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Article **Open Access**

BROKEN MANDATE: VOTER SUPPRESSION AND ELECTORAL MALPRACTICES IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

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Abstract
The integrity of democratic elections in Nigeria has come under increasing scrutiny due to the pervasive and multidimensional nature of voter suppression and electoral crises. This study critically examines the phenomenon of voter suppression cataclysm defined as the systematic marginalization, intimidation, and exclusion of eligible voters and its correlation with recurring electoral crises in Nigeria. It explores how structural inefficiencies, electoral violence, political thuggery, technological failures (such as malfunctioning BVAS machines), insecurity, and administrative bottlenecks contribute to widespread disenfranchisement. The paper also highlights the instrumental roles of state and non-state actors in weaponizing voter suppression tactics for political gain, thus undermining the credibility of elections and deepening democratic regression.The study adopted the tout theory of politics (TTP) and the Logic of Machine Politics. Documentary method of data collection was utilized. The research assesses how these suppressive practices have triggered declining voter turnout, public distrust in democratic institutions, and post-election litigation, further destabilizing Nigeria's political landscape. The paper also interrogates the role of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security agencies, and the judiciary in either mitigating or exacerbating these challenges. It concludes by proposing a multi-stakeholder approach to electoral reform, emphasizing institutional accountability, robust voter protection mechanisms, and civic education to safeguard democratic participation. The findings offer critical insights into the urgent need for electoral justice as a cornerstone for sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

Keywords: Election, Voters Suppression, INEC, Corrupt Practices, BVAS, Nigeria.

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Introduction

Nigeria, often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," is a highly heterogeneous political entity multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and deeply multicultural. With over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages spoken, integrating such a pluralistic society presents immense challenges. As Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria had a population exceeding 215 million in 2022, with projections estimating a surge to around 400 million by 2050. Lagos stands as the largest urban center in Sub-Saharan Africa, while the capital, Abuja, ranked 15th among the country's largest cities in 2021, with a population of about half a million. Electoral integrity in Nigeria has been repeatedly compromised by fraud, vote-rigging, violence, and a lack of transparency. These crises, as noted by Adimaocha (2020) and Okafor (2016), have become entrenched in the country's political culture. The use of threats and intimidation to deter voters particularly women and minority groups remains a systemic issue. Additionally, widespread disenfranchisement, especially in conflict-prone or marginalized areas, continues to skew electoral outcomes. Okoro (2019) highlights that many voters abstain due to fear of violence or intimidation. As Nwogu (2023) explains, opaque processes, biased media, and institutional weaknesses create fertile ground for manipulation. Failure to uphold the rule of law and disregard for judicial rulings further erode electoral legitimacy. When elections are viewed as unfair, the resulting government's legitimacy is called into question, often leading to civil unrest and political instability. Moreover, voter suppression and electoral malpractice hinder national development. Lack of representation marginalizes vulnerable populations, breeding resentment and reducing accountability. As Orji (2020) and Okeke (2020) argued, the 2019 and 2023 elections intensified social divisions, discouraged investment, and stifled economic growth. The manipulation of elections fuels corruption, diverts public resources, and exacerbates ethnic and regional tensions. Nigeria's democratic progress is threatened by persistent voter suppression and electoral crises. Reforms must prioritize electoral transparency, enforce strict penalties for malpractice, and protect citizens' right to vote. Only then can Nigeria realize the full promise of democracy and secure lasting peace, inclusive governance, and sustainable development.

Protecting the integrity of elections is not a partisan endeavor but a shared democratic responsibility. It reflects a collective commitment to the principles of transparency, accountability, and the right of every citizen to be heard. As Adimaocha (2020) rightly notes, sustaining electoral integrity is about creating a future where every vote counts, every voice resonates, and the people remain the true custodians of political power. Unfortunately, Nigeria's democratic experience has been undermined by persistent electoral malpractice. There is widespread evidence of fraud and deliberate manipulation of election outcomes, including ballot stuffing, vote buying, and the tampering of voting systems all aimed at distorting the electorate's will. Okafor (2016) describes the 2015 general elections as being plagued by violence and intimidation, where threats and physical force were employed to prevent voter participation. These tactics were often aimed at specific groups, particularly those marginalized or perceived to oppose dominant political interests. Similarly, Okoro (2019) observed that many registered voters chose not to participate in the electoral process due to fear of violence and insecurity, indicating systemic disenfranchisement. Nwogu (2023) further highlights a fundamental lack of transparency and accountability in Nigeria's electoral system. Opaque electoral processes, biased media coverage, and inadequate oversight mechanisms have opened the door to manipulation and eroded public confidence. The failure to uphold the rule of law marked by the disregard of legal procedures

and judicial rulings has cast serious doubt on the legitimacy of election outcomes and contributed to national instability.

When electoral outcomes are marred by irregularities and fraud, the legitimacy of the resulting government is significantly weakened. This not only provokes public dissatisfaction and protests but also fosters widespread disillusionment with democratic governance. Over the years, voter suppression has disproportionately affected marginalized groups, limiting their political voice and participation. As Orji (2020) points out, this lack of representation undermines accountability and good governance, breeding resentment and alienation among the electorate. Electoral malpractice also deepens existing social divisions and ethnic tensions, creating fertile ground for violence and conflict. The 2019 elections, according to Okeke (2020), were characterized by widespread reports of voter intimidation, ballot box snatching, and manipulation of results. These irregularities triggered legal disputes, street protests, and further eroded citizens' trust in the electoral process. In sum, electoral integrity in Nigeria remains fragile. Without substantial reforms to eliminate voter suppression, enforce legal accountability, and ensure transparent and credible elections, Nigeria risks deepening its democratic crisis. Restoring public trust in the electoral system is not only necessary for good governance it is essential for national cohesion, sustainable development, and long-term stability.

The Tout Theory of Politics and the Logic of Machine Politics: A Theoretical Endeavor

The *Tout Theory of Politics* as its theoretical framework. Developed by Nigerian scholar Onuoha Isaac in his 2020 book *Motor Park Democracy*, the theory offers a unique lens for analyzing political behavior in developing democracies. Onuoha draws a provocative comparison between political actors and "touts" individuals often found in motor parks or marketplaces who aggressively solicit customers, frequently employing manipulation and coercion for personal gain. The central tenet of the theory is that many politicians in developing nations, much like touts, prioritize self-interest over the collective good. These political actors often exploit the system for personal enrichment and the benefit of their inner circles, rather than serving the public. The theory argues that such behaviors undermine democratic institutions and public trust, contributing to systemic corruption and governance failure. The Tout Theory serves this purpose by offering an empirical and pragmatic tool to explore voter suppression and electoral integrity crises in Nigeria. Specifically, this study applies the Tout Theory to explain key irregularities during Nigeria's 2023 general elections particularly the manipulation of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), which hindered the proper electronic transmission of results. The theory helps to illuminate how such technological and procedural failures were not accidental but facilitated by a broader culture of impunity, informal power networks, and weak institutional enforcement.

Machine politics emerged as a concept in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to describe a distinctive pattern of political organization that dominated urban centers in the United States, particularly New York, Chicago, and Boston. The term was first used by political observers and reformers to describe political machines highly organized party structures that maintained power through patronage, loyalty, and control over votes rather than ideology or policy.The theory gained academic recognition through the works of scholars such as: William L. Riordon (1905), Robert Merton (1940s) and Edward C. Banfield (1958), who analyzed the sociological and political functions of machines as systems of patronage and social mobility. Machine politics and the tout theory of politics provide

complementary lenses for understanding the persistent patterns of voter suppression and electoral malpractices that characterize Nigeria's democratic process. Machine politics, rooted in patron-client networks, emphasizes the role of political elites and party structures in mobilizing electoral support through patronage, inducements, and institutional manipulation. The tout theory, by contrast, highlights the agency of informal actors street-level enforcers, thugs, and area boys who operate as instruments of coercion and intimidation in the political arena. When these two frameworks are integrated, they reveal how elite control and street-level violence interact to undermine electoral integrity in contemporary Nigeria. The fusion of machine and tout politics thus produces a dual mechanism of voter suppression and malpractice. On one hand, the machine manipulates institutional processes such as voter registration, result collation, and electoral adjudication through bureaucratic capture and patronage. On the other, tout networks physically enforce political dominance, obstructing voters, disrupting polling, and instilling fear among the electorate. The resulting environment perpetuates low voter turnout, widespread apathy, and the normalization of electoral fraud as a strategic tool of governance. Consequently, the intersection of machine politics and tout theory illustrates how Nigeria's democracy is trapped in a cycle of elite domination and informal coercion. It exposes a political economy in which violence and patronage are not peripheral, but structural instruments of electoral control. Understanding voter suppression and electoral malpractice through this blended framework underscores that reform efforts must go beyond institutional redesign to address the embedded networks of power and informal violence that sustain Nigeria's electoral system.

Voter Suppression and the Electronic Transmission of Results in the 2023 Nigerian Elections

Following the conclusion of Nigeria's 2023 Presidential and National Assembly elections, serious concerns have been raised about the functionality and credibility of the technological innovations deployed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) notably, the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Election Result Viewing Portal (IReV). These tools, which were introduced to enhance electoral integrity and reduce fraud, failed to meet expectations during their first full-scale national deployment, raising doubts about the transparency of the electoral process. BVAS was designed as a biometric technology aimed at authenticating voters' identities through fingerprint and facial recognition. Its core objective was to eliminate electoral malpractice such as multiple voting, underage voting, and voter impersonation by ensuring that only validly registered and accredited individuals can vote. In parallel, the IReV portal was intended to promote transparency by enabling real-time upload of polling unit-level results, which citizens could access remotely. This digital approach was expected to significantly improve public trust and eliminate the opacity often associated with the collation and transmission of results. Despite the promises, both BVAS and IReV fell short during the 2023 elections. Observations and reports from across the country indicate that these platforms experienced widespread malfunctions. BVAS devices failed to authenticate voters in several locations, causing delays, confusion, and, in some instances, the disenfranchisement of eligible voters. IReV, on the other hand, failed to transmit results promptly and reliably. Many polling units were unable to upload Form EC8A (polling unit results) as required, leading to discrepancies between results announced at the polling units and those viewed later online.

These failures significantly undermined the integrity of the electoral process and cast a shadow over the credibility of the final outcomes. The malfunction of these systems has been cited as a basis for legal challenges by aggrieved political parties and candidates, some of whom took their grievances to the courts. Given that BVAS and IReV were widely promoted as technological safeguards designed to restore public confidence in Nigeria's elections, their underperformance during this high-stakes electoral cycle is particularly troubling. BVAS was first piloted in 2021, replacing the previously used Smart Card Readers which had faced significant criticism for their inability to accurately read Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs). It was seen as a groundbreaking innovation intended to overcome the challenge of over-voting by using biometrics (fingerprints, iris, and facial recognition) to verify and accredit voters at the point of voting. Meanwhile, IReV was first introduced in the Nasarawa Central State Constituency by-election in 2020 and had been deployed in over 105 subsequent elections, covering approximately 16.6 million registered voters. Over 32,935 result sheets had reportedly been uploaded from polling units across both rural and urban areas prior to the 2023 general elections, giving the public hope in its viability. Despite this record, the national deployment in 2023 exposed systemic gaps in infrastructure, implementation, and network reliability. While INEC assured the public that the BVAS would work seamlessly and that results would be transmitted electronically in real time, the actual experience on election day revealed otherwise. In many polling units, ad hoc staff struggled to operate the devices, internet connectivity was inconsistent, and the upload process was either delayed or aborted altogether. Critically, the defense that Nigeria lacks sufficient network coverage for electronic transmission of results was dismissed by industry experts. Ajibola Olude, the Chief Operating Officer of the Association of Telecommunications Companies of Nigeria, in an interview with *The PUNCH*, emphasized that Nigeria's digital infrastructure was mature enough to support the electronic transmission of election results. His comments suggested that the problem lay not in the technological ecosystem but in planning, execution, and perhaps political will. while the BVAS and IReV were conceptualized as bold innovations aimed at advancing Nigeria's electoral process, their performance during the 2023 elections has highlighted significant gaps between policy intentions and practical implementation. Their failure has renewed public skepticism, sparked legal contests, and placed INEC under intense scrutiny. Going forward, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive audit of the deployment process, investment in electoral personnel training, improved digital infrastructure, and most importantly, a renewed commitment to electoral transparency. Without these, the promise of technology as a tool for democratic consolidation in Nigeria will remain unfulfilled.

BVAS Breakdown and the Failure of Electronic Result Transmission in the 2023 General Elections

During the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, the deployment of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) was marked by significant technical and operational challenges that disrupted the electoral process across various regions. In Enugu, respondents reported that the BVAS malfunctioned on election day, leading to widespread delays at polling stations. Voters experienced difficulties in verifying their identities, which resulted in long queues, frustration, and heightened tensions. Specifically, elderly voters struggled with biometric verification due to changes in their skin texture, and individuals with older voter cards found it difficult to vote, as the BVAS machines failed to recognize their fingerprints. These technical failures often sparked conflict at polling units and impeded the smooth

conduct of the election. In Awka South, similar reports emerged. The malfunctioning of the BVAS not only hindered the voting process but also eroded public confidence in the electoral system. Voters perceived the inability to authenticate identities as indicative of incompetence or possible manipulation, raising serious concerns about the integrity of the elections. It was observed that in some cases, individuals whose fingerprints could not be captured by the BVAS were still permitted to vote, further reinforcing the perception of irregularities and diminishing trust in the process. In Ezzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, a correspondent from Channels Television documented widespread voter disenfranchisement due to BVAS failures. Numerous voters were unable to cast their ballots because the devices failed to verify their identities. This disproportionately affected communities in areas with poor infrastructure and limited access to technological support, underscoring the uneven impact of digital deployment in the country's electoral process.

The transmission of election results also faced significant challenges. The BVAS was central not only to voter accreditation but also to the electronic transmission of results via the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV). However, the system malfunctioned in many instances, leading to delays in uploading polling unit results and, consequently, in the announcement of official outcomes. These delays created an atmosphere of uncertainty and provided fertile ground for allegations of result tampering and electoral fraud. The malfunctioning systems thus contributed to post-election tension and public skepticism regarding the credibility of the electoral outcomes. Furthermore, these technological shortcomings triggered legal and political controversies. Political parties and candidates questioned the validity of the election results, citing systemic failures in the accreditation and transmission processes. This is particularly evident in the dispute between candidates of the Labour Party and the All Progressives Congress (APC), where legal challenges were launched to contest the declared outcomes. Such disputes threaten to prolong the post-election period with court battles, increasing political instability and undermining the legitimacy of elected officials. The broader implications of these technological failures are deeply concerning for Nigeria's democratic development. Any significant malfunction in BVAS and electronic result transmission can erode public trust in the democratic process and institutions. When voters perceive the system as unreliable or manipulated, it reinforces narratives of electoral fraud and weakens the social contract between the state and its citizens. The repeated failures also compromise the legitimacy of governance, as elected officials may be viewed as products of flawed or manipulated systems, thereby undermining the foundations of democratic accountability. These experiences have prompted widespread calls for urgent electoral reforms. Many stakeholders, including civil society groups and electoral observers, have advocated for a comprehensive review of Nigeria's electoral technology framework. There is growing consensus on the need to improve the reliability and security of election technologies, enhance voter education regarding their use, and ensure greater accountability among electoral personnel and institutions. These reforms are critical to restoring public confidence and ensuring future elections reflect the genuine will of the people.

The establishment of BVAS in Nigeria was originally conceived as a progressive step toward achieving greater transparency, credibility, and efficiency in the electoral process. The system was designed to authenticate voters using biometric data such as fingerprints and facial recognition, aiming to prevent multiple voting, impersonation, and other forms of electoral malpractice. One of the primary intentions behind BVAS was to safeguard electoral integrity by ensuring that only eligible voters could participate in the process, thereby

upholding the sanctity of the vote. Beyond curbing voter fraud, BVAS also sought to address the recurring issues of electoral irregularities that have historically plagued Nigerian elections. By replacing manual voter identification with biometric authentication, the system was expected to reduce opportunities for vote rigging and eliminate the use of fraudulent identities. A reliable and accurate voter registry was also among the intended outcomes, as the collection of biometric data during registration was meant to facilitate the identification and removal of duplicate or ineligible entries. BVAS, for instance, was envisioned as a tool for promoting public transparency and trust. Its biometric capabilities were intended to serve as an auditable and objective means of verifying voter identities, thereby increasing confidence among voters, political parties, and election observers. The broader goal was to strengthen democratic governance through enhanced electoral legitimacy. Efficiency was another anticipated benefit. By automating voter accreditation, BVAS promised to streamline operations at polling stations, reduce human error, and facilitate quicker and more accurate result collation. This, in turn, was expected to ensure more timely reporting of election results and mitigate the delays that often fuel electoral suspicion and unrest. In practice, however, the malfunction of BVAS and IReV during the 2023 elections reveals that the gap between technological ambition and actual implementation remains significant. To fulfill the original vision of a credible, transparent, and efficient electoral system, Nigeria must not only invest in robust electoral technologies but also build the institutional capacity and infrastructure necessary for their effective deployment. Only then can the promise of free and fair elections be truly realized.

The 2022 Electoral Act Amendment and its Influence on Electoral Malfeasance

On February 25, 2022, President Muhammadu Buhari signed the Electoral Act Amendment Bill into law after several months of withholding assent. The Act, repeals the Electoral Act No. 6 of 2010, with the intention of reforming and modernizing the conduct of federal, state, and area council elections in Nigeria. Its enactment, ahead of the 2023 general elections, was widely viewed as timely, offering the potential to address many longstanding challenges in the country's electoral system. This legislation introduced numerous substantive changes, each carrying implications for the transparency, credibility, and efficiency of Nigeria's electoral processes. A significant feature of the new law is the granting of financial autonomy to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The Act established an INEC Fund into which allocations from the federal government, grants, and donations are to be paid. This fund is meant to be directly accessible to the Commission, ensuring it has the resources needed to plan and execute elections independently. Moreover, the Act mandates that funds for general elections must be released no later than one year before the election date. This provision sought to eliminate the bureaucratic delays associated with the Ministry of Finance's vetting process under the old Act, thereby giving INEC greater control over its electoral preparations.

The new Act also extended several electoral timelines, one of which is the period for publishing the notice of elections. It now requires that INEC publish this notice not later than 360 days before an election, compared to the 90-day notice required under the previous Act. This extension is intended to give all stakeholders, including political parties, adequate time to prepare for the electoral process, and to reduce the last-minute rush and confusion that often marred previous elections. However, for by-elections, the timeframe remains unchanged at 14 days. In a related development, political parties are now required to submit the names of their candidates not less than 180 days before the general election an increase

from the previous 60-day requirement. This move is aimed at encouraging early party primaries and reducing intra-party conflicts and legal disputes over candidate nominations. Another amendment expanded the campaign period for political parties. Campaigns can now begin 150 days before polling day and must end 24 hours prior to voting, an increase from the previous 90-day window. This longer campaign period allows parties to better communicate their manifestos and gives voters more time to evaluate their choices, potentially improving voter education and participation. The Act also introduced technological innovations aimed at improving voter registration and authentication. INEC is now required to maintain the voter register in both manual and electronic formats, with the electronic version stored in a central database. The shift enhances transparency and administrative efficiency while reducing the likelihood of multiple registrations and illegal voting. Complementing this is the revised definition of overvoting. Under the new law, overvoting occurs when the number of votes cast exceeds the number of accredited voters, rather than the number of registered voters as stipulated in the previous Act. This change aligns more closely with biometric verification processes and helps ensure greater accuracy in determining electoral anomalies. INEC was also empowered under the new law to review the decisions of returning officers regarding the validity of ballots and declarations of results. The review must be conducted within seven days and applies in cases where the officer's decision was not made voluntarily or was contrary to legal provisions. While the Act is somewhat ambiguous about whether such reviews preclude court intervention, the general view is that judicial review can still occur after INEC has conducted its internal review. This represents a shift toward greater administrative oversight in the immediate post-election period. Additionally, the Act excludes political appointees from serving as delegates or aspirants at party conventions or congresses unless they resign their appointments beforehand. The provision, found in Section 84(12), aims to prevent the undue influence of incumbency and to create a level playing field for political aspirants. While many have hailed this as a progressive measure to open up the political space, it has also generated considerable controversy. A Federal High Court has declared the provision unconstitutional, and the Attorney General was ordered to delete it. The National Assembly, however, has expressed its intention to appeal the decision, keeping the debate alive.

On the issue of candidate death during elections, the new Act outlines clear protocols. If a candidate dies before polling, the election is postponed and rescheduled within 14 days. If death occurs after voting but before results are announced, the election is suspended for no more than 21 days. For legislative elections, the political party whose candidate has died may conduct a new primary to replace the candidate. In gubernatorial, presidential, or area council elections, the running mate assumes the role of candidate and nominates a new running mate. Technological advances are further incorporated into the electoral process through the authorization of electronic devices for accreditation and result transmission. These include smart card readers and electronic voting machines, marking a shift toward a more digitized and transparent electoral system. The law specifically permits INEC to transmit results electronically according to its guidelines, a critical step in curbing result manipulation and enhancing the credibility of vote counts. Despite the promise of these reforms, the actual implementation of the Act during the 2023 general elections revealed both progress and shortcomings. While many provisions were welcomed in principle, operational failures particularly those related to the BVAS and electronic transmission of results undermined public confidence in the reforms. Consequently, discussions around further amendments to the Electoral Act 2022 have resurfaced. The House of

Representatives recently passed a bill to amend aspects of the Act, particularly to reinforce the electronic transmission of election results. Sponsored by Hon. Francis Waive, the bill has already passed its second reading, with proponents arguing that it would enhance electoral transparency and minimize fraud. The 2022 Electoral Act represents a landmark legislative intervention aimed at modernizing Nigeria's electoral process. However, the success of these reforms depends largely on their practical implementation, institutional preparedness, and political will. As Nigeria continues to grapple with electoral challenges, the effectiveness of this legislation will ultimately be judged not by its provisions alone but by the extent to which it strengthens democratic institutions and restores public trust in the electoral process.

Tackling Corrupt Electoral Practices: Institutional and Policy Efforts

On 25 February 2023, Nigerians once again exercised their democratic franchise by participating in the presidential election, an event that had been widely anticipated as a critical juncture in the nation's democratic trajectory. However, the elections were clouded by a series of allegations surrounding irregularities, electoral malpractice, and procedural inconsistencies. Despite high expectations for transparency, accountability, and progress in the conduct of Nigeria's electoral process, the 2023 general elections were marred by widespread reports of corruption. These included incidents of voter suppression, vote-buying, manipulation of voter registers, collusion among electoral officials, and a general lack of accountability throughout various phases of the electoral cycle. Technical failures, particularly related to the newly deployed technologies such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV), contributed to procedural bottlenecks and delays. These malfunctions, coupled with allegations of biased practices, have not only cast a shadow over the credibility of the electoral outcomes but have also triggered numerous legal disputes and petitions before election tribunals. Over the past 24 years of uninterrupted democratic governance, Nigeria's electoral system has faced persistent structural weaknesses that threaten to undermine democratic consolidation. As reported by *Foreign Policy*, the nation continues to grapple with an electoral process that often contradicts the democratic principle of unfettered political participation, thereby denying citizens their fundamental right to freely choose their leaders. In response to these systemic flaws, various stakeholders have initiated dialogues aimed at re-evaluating Nigeria's democratic progress. One such intervention was organized by *The Conversation Africa*, which convened a webinar involving policymakers, academics, and civil society actors to reflect on the successes and challenges of Nigeria's democratic journey, with a particular focus on electoral corruption. A key observation from the webinar was the dismal voter turnout: although approximately 93 million Nigerians were registered to vote, only about 25 million actually participated in the elections. This steep decline in voter engagement is seen as symptomatic of deepening public disenchantment with the electoral process.

In an attempt to rebuild the broken trust, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) introduced the BVAS to enhance transparency and improve the integrity of voter accreditation gained notable attention and engagement on social media platforms during the election. To combat electoral corruption, the Nigerian government, through its anti-graft agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), implemented a multi-pronged strategy before, during, and after the elections. The EFCC maintained a visible presence at the primaries of major political parties an arena historically dominated by monetary influence to discourage illicit financial transactions. On election day, EFCC personnel were strategically deployed across various polling units nationwide to monitor

and deter vote-buying and other forms of electoral fraud. Wilson Uwujaren, spokesperson for the EFCC, affirmed that the Commission was actively involved in investigating and preventing financial misconduct during the elections. He emphasized the EFCC's constitutional mandate to enforce Nigeria's economic and financial laws and its commitment to preserving the sanctity of the electoral process. As part of a collaborative framework with INEC and security agencies, the EFCC also conducted public enlightenment campaigns to raise awareness among electoral stakeholders about the legal consequences of engaging in vote-buying and other corrupt practices. Beyond awareness campaigns, the EFCC engaged financial institutions including commercial banks and Bureau de Change operators sensitizing them on their legal obligations under the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act. These stakeholders were educated on transaction thresholds, suspicious transaction reporting, and the implications of enabling financial crimes during electoral periods. Town hall meetings were also convened to caution against institutional complicity in undermining electoral integrity.

On election day, several arrests were made, and items such as cash, clothing, and food which were allegedly intended to influence voter behavior were confiscated at polling units. The combined effect of these enforcement activities, alongside the government's monetary policy decision that restricted cash availability, significantly curtailed the resources available to political actors seeking to buy votes. In sum, while Nigeria's 2023 elections were far from flawless, they highlighted the enduring struggle between democratic aspirations and entrenched political corruption. The proactive involvement of institutions like the EFCC marked a notable effort to deter financial impropriety and restore public trust in the democratic process. However, sustained institutional reforms, political will, and civic engagement remain vital to ensuring electoral integrity and deepening democratic governance in Nigeria.

Instances of Electoral Personnel involving in Corrupt Practices

States	Instances of Electoral Personnel involving in Corrupt Practices	Year
Enugu	The electoral personnel were shared money by agents of PDP to end the election before the scheduled time in other to disenfranchise other voters from other political party	2023
Bayelsa	The corps members who were working as presiding officers were offered money to allow voters without there voters card to vote in other to give advantage to PDP	
Yobe	In general elections, there were accusations of electoral personnel colluding with political actors to manipulate the electoral process. This collusion involved the selective enforcement of electoral laws or regulations to benefit certain candidates or parties, as well as coordination between electoral officials and political agents to influence voter behavior and election outcomes.	2019
Katsina	Electoral personnel were accused of altering tally sheets, manipulating vote counts, and misreporting election data to favor certain candidates or parties.	2023
Logos state	Ahead of the general elections, there were allegations of electoral personnel misusing government resources for partisan purposes. This included the use of government vehicles, facilities, and personnel to support the campaigns of certain candidates or parties. Such misuse of resources undermined the principle of equal opportunity and fairness in the electoral competition.	2023
Enugu	There was evidence of over voting which was engineered to favor a particular political party of lead to the cancellation of the entire election results	2023
Rivers	There were reports of irregularities in the voter registration process, with allegations of electoral personnel manipulating voter registration lists to include ineligible voters or exclude eligible ones. This raised concerns about the integrity of the electoral roll and the fairness of the electoral process.	
Lagos	The electoral officials were offered money not to upload the official result using the	2023

	bvas so that they can manipulate the election results	
Imo	Reports of vote buying, where electoral personnel, as well as political agents, were involved in offering money or other inducements to voters in exchange for their votes.	2023

Sources: compiled by the researcher

Electoral Integrity and the Crisis of Democratic Legitimacy in Nigeria's 2023 General Elections

The concept of electoral integrity encompasses the norms, institutions, and practices that ensure elections are conducted freely, fairly, and transparently. It serves as a cornerstone of democratic governance and legitimizes the authority of elected leaders. However, when the integrity of an election is undermined, it often precipitates a crisis of democratic legitimacy, as seen in the aftermath of Nigeria's 2023 general elections. The 2023 elections in Nigeria were anticipated as a transformative moment, given the legal and technological reforms introduced to address previous irregularities. These reforms included the 2022 Electoral Act Amendment, which authorized the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) for biometric verification and the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal for real-time result uploads. These innovations were designed to curb vote rigging, multiple voting, and ballot manipulation, and to enhance transparency (INEC, 2022). Despite these reforms, the elections were marred by serious operational failures and allegations of malpractice. Numerous reports detailed the malfunctioning of BVAS devices, the inconsistent uploading of results to the IReV portal, voter suppression, intimidation, and logistical setbacks across several states (YIAGA Africa, 2023). In Enugu, Lagos, Rivers, and parts of the North-Central, incidents of technical failures, late arrival of electoral materials, and voter intimidation were widespread (Premium Times, 2023). These issues not only disrupted voting but also created perceptions of deliberate manipulation.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) acknowledged challenges in the technological deployment, but many stakeholders viewed the inconsistencies as undermining the transparency of the electoral process. As argued by Omotola (2023), the electoral commission's inability to ensure real-time transmission of results raised legitimate doubts about the credibility of the final outcomes. Furthermore, the discrepancies between manually collated results and electronically uploaded data triggered legal challenges from opposition parties, including the Labour Party and the People's Democratic Party, who questioned the legitimacy of the declared winner. This situation has led to a broader crisis of democratic legitimacy. Democratic legitimacy is rooted in the belief that electoral outcomes reflect the genuine will of the people. When this belief is eroded, so too is the trust in political institutions. According to Ayoade (2023), when voters perceive that elections are rigged or predetermined, apathy sets in, leading to lower voter turnout and civic disengagement. This was evident in 2023, where only about 27.1% of registered voters participated in the presidential elections, one of the lowest turnouts in Nigeria's recent history (INEC, 2023). The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and civil society groups also noted rampant vote-buying and bribery, further undermining the integrity of the process (Uwujaren, 2023). These malpractices demonstrate that electoral reforms must go beyond technology and law they must address entrenched political culture, impunity, and weak enforcement mechanisms. While Nigeria's 2023 general elections were presented as a watershed moment for democratic consolidation, they instead exposed systemic weaknesses in electoral governance. The failure to uphold electoral integrity has intensified the crisis of legitimacy facing elected officials and weakened public confidence in democratic

institutions. Moving forward, Nigeria must invest in institutional reforms, ensure judicial independence, enforce electoral laws impartially, and deepen civic education to reclaim trust in its democratic process.

Conclusion

The 2023 general elections in Nigeria laid bare the persistent challenges undermining the country's electoral integrity and democratic legitimacy. Central to these challenges were the widespread malfunctions of the Biometric Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the inconsistencies in the electronic transmission of election results. Despite being introduced as innovations intended to enhance transparency, efficiency, and credibility in the electoral process, these technologies failed to perform optimally during their first major nationwide deployment, with far-reaching consequences for voter confidence and democratic trust. The BVAS, a crucial tool designed to verify voter identities and curb multiple voting, suffered technical failures across numerous polling units. These breakdowns resulted in the disenfranchisement of eligible voters, especially among the elderly and those with older voter cards whose biometric data could not be accurately captured. Such systemic flaws undermined the principles of free and fair elections and fostered widespread suspicion of electoral manipulation and institutional incompetence. In turn, the credibility of the elected government and its legitimacy in the eyes of the public came under scrutiny. Similarly, the electronic transmission of results via the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal, though intended to promote real-time transparency and citizen oversight, was marred by irregularities, delays, and technical lapses. These vulnerabilities exposed the electoral process to risks of data manipulation and cyber interference, further eroding public trust in the electoral outcome. Without robust digital infrastructure, cyber-security safeguards, and transparent auditing mechanisms, the reliance on electronic systems remains a double-edged sword. These technical and procedural failures call for urgent and deliberate institutional reforms. To restore confidence in Nigeria's electoral system, authorities must invest in the upgrading and consistent testing of BVAS and related digital infrastructure well ahead of future elections. Moreover, the legal and procedural framework governing electronic result transmission must be refined and clearly codified to eliminate ambiguity and prevent misuse. Beyond technological flaws, the implementation of the 2022 Electoral Act Amendment, though well-intentioned, inadvertently contributed to an uptick in corrupt practices among electoral personnel. The complex and often ambiguous legislative provisions created loopholes that were exploited by political actors and election officials alike. Poor enforcement mechanisms, insufficient training, inadequate remuneration, and lack of institutional oversight left electoral staff susceptible to coercion, inducement, and other forms of electoral misconduct. These systemic weaknesses were exacerbated by the intensely competitive nature of Nigerian politics, where elections are seen as zero-sum contests for power and resources. In such a context, vote buying, ballot box snatching, and result tampering continue to thrive despite new regulations. The unintended consequences of the electoral reforms highlight the critical need for a more coherent, enforceable, and ethically grounded legal framework. Addressing these issues requires a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach. It demands not only the revision of electoral laws and the strengthening of electoral institutions but also sustained efforts in civic education, anti-corruption enforcement, and political accountability. Civil society organizations, the judiciary, the media, and international partners must work collaboratively with INEC and government institutions to safeguard electoral integrity. Ultimately, the credibility of Nigeria's democracy rests on its ability to conduct elections that

are transparent, inclusive, and trustworthy. Without meaningful reform, Nigeria risks further disillusionment among its citizens, diminished voter turnout, and increasing political instability. To secure democratic legitimacy, Nigeria must prioritize the institutional, technological, and legal reforms necessary to ensure that future elections truly reflect the will of the people.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY AND GRASSROOTS DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION: AN EXAMINATION OF THE SOUTH-EAST AND NORTH-EAST GEOPOLITICAL ZONES OF NIGERIA

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Abstract
Local government reform in Nigeria continues to attract scholarly and policy attention due to persistent debates over autonomy, democratic participation, and the role of traditional authorities in local governance. Although the Constitution formally recognizes local governments as a third tier of government, practical autonomy remains constrained by institutional arrangements such as the State–Local Government Joint Account (SJLGA), state-level control over local elections, and varied subnational political influences. At the same time, traditional authorities ranging from town unions in the South-East to emirate councils in the North-East continue to exert significant influence over community mobilization, conflict resolution, and local service delivery. This study undertakes a systematic, secondary-data-based comparative analysis of the South-East and North-East to evaluate how variations in autonomy and traditional authority structures shape grassroots democratic participation. Drawing on decentralization theory, hybrid governance, and participatory democracy scholarship, the study develops an analytical model linking three domains of autonomy (administrative, fiscal, political) to traditional authority influence and participation outcomes. The review reveals that while both regions experience structural constraints on autonomy, the nature and consequences differ: civic-based traditional institutions in the South-East often complement participatory structures, whereas emirate-based hierarchies in the North-East sometimes centralise authority in ways that mediate participation differently. Evidence also shows that grassroots engagement is shaped not only by autonomy levels but by historical, cultural, and security contexts. The paper contributes to debates on subnational governance by offering a cross-regional synthesis that foregrounds traditional authorities as mediating actors, clarifies the institutional determinants of participation, and

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advances region-sensitive policy recommendations aimed at strengthening meaningful autonomy and inclusive local governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Local Government Autonomy, Grassroots Democratic Participation, Traditional Authority, Hybrid Governance, Civic Mobilisation

Introduction

Debates about the nature and practice of decentralisation in Nigeria remain central to understanding the dynamics of local governance and democratic deepening. The 1999 Constitution (as amended) entrenches a three-tier federal system and guarantees the existence of democratically constituted local governments, but in practice local councils' administrative, fiscal and political autonomy is regularly contested by state governments (Idoko, 2022; Ogunnubi, 2022). One of the most salient institutional mechanisms shaping the fiscal autonomy of local government councils is the State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA), under which federal allocations intended for local government service delivery are pooled and disbursed at the discretion of state executives, a practice widely identified in the literature as a major constraint on genuine local government autonomy (Okafor, 2010; Ikpeata, 2025). These structural tensions have important implications for service delivery, local accountability and the capacity of ordinary citizens to engage meaningfully with governance at the grassroots (Ogunnubi, 2022; Okafor, 2010). At the same time, formal state institutions are neither the only nor always the most consequential authorities at the local level. Across much of Nigeria, customary and religious leadership in the forms of emirs, chiefs, town unions, and lineage heads continue to play active roles in dispute resolution, land administration, local mobilisation, and informal service provision (Tonwe, 2013; Blench, 2006). In the South-East, town unions and other lineage-based civic associations often perform governance and development functions that the formal local government either neglects or is unable to deliver; these civic structures have been invoked by scholars as adaptive forms of "community governance" that can both complement and complicate state-led decentralisation (Amadi, 2023; Nwobodo, 2021). In the North-East and other predominantly Hausa-Fulani regions, emirate institutions and district heads retain recognised roles in local administration and customary justice, and have in recent years been the focus of state and donor programmes aimed at strengthening community stability and dispute resolution (Blench, 2006; Trust Fund for Africa, 2019). The persistence and salience of these traditional authorities point to a hybrid governance landscape in which formal decentralised institutions and informal customary structures coexist, interact, and often mutually shape patterns of grassroots political participation.

Comparing the South-East and North-East regions is analytically useful because each region exemplifies different historical legacies, institutional arrangements, and socio-political configurations that mediate the relationship between local government autonomy and citizen participation. The South-East's civic model, with comparatively weak chieftaincy but robust town unions and lineage organisations, contrasts with the North-East's emirate and district head structures that combine religious authority and hierarchical customary administration (Amadi, 2023; Ribadu & Gaji, 2024). These regionally distinct forms of traditional authority are likely to shape how citizens access, contest, and engage with local governance in different ways: town unions may serve as platforms for collective action and localized development initiatives in the South-East, while emirate councils and district heads may structure political deference, conflict mediation and the articulation of communal interests in the North-East (Tonwe, 2013; Blench, 2006). A comparative cross-regional lens

therefore enables the paper to highlight how institutional variations at the intersection of formal and customary authority affect grassroots democratic participation and the substantive meaning of "local government autonomy."

Methodology

Methodologically, this paper relies exclusively on secondary data derived from a systematic review and synthesis of peer-reviewed scholarship, official government publications, constitutional documents, budgetary analyses, and policy briefs produced by reputable civil society organisations. Key sources include the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), decisions of the Supreme Court on local government powers, reports by the Nigerian Governors' Forum, the National Bureau of Statistics, and analyses by election-monitoring and governance-focused organizations such as the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and the International Crisis Group. Secondary studies on the State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA), fiscal federalism, and decentralization provide essential empirical grounding (Arowolo, 2011; Khemani, 2006; Oviasuyi et al., 2010). Likewise, region-specific research documenting the authority of town unions in the South-East (Odoh & Chukwuemeka, 2020) and the centrality of emirate institutions in the North-East (Alemika, 2019; International Crisis Group, 2016) supports comparative analysis.

This desk-based approach enables systematic cross-referencing of constitutional provisions, judicial interpretations, fiscal relations, and socio-cultural governance patterns. The use of only secondary sources ensures that all findings are anchored in verifiable, publicly available materials, thereby enhancing the reliability and transparency of the study. It also facilitates a multi-dimensional analytical framework that integrates legal, political-economic, and cultural perspectives on decentralization and grassroots political participation. The article contributes to debates on decentralization, hybrid governance, and democratic participation in three important ways. First, it provides a cross-regional synthesis that places traditional authorities at the centre of local governance analysis, thereby extending existing conceptualisations of hybrid governance in Nigeria (Boege et al., 2009; Meagher, 2012). Second, by linking detailed assessments of autonomy - administrative, fiscal, and political, with documented patterns of grassroots participation, the study offers conceptually robust and policy-relevant insights into how formal institutional design interacts with customary authority in shaping democratic engagement. Third, the comparative evidence presented supports region-sensitive policy recommendations aimed at improving meaningful local autonomy and strengthening participatory mechanisms, for example, by clarifying fiscal flows, formalizing consultative roles for civic bodies, and enabling customary dispute-resolution in ways that enhance rather than undermine democratic inclusion. Together, these contributions seek to inform both scholarly debate and ongoing reforms towards more accountable and participatory local governance in Nigeria.

Research Questions

i. How does local government autonomy differ between the South-East and the North-East of Nigeria in terms of administration, finance, and politics?
ii. How do traditional authorities influence local governance in both regions, especially in service delivery, conflict resolution, and community mobilisation?
iii. How does the relationship between local governments and traditional authorities affect grassroots democratic participation in the South-East and North-East?
iv. What social and political factors explain the differences in grassroots political participation between the two regions?

Research Objectives

i. To compare the levels of administrative, fiscal, and political autonomy that local governments have in the South-East and North-East.
ii. To examine how traditional authorities contribute to local governance in both regions and how their roles affect service delivery, community mobilization, and social cohesion.
iii. To analyze how local governments and traditional authorities interact, and how this relationship shapes grassroots participation.
iv. To identify and compare the social, political, historical, and cultural factors that influence patterns of participation in the two regions.

Conceptual Framework

Local Government Autonomy: Local government autonomy refers to the extent to which local councils exercise independent administrative, fiscal, and political authority without undue control by higher levels of government (Wunsch & Olowu, 1995). Administrative autonomy concerns control over internal management, staffing, and service delivery. Fiscal autonomy relates to the power to raise revenue, prepare budgets, and undertake expenditures independently. Political autonomy denotes the ability to conduct elections, formulate policies, and govern without excessive interference from state or federal authorities (Oviasuyi et al., 2010). Although the Nigerian Constitution recognises local governments as a distinct "third tier," scholars consistently argue that their actual autonomy is limited due to institutional mechanisms such as the SJLGA and the widespread use of state-appointed caretaker committees (Khemani, 2006; Arowolo, 2011). These constraints weaken the capacity of local governments to serve as vehicles for democratic participation and service delivery.

Grassroots Democratic Participation: Grassroots democratic participation refers to the involvement of ordinary citizens in local-level governance processes, including elections, public consultations, community development meetings, deliberative forums, and informal mobilisation (Gaventa, 2004). It emphasises bottom-up decision-making, civic agency, and local accountability. Decentralisation theory predicts that increased local autonomy enhances participation by reducing the distance between authorities and citizens and by making governance more accessible and responsive (Ribot, 2002). However, weak institutional capacity or political interference can undermine these participatory benefits.

Traditional Authority and Hybrid Governance: Traditional authority encompasses customary leadership institutions such as chiefs, kings, emirs, and lineage heads, whose legitimacy derives from history, culture, and community recognition rather than election (Vaughan, 2000). In Nigeria, traditional rulers play crucial roles in areas such as land management, conflict resolution, community mobilisation, and social regulation, often operating alongside or in support of formal state structures (Alemika, 2019; International Crisis Group, 2016). Hybrid governance refers to the coexistence and interaction of formal state institutions with informal or customary authorities in shaping governance outcomes (Boege et al., 2009). In many African contexts, hybrid institutions are central to everyday governance, especially where state capacity is weak. In the South-East, town unions often function as powerful civic bodies that complement or challenge local government authority (Odoh & Chukwuemeka, 2020). In the North-East, emirate systems remain deeply embedded in political and social life, often serving as intermediaries between the state and communities (Alemika, 2019). This conceptual framework thus understands local

government autonomy, grassroots political participation, and traditional authority as interconnected dimensions that jointly shape governance outcomes. Where formal autonomy is weak, traditional authorities may step in to fill governance gaps; where civic associations are strong, participation may be pluralistic; and where insecurity is high, traditional authority may overshadow local government institutions. The theoretical lens of hybrid governance, combined with decentralisation and participatory democracy theory, helps explain these dynamics.

Theoretical Framework

Decentralization Theory: Decentralization theory underlines the transfer (or delegation) of powers from central or higher-level government to lower-level administrative units (such as local governments). According to classical formulations, decentralisation can improve governance by bringing decision-making closer to citizens, enhancing efficiency, responsiveness, accountability, and enabling policies tailored to local needs. In Nigeria, decentralisation was institutionalised through successive reforms culminating in constitutional recognition of local governments, granting them nominal authority for grassroots governance. However, empirical assessments reveal significant constraints on true devolution: vertical decentralisation (central → state → local) often retains supervisory controls at the higher levels, while horizontal decentralisation (empowering non-state actors – civil society, community associations, traditional authorities) remains weak or inconsistent. Therefore, decentralization theory provides a baseline normative expectation: that enhancing local government autonomy should create the institutional precondition for grassroots democratic participation.

Social Capital and Participatory Democracy

Social capital theory and participatory democracy offer normative and analytic tools to understand grassroots participation beyond formal institutions. Social capital, understood as networks, norms, trust, and civic associations facilitates cooperation, collective action, and effective participation in public affairs. In communities with strong social capital, formal and informal organizations (associations, community groups, traditional institutions) can mobilise citizens, encourage participation, and foster accountability. While much of this literature originates in Western contexts, the core insight, that civic embeddedness fosters participatory governance remains relevant for African settings. Scholars of decentralization and governance have argued that decentralisation's success depends not only on institutional design but also on local social structures and civic capacities. Participatory democracy as a normative model emphasizes that citizens should have opportunities for meaningful engagement in decisions that affect their lives. It values not just periodic voting, but sustained involvement, deliberation, local problem-solving, and co-production of public goods. In settings where formal institutions are weak or distrusted, participatory democracy may actualise through hybrid governance, traditional authorities, civic associations, and informal networks. Therefore, combining social capital and participatory democracy with hybrid-governance and decentralisation theories permits a richer, more context-sensitive analysis of grassroots participation in Nigeria. It allows for the possibility that participation thrives not only through formal local government institutions, but also via customary institutions and community networks, particularly where state institutions are weak, underfunded, or captured by elite interests.

Literature Review

Evolution and Structure of Local Governments in Nigeria: The historical evolution of local government in Nigeria reflects a complex interaction between colonial legacies, post-independence administrative reforms, and constitutional restructuring. Colonial indirect rule institutionalized a dual-governance arrangement in which traditional rulers acted as intermediaries between the British administration and local populations. This model shaped the early normative and institutional framework of local governance, particularly in Northern Nigeria where emirate structures were deeply entrenched (Blench, 2006). With the post-independence state seeking a uniform administrative system, the 1976 Local Government Reform marked a major turning point. The reform aimed to make local governments a distinct tier with defined boundaries, statutory responsibilities, and funding arrangements, particularly fiscal transfers from the federation account (Monday, 2022). However, the uniformity envisaged by the 1976 Reform has remained largely aspirational. Monday (2022) observes that successive military regimes frequently dissolved elected councils, appointed caretaker committees, and modified local government boundaries, thereby politicizing their structure and weakening institutional continuity. The 1999 Constitution reaffirmed the creation and functions of local governments but left substantial discretionary power to state governments particularly in the administration of elections, financial oversight, and structural modifications. Scholars argue that this constitutional ambiguity is a core explanation for ongoing contestations around autonomy and functionality (Tonwe, 2013). Beyond constitutional design, local governments face persistent institutional challenges including capacity deficits, weak fiscal management systems, poor staffing, and political clientelism. Many councils depend almost entirely on monthly allocations from the federation account, with internally generated revenue remaining grossly inadequate (Okafor, 2010). These structural limitations have contributed to inconsistent service delivery and reduced legitimacy of local governments in the eyes of citizens across regions.

Autonomy Debates and Constraints (SJLGA and State Interference)

Debates on local government autonomy in Nigeria revolve around three central dimensions; political, administrative, and fiscal autonomy. Fiscal autonomy remains the most contested, with the State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) emerging as the single most frequently cited structural constraint. Although the SJLGA was originally conceived as an oversight mechanism to ensure proper financial management, evidence demonstrates that many state governments use the account to retain or divert funds intended for local councils (Okafor, 2010). This diversionary practice leads to unpredictable monthly allocations, delayed payments, or significant deductions, thereby undermining fiscal planning and project execution at the local level. Empirical work in Borno State by Dibal et al. (2020) provides concrete evidence of how SJLGA arrangements distort local government operations. Their study shows that reduced access to statutory funds led to incomplete or abandoned capital projects, particularly in infrastructure, primary health care, and rural development. Similarly, studies on Plateau State document a pattern of state-level control that effectively constrains administrative discretion of councils, leading to poor service delivery outcomes and weakened local-level accountability systems (State-Joint-Local Government Account studies, 2022). Beyond fiscal constraints, state interference also manifests politically through the prolonged use of caretaker committees in place of elected councils. Although Nigerian law anticipates democratic governance at the local level, numerous states have maintained appointed committees for years, thereby limiting political autonomy and citizen

participation. Okafor (2010) argues that such practices transform local governments into extensions of state-level political networks rather than autonomous institutions responsive to grassroots needs. Administrative autonomy is similarly curtailed. Local governments often depend on state approval for recruitment, project implementation, and sectoral coordination. This hierarchical governance structure has created what several scholars term "dependent autonomy," wherein constitutional guarantees exist on paper but are contradicted by political realities. The consequence is an institutional environment where local governments are unable to fulfil their statutory responsibilities or effectively engage citizens.

Roles of Traditional Authorities in Service Delivery, Conflict Resolution, and Mobilisation

Traditional authorities remain central actors in Nigeria's local governance ecosystem, despite the formal establishment of modern local government councils. Blench (2006) emphasises that traditional rulers, whether emperors, chiefs, obas, emirs, or district heads, retain substantial legitimacy and play critical roles in customary dispute resolution, community mobilisation, land administration, and cross-community mediation. Their embeddedness within local social structures often gives them higher credibility than elected officials, particularly in rural communities where state institutions are weak. Traditional authority in the South-East of Nigeria operates through a hybridised governance structure that combines hereditary leadership, lineage heads, village councils, and, most distinctively, town unions, which have evolved into highly organised civic institutions. Town unions emerged during the early twentieth century as part of broader Igbo self-help traditions and have remained central to grassroots governance (Afigbo, 1981; Uchendu, 1965). Studies consistently show that these unions play leading roles in financing community infrastructure, coordinating village development projects, organising collective labour, maintaining local security arrangements, and negotiating with external authorities (Omenka, 2014; Nwangwu & Eze, 2020). Their autonomy and organisational strength are rooted in Igbo republicanism and the long-standing norm of communal self-governance. Empirical analyses of community development across the region demonstrate that town unions often outperform local government councils in service delivery due to their stronger accountability mechanisms, participatory decision-making forums, and deeper legitimacy within the community (Nwobi, 2016). For example, Omenka (2014) documents how town unions raise and manage community levies, construct schools and roads, and supervise local dispute-resolution committees. During the COVID-19 pandemic, reports by CLEEN Foundation (2021) and International IDEA (2020) show that South-Eastern community associations, especially town unions mobilised relief materials, implemented public health campaigns, coordinated local surveillance, and filled administrative gaps created by overstretched state institutions. These activities reaffirm scholarly arguments that town unions function as de facto local governance institutions, often more trusted and more effective than formal local governments. Overall, traditional authority in the South-East reflects an institutional pluralism in which civic-based traditional organisations work alongside hereditary rulers to shape governance outcomes, influence participation, and facilitate community mobilisation.

In contrast, traditional authority in the North-East of Nigeria is anchored in the centralised emirate system, characterised by emirs, district heads, village heads, and ward leaders in a nested hierarchy. This structure traces its origins to precolonial Islamic statecraft and was strengthened under colonial indirect rule (Last, 1967; Paden, 1970). Blench (2006) emphasises that the emirate system's combination of hierarchical authority, Islamic

jurisprudence, and institutional continuity grants it substantial influence in conflict mediation, land administration, community mobilisation, and social regulation. In contemporary governance, traditional rulers in the North-East remain indispensable actors, especially in rural areas where formal state presence is weak. Research conducted during the Boko Haram insurgency shows that emirs and district heads played critical roles in peacebuilding dialogues, intelligence gathering, humanitarian coordination, and early-warning systems (International Crisis Group, 2016; Mercy Corps, 2016). Their local legitimacy and cultural authority enabled them to mediate between security agencies, humanitarian actors, and local populations, often functioning as intermediaries where distrust of formal state institutions was high. Assessments by UNDP (2018) and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD, 2019) further highlight that traditional rulers were central to mobilising displaced persons, coordinating relief distribution, restoring disrupted social norms, and maintaining community resilience during prolonged insecurity. Their engagement has also contributed to reintegration efforts for former combatants, community-level dialogue platforms, and civilian protection strategies. Thus, traditional authority in the North-East reflects a highly centralised governance tradition, where hereditary rulers command significant influence in both routine governance and crisis situations. This contrasts sharply with the more decentralised, civic-driven structure in the South-East and shapes distinct patterns of grassroots participation, community mobilisation, and local governance.

Patterns of Grassroots Democratic Participation in South-East and North-East Nigeria

Grassroots participation varies substantially across Nigerian regions, shaped by socio-cultural norms, security conditions, and institutional performance. In the South-East, participatory culture is historically anchored in communal assemblies, age grades, women's groups, and town unions. These bodies frequently convene meetings, influence decision-making, and support local development planning. Even though formal local governments exist, much community-level governance occurs through these civic structures. Studies analysing voter behaviour in the region highlight the high levels of political awareness but also note the negative effects of electoral malpractice, mistrust in political institutions, and rising security risks on voter turnout (Transforming Voter Behaviour, 2025). In contrast, civic participation in the North-East is significantly shaped by insecurity, displacement, and reliance on traditional authority structures. For communities facing conflict, opportunities for deliberation, public meetings, or community-based development planning are often limited. Oyewo (2024) documents how insecurity reduces participation in formal political processes while increasing dependency on traditional leaders for communication and decision-making. This creates a unique scenario where participation remains high but largely channels through traditional institutions rather than state-led forums. Additionally, studies on community development programmes across Nigeria highlight that meaningful participation is strongly correlated with the legitimacy and accessibility of governance actors (Journal of Sustainable Development, 2013). In communities where local governments are perceived as distant or ineffective, citizens gravitate toward traditional leaders and informal associations as preferred mechanisms for engagement.

Autonomy Constraints and Their Implications for Governance

Although the constitutional framework theoretically locates local governments as the third tier of government, both regions demonstrate substantial deficits in fiscal and political autonomy. Secondary evidence consistently points to the State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) as the most significant bottleneck, preventing LGAs from accessing funds

directly and weakening incentives for independent local development planning. In both regions, these constraints curtail the capacity of LGAs to engage the public meaningfully, deliver services, or foster inclusive participation. However, the effects are more acute in the North-East, where conflict, displacement, and fragile local economies heighten dependence on higher tiers of government. Consequently, local authorities become less visible and less capable of stimulating participation, which opens greater room for traditional institutions and non-state actors to step in. A key cross-regional contrast emerges in how traditional authorities interact with the weakened autonomy of LGAs. In the North-East, where emirate councils retain strong historical legitimacy, traditional rulers often play substantive roles in dispute resolution, community mobilisation, and local security. Therefore, while traditional actors influence participation in both regions, the intensity, legitimacy, and institutionalisation of their authority is far higher in the North-East.

Hybrid Governance and Participation Outcomes

The study's analytical framework posits that the degree of local government autonomy directly influences the role and prominence of traditional authorities as mediators between citizens and the state. In contexts where local governments are constrained, administratively, fiscally, or politically, traditional authorities often step in to fill governance gaps, shaping access to resources, dispute resolution, and community mobilisation. This dynamic is evident across both the North-East and South-East regions of Nigeria, but it manifests in markedly different forms due to historical, social, and institutional variations. In the North-East, hybrid governance is largely centralised around traditional rulers, including emirs, district heads, and ward leaders, who frequently perform quasi-state functions. These authorities often substitute for absent or weakened local governments, particularly in areas affected by insecurity, such as regions impacted by Boko Haram insurgency. Traditional rulers in this region mediate service delivery, coordinate humanitarian interventions, and act as conduits for information between citizens and higher levels of government. Their authority is reinforced by hierarchical social structures, Islamic jurisprudence, and long-standing cultural legitimacy, which grants them considerable influence over local political and social life. In contrast, the South-East exhibits a more diffuse, pluralistic form of hybrid governance, where traditional rulers operate alongside an array of other community organisations, including town unions, lineage associations, and civic groups. Here, authority is less concentrated, and governance is shaped collectively by multiple actors, each contributing to community development, mobilisation, and dispute resolution. Traditional rulers remain influential but are one component within a broader ecosystem of civic participation and collective action. These structural and institutional differences have important implications for grassroots democratic participation. In the North-East, citizen engagement tends to occur through indirect, informal, or customary channels, reflecting the centralised and hierarchical nature of traditional authority. By contrast, in the South-East, participation is more pluralistic, issue-based, and mediated by active civil society networks, allowing for multiple points of entry for citizens to influence governance. Understanding these regional variations is critical for analysing how local government autonomy interacts with traditional authority structures to shape the opportunities, patterns, and quality of grassroots political engagement across Nigeria.Overall, the findings suggest that reforms must account for regional diversity rather than assuming a uniform national model of decentralisation or community participation.

Table 1: Nigeria Local Government Statistics by State

State	Number of LGAs	Approx. Number of Wards*
Abia	17)	267
Adamawa	21	226
Akwa Ibom	31	328
Anambra	21	330
Bauchi	20	323
Bayelsa	8 (least)	105
Benue	23	277
Borno	27	310
Cross River	18	192
Delta	25	267
Ebonyi	13	235
Edo	18	192
Ekiti	16	177
Enugu	17	280
Gombe	11	114
Imo	27	376
Jigawa	27	288
Kaduna	23	255
Kano	44 (most in Nigeria)	484 (most wards)
Katsina	34	361
Kebbi	21	225
Kogi	21	239
Kwara	16	193
Lagos	20	377
Nasarawa	13	147
Niger	25	275
Ogun	20	240
Ondo	18	203
Osun	30	332
Oyo	33	351
Plateau	17	325
Rivers	23	318
Sokoto	23	244
Taraba	16	167
Yobe	17	178
Zamfara	14	147
Total / National	774 LGAs	≈ 9,410 Wards

Source: 1999 Constitution (as amended)

Nigeria's 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) are distributed unevenly across the country's 36 states, reflecting historical, political, and demographic considerations. The number of LGAs per state varies considerably, ranging from as few as eight in Bayelsa State to as many as 44 in Kano State, illustrating significant regional disparities in administrative structuring. This uneven distribution is particularly notable between the northern and central zones, which tend to have a higher concentration of LGAs and electoral wards. These differences often correspond to larger populations and a need for finer administrative segmentation to facilitate governance, service delivery, and political representation. The number of wards within each state serves as a practical proxy for sub-LGA administrative and electoral granularity. States with a higher number of wards provide more localized electoral units, potentially creating greater opportunities for citizen engagement and grassroots

representation. Wards function as the smallest official electoral and administrative units, shaping the scale and scope of political participation at the community level. However, the presence of many wards does not automatically translate into effective governance or increased civic engagement. The quality of service delivery, the capacity of local administrators, and the degree of fiscal and political autonomy enjoyed by LGAs critically mediate the potential for meaningful participation. From a research perspective, tabulated data on the number of LGAs and wards offers an essential structural baseline for studies on decentralisation, local government autonomy, and grassroots democratic participation. Such data can guide the selection of case-study LGAs, inform stratified sampling strategies, and provide a contextual framework for comparative analysis across different states and regions. By integrating these structural indicators with qualitative and quantitative measures of governance performance, researchers can better understand the complex interplay between administrative design, institutional capacity, and citizen participation in Nigeria's multi-tiered governance system.

Table 2: Revenue-sharing Formula

Tier / Revenue Pool	% Share (Vertical Formula)	Mechanism (or Notes)	Implication for LGA Autonomy
Federal Government	52.68% (*National Bureau of Statistics*)	Federal retains majority of federation-account revenue; mineral/oil resources, statutory allocations, stabilization, FCT maintenance, etc. (*National Bureau of Statistics*)	Little direct effect on LGAs — federal control reduces overall pool available for downward transfer, strengthening dependence of lower tiers.
States (36 States + FCT)	26.72% (*National Bureau of Statistics*)	States receive this portion, then apply a horizontal allocation formula to distribute among state-level obligations and LGAs. (*National Bureau of Statistics*)	States act as gatekeepers: they control what portion of their share reaches LGAs. This limits LGA fiscal autonomy and creates potential for state-level discretion or diversion.
Local Government Areas (LGAs) overall	20.60% (of the net distributable federation-account revenue) (*National Bureau of Statistics*)	LGA allocations are pooled at state level (via the State Joint Local Government Account SJLGA), then disbursed to individual LGAs. (*allAfrica.com*)	Because allocations are mediated by states — often with delays or non-disbursement — LGAs frequently lack the resources needed for independent planning, capital projects, or consistent service delivery. This undermines both fiscal and administrative autonomy.

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)

The allocation of revenue to Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Nigeria is not solely determined by vertical distribution from the federation account; it is further shaped by a complex horizontal sharing formula applied at the state level. Once a state receives its share of federally collected revenue, it is responsible for distributing funds among its LGAs and fulfilling other state obligations. The horizontal formula incorporates multiple principles intended to ensure equity and reflect local needs. These include population size, which ensures that more populous areas receive proportionally higher allocations; landmass or terrain, which acknowledges the higher costs of administering geographically large or difficult-to-access LGAs; internally generated revenue effort, which rewards LGAs that actively raise their own funds; and social development factors, such as allocations for

education, healthcare, and water infrastructure, which aim to address community welfare and development disparities (National Bureau of Statistics, n.d.). However, the application of these principles is uneven, with significant variation across states depending on political priorities, administrative capacity, and transparency mechanisms. In addition to statutory allocations, Value Added Tax (VAT) revenue and other federally pooled revenues follow separate sharing arrangements. These revenues are distributed according to rules that are often more technical and complex, taking into account consumption patterns, state contributions, and other fiscal parameters. The process can be contentious, with disputes frequently arising between states and federal authorities over the interpretation of allocation rules and the timing of remittances (jmscholarship.org). Despite these formulas, multiple analyses by civil society organizations, policy monitors, and media outlets have highlighted a persistent pattern of state-level retention or delay of funds earmarked for LGAs. Over a prolonged period, these practices have significantly constrained local government autonomy and capacity to deliver services effectively. For example, a recent 16-year aggregate assessment estimated that state governments collectively retained or diverted over ₦23 trillion intended for LGAs, highlighting a systemic challenge in ensuring fiscal accountability and protecting the constitutional financial entitlements of local governments (allAfrica.com, 2024). These practices underscore the practical limitations of fiscal decentralization in Nigeria, as LGAs remain heavily dependent on state-level discretion, undermining both their administrative independence and their ability to facilitate grassroots democratic participation.

Findings and Recommendations

The findings of this study highlight the complex and uneven ways in which local government autonomy intersects with traditional authority structures to shape grassroots democratic participation in Nigeria. Across both the South-East and the North-East, decentralisation operates within a highly centralised federal system in which state governments exercise decisive control over local government finances, political processes, and administrative decision-making. This persistent state dominance, manifested through joint allocation systems, ambiguous constitutional provisions, and political influence over local councils—limits the autonomy necessary for local governments to perform effectively. Yet, the implications of this constrained autonomy for participation diverge considerably across the two regions due to differences in historical governance cultures, patterns of communal organisation, and the nature of traditional authority. This study set out to examine how local government autonomy and traditional authority structures interact to shape grassroots democratic participation in Nigeria, using the South-East and North-East as comparative cases. The analysis demonstrates that while decentralisation frameworks promise local empowerment, the reality of local governance remains constrained by state-level political and fiscal dominance. These constraints significantly limit the effectiveness of LGAs and shape how citizens engage with governance at the community level. Traditional authorities remain central to local governance, but their influence varies markedly across the two regions. In the North-East, emirate structures possess institutional depth, historical legitimacy, and administrative functions that allow them to fill governance vacuums and mobilise participation—albeit in hierarchical forms that do not always align with democratic ideals. In the South-East, the multiplicity of civic organisations diffuses authority and produces a more participatory, community-driven framework, although traditional rulers continue to play symbolic and cultural roles. The study concludes that strengthening

grassroots democracy in Nigeria requires a dual strategy: enhancing genuine local government autonomy and recognising regionally specific roles for traditional institutions without undermining democratic accountability. Reform efforts must move beyond uniform templates and instead design decentralisation systems that integrate local realities, political cultures, and authority structures. Only through such context-sensitive reforms can Nigeria's decentralisation achieve the goals of inclusive participation, responsive governance, and sustained local development.

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THE INFLUENCE OF CRIMINOLOGY AND SECURITY STUDIES CURRICULUM IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA (NOUN) IN PROMOTING EFFECTIVE POLICING

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Abstract

Nigeria continues to face multifaceted security challenges, ranging from terrorism and kidnapping to cybercrime, armed robbery, and communal conflicts. These issues underscore the urgent need for a well-trained and intellectually grounded security workforce capable of addressing crime through preventive, analytical, and rehabilitative approaches. This study explores the influence of criminology and security studies curricula in Nigerian universities, focusing on the contribution of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in promoting effective policing and national security. Guided by human capital theory, social learning theory, and community policing theory, the study adopts a descriptive analytical design, drawing on documentary and content analysis of curriculum frameworks, academic publications, and institutional reports. Findings reveal that the criminology and security studies curriculum in Nigerian universities particularly through NOUN's open and distance learning model - has significantly contributed to professionalizing policing and strengthening community security initiatives. However, challenges such as outdated curricula, limited practical exposure, and weak collaboration between academia and security agencies hinder optimal outcomes. The study concludes that the open university model offers a viable platform for continuous professional training and reorientation in criminology and security management. It recommends a periodic curriculum review, integration of emerging security technologies, and structured partnerships between universities, the police, and national security institutions to ensure that criminology education translates into improved policing outcomes and sustainable peace in Nigeria.

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Introduction

The security landscape of Nigeria has evolved significantly over the past two decades, characterized by persistent challenges such as insurgency, kidnapping, cybercrime, communal conflicts, and youth unemployment-related offences. These complexities demand a reorientation of policing philosophy and the professional development of law enforcement officers (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2018). Policing in modern democratic societies requires not only coercive power but also deep sociological insight, ethical awareness, and community engagement competencies largely cultivated through higher education. Universities that offer criminology and security studies programmes serve as incubators of knowledge, producing graduates who influence the theory, policy, and practice of policing. In Nigeria, the introduction of criminology as a degree programme across federal and state universities, and its integration into open and distance learning (ODL) frameworks through the National Open University of Nigeria, represents a strategic shift toward human-capital investment in public safety (Nwankwo et al., 2021). Yet, questions remain about whether the existing curricula are adequately aligned with the operational realities and ethical dilemmas confronting the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). The contemporary security environment in Nigeria presents complex threats that transcend conventional crime patterns. Issues such as insurgency, terrorism, kidnapping, cybercrime, and communal conflicts have redefined national security and policing paradigms (Alemika, 2023). In response to these realities, higher education institutions particularly those offering criminology and security studies, play a critical role in producing graduates equipped with the analytical, ethical, and operational competence needed for modern policing and security management. The introduction of criminology and security studies as a distinct academic discipline in Nigerian universities marked a strategic step toward addressing the country's escalating crime rates and security instability (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2019).

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) has been at the forefront of democratizing access to criminology and security education through open and distance learning (ODL). By leveraging flexible delivery systems, NOUN enables police officers, military personnel, civil servants, and private citizens to acquire criminological and security management knowledge without interrupting their professional responsibilities. This educational model aligns with global trends emphasizing lifelong learning and continuous professional development in security and law enforcement (UNESCO, 2024). Despite the expansion of criminology and security studies programmes across Nigerian universities, the direct impact of these curricula on policing effectiveness and national security outcomes remains inadequately documented. While institutions such as NOUN have made significant contributions to knowledge dissemination, questions persist regarding the practical applicability of academic instruction to real-life security challenges (Edeh & Ekpenyong, 2022). Moreover, inconsistencies in curriculum design, limited use of technology, and poor linkage between academic research and policing practice have weakened the capacity of graduates to respond to the evolving security landscape. This paper interrogates how criminology and security studies curricula shape the skills, values, and effectiveness of future and serving police officers. It focuses on the National Open University of Nigeria's role as an ODL institution capable of extending professional education to officers dispersed across the country. By bridging academic instruction and field-based application, NOUN can play a

transformative role in policing reform and community security enhancement. It is from the foregoing that this paper is put forth to address the following objectives:

i. To analyze key components of criminology and security studies curricula that impact policing effectiveness;
ii. To assess the distinctive potential and limitations of NOUN's open-learning model for police education; and
iii. To propose actionable reforms that link university training to sustainable policing practices.

Literature Review

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: The theoretical foundation of this study anchored on three interrelated theories that explain the relationship between education, institutional competence, and societal outcomes: Human Capital Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Community Policing Theory.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, popularized by Gary Becker (1993), emphasizes the idea that investment in education, training, and skill development enhances the productivity, efficiency, and overall performance of individuals and institutions. According to this theoretical framework, education is not merely a social good but a form of capital accumulation, yielding long-term economic and institutional benefits. In the context of governance and security, Human Capital Theory provides a compelling rationale for viewing criminology and security studies education as a strategic investment in the intellectual and operational capacity of a nation's law enforcement system. Applied to the field of criminology education, Human Capital Theory suggests that universities act as knowledge production centers and capacity-building institutions responsible for equipping learners with the analytical, ethical, and technical competencies necessary for effective policing, criminal justice administration, and public safety management. Graduates of criminology programmes, therefore, represent a form of human capital professionals who can apply research-driven insights to improve investigation processes, policy formulation, intelligence analysis, and community policing strategies. This underscores the notion that education is not only an individual asset but also a collective investment in institutional performance and societal stability.

Within this framework, the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) plays a critical role in advancing the development of human capital in the security sector. Through its Open and Distance Learning (ODL) model, NOUN expands access to quality education for working law enforcement personnel, correctional officers, and private security practitioners who might otherwise be excluded from traditional university systems due to time, duty, or geographical constraints. By enabling officers to pursue higher education while in active service, NOUN enhances their cognitive, ethical, and operational capacities, thereby contributing directly to the modernization of Nigeria's policing system. This alignment between education and professional practice strengthens institutional learning, promotes innovation in security management, and fosters a culture of continuous professional development. Consequently, criminology and security studies education functions not merely as an academic pursuit but as a developmental instrument integral to national security architecture. By building the intellectual capital necessary for critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and strategic decision-making, such programmes can transform law enforcement institutions into more professional, accountable, and citizen-centered

organisations. In essence, investment in criminology education particularly through flexible and inclusive models like ODL serves as a multiplier effect. It empowers individuals, enhances organisational effectiveness, and contributes to the broader goals of peace, stability, and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura (1977), provides a powerful framework for understanding how individuals acquire new behaviours, values, and problem-solving capacities through observation, imitation, modeling, and social interaction. According to Bandura, learning is not merely a cognitive or individual process but a socially mediated experience, shaped by environmental influences, role models, and feedback mechanisms. Individuals observe others' behaviours, assess the consequences of those actions, and internalise patterns that are rewarded or reinforced within their social contexts. In the realm of criminology, this theory has profound implications for both understanding criminal behaviour and designing effective educational models for crime prevention and law enforcement training. Applied within the criminology and security studies curriculum, Social Learning Theory underscores the pedagogical importance of experiential learning that is, the idea that students learn best when they can actively engage with real-life scenarios and practice applying theoretical concepts to practical situations. In this view, criminology education should move beyond passive instruction toward interactive, reflective, and participatory modes of learning, such as crime scene simulations, investigative practicums, community-based projects, and field placements. These activities allow students to observe professional conduct, replicate best practices, and develop situational judgment through guided mentorship.

When properly implemented, a curriculum informed by Social Learning Theory can cultivate ethical behaviour, analytical reasoning, teamwork, and situational awareness among learners. Exposure to ethical role models, for example, reinforces professional integrity and accountability, while participation in collaborative problem-solving exercises enhances students' ability to navigate complex real-world security challenges. Moreover, by creating opportunities for vicarious learning and critical reflection, educators can help students internalize democratic values, human rights principles, and respect for diversity all essential in the practice of modern, community-oriented policing. In the context of open and distance learning (ODL), particularly within the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) framework, Social Learning Theory provides valuable insight into how digital platforms can facilitate experiential engagement despite physical separation. Through interactive online simulations, case-based discussions, digital mentoring, and peer collaboration tools, ODL institutions can replicate the social dimensions of learning that Bandura emphasized. Such integration ensures that criminology students not only absorb theoretical content but also engage in applied learning experiences that mirror real-world professional dynamics. Ultimately, embedding Social Learning Theory within criminology curricula both in traditional and ODL settings helps bridge the gap between academic knowledge and professional competence. It prepares graduates who are morally grounded, critically reflective, and operationally skilled, capable of translating classroom learning into effective and ethical policing practices that contribute to public safety and justice reform.

Community Policing Theory

Community Policing Theory underscores the importance of collaborative partnerships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve as a strategy for

addressing localized security challenges and enhancing public trust (Goldstein, 1987). At its core, the theory promotes a paradigm shift from traditional, reactive forms of policing focused on enforcement and control to preventive, problem-oriented approaches that engage citizens as co-producers of safety and order. This framework redefines the police not merely as enforcers of the law but as facilitators of community well-being, emphasizing dialogue, mutual respect, and shared problem-solving. By involving communities in identifying root causes of crime and designing localized responses, community policing fosters a sense of ownership and accountability that strengthens social cohesion and legitimacy in policing. Integrating the principles of community policing into university criminology and security studies curricula is therefore critical for cultivating a new generation of officers and security practitioners who value partnership, communication, and empathy as essential tools of law enforcement. Academic exposure to community policing theory encourages students to critically analyze the socio-cultural and environmental factors that shape crime and insecurity, while equipping them with the skills to engage constructively with diverse communities. This pedagogical orientation helps to dismantle authoritarian tendencies in policing by grounding future practitioners in democratic values, human rights, and participatory governance.

Within the framework of Open and Distance Learning (ODL), the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) provides an innovative platform for disseminating community policing principles to a wide and diverse audience. Through its flexible learning structure, NOUN's criminology and security studies programmes can reach both serving security personnel and civilians, thereby promoting a shared understanding of the collective responsibility for maintaining public safety. Interactive digital forums, online discussions, and community-based research projects within the ODL model can foster cross-sector dialogue between law enforcement officers, community leaders, and students. Moreover, by embedding community policing concepts into ODL course content such as modules on crime prevention strategies, ethics in policing, and community engagement techniques NOUN can play a pivotal role in reorienting policing culture toward inclusivity, trust-building, and transparency. This approach not only strengthens the intellectual foundation of criminology education in Nigeria but also supports ongoing national efforts to professionalize and democratize the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Ultimately, integrating community policing theory within open and distance education serves as a strategic bridge between academic instruction, professional practice, and civic participation creating a more informed, cooperative, and security-conscious society.

Conceptual framework

Criminology and Police Professionalisation: The global evolution of criminology as an academic discipline has played a pivotal role in shaping the professionalization and modernization of policing across various jurisdictions. As Loader and Sparks (2010) note, criminology's most significant contribution lies in its capacity to reconceptualise crime not merely as an individual act of deviance or pathology, but as a complex social phenomenon influenced by interrelated economic, political, cultural, and psychological factors. This multidimensional perspective has broadened the understanding of criminal behaviour and positioned policing within a wider social and institutional framework. In contemporary settings, therefore, police officers trained in criminological theory are better equipped to engage in community-oriented, preventive, and evidence-based policing rather than relying solely on punitive or reactive measures. Such training fosters competencies in data-driven

crime analysis, ethical decision-making, and collaborative problem-solving, all of which are essential for effective law enforcement in democratic societies. In the Nigerian context, the formal introduction of criminology and security studies programmes into university curricula in the early 2000s marked a significant step toward addressing long-standing skills and knowledge gaps within the nation's criminal justice and law enforcement institutions (Okeshola, 2019). These programmes were envisioned as vehicles for developing a more professional, intellectually grounded, and socially responsive policing culture. The Nigerian curricula typically encompass key thematic areas such as criminal justice administration, forensic science, the sociology of deviance, penology, and peace and conflict studies, reflecting a multidisciplinary approach that mirrors global best practices in criminological education.

Despite these advances, the translation of academic knowledge into operational policing practice remains uneven and incomplete. While universities have succeeded in cultivating theoretical and analytical proficiency among graduates, there remains a deficiency in experiential learning components particularly in areas such as investigative techniques, forensic documentation, crime scene analysis, and community-based conflict resolution (Adewale & Johnson, 2021). Consequently, many graduates enter the workforce with strong conceptual frameworks but lack the technical, procedural, and interpersonal competencies required for effective field operations. This disconnects between classroom instruction and real-world application underscores the urgent need for curriculum reform and closer collaboration between academic institutions and law enforcement agencies. Bridging this gap would require integrating experiential learning models, such as supervised internships, simulation-based training, and partnerships with police departments, to ensure that criminology graduates acquire not only intellectual understanding but also the practical dexterity and ethical sensibility necessary for effective policing. Such a reform would align criminology education in Nigeria with international standards, where theory and practice are treated as complementary dimensions of professional development, ultimately enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of both police institutions and criminology programmes nationwide.

The Nigerian Policing Context

Nigeria's policing system continues to grapple with deep-rooted structural and institutional challenges that stem from its colonial legacy, centralised command structure, and persistent public distrust (Alemika, 2010). Historically, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) was established primarily as an instrument of colonial control rather than community service, a legacy that has shaped its operational culture, public image, and relationship with citizens. Despite several decades of independence, remnants of this colonial ethos manifested in authoritarian practices, hierarchical rigidity, and minimal community engagement continue to influence policing behaviour and hinder reform efforts. Contemporary challenges within the NPF include poor and inconsistent training regimes, inadequate logistics, low morale, corruption, and limited cooperation from the public, all of which undermine effective law enforcement and citizen-centered policing. Recognizing these systemic weaknesses, successive reform initiatives most notably the 2014 Police Reform Roadmap and the enactment of the 2020 Police Act have underscored the urgent need for education, professional development, and capacity building as foundational pillars of police transformation. These policy documents advocate a shift from reactive, force-based policing

to intelligence-led, community-oriented, and ethically grounded practices, achievable only through the continuous intellectual and professional development of police officers.

However, a critical gap persists between tertiary education curricula and these reform objectives. As Eze and Okafor (2022) observe many university programmes in criminology and security studies have yet to align their course content and learning outcomes with the competencies demanded by Nigeria's evolving policing landscape. The existing curricula often remain heavily theoretical, with limited integration of modules that address contemporary policing issues such as human rights compliance, digital forensics, counterterrorism, and community policing dynamics. Against this backdrop, the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) presents a promising alternative framework for bridging the gap between police reform policy and academic instruction. Anchored in the philosophy of Open and Distance Learning (ODL), NOUN's criminology and security studies programmes expand educational access to serving officers who may be unable to attend conventional universities due to duty constraints or geographic limitations. This model promotes continuing professional development (CPD) by enabling officers to pursue academic advancement while remaining active in service. Moreover, the flexible ODL structure encourages the integration of real-world policing experiences into academic discourse, fostering a dynamic exchange between practice and theory. By aligning its curriculum with the core objectives of national police reform ethics, professionalism, accountability, and community partnership NOUN holds the potential to play a transformative role in reshaping Nigeria's policing culture. Through strategically designed modules and technology-driven pedagogy, it can cultivate a new generation of officers who are not only well-educated but also reflective, ethically conscious, and responsive to the complex security realities of a democratic society.

Criminology Curriculum Components and Their Impact

Globally, criminology programmes are structured around a core set of foundational courses that provide students with both theoretical insight and methodological competence. These typically include criminological theory, criminal law, research methods, policing studies, forensic science, penology, and criminal justice administration (Jones & Newburn, 2013). Such curricula are designed to cultivate a multidisciplinary understanding of crime drawing from sociology, psychology, law, and public policy while also preparing graduates for diverse roles within law enforcement, corrections, and policy analysis. In the Nigerian context, the structure of criminology and security studies programmes mirrors these global standards in form, but not always in depth or application. While students are exposed to the core theoretical frameworks of crime causation, deviance, and justice processes, the emphasis remains predominantly academic rather than experiential. The absence of robust internship programmes, simulation-based learning environments, and structured fieldwork opportunities has significantly limited the operational preparedness of graduates entering the security and law enforcement sectors (Ogunleye, 2021). As a result, many graduates possess substantial conceptual knowledge but lack the hands-on competencies necessary for practical engagement in policing, investigation, and community security management.

By contrast, international models of criminology education, such as those implemented in the United Kingdom, Canada, and South Africa, demonstrate how well-integrated, practice-oriented curricula can produce more adaptive and effective security professionals. These systems incorporate continuous collaboration between universities and law enforcement agencies through joint research initiatives, co-supervised student

placements, and curriculum advisory boards composed of practitioners and academics. In the United Kingdom, for instance, universities like Portsmouth and Leicester partner with police departments to deliver modules on evidence-based policing, forensic investigation, and criminal intelligence analysis, ensuring that students apply theoretical principles to real-world contexts (Manning, 2017). Similarly, South African universities integrate community policing projects and offender rehabilitation practicums, linking academic learning with the country's unique social realities and policing challenges. The success of these international models underscores the value of curriculum-practice integration in strengthening the professional relevance of criminology education. Establishing comparable frameworks in Nigeria anchored on university police partnerships, supervised practicums, and technology-enhanced learning tools would bridge the current theory–practice divide. Ultimately, embedding experiential learning within Nigerian criminology programmes would not only enhance graduates' employability and field competence but also contribute to the professionalization and modernization of policing practices nationwide.

Open and Distance Learning in Security Education

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has fundamentally redefined the landscape of tertiary education by breaking down the spatial and temporal barriers that traditionally limited access to higher learning. Through the integration of digital platforms, multimedia courseware, and flexible study schedules, ODL democratizes education, enabling learners from diverse backgrounds particularly working professionals to pursue academic advancement without disrupting their careers. In the field of criminology and security studies, this model offers a particularly strategic advantage, as it allows serving security personnel and law enforcement officers to continuously update their knowledge, acquire new competencies, and align with evolving global standards in policing and criminal justice (Naidu, 2019). The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) exemplifies this transformation by adopting an ODL framework that resonates with UNESCO's lifelong learning paradigm, which prioritizes inclusivity, flexibility, and technology-enabled instruction as cornerstones of sustainable education. This approach ensures that learners regardless of location, profession, or socioeconomic status can access academic resources and engage with learning materials at their own pace. In doing so, NOUN contributes to the national goal of human capital development by providing educational opportunities to those excluded from conventional university systems, including police officers, civil defense personnel, and private security practitioners.

Despite the achievements, the effectiveness of ODL delivery in Nigeria remains constrained by systemic challenges. As Ajadi (2020) observes many distance learning programmes in the country suffer from insufficient digital infrastructure, low bandwidth connectivity, inadequate technical support, and limited student–tutor interaction. These constraints weaken the interactive and collaborative dimensions of learning, which are essential for disciplines like criminology that depend on experiential engagement, ethical reflection, and case-based reasoning. The lack of real-time feedback and mentoring often diminishes learner motivation and reduces the depth of conceptual understanding, leading to a gap between instructional content and practical application. To maximize the transformative potential of ODL in security and criminology education, it is therefore imperative to strengthen the technological, pedagogical, and institutional components of programme delivery. This includes investing in robust e-learning infrastructure, training facilitators in digital pedagogy, and embedding interactive learning tools such as virtual

simulations, online discussion forums, and digital case laboratories. By addressing these gaps, NOUN and similar institutions can fully harness the promise of ODL as a catalyst for professional development, policy innovation, and security sector reform in Nigeria.

Methodology and Analytical Approach

i. **Methodology:** This study adopts a qualitative and conceptual–analytical research design, which is appropriate for exploring the intersections among curriculum development, policing practice, and open and distance learning (ODL) delivery in Nigerian universities. The methodology emphasizes interpretive analysis and theoretical synthesis rather than empirical quantification, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how educational structures and delivery modes shape professional outcomes in criminology and policing education. The research primarily relies on secondary data sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, government policy documents, institutional reports from the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), as well as course outlines and curricular blueprints from selected universities. These data sources provide diverse perspectives on criminology education, higher education policy, and police training standards. The analytical process unfolds through three interrelated stages. First, curriculum mapping is undertaken to identify the structure, content, and pedagogical orientation of criminology and security studies programmes across Nigerian universities. This mapping assesses the balance between theoretical and practical components, highlighting existing strengths and deficiencies in aligning academic instruction with professional policing needs. Second, the study engages in a comparative reflection on international models of police education, drawing insights from countries such as the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Canada, where collaborative university–police frameworks have enhanced professional training and ethical standards. This comparison helps contextualise Nigeria's current practice within a broader global landscape of policing education. Third, the research applies analytical extrapolation to examine how ODL modalities such as online learning platforms, multimedia instruction, and blended pedagogy affect the quality and outcomes of professional training for criminology students and in-service officers. This methodological orientation aligns with Creswell's (2018) qualitative design framework, which advocates interpretive synthesis, pattern recognition, and conceptual integration over statistical generalization. By emphasizing interpretation rather than measurement, the study aims to uncover underlying relationships and thematic linkages among the constructs of curriculum design, policing practice, and distance education delivery. The choice of this qualitative, conceptual-analytical approach is therefore justified on both theoretical and practical grounds. It provides the flexibility to integrate multidisciplinary insights from criminology, education, and public administration, while allowing for critical reflection on policy and institutional practices. Ultimately, this approach enables a comprehensive and context-sensitive exploration of how open and distance learning frameworks can contribute to the professionalization of policing and the enhancement of criminology education in Nigeria.

ii. **Analytical Framework:** The analysis follows three stages: Curriculum Evaluation – examining how subject content aligns with policing competencies (e.g., ethics, investigation, community engagement). Institutional Assessment analyzing NOUN's structure, learning technologies, and partnerships with policing agencies. Impact Extrapolation – projecting how improved curriculum design could influence policing

effectiveness nationally. The triangulation of these stages ensures internal validity and policy relevance.

Findings and Discussion

i. **Curriculum Relevance and Policing Competence:** The findings indicate that although Nigerian universities have made commendable progress in developing comprehensive criminology and security studies programmes, a substantial gap persists between academic instruction and the practical realities of policing operations in the country. This disconnect manifests in the imbalance between theoretical and applied learning. For instance, many criminology curricula place considerable emphasis on classical and contemporary criminological theories, sociological perspectives of crime, and criminal justice administration, while giving limited attention to applied courses such as investigative science, forensic documentation, cybercrime forensics, intelligence analysis, and crime data analytics (Adewale & Johnson, 2021). As a result, graduates often emerge with a solid conceptual understanding of crime causation and prevention but lack the experiential and technical competencies required for effective field practice. At the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), the inclusion of foundational modules such as Introduction to Policing, Security Management, and The Criminal Justice System in Nigeria reflects an institutional effort to align criminology education with the realities of law enforcement. However, these modules, though essential, are largely theoretical and rarely incorporate interactive or practice-oriented components. Without hands-on engagement such as simulation-based learning, mock crime scene investigations, and supervised field practicums the transition from academic knowledge to practical policing remains incomplete. Therefore, there is a critical need to restructure the criminology and security studies curriculum to better integrate experiential learning opportunities. Embedding simulation-based exercises, community policing projects, and collaborative research with security agencies would bridge the gap between the classroom and the field. This approach would not only enhance students' problem-solving and analytical skills but also prepare them for the complexities of contemporary policing, where data-driven intelligence, community engagement, and ethical decision-making are essential for effectiveness. Ultimately, aligning academic programmes with operational realities would produce graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also professionally competent, adaptive, and ready to contribute meaningfully to national security management.

ii. **Pedagogy and Learning Delivery:** The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) employs an innovative open and distance learning (ODL) model that leverages multimedia courseware, interactive online forums, and regionally distributed study centers to facilitate access to higher education across diverse geographical locations. This system provides remarkable flexibility, particularly for working professionals and serving security officers who seek to enhance their academic qualifications while maintaining active duty. The asynchronous design of the ODL framework allows learners to progress at their own pace and convenience, thus supporting inclusivity and lifelong learning. However, despite these advantages, pedagogical engagement within NOUN's ODL structure remains inconsistent. The challenges primarily stem from limited tutor-student interaction, technological barriers, and infrastructural inadequacies such as unreliable internet connectivity, insufficient digital literacy among learners, and occasional delays in academic feedback (Ajadi, 2020). These shortcomings often hinder

the level of cognitive engagement and mentorship that are vital for translating theoretical understanding into applied competence, particularly in professional fields like policing that demand real-world decision-making and situational judgment. Empirical studies in adult education further suggest that adult learners especially those in policing and security professions benefit most from blended learning environments that combine digital instruction with periodic face-to-face workshops and collaborative learning experiences (Naidu, 2019). Such hybrid models foster interpersonal interaction, collective problem-solving, and immediate feedback elements often missing in purely online delivery formats. To strengthen learning outcomes and professional relevance, the NOUN criminology and security studies programmes could integrate active learning strategies designed to simulate authentic policing challenges. These might include problem-based learning (PBL) scenarios, case simulations, role-play exercises, and reflective journal assessments, all of which encourage critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and adaptive decision-making. Through such experiential pedagogies, learners would not only acquire theoretical insight but also develop the professional competencies and moral discernment necessary for effective and community-oriented policing. Ultimately, enhancing the interactive dimension of NOUN's ODL model through blended and active learning methods would bridge the gap between digital instruction and real-world application, ensuring that graduates of criminology and security studies emerge as both intellectually grounded and operationally capable practitioners in Nigeria's evolving security landscape.

iii. **Institutional Linkages and Professionalization:** Partnerships between universities and law enforcement agencies in Nigeria remain limited and largely underdeveloped, despite the growing recognition of the need for evidence-based policing and professionalised law enforcement. Currently, collaboration between academic institutions and policing bodies tends to be ad hoc and fragmented, with few structured mechanisms for knowledge exchange, curriculum alignment, or professional training. The Nigeria Police Academy (POLAC), Kano, though established to integrate academic and professional police education, still operates in relative isolation from mainstream universities, restricting opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and shared research initiatives. This separation has contributed to a persistent theory–practice divide, where criminology graduates often lack the operational skills required by policing institutions, and police officers have limited exposure to evolving academic insights in crime prevention, behavioural studies, and data-driven security management. To address this gap, there is a pressing need to institutionalise partnerships between universities and law enforcement agencies through formal frameworks that support collaborative activities such as internship placements, curriculum co-design, and joint research programmes. Internship and practicum opportunities within police formations, correctional institutions, and security agencies would provide criminology students with practical exposure to the complexities of policing, investigative procedures, and ethical dilemmas in real-world contexts. Similarly, involving police professionals in curriculum development would ensure that academic content reflects current operational realities, while joint research initiatives could generate context-specific solutions to Nigeria's security challenges, including community policing, insurgency, and cybercrime.

In this regard, the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) possesses unique institutional advantages that position it as a strategic partner in police education and reform. With its

nationwide digital infrastructure, flexible learning platforms, and distance education expertise, NOUN can serve as a hub for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of officers within the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). By offering modular short courses in critical areas such as police ethics and accountability, cybercrime investigation, forensic awareness, intelligence analysis, leadership, and data analytics, NOUN could significantly enhance the professional competence and ethical standards of serving officers. Moreover, the integration of such CPD programmes into the NPF's reform agenda would help cultivate a culture of lifelong learning, reflective practice, and evidence-based decision-making within the policing profession. This collaborative approach not only bridges the gap between academic theory and law enforcement practice but also aligns with broader national objectives of security sector reform, institutional modernization, and human capacity development. By fostering enduring partnerships between academia and policing institutions, Nigeria can build a more knowledgeable, ethical, and community-responsive police force capable of meeting the demands of contemporary security governance.

Policy Implications and Strategic Recommendations

i. **Policy Implications**: The integration of criminology and security studies into the Nigerian higher education system represents a pivotal strategy for police reform and national security management. However, its current implementation reveals critical gaps that must be addressed through deliberate policy interventions.
ii. The Nigerian National Security Policy (2021) emphasizes intelligence-led policing, community safety, and crime prevention through social development. Yet, many criminology curricula do not adequately incorporate these priorities. For instance, digital forensics, cyber intelligence, and human rights policing are often peripheral rather than core modules. Curriculum reform guided by the National Universities Commission (NUC) should therefore ensure consistency between academic content and national security priorities.
iii. A recurring challenge is the disconnect between academic institutions and operational agencies. The absence of joint research programmes, internship pathways, and policy dialogues limits mutual learning. Policymakers should establish University–Police Knowledge Exchange Councils that facilitate continuous communication between academia and law enforcement institutions. Such structures would ensure that policing challenges inform curriculum design while academic insights feed into operational reforms.
iv. Given that most police officers in Nigeria enter the service with minimal tertiary education, open and distance learning provides a viable route for upgrading professional qualifications. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) should collaborate with the Police Service Commission (PSC) to institutionalise CPD programmes that count toward rank progression and promotion. These programmes should be modular, competency-based, and delivered flexibly to accommodate officers' schedules.
v. Modern policing increasingly depends on technological proficiency. Therefore, NOUN and other Nigerian universities offering criminology must embed digital literacy, data analytics, and GIS crime mapping into their curriculum. This would equip graduates with the analytical tools necessary for evidence-based decision-making and predictive policing.
vi. Incidents of police brutality and rights violations have eroded public trust. Embedding courses on ethics, accountability, and human rights into the criminology curriculum is

imperative. The National Open University, with its national reach, can lead in offering online ethics training modules accessible to both students and serving officers. This would align with the global shift toward democratic policing principles and strengthen community confidence in law enforcement.

Strategic Recommendations

Based on the study's analysis, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

i. The NUC should periodically review criminology and security studies curricula across Nigerian universities to ensure parity, relevance, and integration of global best practices.
ii. Establish formal partnerships between NOUN, Nigerian Police Academy, and other universities for student internships, joint seminars, and applied research.
iii. NOUN should complement theoretical modules with field simulations, forensic demonstrations, and virtual crime-lab experiences to enhance experiential learning.
iv. Lecturers in criminology and security studies should undergo periodic professional development to stay updated with emerging trends such as cybercrime, counterterrorism, and digital policing.
v. The Federal Government should allocate special funding for e-learning infrastructure at NOUN and similar institutions to improve content delivery and student engagement.
vi. Universities should organise public enlightenment programmes on community policing, restorative justice, and peace education to foster collaboration between citizens and law enforcement.
vii. The Ministry of Education and the PSC should jointly establish performance indicators for evaluating how criminology graduates contribute to policing outcomes nationwide.

Conclusion

This study examined "The Influence of Criminology and Security Studies Curriculum in Nigerian Universities: The Role of National Open University in Nigeria on Promoting Effective Policing." It found that while Nigerian universities have made commendable strides in integrating criminology into higher education, significant gaps persist in curriculum relevance, pedagogical delivery, and institutional collaboration. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), as the largest open and distance learning institution in the country, plays a pivotal role in bridging these gaps. Its flexible delivery system allows for the inclusion of in-service police officers and other security personnel, thereby democratizing access to quality education in criminology and security management. However, realizing its full transformative potential requires enhanced investment in technology, field-based learning, and closer ties between academia and law enforcement. At a broader level, this study underscores that effective policing cannot exist in isolation from education. A well-structured criminology curriculum equips officers not only with theoretical insight but also with the analytical, ethical, and interpersonal competencies required for modern policing. It also positions universities as key stakeholders in the national security architecture. By championing peace education, ethics, and community engagement within criminology programmes, NOUN and other universities can help transition Nigeria from a reactive model of policing focused primarily on force - to a preventive and service-oriented approach grounded in trust and social responsibility.

In conclusion, the influence of criminology and security studies on effective policing in Nigeria is both significant and evolving. The Open University's role in widening access, promoting continuous learning, and encouraging reflective practice among law enforcement officers represents a cornerstone for sustainable police reform. To fully harness this

potential, stakeholders must adopt a multi-sectoral strategy that integrates academic innovation, technological modernization, and institutional accountability. When education becomes a central pillar of policing, Nigeria can build a law enforcement culture rooted in professionalism, empathy, and respect for the rule of law.

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Article **Open Access**

DEMOCRATIC AND MILITARY GOVERNANCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SECURITY OF LIVES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study reveals a complex scenario based on existing academic resources that generally show that the security of lives in Nigeria either under democratic or military governance has no clear-cut distinction. It is true that democracy provides a superior framework for long-term security, transparency, accountability and development, the current practice of democracy in Nigeria is fraught with challenges that trigger persistent cases of insecurity. The study adopted the hermeneutic analysis understand the challenges. The major objectives of the study are to; show that there is abundance of human and natural resources that if properly harnessed can provide for the well-being of all citizens, compare which government has worse experience of insecurity of lives in Nigeria and to show that the charisma of a leader is what makes the difference between democratic and military governance. The study discovered that the conception of politics (democracy) as a do-or-die affair not for service to humanity but for personal interest is major challenge of practicing politics in Nigeria. The paper recommended that political leaders should be well trained in the art of political leadership, rather than allowing money bags politicians without morals to dominate the public space. This is possible if there is conscious efforts to rejig the attitude of Nigerians at the tender age through the introduction of ABC of ethics and offenders or criminals must be thoroughly punished to serve as a deterrent to would-be political criminals no matter their political affiliation. The study concluded that military governance may appear to be more effective as it uses force to achieve its objectives, but fundamentally, it undermines the constitution which is the bedrock for sustainable human security. Ethics should be introduced at the family level, primary and secondary school under the principle of catch-them-young and learning by doing.

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Introduction

The aphorism that "the worst democracy is better than the best military dictatorship" is attributed to Chief Obafemi Awolowo in 1983. This maxim means different things to different people. The likes of late Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, it highlights strong belief in the inherent superiority of democratic values of liberty, accountability, transparency, rule of law which are absent in autocratic military governance. The philosopher does not get polarized on which of the divides to belong to as he thinks that politics is a worthy project to indulge in as one journey through life. The philosopher politician is not like the crude political criminal who goes into politics to earn a living through the recruitment and use of thugs and application of the militia, bandits and kidnappers for purposes of money-making. The presence of these criminals has sent away individuals who are highly religious from participating into politics or seeking for any political office.

Politics is a Dirty Game

The holier than thou attitude of the "good" individuals are quick to declare that "politics is a dirty game". So, these defeatist approaches to the game of politics are highly subjective. How can one person decide to condemn politics in its entirety as dirty? It is true that politicians use propaganda, false promises, or misleading information about another candidate just to gain support or discredit an opponent, there are several cases of betrayals, bribery, embezzlement, assassination, but these are never strong points to dissuade political participation. There are so many good men and women who are refusing to take advantage of the opportunities that come to them with the open door of democracy. Politics is essential for every human being who is naturally drawn to live with others. The possession of reason and speech allows humans in a community to discuss justice, fairness, and morality which are the ingredients for achieving the good life. Hence, the purpose of any individual human being to participate in politics is to achieve happiness and virtuous existence by constantly performing good acts. There is no sane person who would not be interested in participating in such a community life that produces a well-ordered society. It is based on this reality that the wise saying that evil prevails when good people do nothing. The best way to describe the situation in Nigeria is very fearful. For Attahiru Jega

> Nigeria's democratic journey in the 21st century is faltering if not stalling, largely on account of deviation from the basic tenets and principles of representative, liberal, democracy. This deviation is manifest in the role of political parties, especially the ways and manners in which they recruit candidates for elective positions and also the ways and manners by which they and their selected candidates engage with the electoral process, as well as engage in governance, once they get 'elected'. [1]

The imposition of ill-educated, unethical, political demagogues is the way the devil has fire in the hearts of men and women in a hyper-religious country like Nigeria. The results of the activities of the agents of death are all over the country.

[1] Attahiru Jega. "Politics, Governance and Leadership Recruitment in 21st Century Democracy: A Review of the Nigerian Situation." A Presentation of the Maiden Lecture of Kwara Visioners Network for Rural Development, University of Ilorin, Saturday, 9th October, 2021,

Denial of Genocide

There is no day that passes without news of the death of people due to attacks from bandits, terrorists, insurgents, kidnappers, ritualists, and militiamen in different geo-political zones in Nigeria, yet, the government of President Bola Ahmed Timubu through a high-level Nigerian delegation to US in Washington DC denied allegations of genocide in Nigeria. The delegation emphasised that violent attacks affect families and communities of all religious and ethnic backgrounds".[2] In the same vein, the Governor of Benue State, Fr. Hyacinth Alia has vehemently denied any form of genocide in his home state. According to him, "There is no religious genocide in the state, countering a narrative pushed by United States government officials to declare Nigeria a Country of Particular Concern".[3] The denials by top government functionaries at the Federal and State government level are contradicted by the ubiquity of corpses all over the country. Over 200 people were reportedly killed by suspected armed Fulani herdsmen in Yelewata, Guma Local Government of Benue State.[4] The claims and counterclaims of genocide in Nigeria have become intense international debate for those interested in Nigeria. This study does not intend to go into the debate on any side. The truth of the matter is that there is security crisis in Nigeria and both Christians and Muslims are constantly under attack by bandits, insurgents and terrorists. This objective perception is supported by the position of Armed Conflict Location and Even Data (ACLED) which holds that: "It is difficult, if not impossible, to delineate the killings based on religious affiliations. All the religions in the country have been affected, and there have been fatalities across several ethnic and religious lines".[5] Does the government of Nigeria remain terrified by the killings of innocent citizens? Whether the killings are classified as genocide or not human lives are wasted for no just cause and it must not be found during a democratic regime.

Effects of Insecurity in Nigeria

The multiplicity of killings has blunted the psyche of Nigerian citizens from the pains of the bereaved family members or victims. It is no longer frightening news to hear T. Oguntola[6] report that "at least 603 people have been killed in floods across Nigeria with 1.3 persons displaced from their communities". Archie (2022)[7] described it as "the worst floods Nigeria has seen in more than a decade". The devastating effects of flooding claimed human lives without any indication that great evil has befallen Nigeria as a nation. The absence of floods and draughts are replaced by slaughtering, macheting, burning and shooting of citizens in Churches, Mosques, Market Squares with impunity. There are various literature to support

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[2] Kabir Adeniyi. "Pregnant woman, children among 11 kidnapped in Nigeria's Kwara State". AA News Broadcasting System. Retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/pregnant-woman-children-among-11-kidnapped-in-nigerias-kwara-state/3753549 4th January, 2026 9.05 am.

[3] Falmata Daniel. "No religious genocide in Benue – Governor Alia" Premium Times. November 10 , 2025. Retrieved from https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/836831-no-religious-genocide-in-benue-governor-alia.html2 January, 2026. 9:20 am.

[4] Emmanuel Akinwotu. "We are being driven from the land.' Nigerian village buries its dead after massacre. July 26, 2025. Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/2025/07/26/nx-s1-5471472/we-are-being-driven-from-the-land-after-a-massacre-a-nigerian-village-buries-its-dead on 4/1/2026. 9.42am.

[5] Olayinka Ajala. "Is there a Christian genocide in Nigeria? Evidence shows all faiths are under attack by terrorists. The Conversation November 5, 2025. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/is-there-a-christian-genocide-in-nigeria-evidence-shows-all-faiths-are-under-attack-by-terrorists-268929

[6] Oguntola, T. (2022), "2022 Flood: 603 Dead, 1.3m Displaced Across Nigeria – Federal Govt". *Leadership*. https://leadership.ng/2022-flood-603-dead-1-3m-displaced-across-nigeria-federal-govt/

[7] Archie, A. "Flooding in Nigeria has killed more than 600 people, the government says". *Npr.Org*., 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/10/17/1129399669/nigeria-floods-death-toll

the fearful situation in Nigeria. A glean reveals the following; "the increasing prevalence of terrorism, armed robbery, kidnappings, corruption, insurgency, and vandalism of local and national assets in Nigeria significantly exacerbates the elevated threat to the security of lives and property overall".[8] The economy, agriculture, employment, education, healthcare, and human welfare is the worst hit as abject poverty becomes the order of the day thereby triggering more criminal activities.

Comparing Democratic and Military Governance

There is no doubt that any attempt to compare democratic and military governance is going to be met with difficulties because both governments are associated with poor governance in their practices. In analysing the 26 years of the practice of democracy in Nigeria, this paper examines which of the type of government with fewer cases of insecurity of lives in Nigeria since the attainment of self-rule in 1960.

African Traditional Democracy

Nigerians in their local communities began to enjoy the fruits of democracy before the different parts were amalgamated as a single nation. Outstandingly, Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu argues that "Democracy is a cherished African value".[9] The pre-colonial Igbo society presented a sophisticated, decentralized democratic system where values like decision-making was highly respected, councils of elders like Okparas, age-grade had identified certain responsibilities (for defending and civic defence/civic duty). When the Igbos gather in the village square (obodo) where adult males and elderly females have the right to participate in the debates concerning the decision-making process. The hallmark of this practice among the Igbos is the reality of inclusivity which shows the existence of complicity stabilized by structured governance before European had contact with the Igbos. The Yoruba had deep rooted democracy in which values like collective decision-making, check and balance, community involvement, accountability and consensus (ifowosowopo) were held in high esteem. Leadership of Obas and Baales were elected by councils. The Tiv people were no exception as traditionally, the political system was decentralized, egalitarian with elders from every lineage participating in the decision-making process. Consensus and collective responsibility were the guiding principle supported by the philosophy of *ya na angbian* which is literally interpreted as eat and give your kin.[10] These political structured clearly show that in most traditional Africa societies democracy was not new. It provided and ensured fuller participation, consultation, inclusion, all geared towards the achievement of the common good.

Military Dictatorship

Leaders have emerged in different societies and most often attributed to themselves as the messiahs. Religiously, they are human beings who see themselves as special representatives of God with special anointing, direct revelation and with firm authority from God. However,

[8] C. Berebon "The nexus between security, human development, and economic stability: Addressing insecurity as a threat to national growth in Nigeria". *Advances in Law, Pedagogy, and Multidisciplinary Humanities*, 3(1), 2025: 28–47

[9] Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu. "African Traditional Democracy with Particular Reference to the Yoruba and Igbo Political Systems". Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu. "African Traditional Democracy". Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities. Vol. 1, No. 1, June, 2015: 1 – 10.

[10] Terzungwe Emmanuel Igyom & Tongov Jacob Nyerga. "TIV TRADITIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEMS: A STUDY OF GOVERNANCE AND SOCIAL ORDER". 2025. *POLIS* 2 (1). https://journals.casjournals.com/index.php/POLIS/article/view/19.

in politics, the leaders are not chosen by God, they chose themselves to be the deliverer of the suffering people. There are four promises every military dictator makes whenever they take over power from the civilian government. They are to restore security and order, fight corruption and economic mismanagement, implement reforms and return power to civilian rule. Experience has shown that most of these promises are unfulfilled. Each passing day presents a chunk of uncertainty.

Military dictators are not from the sky, they are from a particular geo-political zone, from a community and members of a particular Nigerian family. They are not outcast, even if they refer to civilians as bloody, they are children of mostly bloody civilians. Dictatorship is not a title strictly meant for the military. There are civilian dictators even in Nigeria. We shall come to that later in this study. This is because the title dictator defines a specific type of authoritarian government where the armed forces hold supreme power. Military dictatorship as a form of government does not value the freedom and liberty of the citizens (no freedom of speech, assembly) high cases of human rights abuses and over reliance on military force. The leaders are involved in the control of power that comes from the gun not God. The leader is usually above the constitution. This characterization fits nations like France, Russia, Britain and America that exhibit such attitude. Nigerians are afraid of the aftermath of America's airstrikes. What is the interest of America in Nigeria? Is it to ensure the respect for human rights or Nigerians will know it later? The consequences of an action are difficult to be evaluated abstractly until the events occur. The road map to the transition for individuals and nations with the entitlement mentality is built on lack of trust. The moment others do not trust their leadership role; they descend heavily on the opposers. There is pomposity, rudeness and a feeling that there is no better person apart from them.

Transition to Western Democracy

The idea of a transition from military regime to civilian rule usually involves the military government setting timelines, lifting bans on partisan politics, among other factors as events of 1979 and 1999 during General Olusegun Obasanjo and General Abdulsalami Abubakar. There are a lot of issues surrounding transition programmes in Nigeria, for this reason our analysis cannot be wholistic because matters of security of lives are highly complex. So, consideration was given to only critical issues relating to three basic aspects such as the practice of democracy; the conduct of elections and the security of lives. If elections are properly conducted and the right candidates are brought in as representatives of the people, the right policies would be formulated and implemented for the good of every citizen. Securing lives and property is fundamentally the primary business of any democracy. How well has Nigeria done in these two all important areas? It is true that for a country to harvest the dividends of the practice of genuine democracy everyone (citizen) must see elections and the security of life as a priority. Every individual in a state has a perspective on how best free, fair and credible[11] elections.

What is Democracy?

With the tincture of the history of hermeneutics, the concept of democracy is traced to two Greek expressions, the noun "demos" meaning the people and the verb "kratein" meaning to rule. A combination of both expressions gives the idea of *democratia* which literally means "the people to rule". It is this phrase "the people to rule," that Abraham Lincoln

[11] E.E.O. Alemika, Post-election violence in Nigeria: Emerging trend and lessons. CLEEN Foundation, Publication, 2011.

interprets of the word democracy as coming from the Greek "demos", meaning people and "kratos" meaning power. So, democracy from this perspective is conceived as "power of the people". Here lie the ambiguities in the definitions of democracy.

Whether democracy is based on the principle that the people should rule or it is the "power of the people". The "people" does not refer to the few rich (aristocrats) nor the majority rule. The notion of democracy also includes the minority in any society, women and children. It goes beyond the voting class and political aspirants. A democracy is democratic if and only if the representatives act democratically by being transparent and accountable to the people. It implies that everyone must "stay informed about what is happening, what is being decided in the name of the people about the decisions and actions being taken by your own representative".[12] Larry Diamond describes democracy as "a system of government with four key elements: i) A system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections; ii) Active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life; iii) Protection of the human rights of all citizens; and iv) A rule of law in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens".[13] The richness in Diamond's definition of democracy is its touch on some key tenets or principles of democracy like; periodic elections, representative democracy, and equality of the value of an individual's vote which is a demonstration of that the protection of the individual rights and freedoms are perpetually guaranteed.

The unique perspectives concerning elections and security of life must be harmonised so that it becomes the business of every individual citizen in Nigeria. There is no need for some people to sit on the fence if Nigeria is to move forward progressively. The need to improved elections in Nigerians is so high for obvious reasons; to foster political stability, democratic legitimacy, enhance political participation, prevent vote buying and achieve electoral integrity. This should be on the front burner of Nigerians and those vested with the mandate to direct the affairs of the electoral body- Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as preparations for the 2027 are on top gear. The culture of death must be done away with in the practice of democracy in Nigeria. The return of democracy must be accompanied with a culture of respect for human dignity and respect for human rights. The contrary principle that is built on the winner-takes-all, poor voter turnout, political apathy and electoral violence make political analysis difficult and political stability most challenging. Those who would want to participate in politics are forced to behaviour like the military junta. A transfer of the military mentality of shooting at victims with intent to kill and not to disarm. A crude civilian can public declare to the listeners that if anyone stand on the path of his political ambition, he will simply crush the person.

The State of the Nation from 1999 - 2024

This paper strictly examines how free and fair elections have been conducted in Nigeria using the presidential election as a yardstick to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of elections in the country. This is so because if Nigerians get it right with the presidential elections all other elections will be credible and truly transparent and Nigeria will be better. The moment Nigerians get it right; every other thing will begin to fall in place. There will no longer a clarion call for the Sovereign National Conference (SNC) to discuss the fate of

[12] Democracy - Manual for Human Rights Education with Young people *Council of Europe*. https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/democracy

[13] Larry Diamond, "What is Democracy?" http://www.standard. edu/~/diamond/Iraq/whalsDemocracy 012004.htm.

Nigeria. At the moment, there is no village, community, town, city, and state that you will go to and not hear an individual complaining of oppression, marginalisation, intimidation, psychological, social discrimination and political fight against godfathers and their godsons and daughters.

Periodic Elections in Nigeria

The tenet of democracy that is open to the people is election or periodic elections. However, Michael Bratton argues that "elections do not, in and of themselves, constitute a consolidated democracy', they 'remain fundamental, not only for installing democratic governments, but as a requisite for broader democratic consolidation".[14] This is a demand for qualitative elections that are fair and credible. A constitutional obligation of a good citizen who is interest in the progress and development of the country. The barbarity of military despots from 1993 to 1998 summed up the painful experience of the military rule in Nigeria even though there were two successful transitions – the 1979 and the 1999 that General Olusegun ceded power to a civilian government and when he received power from a military General to launched the longest Republic in the history of Nigeria so far. Immediately after General Sani Abacha's mysterious death, General Abdulsalami Abubakar came up with another transition programme with the adoption of a new constitution on the 5th May, 1999. However, Nigerians did not take his promise to hand over power to any democratically elected government because the military have always failed in fulfilling their promises. Experience has shown that most of the transitions were either aborted or prolonged. For instance, the Yakubu Gowon's regime of 1966 – 1975, Ibrahim Babangida's regime of 1985 – 1993 and the Sani Abacha's regime of 1993 – 1998. It became a meal of lies the military served civilians seeking to escape politics of the gun. Ethically minded politicians were not ready to go into politics as it was still judged as a dirty game. It is to be noted that politics of itself is not dirty. The practitioners are the ones conducts make the ignorant perceive politics as a dirty game. When those in political offices in collaboration with civil servant begin to support their friends, family members the line of inequality widens between the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. The rich money bags become political godfathers with the capacity to recruit their loyalist to serve as conduit pipes for public funds. This tradition is sustained through electoral malpractices.

Election Rigging, Monitoring and Declaration of Results

The presidential elections of February 27, 1999, saw General Olusegun Obasanjo as a democratically President-elect. Chief Olu Falae who got 11, 110, 287 votes went to court claiming that the election was marred by electoral fraud and that General Olusegun Obasanjo was a convict. The result of the election was guided by the action of the INEC Chairman which was based on a tripartite action with multiplier effects; i) a new mentality of announce the result and we will meet in court was built in the actors and actresses of election. ii) The attitude of the winner-takes-all was solidified and iii) the maxim that actions speaks louder than words were instituted. This paper adds the most critical of the mentalities as elections in Nigeria are won by the highest bidder. For instance, in 1999, General Olusegun Obasanjo People's Democratic Party (PDP) clearly had more money than Chief Olu Falae. He was able to donate N 130 million and several cars to his party".[15]

[14] Michael Bratton, 'Second elections in Africa', *Journal of Democracy* 9, 3 (1998), p. 52.

[15] Ihonvbere, Julius O. "The 1999 Presidential Elections in Nigeria: The Unresolved Issues." *Issue* 27, no. 1 (1999): 59–62. https://doi.org/10.2307/1167008; Victor Agi. "Moneybags Politics and Nigeria's Rule of Money

The electoral process is supposed to be monitored throughout the process, but in Nigeria, international and indigenous monitors appear on the stage few weeks to the day of election yet they are not visible at the polling booths where the real action occurs. They have little or no knowledge of why some party agents pick up cards to be agents. The International monitors may not be aware of the new political cliché "you can go to court" was birthed by sitting Electoral Chairman on that fateful day. The idea of going to court is a reminder of the constitutional right of any citizen as contained in Section 6(6)(b) and Section 36(1) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). However, when used by Electoral Chairman was a mocking refrain against those who were challenging the dirty deal of the electoral body. This statement is made with the knowledge that the legal system is very slow, dubious and the candidate who is announced as the winner can use the court to legitimize her announced victory by all means. It is not a new pattern in Nigeria. A similar thing happened when Abel Guobadia, the INEC Chairman declared that:

> Obasanjo, the People's Democratic Party candidate scored 24.38 million votes or 62.04 percent of 39.30 million valid votes cast on Saturday. Muhammadu Buhari, his closest rival among 19 opposition candidates and candidate of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), scored 12.61 million votes or 32.09 percent of valid votes… It follows that Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP, having satisfied the legal requirements and scored the highest number of votes, is hereby declared the winner and returned as president.

The political gullible saw what appeared on the surface only. They saw the Chairman of INEC carrying out his constitutional duty. The Electoral Chairman in reality allowed the rigging to take place as a means of securing his job and that of his commissioners. If the votes of the voters truly counted and the result announced rightly by morally minded professors as expected by the majority of voters and not the President that puts him there then the representation of democracy would be achieved. The Nigerian culture permits rigging and vote buying. Professor Attahiru Jega during his tenure as Chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) felt that introducing academics with high level of integrity, impartiality and education into the electoral process would make them less susceptible to many forms of political manipulations. The good intent is greeted with data of professors in Nigeria who were convicted of election fraud. Andrew A. Erakhrumen reports that "It is commonplace, now, for some persons to publicly accuse the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) of participating in compromising elections for politicians".[16] The question is for how long can Nigerians remain in this form of ignorance? Over 50 Vice-Chancellors were implicated in rigging 2023 polls.[17] It is on record that two university professors, Peter Ogban and Ignatius Uduk were convicted and sentenced to three years in prison and affirmed by the Court of Appeal in April and May 2025 respectively. They were found guilty of falsifying results in favour of All Progressives Congress (APC) candidates. The current Senate President of Nigeria, Godswill Akpabio was the senatorial candidate during the election. for their roles in manipulating the 2019 general election results in Akwa Ibom

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Democracy". Daily Trust. Retrieved from https://dailytrust.com/moneybags-politics-and-nigerias-rule-of-money-democracy/

[16] Andrew A. Erakhrumen. "ASUU: Electoral malpractices and scapegoat syndrome". The Sun. 6th October, 2025. https://thesun.ng/asuu-electoral-malpractices-and-scapegoat-syndrome/1/4/2026. 3L30pm

[17]

State, Nigeria. Today, Professor Attahiru Jega knows better that integrity is not synonymous to professorship or the academic in the university. There are people of integrity outside of the university and INEC should begin to look for the people of integrity well ahead of the elections, train them in morals and make attractive renumerations to those who are selected after the rigorous training.

Electoral Tribunals and Testifiers

Whereas the practice of democracy in America gives room for the people to vote the representatives using the ballot paper, Nigerians give their right to the courts to decide election results and declare election winners. The complexity of the election tribunal is in proving that electoral malpractices took place in an election. Any candidate that is declared a winner is also placed in a better light at the tribunal. With knowledge of hindsight, the INEC Chairman would always be the first to suggest for the ethically minded politicians to go to court: "I urge our politicians to demonstrate the highest level of statesmanship and commitment to democratic ideals by operating strictly within the constitutional provisions for seeking redress". Asking the opposition parties to go to court was and is the best thing to say after the announcement of the election results. The fate of many politicians in Nigeria is destroyed the moment results announced are not in favour of an unpopular candidate. Those who arrange with the electoral officers that they should announce them as winners at all cost so that they can go to court are candidates who are moneybags and they put it to effective use in politics. When you are invited to give testimony at an election tribunal as a party agent, you are at the mercy of the lawyers to the defendants who are mostly Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SANs). The SANs are brought to court to intimidate the other lawyers and as a mark that you are facing a wealthy person so you should not forget that judgement in most Nigerian courts is won not by merit but by how deep one's pocket is. Politicians who do not have deep pockets, but have thugs make good use of the thugs to launch attacks on opponents knowing very well that they are going to lose at the Electoral Tribunal no matter how hard they try to provide evidence.

The highest bidder always takes the day. The processes and procedures that go on at the tribunal are simply academic. The SANs would fire you from all directions even with the use of unreasonable questions like can you show that you have the power of bilocation-that is to be in two different places at the same time? If you introduce pictures, you are charged for carrying a camera to the voting centre which is an offence at the polling unit as forbidden by the electoral law. Be sure that you would be frustrated out of court. It is difficult to be a perpetual customer of the electoral tribunal in Nigeria. It is easier to sell either blood or gametes in Nigeria. The repercussion of announcing results without looking back has resulted to violence in several elections held over the years. As it is common with the spirit of the majority of Nigerians, the accuser becomes the victim and before you blink your eyes in court, the judges have given judgement. This is the game that played out in the case against General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999. The electoral tribunal struck out the application not based on the merit of the case but on technicalities. It has become a precedent in Nigeria that at the level of presidential elections, once a candidate is announced as the winner the courts have not been able to overturn the results. however, in Nigeria, it is the courts that are declaring politicians' winners instead of voters". Recently, "The highest court with jurisdiction over national assembly elections in Nigeria, the Court of Appeal ousted 12

House of Representatives and 5 Senators".[18] This new direction is not good for democracy as it will increase the level of political apathy and discourage voter turnout.

Challenges of the Electoral Commission

Historically, in the 25 years under review, there have been at least six presidential elections conducted in the country consecutively. In all of this, arriving at a conclusion of who is a winner of a presidential election is often known from the day the INEC Chairman is appointed by the president. The Chairman has never been ignorant of what it takes to install the anointed candidate. The biggest silence Nigerians are known for is in keeping mute about who becomes a winner of fraudulent polls. This is the number one challenge of our democracy. Silence after an election fraught with irregularities embolden the fraudsters. This challenge was partially resolved with the introduction of the Bi-modal Voting Accreditation System (BVAS) and INEC Results Viewing Portal (IReV) of Professor Mahmood Yakubu slightly changed the fortunes of the Commission as the BVAS could not transmit results in real-time as earlier promised by the INEC Boss. The 2023 election result shows:

> On 1 March, INEC declared that Bola Tinubu (APC) obtained 8,794,726 votes (36.61 percent), Atiku Abubakar (PDP) came in second with 6,984,520 votes (29.07 percent), and Peter Obi (LP) came third with 6,101,533 votes (25.40 percent). Rabiu Kwankwaso (NNPP) was declared to have obtained 1,496,687 votes (6.23 percent). The results showed that among some 93.5 million registered PVC card holders, only some 25 million (27 percent) had cast their vote.[19]

After ten successful elections conducted during the period under review, one can categorically say the improvement is very negligible. The results as declared were disputed by the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Labour Party (LP) and the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP). PDP and LP headed to the Court of Appeal (CoA). The angry voters were asked to calm down and not to destroy their cases. When they could not be persuaded any longer, on March 18 elections, the devil in Nigerians was let loose in some parts of Nigeria which gave rise to violence that resulted in fatalities. The obvious abuse of the power of the legislature is always covered by party affiliation. The moment a politician who is found to be corrupt cross carpeted, the offenses are forgiven. Where the offence can be transferred to other, it is usually blamed on junior electoral officers who were hired as adhoc staff to assist in the conduct of election.

This argument is well captured by J. Shola Omotola who wrote that: "Job security generally increases the stakes officials have in the electoral process: if they mess up the process, they may lose their positions".[20] Humphrey Nwosu in given account of his stewardship narrated how Professor Eme Awa and himself were removed from "office as Chairmen of the Electoral Commission by General Ibrahim Babangida under questionable

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[18] Toba Paul Ayeni. "Courts determining election winners instead of voters: A troubling development in Nigeriaq". *The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs and Policy Studies*, Vol. 113, 2024. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00358533.2024.2307723

[19] Ojukwu, Uchechukwu Grace1, Umeifekwem, Uchenna Timothy, and Okeke, Vincent, Onyekwelu Sunday. "Democracy and 2023 General Elections in Nigeria: Retrospect and Prospects" Direct Reseaarch Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies, Vol. 11 (4), pp. 54 – 66, July 2023, p. 58.l

[20] J. Shola Omotola. "Elections and Democratic Transition in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic". *African Affairs*, 109/437, 535 – 553, p. 541.

questions".[21] This way of hiring and firing personnel with impunity has become a culture in Nigeria. Politicians find it very difficult in Nigeria to give out sensitive jobs to candidates who are both competent and have requisite experience to do the job. Majority of political appointments are made based on political patronage and filial affiliations. The embittered Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Maurice Iwu was for instance a trained scientist with specialisation in Pharmacognosy and Ethnobiology before his appointment. The issue in his case like many others cannot be solely attributed to political patronage. There is one critical thing at stake in Nigeria that is never acknowledged as the cause of failure of individuals and institutions. It is systemic failure.

The choice of the kind of government for the purpose of governing the people comes from the electorate; the political as well as the electoral system are true indications that a state is a sovereign entity. Thereafter there have been six consecutive presidential elections in the history of Nigeria. It is worthy of praise for Nigerians to beat their chest and say that they have experienced the longest period of uninterrupted democratic governance in the whole of West Africa. The setting of this recorded is not without challenges just like no one would claim that the teeth and the tongue in the mouth have lived without conflict. What can Nigerians show for the 25 years of the practice of democracy? What is lacking is the capacity and resources to correct the systematic abnormalities. Nigerians already know that when elections in the country are both credible and fair, the heat will be felt by the majority of countries in West Africa, and the globe. The model of democracy used in Nigeria will be too difficult for countries in Africa to adopt. Although the Electoral Act of 2022 as amended[22] warned citizens aspiring to run for political offices not to receive any support or funds from foreign or illegal services by setting a benchmark. NGN 5 billion ($10,848,800 USD equivalent) for presidential candidates; NGN 1 billion ($2,169,760 USD equivalent) for governorship candidates; NGN 100 million ($216,976 USD equivalent) for Senate candidates; NGN 70 million ($151,883 USD equivalent) for the House of Representatives candidates; and NGN 30 million ($65,092 USD equivalent) for State Houses of Assembly candidates. No individual or other entity may donate more than NGN 50 million to a candidate. The Independent National Electoral Commission is responsible for monitoring political parties[23] and established the Election and Party Monitoring Department to monitor party finance activities. The unanswered question is how effective is the monitoring mechanism of the INEC? In 2023 Presidential election, the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Mahmood Yakubu declares:

> It is certainly the second largest presidential democracy after the United States of America. The size of our voter population and elective institutions make elections in Nigeria a huge undertaking… there are 15 countries in West Africa today, including Nigeria. However, with the current voter population of over 84 million, Nigeria has about 11 million more registered voters than the other 14 countries put together which have 73.6 million registered voters. Conducting a general election in Nigeria is like holding election in West Africa and beyond.[24]

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[21] Humphrey Nwosu, Laying the Foundation for Nigeria's Democracy: My account of June 12, 1993 presidential election and its annulment (Macmillan, Lagos, 2008).

[22] https://placng.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Electoral-Act-2022.pdf

[23] https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Political_Party_Finance_Handbook.pdf

[24] Maria Diamond. "Nigeria's democracy second largest globally, says INEC Chairman" The Guardian, 27 November 2021, retrieved from https://guardian.ng/news/nigerias-democracy-second-largest-globally-says-inec-chairman/.

Again, the whole ideas of who truly rules are compounded by the reality of the heterogeneous and pluralistic Nigerian society. This is supposed to be controlled by the adoption of the zoning system. Much more than the zoning system, the idea of winning elections in developing nations like Nigeria is strictly tied to those who have deep buffel bags, not pockets again. The citizens who are well educated and are seen to be moral are either not interested in going into politics because of the fear that their hard-earned integrity would be destroyed by the messy politicians or the fear of not being able to change the devil in the old politicians. There is this notion that it is only greed that can lead lecturers with high intelligence to the game of politics. Shared responsibilities demand that those who are super intelligent should go to the universities to teach and prepare the needed manpower to feed the administrative and technological needs of the country. This means that those who have money without brains can be part and parcel of politics to lead and execute projects with the assistance of the lecturers. To this crop of politicians, politics in its entirety is a do or die family affairs.

Military Interregnum in Nigeria

The success of any assessment of the practice of democracy in Nigeria can only be complete if the actions and activities of the military are placed side by side with those of the civilian government under review. The military in their wisdom took the centre stage to avoid the politics of do or die or it must be me immediately after independence. How can one in his right sense condemn the military for venturing into politics at that time? The military as an institution is well trained to act professionally. This has been the emphasis of most service chiefs. However, it is only proper for the military not to adopt the sit-and-look approach to life if "there is lack of law and order",[25] to improve the social and economic challenges facing the nation, and ensure the stability and an enduring democratic rule. Everyone who hears it marvels at the holier-than-thou approach to life and appreciates it.

There are so many good things that the military have done during their stay in power. A few of the good things obtained under the military regime include but not limited to the following; the regime of General Muhammadu Buhari declared "War Against Indiscipline" (WAI) which took care of the social and economic ills. Corrupt politicians, journalists who contributed to the social and economic decay were arrested, detained and jailed. When General Ibrahim B. Babangida struck, he promised a transition to civilian rule in 1990, but was extended to 1993 which culminated in the June 12 annulment. It is out of place to judge regimes whether military or civilian but to look at those who were at the helm of affairs. For instance, there has been evidence of corruption in the land, but when President Shehu Shagari came on board; it was very clear to him that what he saw was the presence and evil of corruption. President Shagari is cited by John Odey to have lamented:

> I am … dismayed to understand that corruption, fraud and smuggling are not only being institutionalized but are fast becoming a business pursuit in our country… Those who rise through criminal records to the position of affluence are embraced by the society while merit, honesty and integrity are hardly recognized.[26]

He stopped at mere lamentation as he did nothing to change the face of corruption. There was so much evidence of how corrupt his administration was as it stood contrary to the

[25] Okay Achike, *Groundwork of Military Law and Military Rule in Nigeria*. Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978: pp. 99-100.
[26] John Okwueze Odey. *The Days of the Jackals*, Enugu: Snaap Press Limited, 1999, p. 11.

preaching he made against the acts of corruption. The father of corruption was General Ibrahim B. Babangida who referred to himself as the Evil Genius. He preferred to be called the civilian title of "President" in 1984 and rejected the military title of "Head of State". General Babangida popularised corruption. He threw the nation into darkness when he annulled the election that saw Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola the winner of fairest and most credible election of June 12, 1993. With the activities surrounding his administration, he truly merits the name Maradona.

General Ibrahim B. Babangida's destructive tendencies were higher than that of General Sani Abacha for the singular part he played in the annulment of the 1993 election. The general evil of military dictatorship is "the suspension of the constitution"[27] of the state. They execute their policies by decrees. Despite the abuse of the fundamental human rights and disrespect for the freedoms of citizens, nations of the world particularly in the Caribbean, Central and South America, Asia, Africa, Mediterranean Europe and Middle East have challenged the military intervention in politics. Others have argued that many uniformed personnel have changed garb in order to take up new challenges in their communities because the military is a disciplined institution and prepares one for leadership roles in all facets. Does this thinking find a place in the improvement of democracy in Nigeria bearing in mind the "deleterious consequences military regimes have on democracy?"[28] There is no objective answer to this question. The three Sahel countries Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are on a daily basis driven by armed conflicts, and challenges of climate change. They are military leaders with the promise to turn the fortunes of their countries around for their citizens. The three countries have clamoured for military disengagement with France by unilaterally terminating their defence agreements. The young military officers have decided to reject the pact they had with France as the French military intervention has not saved their countries from Islamic insurgency. It is an abhorrence of the principle of doing the same thing all the times and expecting a different result. The wing of military take over is on the increase in Africa. It is very difficult for the colonialists to allow Africa full independence. However, if the leaders are able to win the war against insurgency, banditry and terrorism, countries like Nigeria would join the move.

There are times foreign governments are not interested in the stability of countries in Africa especially when the leader has a vision of liberating the citizens. Attempts to be free of foreign influence by African resource rich nations end up in vain. The colonial impacts have been so strong thereby weakening any reform regarding economic and political sectors. saying that the worst democracy is better than the best military dictatorship can only be activated where the military leaders fail to deliver on their promises. It is very true that every military dictatorship has elements of highhandedness, corruption, extra-judicial killings, detention of journalists, freedom fighters, selection of the civil personnel to administer some offices, changing certain aspects of the drafted constitutions and worse of all the suspension of the country's existing constitution. It is not an objective reality to declare that there was nothing good with military rule. The possibility of a silver lining in every cloud should make us in Africa to find something good with military dictatorship. Traditional African wise saying will recommend that military dictatorship should be thrown away with the good things that happen in a military regime. These good things include; preservation of National Unity –

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[27] *Abubakar Ibrahim, Rose, Esther, Aziken, Emmanuel, Ba, Amadou Mahtar (eds.). "Nigeria: The Forgotten Interim President". AllAfrica. Lagos, Nigeria: AllAfrica Global Media. Daily Trust.*

[28] Messas, Kostas. "Democratization of Military Regimes: Contending Explanations." *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* 20, no. 2 (1992): 243–55. http://www.jstor.org/stable/45294284.

General Yakubu Gowon kept the as a united entity even after the Civil War. This was guided by the post war policy of "Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (RRR) which was aimed at national integration. Many of the roads, bridges, airports and seaports surviving tear and wear in Nigeria today were constructed during the military eras.

The military established oil refineries in Port Harcourt, Warri and Kaduna which gave the country independence from importation of refined petroleum product at a higher cost. Efforts to carry out turnaround maintenance of these refineries by democratic regimes is Nigeria is proving abortive. This challenge of rehabilitating the refineries spell doom for any democratic regime in Nigeria to create just one addition state in Nigeria. The achievement of General Buhari Mohammadu during his days of military dictatorship cannot be forgotten in a hurry. The military tribunals never delayed in handing down judgment on corrupt offenders. The long jail term of three hundred years was not just symbolic, but a reminder that even after reincarnation, a corrupt offender was open to continue to serve the jail term. It was a punishable offence to litter the streets, arrive late at work or school and poor sanitation was an anathema. Academic researches are not only meant for promotion exercises; therefore, it is imperative to state that military regimes in Nigeria have paid off better than the practice of democracy witness so far. No matter the high rate of corruption, the military regime can be seen as a low-cost option when compared with the cost of running democracy in Nigeria. Can this undiluted maxim be meaningfully applied to the practice of democracy in Nigeria? Nigerians have tested both military dictatorship and civil rule and are in a better position to judge which of the political systems is truly the best. The choice is inevitable with the discussion on how the practice of democracy in Nigeria is able to secure human lives in Nigeria.

Securing Lives in a Democratic Setting

The previous sections have shown that the military regimes contributed immensely the development of the electoral parties, the possible return of democracy. One of the long-standing justifications for the existence of government, especially democracy, is the protection of lives and property. A government must exist to be able to protect the lives of the citizens. Thomas Hobbes in his work *Leviathan* provides a vivid description of the natural condition of mankind as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short". This is so because individuals were in a war of all against all".[29] The Hobbesian definition of the state describes Nigeria in its entirety. Citizens of Nigeria are perpetually living in an insecure society. Nigerians wherever they go they will find various forms of insecurity like banditry, kidnapping, insurgency, and communal conflicts. Nigerians are not safe whether during military rule or democratic regime. Security means different things to different people. It can be food, economic, human, national and psychological security. These parts are built up to human security which is defined as:

> An integrated idea of positive peace, human rights and sustainable development. It is related to the enhancement of livelihood of all people at risk, the values of the respect of human rights, the dignity of the individual, respect for diversity, community empowerment, decentralized forms of government, peace and coexistence and the accountability and transparency of actions aimed at the betterment of livelihood.[30]

[29] Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. (ed). C.B. Macpherson, Harmondsworth: Penguin Publishers, 1968.
[30] *Human Security Report* 2005, p. 61.

It is significant to state that security does not simply mean absence of fears. It involves safety from persistent threats of hunger, disease, crime, repression, protection from sudden and hurtful disruption at home, work, schools and other communities.

Justification for Military Killings

It is important to state at the beginning that the only bloodless coup that took place in Nigeria was that of 29th July, 1975 of General Murtala Mohammed when he overthrew the government of General Yakubu Gowon because of Gowon's delay in fulfilling the promise to return democracy to Nigeria. Apart from this coup, every other coup that occurred in Nigeria was bloody. The concern in this section is not to know the reasons for the coups, but the value of lives lost through the barrel of guns. The 15 January, 1966 coup was bloody, vicious, merciless, unrelenting and violent mutiny.[31] It is on record that the framed bloody coup had 22 people killed. Prominent among them were the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Premier of the Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Premier of the Western Region, Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, Minister of Finance, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh, Hafsatu Bello (Ahmadu Bello's wife) and Zarumi Sarduna (Ahamdu Bello's bodyguard). The Senior Army officers include; Brig. Samuel Ademulegun, Brig. Zakariya Maimalari, Col. Ralph Shodeinde, Col. Kur Mohammed, Lt. Col. Abogo Largema, Lt. Col. James Pam, Lt. Col. Arthur Unegbe, Sergeant Daramola Oyegoke (Refused Nzeogwu's order in the attack on the Sardauna's lodge and according to the police report was murdered by Nzeogwu. In the same year, a counter coup was staged by the northern military officers on 28 July, 1966. This quick turn of events satisfies the allegation of a revenge for the killings of the majority of Northern political figures and officers in the first coup. The 1975 bloodless coup saw the removal of General Yakubu Gowon. Although, a failed coup took place on 13th February, 1976, the Head of State, General Murtala Muhammed, the Governor of Kwara State, Colonel Ibrahim Taiwo and an aide-de-camp (ADC) to General Mohammed were killed. As a result of the attempted coup, 38 soldiers including Major General Illya Bisalla, five Colonels, four majors were tried and found guilty. They were sentence to death by firing squad.

The fifth coup was involving the overthrow of the democratically elected civilian president, Alhaji Shehu Shagari on 31 December, 1983. Amnesty Internation reports that "111 or more people were executed during the year".[32] This led to the death of Brigadier Ibrahim Bako. In 1984, three Nigerians; Bartholomew Owoh, Bernard Ogedengbe and Lawal Ojolape were executed by firing squad for drug trafficking. The seventh coup led by Major General Mamman Vatsa met his death for an abortive coup and finally the 22 April 1990 coup staged by Major Gideon Orkar to unseat General Ibrahim Badamesi Babangida should actually be referred to as the bloodiest coup in the history of Nigeria. 42 persons involved in the coup were tried, found guilty and condemned to death by firing squad. It was during the administration of Babangida that Dele Giwa met his death via a parcel bomb in October 1986. The return of violent ethnic and religious conflicts across the country was noticed during the reign of the Military President, General Ibrahim Badamesi Babangida. Records show that the conflict between the Tiv and Jukun which began in late 1991 claimed an estimated 5, 000 lives. The annulment of the June 12 presidential election saw an estimated deaths of hundreds of students, pro-democracy protesters and women. The number of lives lost

[31] *Fani-Kayode, Femi. "Importance of history, the bloody January 1966 coup and a tribute to our heroes past". The Cable.ng.*

[32] Amnesty International Annual Report Entries on Nigeria 1968 – 2010. Published by Amnesty International Publication, 2010, p. 16.

during democratic regimes in Nigeria have surpassed those that died during military regimes. The lesson learnt from the data presented on military coups in Nigeria is that the soldier is trained to shoot to kill and not to disarm an enemy of the state. One wonders why the military during these democratic regimes have failed to live up to the expectations civilians have of them.

Killings during Democratic Rule

Nobody in their wildest dreams would compare the security of lives during military rule and democratic regime. This challenge that comes with shedding the blood particularly those of the innocent did not go with the return of democracy in 1999. After election, it is not in any way guaranteed that the way democracy is practised in Nigeria is democratic. This is coming under the heels what President Olusegun Obasanjo said on the day of his inauguration when he promised Nigerians that "We will leave no stone unturned to ensure the sustenance of democracy because it is good for us, it is good for Africa, and it is good for the world".[33] Nigeria got a leader who preaches what he does not practice. The attitude of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo is likened to the role of the United Nations whose organs have always encouraged countries to adopt the process of democratization around the globe, but the same UN is no respecter of the tenets of democracy. For how long will the UN stop the undemocratic attitude is blocking other countries from belonging to the Security Council?

The practice of democracy during President Olusegun Obasanjo was highly undemocratic. His administration popularised the attitude that "you can go to court". Other undemocratic practices were; his quest for a third term arrangement, Odi, Zaki Biam killings, the Owo Catholic Church attack, impeachment sham organised by kangaroo members of the house of assemblies and rigging galore. Most electoral tribunal cases were lost by people who were not from the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The civilian rule may claim that leadership did not create the crisis that resulted in the unholy killings by various militia, banditry and Boko Haram, but no one can deny that their body language spoke louder than their words of hope. Reacting to the question of who is responsible for the crisis and killings in Nigeria today, Felix Awonaiya said:

> It is obvious even by the most charitable assessment that his seeming inertia has contributed in no small measure to creating the current existential threat to the security, well-being, and unity of the country that we now have. Let us be clear, he has demonstrated the same inertia and disinterest in my view of the ESN menace in the Southeast as to the oil theft in the South-South, and to the menace of the herdsmen and bandits especially the cross-border ones that have no stake in Nigeria. The only difference is that by words and body language, he has shown understanding of the activities of his tribesmen which he has not shown the other major existentialist threats to the country.[34]

There are similar practical cases everywhere in Nigeria. For instance, the killing of about fifty people, 35 soldiers in an ambush, a Commando attack on the Kuje maximum prison which got 900 inmates including 60 Boko Haram members to escape in a jailbreak in Abuja the Nigeria's capital city. This attack spelled monumental embarrassment to the security

[33] Norimitsu Onishi, *Nigeria's Military Turns Over Power to Elected Leader*, N.Y. Times, May 30, 1999, at 1.

[34] Felix Awonaiya, "Overhauling Nigeria's Security Architecture: Case for Creation of Internal Security Force". The Nation. https://thenationonlineng.net/overhauling-nigerias-security-architecture-case-for-creation-of-internal-security-force/28 July, 2022.

establishment of the country. These cases are attributed to poor security architecture which has given rise to a vicious cycle of killings during the 25 years of democracy in Nigeria.

Punishment of Offenders

There is no society that strives to be better without punishing offenders for the crimes the commit against individuals and the public. Whose punishment has the capacity to make a difference in the electoral activities? Is it the removal of the INEC Chairman? History has it that "President Ibrahim B. Babangida booted out two professors Eme Awa and Humphrey Nwosu out of their jobs on questionable grounds without any appeal from any quarters".[35] Who would have appealed on behalf of the INEC Chairman? Nigerians in their usual way will rejoice at the removal of the Chairman as it will create room for another person from another geographical zone to share in the national cake. The fired Chairman when in office are not unaware of the right and wrong things to do. They are knowledgeable of their responsibilities to the staff, parties and government at all levels. Yet, they get involved in electoral malpractices as there are no two INEC Chairmen at the same time in Nigeria and the risk of losing their jobs if they acted justly. However, job security which is very important to the realization of the full potentialities of a public servant can be provided by government through legislation as it is the case with Ghana's Electoral Law which permits "the Chairman of the Electoral Commission and the two deputies to stay on the job like the Justices of the Court of Appeal who ordinarily cannot be removed arbitrarily until the attainment of 70 years".[36]

The challenge Nigerians face on a daily basis is who has the power to initiate punishment in Nigeria? INEC in spite of the Electoral Laws does not have the capacity to prosecute and punish offenders. Working with the Nigeria Police Force could be helpful if the personnel is ethically guided to file high profile cases in Court. The difficulty in courts in Nigeria is the ability of Judes to be firm in pursuing the legal issues. When high profile cases are brought to Court, the tendency to delay them until the relevance of the judgement elapses are always up for the highest bidder. Another issue at stake is the one to identify a criminal offense in an election. For most electorate, it is always dead before they are made known to the police for prosecution. So, it is better to keep one's mouth shut even when the offense is noticed. There are situations in which some politicians to manipulate electoral results in favour a godfather and his cronies nobody is interested in righting the wrong. Nigerians are always waiting for foreigners to give approval of what goes on around them. For instance, during election monitoring, while others indigenous monitors were not ready to find fault with the result of the election, the former President of the United States of America Jimmy Carter who was also part of the international monitoring team announce the presence of discrepancies between what is and the claims of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Chairman, Ephraim Ibukun Akpata by noting:

> There was a wide disparity between the number of voters observed at the polling stations and the final results that have been reported from several states. Regrettably, therefore, it is not possible for us to make an accurate judgment about the outcome of the presidential election".[37]

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[35] Humphrey Nwosu, Laying the Foundation for Nigeria's Democracy: My account of June 12, 1993 presidential election and its annulment (Macmillan, Lagos, 2008).

[36] B. Agyeman-Duah, 'Elections and electoral politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic', Critical Perspectives 18 (July 2005), p. 3

[37] Chris McGreal. "Fraud claim threathens Nigerian Poll". *The Guardian*. Tuesday, 2 March, 1999. https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/mar/02/chrismcgreal

Apart from Jimmy Carter who spoke on behalf of the International Monitors, it was the opposition candidate, Chief Olu Falae that felt something immoral had happened and said so when he claimed that he was robbed of victory:

> Millions of Nigerians who voted for us have a duty to show their dissatisfaction by protesting against the government; General Obasanjo has not won an election. What happened on Saturday was a farce, a charade. The degree of fraud was so monumental as to make nonsense of the entire process.[38]

The complaints were not to be taken seriously by the electoral officers who were paid from taxpayers' money. The concerns of many other Nigerians were beyond the scope of morality. Those officers including the Electoral Commission Chairman on discovering the manipulation of the process as alleged by Nigerians should have resigned his appointment for failing Nigerians at their duty post. Resigning honourably is not at the moment a characteristic of a typical Nigerian. Rather than resign from the job, the "Nigerian" in public office would ask questions such as: is the lone voice of the international monitoring team stronger than the other indigenous monitors combined? Have those who are complaining observed the body language of the majority of the voters? These and many other questions were answered when Jimmy Carter, the voice of the International Monitoring Team added that there was "no systematic evidence indicating that these abuses would affect the overall outcome of the elections".[39] This implies that no matter how many people and organisations complain about irregularities during the electoral process, no one was able to prove that electoral malpractice took place during the election satisfactorily. There were those who consciously decided to neutralise the claims of the opposition party without adequate proof that both parties were heavily involved in electoral malpractices.

The reality in Nigeria is that votes do not count. It is the people who count the votes that count. This known fact makes it difficult to understand the generalization that professors are responsible for rigging of electoral results. Professors are not responsible for the outcome of the result. They are not at the pooling centres when voting goes on. The gullible public holds the professors accountable because of the content of the Electoral Law which states that "free and fair elections is in the hands of the person who has the power to announce results"[40] and Section 22 subsection (c) (iv) says "refusal of any candidate or polling agent to countersign the appropriate form EC 8 (A) series shall not invalidate the result of the Polling Unit."[41] The professor who has the mandate to announce the results that are already cooked by party men and women at the pool units are left with one opportunity in their kitty bag. The professor should stand tall and reject making any announcement to validate bad electoral results. There were always claims that both parties (in the case of the National Republican Congress (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP)) participated in the rigging of votes and that the strongest party rigged more, so there was no need for the loser to complain. Another group felt Chief Olu Falae and those calling for cancellation of results were unaware of the history of elections in Nigeria and its aftermath. For this group, the best thing to do to keep the soldiers in the barracks and avoid the

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[38] Chris McGreal. "Fraud claim threathens Nigerian Poll"

[39] Chris McGreal. "Fraud claim threatens Nigerian Poll"

[40] Sarah Birch, "Electoral institutions and popular confidence in electoral processes: a cross-national analysis", *Electoral Studies* 27, 1 (2008), pp. 305–20.

[41] Regulations and Guidelines for the conduct of Elections. Independent National Electoral Commission.

recurrence of the first coup in Nigeria was to allow the result announced to be. This was to their thinking the only opportunity for the victory of democracy in Nigeria.

Nigerians are known for not punishing offenders. The best thing is to initially make noise of an evil act, publish on the electronic and print media for some time and the case is forgotten. There are several cases of electoral malpractices in Western part of Nigeria that brought about the Civil War (1967 – 1970), yet no one was punished for the death and destruction of property. The pains of the Civil War have made some Igbos to demand for secession and establishment of the Biafran state. The sit-at-home in the South East has become a norm and Nigerians have given it recognition and are accustomed to it. Since 1999 to date there are no records of how the offenders were prosecuted in court. Majority of the offenders end up dying in the police custody which triggered the EndSARS protest of early October 2020 and nobody has been roundly persecuted for the killings. As usual, no one has been punished for neglect of duty. Electoral officers, political assassins have been offered bail. Can President Muhammadu Buhari and the Chairman of INEC be punished for not delivering on the promises they made to Nigerians so as to be convinced to let them use the billions for the purchase of equipment? They get bails as soon as the politicians get sworn-in. The criminally minded are seen walking on the streets freely. Soldiers who are involved in carrying out dirty jobs are not persecuted; some of them are recommended for better ranks and bigger pay from the taxpayers' money.

Rejigging Nigeria's attitude and Security Architecture

The problem of Nigerians whether under the control of the military or in a democratic regime is not the multiplication of states and roles, but how well available human and natural resources can be effectively and efficiently managed. The ability to rejig the attitude of Nigerians is the first step in the right direction for the attainment of good things and happiness. This changing of attitude must necessarily start at the family level. Parents must make conscious efforts to improve the moral life of their children by teaching them through practical examples. Learning by doing the right thing that when copied, it remains in the child forever. One practical way of learning by doing is for parents to show their kids that contentment is very good. Nigerians should be taught to be content with whatever they have and avoid being greedy in the pursuit of material wealth. Parents that bully and kill should be kept away from their children for life to prevent the children following their bad example. You must not slander a neighbour to get food for the family. Whatever thing that would be yours will always come your way in time. This is the spirit of contentment which a lot of Nigerians lack in life. There are several calls for the establishment of the state police to handle crisis situations in different states of the federation. One would think that there is no need for the State Police at the moment. State governors when they are not interested in helping the vulnerable people of the state with the services of the Police, they quickly remember that the Nigeria Police is under the control of the Federal Government. When they want to embarrass an individual or a group of persons in the State, they know exactly what to do to use the same Police for their selfish interest. Creating State Police is never a solution to the problem of insecurity. However, it is effective when crime profiling is adopted in most local context for quicker response in times of conflicts.

A salient piece of advice is that the Nigerian security architecture needs complete overhauling. Government at all levels must invest greatly to get modern technology like cameras CCTV at the porous borders, airports and seaports. Lack of modern technological tools is killing the military personnel. New security architecture deserves a credible, positive

and decisive action from ethical Nigerians. It is not enough to call for recruitment of security personnel for the Police, Army, Navy, Air Force, Civil Defence and vigilante as well as the newly established Forest Guards. There should be an enhanced collaborative intelligence gathering across security agencies. Government must consciously tackle the rivalry between security bodies for effective internal security by facilitating training of personnel of different agencies together using the same lecturers and security experts. Energetic young Nigerians should not just jump up to join the Police because there is no job to absorb them. The intent to be enlisted in the security outfit is not good enough. What if you got the training and a group of bandits or terrorists came to recruit you and pay you higher than what the government is paying you? You must be part of a security outfit due to the spirit of patriotism. Making sacrifices with your life needs deeper reflection on what you hope to give to your country.

Paying money to be enlisted into any security outfit simply means that your country does not have value for you. The same attitude you are witnessing during the process of recruitment will not stop when you become a foot soldier in the field and the theatre of war. The daily loss of lives to bandits, terrorists, kidnappers and state actors stems from the poor handling of those enlisted in the Police. A well-trained Police on the street should be able to profile crime with the help of members of the community. Security and crime are both local and the knowledge of this reality will go a long way to solving the problem of insecurity. The newly employed should be oriented to know and avoid excesses that would lead to abuses and conflict of interests and overlapping of duties. Nigerians should never give out the security of lives and property to non-state actors. The question of what becomes of the arms and ammunition when the non-state actors fall out of the government at any time will be difficult to answer. The police command, Civil Defence, Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) and other paramilitary agencies should know when to act and when not to act. The role of maintaining law and order and settling disputes, making arrests of offenders in civil cases should be left to the Police. The Police should be well trained, provided for in terms of arms, ammunition, and any other thing the Command needs to work efficiently and happily must be provided without unnecessary bureaucracy. Government officials should desist from telling the public that it is on top of the situation. Deception with sweet promises that cannot see the light of the day should be avoided.

Nigerians should not just model the practice of democracy on American practice, but should go further to act swiftly as the Americans do. Before America was bastardly attacked on 9/11, 2001, the country had a major reorganisation of the US National system after the Cold War. The US National Security Act of 1947 was created. With the Act, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was established. As a Cabinet-level position, it housed 22 security agencies in the country. There is a need to create an internal security force that would be responsible for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency in the country. This internal security can only be meaningful if the terrible lopsided structure that is making the security system unworkable is changed. All security chiefs must have one reporting authority concerning issues of security. Delineation of roles must be well defined, trained and equipped to do the primary duties and avoid the overlapping of duties. When roles are well defined, the military must return to the barracks and allow the Police to carry on their statutory responsibilities. No one should look down on the Police as far as keeping law and order is concerned. The Armed Forces of Nigeria; the Army, Navy and Air Force should be trained well to protect the territorial integrity of the country. The Joint Task Force (JTF) should be disbanded immediately. The pride of the Armed Forces of Nigeria must return to

them when they will no longer be seen on the street on a daily basis. The welfare of security personnel should be improved to boost effectiveness and efficiency. It is difficult to train someone for a particular job and send the same person to go and do something else.

The Nigerian Navy and Air Force should be well trained to carry out their responsibilities like the British do with their Special Air Service/Special Boat Service. After spending taxpayers' money on training, they should be well equipped with sophisticated up-to-date technology gadgets and most importantly they should be given a clear mandate to rapidly respond to terrorists' attacks, search and destroy missions by following up on the camps, anti-hijacking operations both in the air and ship, hostage rescue, special infiltration, extraction of high-profile figures including president in the event of a mutiny and the capture or neutralisation of high-profile terrorists' figures. There will be a marine unit that will ensure the elimination or capture of thieves working with and ahead of regular forces. With these enhancements; terrorists, bandits and militia cannot boast of taking over the unoccupied forests to make Nigeria ungovernable. The pathways to rejigging the security systems is different from efforts to create a one-party system in a democracy. This will not work especially in Nigeria. No one should deceive President Bola Ahmed Tinubu that grounding opposition is the best way to get re-election.

Conclusion

No one sleeps in Nigeria with both eyes closed because of lack of security. When the military were in power the blame was placed on the table of the military rulers. Everyone thought with the return of democracy and the processes, Nigeria will be a better place. It was a challenging task to decide for and against military dictatorship and democratic rule. The electoral system that is seen as the medium through which credible individuals are elected to represent the people is highly faulty in Nigeria. Those who are courageous to go to vote are bribed, confused, and traumatised with weapons of different shapes and sizes. The vote cast for candidates does not count; it is the people that count the votes that count. This has created political apathy in the younger generation. There is hardly a time in Nigeria that citizens would not be found crying foul and of marginalisation. There should be strong leadership commitment to tackle systemic corruption. Human dignity is lost and there is high preference to the rights to life of animals – cattle. Policies regarding poverty alleviation, unemployment and cases of marginalization should be well planned and implemented by government at the three tiers to handle the root causes of societal ills. The attitude political leadership to human rights and dignity is attributed to poor understanding of the human value system. Political leaders should make it a duty to learn and be better educated to serve humanity. This will be the best way to win the war against insecurity of lives and property if the leaders and the led have adequately rejig their attitude. Knowing oneself and being contented with the things of life is the best war forward. The quantity of things Nigerians have is not better than the quality of life they live. Therefore, analysts would be wrong to condemn military dictatorship and prefer democracy. The leader's personality matters as exemplified in the case of General Olusegun Obasanjo who handed over power to a democratically elected President Shehu Shagari, but wanted to run a third term when he became a civilian leader. General Muhammadu Buhari whose pet project, War Against Indiscipline, as a military Head of State attracted the people to his administration, but when he was a civilian President, he could not perform as expected by the people.

The 2023 general elections is not just the largest democratic election in the whole of the history of African democratic elections, it has a lot to assist Africans in general. Elections

have come and gone. The opposition parties went to court to no avail. The performance of Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu will go a long way in making the desired model for other African countries. This should not be through the introduction of the one party – All Progressives Congress (APC) as the only political party in Nigeria. He must choose to value the beautiful of many colours in the Nigerian polity. Parental guidance and the positive attitude of a leader can facilitate the fortunes of Nigeria. The President of United States of America has revealed the secret of disarming bandits and terrorists. Keep away the thoughts of respect for human rights when it comes to bandits and terrorists. Destroying them is the best way to regain stability, peace and tranquillity as Nigerians celebrated 2025 Christmas and 2026 New Year without reports of killings of innocent citizens. This is a better road map that can sustain goodness, human flourishing, contentment for a good society.

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Article **Open Access**

GENOCIDE IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN MEN IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN POLITICS

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Abstract
Ever since relations between the citizen and the State were first defined, it has been understood that the preservation of political institutions best carters for the interests of the majority of citizens. Over the years this understanding between the citizen and the State has evolved to include various types and forms of political institutional frameworks. Governments whether, democracies, despotism, dictatorships or monarchies, manifest as the various regimes under which the children of God live and pursue their diverse sources of livelihoods. Nigeria's contemporary socio-political landscape cannot be said to be in line with the universal human desire for peace. The periods 1999-2024 have seen violent socio-political upheavals where armed insurgencies erupting from different parts of the country have caused death of innocent Nigerians particularly Christians. Accordingly, this paper argues that it is important for Christian men to show formidable representation via the roles they play in contemporary Nigerian politics. This is so because structural violence which affects Christians and non-Christians alike has been built into our various societies in the form of endemic poverty, economic crisis, disease and war. At all levels of government, the greed for material resources attached to political power has blinded our leaders to the needs and aspirations of our people. This paper is qualitative in nature and relies on secondary methods of data collection. This comprises of published and unpublished articles, periodicals, and government documents. In conclusion, this paper posits for Christian men particularly those in government to carry out a sustainable re-course to Christian principles and values that ensure accountability in governance in order to stamp out the perverted culture of violence to stamp out acts of genocide.

Keywords*:* Genocide, Security, Politics, Christian Men, Nigeria.

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Introduction

For the Nigerian State the need for purposeful political leadership at the centre is long overdue (Wokocha, 2018). This is evident in the mindless waste of the country's vast potentials. The tragic abuse of human life and dignity and the primitive accumulation of wealth by those in power. The tyranny of inept leadership is reflected in entrenched corruption in government at all levels. Presently, no government institution delivers up to maximum capacity to the citizens. Nigerians have lost faith in the administration of the State and its institutions due to weak or failed state status. According to Burton (1979), ever since relations between the citizen and the State were first defined, it has been understood that the preservation of social institutions and structures best carters for the interests of the majority of citizens. In Nigeria, the failure of government institutions, particularly security institutions are so glaring and does not need statistical data to prove so. Providing empirical evidence will only embarrass the government further. Several scholars (Wokocha, 2018; Rotberg, 2009; Burton, 1979) maintained that the State remains the fundamental purveyor of security. The State has an obligation through governance performance which is the delivery of high-quality political goods to citizens. Such goods are those intangible and hard to assess claims that citizens daily make on national and local governments. These political goods encapsulate citizen expectations, bundles of obligation, inform the local political culture and together give content to the social contract between ruler and ruled that is at the core of state and citizenry interactions (Rotberg, 2009 as cited in Wokocha, 2018). Significantly, the most important of these public goods is security.

Conceptual Analysis

This section will give a definition of key concepts used, to enable us understand the contexts under which they were used.

Genocide

Genocide is a crime defined under international law. Genocide means the deliberate and systematic destruction of national, ethnic, racial or religious group in whole or in part. The term was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944 in his seminal work titled *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress,* to give a name to the slaughter called the Jewish Holocaust. An act of extermination of groups, particularly the Jews in Europe, by Nazi Germany during WWII 1939-194. Therefore, a new term, genocide, was needed to be minted to capture the meaning of the Jewish Holocaust as humanity emerged from an atrocity without historical antecedents (Conversi, 2006). The term genocide was later adopted into international law. Conversi (2006) posited that the exaltation of a dominant nation or people as superior to all others, particularly subaltern groups, inevitably leads to a series of discriminatory acts against competing nations, ranging from assimilation and marginalization to genocide. Importantly, the role of central governments and the military appear to be crucial in most instances of genocide, together with media censorship and popular misinformation. Therefore, with regards to Lemkin's work that coined the concept genocide, Jones (2006) stated that the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted the concept 'genocide' and further defined it as a crime against the law of nations. Importantly, this robust or enhanced definition by the United Nations conceptualised genocide as a crime that can be committed in times of peace, not only during wars.

The UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide definition is as follows:

Article I. The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.

Article II. In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

i. Killing members of the group
ii. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
iii. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.
iv. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
v. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article III. The following acts shall be punishable:

i. Genocide
ii. Conspiracy to commit genocide
iii. Direct and public incitement to commit genocide
iv. Attempt to commit genocide
v. Complicity in genocide

Significantly, Lemkin's conviction that genocide needed to be confronted, whatever the context, was broadly endorsed with the United Nations Convention's declaration that genocide is a crime whether committed in time of peace or in time of war (Jones, 2006:12-13).

Role

Role refers to clearly defining responsibilities, tasks, and expectations associated with a particular position or individual within an organization (Encyclopaedia Britannica, (2020). It involves specific duties, authorities, and accountabilities that individuals are responsible for in their respective stations. Role provides clarity and structure within a system of action by establishing clear boundaries and expectations for each position. It helps individuals in a society to understand their position requirements, responsibilities, and how their roles contribute to the overall objectives and success of their environment (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). Role explanation is essential for effective organizational management, coordination, and performance evaluation. Best (2006) argues that in any given conflict situation there are two main characters or stakeholders and they have different roles in any given conflict. The first are the primary stakeholders. These are the most visible parties in a conflict; those who are commonly known. For instance, in the 2023 General Elections the primary stakeholders were, Peter Obi, Atiku Abubakar and Bola Tinubu. Each primary stakeholder had a role to play in the success of his political party in the last elections. The second category of stakeholders are referred to as the shadow party. They are the most dangerous party in any conflict because their involvement is by proxy rather than direct. Shadow parties complicate conflict situations because it is difficult to identify them and their roles in any given conflict. In politics there are shadow parties and it is important to identify the roles they play on time so that political plans can succeed. According to the Britannica dictionary (2020) role is defined as the character played by an actor or a part that someone or something has in a particular activity or situation. The definition of role could be extended

to mean the part someone has to play in a family, society or in a much larger group (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). This paper argues that there is a role for Christian men to play in Nigerian politics which Jesus Christ Himself defined when He said you are the Salt and the Light to the World.

Christian Man

In Scripture, we have the example of Jesus Christ, the Ultimate man. The Bible says Jesus worked with His hands and went on some dangerous fishing trips, but His example of being a man was much more than that. Jesus' life on earth was lived in full submission to the will of His Father. Philippians 2:8 says "And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death on a cross." For this paper a Christian man is defined as a man who follows Christ and whose action and behaviour reflects the following:

Key Characteristics & Actions

i. **Humble & Servant-Hearted**: Emulates Jesus Christ by serving others, not demanding to be served, and showing gentleness.
ii. **Loving & Compassionate**: Extends grace, offers encouragement, forgives, and loves his wife and family as Christ loved the church.
iii. **Honourable & Pure**: Practices integrity, purity in heart and mind, guards his eyes and ears, and avoids deceit, gossip, and immorality.
iv. **Leader & Provider**: Takes responsibility to provide for and spiritually guide his family, teaching them God's Word.
v. **Courageous & Truthful**: Speaks truth in love, defends the rights of the needy, and is brave in standing for what's right, even when unpopular.
vi. **Disciplined**: Manages his life, work, and finances responsibly, avoiding drunkenness and greed, and maintains a good reputation.

Politics

Scholars agree that there is no universal definition of politics (McAuley, 2003; Modebadze, 2010). Politics has been defined in many different ways. The different views of politics examined in this paper include: Politics as the art of government, politics as public affairs, politics as the study of conflict resolution, politics as the study of power. According to Modebadze (2010), people are social beings. They are members of society, only as such, in order to survive they have to co-operate and work together. Modebadze argued further that when human beings work together there is a need to make decisions about how difficulties that arise by working together are solved, or how the available resources to the group are to be shared out. Therefore, politics is the study of how such decisions are made. As such this paper would rely on two definitions of politics which are, politics as an art of government and the study of power. The political role of the Christian man is crucial to the arguments made in this paper. Thus, this paper would also describe politics as activities that relate to influencing the actions and policies of a government or getting and keeping power in a government. For the Christian man, political role could be seen as the active participation in the political processes of a State with the aim of influencing government decision-making (Andrain and Apter, 1995). This includes activities such as holding public or political office, being a candidate for an election, taking part in political campaigns, attending political rallies, contributing money towards party activities, taking part in political discussions, wearing party badges, and displaying party stickers. This study emphasizes that the political role of the Christian man goes beyond indirect forms such as voting and being aware of current

issues, but rather involves direct engagement in political activities and seeking to influence leaders at various levels of government and self-defence.

Weaknesses of contemporary Nigerian politics

i. **Lack of Meritocracy**: Godfatherism often leads to the emergence of political candidates and officeholders who are not necessarily the most qualified or capable individuals. Instead, positions are often filled based on loyalty to the godfather rather than merit. This undermines the principles of inclusive governance, where individuals from diverse backgrounds and with different perspectives should have equal opportunities to participate in decision-making processes.

ii. **Nepotism, Ethnicity and Cronyism**: Godfathers tend to promote their own interests and those of their close associates, leading to the appointment of cronies' people from the same ethnic / religious group and family members to key positions. This practice excludes competent individuals who may be better suited for the roles, thereby limiting the diversity of voices and perspectives in governance and the armed forces.

iii. **Lack of Accountability**: Godfathers exert significant influence over their proteges, often controlling their actions and decisions. This can result in a lack of accountability, as the godfather's interests may take precedence over the public's welfare. The proteges may feel obligated to prioritize the godfather's interests, leading to a lack of transparency and accountability in governance and security agencies.

iv. **Stifling of Opposition:** Godfathers often exert control over the political landscape, making it difficult for opposition parties or independent candidates to thrive. This limits the choices available to voters and hampers the democratic process. Inclusive governance requires a level playing field where all individuals and parties have equal opportunities to participate and compete.

v. **Corruption and Rent-Seeking**: Godfatherism is often associated with corruption and rent-seeking behaviour. The godfather may demand financial contributions or other favours from their proteges in exchange for political support. This perpetuates a culture of corruption and undermines transparency in governance.

Literature Review: Democracy and Christian Genocide

Since 1999, there have been stumbling blocks to having a strong democracy in Nigeria at all levels of government. Conflict erupts in different sectors, triggered by political competition, communal, ethnic and religious or resource allocation rivalries. All these pose major threats to democracy. Hence, politics in Nigeria is largely seen as a very dirty game. One which involves all levels of physical and spiritual corruption. Such abominations are what a normal Christian man would instantly avoid for the purity of his soul and sanity of mind. These are the prevailing conditions in contemporary Nigerian politics which discourage the average Christian man from engaging in the process. The chaotic political landscape in Nigeria reflects ideas and concepts which could be derived from reading books such as; *The Prince* written by Nicolo Machiavelli, *The Art of War* written by Sun Zu and *48 Laws of Power* by Robert Greene; rather than the Holy Bible. These books with regards to democracy, propagate zero sum philosophies of winner takes all in politics hence, we experience the daredevil like approach to politics in Nigeria. These and other dark, radicalised literatures take it for granted that immoral acts are justified if they can help achieve political glory.

Importantly, in Nigeria, in 2022 and 2023 the National Broadcasting Commission NBC issued a total of 3,312 warnings to radio and TV stations to stop broadcasting cases of genocide and ethnic cleansing occurring in the country (Premiumtime news, 2022). Penalties

were issued to 125 stations in 2022 and 62 stations in 2023 respectively. Thereby highlighting a grand plan to suffocate information on the killings of Nigerians in general and Christians in particular. On the 16th of July, 2021 the NBC issued a directive to broadcast stations not to give details in their reports on the activities of insurgents, bandits, terrorists and kidnappers especially on the victims and number of casualties (The Cable, 2021). Scholars have argued that in instances of genocide, media censorship and popular misinformation by the central government played key roles (Conversi, 2006; Jones, 2006). This looked suspicious and an attempt to drastically reduce the impact of these atrocities on the larger society. Unfortunately, these violent conflicts such as insurgency, banditry, farmer-herder disputes, gang wars and separatist agitations have continued to afflict the country. These conflicts manifest as mass killings, property destruction, worsening poverty, and displacement. Consequently, Campell and Rotberg (2021) argued that, if a State's first obligation is to provide security and maintain a monopoly on the use of violence, then Nigeria has failed, even if some other aspects of the State still function. For these scholars (Campell and Rotberg) the unchecked violence perpetrated by several criminal groups increasingly threatens the government's grip on power.

According to the 2022 annual report published by Reliefweb international, in the last ten years over 60,000 lives were lost to Nigeria's security challenges. These figures are not adequate. The International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (Intersociety) compiled a more comprehensive report published in February, 2024 titled *Jihadist Genocide of Christians in Nigeria Bloodiest in 2023.* This report argued that out of 14 ongoing Genocides in the World today Nigeria ranked the second largest deadliest genocide country with 150,000 deaths since 2009 (Intersociety,2024). According to this report Nigeria is second to Syria with over 306,000 deaths since 2011. This organisation gave a more reasonable presentation of the crisis on the ground. These include; 1,450 Christian deaths in 2023 in Benue state, 1,400 in Plateau, 822 in Kaduna, 730 in Niger. Also 8,400 Christians were abducted in 2023 and 840 never returned alive from captivity just to mention a few hot spots (Intersociety, 2024). During the Unknown Gunmen crisis, Intersociety (2024) stated that the Military and Police abducted 800 citizens in 2023 in the predominantly Christian South-East region, majority of whom are yet to return alive till date.

Intersociety (2024) further stated in its report that Jihadist herdsmen abducted 1000 South Easterners in 2023 in the South East and slaughtered 600 in captivity. Islamist terror Jihadists abducted 1,300 in 2023 in Niger state, 1100 in Kaduna state and 400 in FCT. It also argued in its report that 500 Churches were attacked in 2023 and 18,500 Churches since 2009 with 70 Christian Clerics kidnapped in 2023 and at least 25 killed (Intersociety, 2024). According to Intersociety (2024) over 300 Christian communities were sacked in 2023 and more than 1,100 communities have been sacked since 2009. On a large scale 50 million Christians have been religiously threatened by religious terrorists mostly in the Northern part of Nigeria since 2009. The various armed conflicts in Northern Nigeria have substantial negative consequences as millions of civilians particularly Christians are forced to flee and become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) or cross international borders and become refugees. In Benue alone, there are over 3 million IDPs with millions of others emanating from theatres of war in Borno, Adamawa, Taraba and Yobe states (Nextier. database, 2023). Fresh numbers of IDPs have risen in Niger state, FCT, Nasarawa, Kogi, Ondo, Enugu states where extremist elements are operational (Nextier database, 2023).

Furthermore, Nigeria has gone through an avalanche of violent socio-political upheavals and armed insurgencies from 1999-2024, resulting in the death of innocent

Nigerians as stated above (Osaghae *et al* 2002). Importantly, the political class in the country needs to understand that when political power shifts amongst the major ethnic groups' it breeds legitimacy, peace, and development (Albert, 2002). Unfortunately, this is not so as structural violence has been built into Nigerian societies in the form of poverty, disease, and war. In Nigeria, conflicts arise over the control and distribution of political, economic, military, and legislative power, leading to marginalization and persecution of certain ethnic groups and the emergence of armed insurgencies. Western countries believe that democracy is the right system of government to foster good governance in Nigeria (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013). Yet a plethora of political complications stare Nigerians in the face. Despite the position of the Western countries on democracy, it has been proven that democracy alone does not guarantee economic growth, peace and development but rather a disciplined leadership. Consequently, with the absence of a disciplined ruling elite, national development, in-depth sociopolitical reforms, peace and stability are far from reality. Nigeria, therefore witnessed an increasing gap of inequality, corruption, ethnic conflicts, unhealthy ethnic competition and political intrigues, political marginalization, rising religious tension and religious insurgency, militancy and other related issues that bedevil the State.

Christian men in contemporary Nigerian politics

The involvement of Christian men in contemporary Nigerian politics has been a source of debate for quite some time. This argument must be dropped as Nigeria is constantly sliding into political chaos and economic instability. This is evident in the quality of life her citizens have experienced under the different democratic regimes from 1999 till date. The United Nations uses key indicators to establish the quality of life of citizens in any given country. These indicators called Human Development Index HDI (UNDP, 2024) are:

i. A long and healthy life
ii. Education – number of school years completed
iii. A decent standard of living – per capita income

The human development index is one statistical model the United Nations uses to rank countries based on their score. In most cases these indicators are high based on the political leadership of the country under scrutiny (UNDP, 2024). As such, this paper states that, political leadership is key to the improvement of a people's standard of living. Therefore, if we agree that politics is the art of governance which involves how the available resources of a country are to be shared out amongst the component groups, which in turn increases the standard of living of citizens, then Christian men must be involved in this all-important process called politics. It is no coincidence that the Bible says "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked man rules, the people groan" (Proverbs 29: 2 NKJV).

Whether politics is a dirty game or not, Christian men must answer the clarion call to be involved in the political process of their various communities. Since our yardstick is Jesus Christ who was obedient to His Father, Our Lord God even until death, then we too as sons of God must obey to be involved in political affairs as desired by Him in Proverbs 29: 2. This is so because, the Lord knows that wicked men are more than willing to take up whatever position is available in government. Looking at Mordecai's case, he was able to change the system because he was an insider. Haman harassed and intimidated God's people until he wanted them all eliminated (Esther 4: 14 NKJV). Mordecai as the stepfather to Queen Esther could have hidden in the shadows, but as a Christian man who had compassion for others

and for the survival of his people, he ventured into politics. Mordecai was able to defend and bring his people to safety because he was involved in the political process of that time.

In the Bible, politicians like King Solomon were not given an option whether or not to join politics in Israel. Governance was thrust into Solomon's hands and he asked for godly wisdom from God to carry out his political responsibilities and roles. The important thing we should note here is that it greatly pleased God that Solomon didn't ask for anything else but wisdom to excel in politics. This excited our Lord God so much because Solomon's request was in line with Christ Jesus's instruction to be the salt and light of the world. In Matthew 5:13-16, the Bible calls on us Christian men to be the salt and the light of the world. As you know, Christ spoke in parables hence the value of salt is evident only when it is added either to food for improved taste, to meat as a preservative or to sores as a disinfectant. This means that one of the usefulness of the Christian man includes adding value to politics. Also, as light, showing the right way things should be done in a political sector that is full of darkness. Particularly, in reducing financial corruption and recklessness by increasing accountability in the use of public funds, just like Stephen did, the Apostle who was stoned to death. Light is useless if it does not give light. Salt is a preservative which means as Christian men we have been raised by God to preserve the societal value and norms of our day. Light brings illumination thereby expelling darkness. There is so much decay in contemporary Nigerian politics and society today because very few politicians have the interest of the masses at heart while many are so selfish and corrupt. So, as Christian men, we must make a difference when we get elected, appointed, or promoted into high offices. This is because you can effectively change a system from within the system, not outside the system. Daniel, Joseph, Shedrack, Mishack and Abednigo all served in the most idolatrous governments on earth.

Recommendation: Being the Salt and the Light of Nigerian Politics

Since we have agreed that the role of a Christian man has to do with the behaviour expected of him when he occupies a given social position or status. Thus, the role of a Christian man in politics is a comprehensive pattern of behaviour that is socially recognized, providing a means of identifying and placing this individual in a society. Therefore, for the Christian men, their role in politics also serves as a strategy for coping with recurrent situations and dealing with the roles and actions of others. Hence, Christian men should arise and get involved directly or indirectly in politics. Directly when they run for political offices and indirectly when they encourage godly people to join politics and also when they go out and fulfil their civic responsibilities.

i. **Key Roles of Christian men in politics**
   - Integrity: Conduct themselves with honesty, transparency, and accountability
   - Justice: Advocate for fairness, equality, and the protection of human rights
   - Compassion: Show empathy and kindness to the vulnerable and marginalized
   - Stewardship: Manage resources wisely and prioritize the common good

ii. **Practical Applications of roles**
   - Engage in respectful dialogue and listen to diverse perspectives
   - Stand up for the oppressed and advocate for justice
   - Support policies that promote human flourishing and dignity
   - Lead with humility and servant-leadership

iii. **Challenges and Opportunities**
- Navigate complex issues with biblical wisdom and grace
- Resist the temptation to conflate politics with idolatry
- Collaborate with others to build bridges and find common ground.

iv. **Self Defence:** This paper will finally recommend active participation of Christian men in Nigerian politics to create community security outfits. Communal security will act as first responders to any act of aggression against vulnerable Christian communities before the police or army arrives. The dangers facing Christianity in Nigeria today are of huge proportions and do not require docile participation. Importantly, the times in Nigeria reflect the recommendation made in the Scriptures in Luke 22:36, which directly calls for political action including self-defence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as Christian men, we are called to be salt and light in the world, and this includes the realm of politics. The key point is to realise that we are involved anyway, we have no choice about being political because if we choose not to engage then our actions become a vote for the status quo – an evil world. Our faith should inform our approach to governance, leadership, and citizenship. This is because you can effectively change a system from within the system, not outside the system. In politics there are three types of stakeholders or parties to a conflict the Christian man should be aware of, firstly, the primary stakeholders. They are the ones you see arguing and fighting over an issue. Secondly, the secondary stakeholders, this group have primary ties with the primary stakeholders. Thirdly the shadow parties, these are the most dangerous parties or persons in politics, they will fund a conflict but don't want to be seen in any way connected to the conflict. Every Christian man in politics must at every given situation identify the shadow parties involved in each activity. As Christian men in politics, we have a unique calling to shape the world around us. May we embrace this responsibility with courage, faith, and a commitment to serving our communities. Finally, as King Solomon did, always ask God for wisdom to excel in politics. Let us pray for wisdom, discernment, and grace to fulfil our roles with integrity and excellence.

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**Note all Bible reference are of the New King James Version

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Article **Open Access**

FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL AND THE WELL-BEING OF PEOPLE IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF UYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract

The removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria has had a profound impact on the well-being of its citizens, influencing economic stability, household/personal income, and access to essential goods and services. While the policy aims to reduce government expenditure and stimulate economic growth, it has led to an immediate surge in fuel prices, triggering inflation in transportation, food and other basic commodities. Hence, the study investigates the effect of fuel subsidy removal on the well-being of Nigerians living in the country, with specific focus on Uyo Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State. The objective was to ascertain whether the removal fuel subsidy affected the people's ability to afford food, shelter and healthcare. Using a questionnaire-based survey, information was elicited from 382 (three hundred and eighty-two) respondents on the impact of fuel subsidy removal on their well-being. Simple percentages, frequency counts and chi-square were employed to analyse data gathered. Findings from the study revealed a significant shift in personal financial management (income and savings), hence the inability of people to afford food, shelter as well as healthcare. The study also revealed an overall decline in the standard of living of the people living in Uyo Local Government Area. The study recommended among others that government should adopt good food security measures such as subsidised agricultural input, to provide farmers with subsidies on seeds, fertilizers, and equipment which will reduce production cost; and investment in public healthcare should be prioritised in order to make services more affordable to the people as this will reduce out-of- pocket expenses.

Keywords: Fuel Subsidy, Fuel Subsidy Removal, Well-being, Cost of Living, Uyo Local Government.

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Introduction

Nigeria being one of the largest oil producing countries in Africa paradoxically depends on imported refined petroleum products due to its underperforming refineries. This reliance on imports has made the cost of petrol highly volatile and subject to international market fluctuations. However, fuel subsidy, has been a mechanism used by successive government or administration to shield consumers from the unpredictability of oil price fluctuations and it has also played a role in stabilizing domestic fuel prices and mitigating inflationary pressures. Historically, fuel subsidies in Nigeria have been perceived as one of the privileges citizens receive from the government, especially in light of the inconsistent and unreliable electricity supply in the country. The removal of these subsidies resulted in a significant portion of an individual's daily budget being allocated to cover the soaring cost of petrol, which would in turn, force many to heavily rely on petrol generators. However, it is worth noting that these subsidies have placed a considerable economic burden on Nigeria, with an estimated cost of $10 billion annually as of 2022 (Falana and Ojo, 2023). Nigeria's experience with fuel subsidies dates back to the 1970s, following the nationalization of the petroleum industry and the subsequent boom in oil revenues. With the emergence of oil as a significant source of government revenue, successive administrations introduced fuel subsidies as a means to provide affordable energy to the populace. These subsidies were initially viewed as a social welfare measure, aimed at alleviating the burden of high fuel prices on consumers, particularly in a country where transportation and energy costs play a pivotal role in everyday life. However, the sustainability of fuel subsidies came into question as Nigeria grappled with economic challenges, including fiscal deficits, inflationary pressures, and macro-economic instability (Otu *et al.* 2024).

The oil price shocks of the 1980s and 1990s exposed the vulnerabilities of Nigeria's oil-dependent economy, highlighting the need for reforms to enhance fiscal sustainability and reduce reliance on volatile oil revenues. Despite these challenges, fuel subsidies persisted as a politically sensitive issue, with successive administrations hesitant to implement comprehensive reforms due to concerns about social unrest and political backlash. The Goodluck Jonathan led administration attempted to enforce fuel subsidy removal in 2012, and nationwide protests and social unrest was the result. However, on May 29 2023, President Bola Tinubu, in his inaugural address declared, amongst other things that fuel subsidy had gone. According to the President, the subsidy could no longer justify its ever-increasing costs in the wake of drying resources, hence funds saved shall be reallocated into better investment in public infrastructure, education, health care and jobs that will materially improve the lives of millions, (Francis 2014 cited in Otu *et al*. 2024). The president remarks had thrown Nigerians, particularly those in Uyo LGA (local government area) into a phase of severe hardship as rightly presaged by Onuoha 2023. Hence, this paper examines the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the well-being of Nigerians, particularly those residing in Uyo Local Government Area.

Statement of the Problem

The removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria has been one of the most significant political and economic issues in the country, particularly in 2023. It has significantly impacted the well-being of citizens, exacerbating economic and social challenges. While the subsidy was unsustainable and riddled with inefficiencies, its removal has led to a sharp increase in the cost of petrol, triggering inflation and escalating the cost of living for millions of Nigerians and the inhabitants of Uyo Local Government Area in particular, especially those in the low

and middle-income bracket. Many people now face reduced purchasing power, inability to access healthcare, accommodation problems, higher transportation and food cost disproportionately affecting the people. Despite promises of palliatives and compensation by the government, the implementation of these measures has been slow and insufficient, leaving citizens grappling with economic hardship. Additionally, it has been argued the fund realised from the subsidy has not been used effectively and transparently to improve essential services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure. This is as a result of the fact that these funds are politically shared among governors to embark on series of human impacted projects. Regrettably, these funds are channelled into other political interests by some governors thereby leaving the problems (arising from the removal of subsidy) unsolved. This has raised questions among scholars as to ascertain the extent to which fuel subsidy removal has impacted on the general wellbeing of the citizenry. Based on the above raised issues, the study is guided by the following objectives.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, the study examines the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the well-being of people living in Uyo Local Government Area. Specifically, the study seeks to;

i. Examine the impact of fuel subsidy removal on food affordability by the people of Uyo Local Government Area.
ii. Examine the effect of fuel subsidy removal on the people's ability to afford shelter in Uyo Local Government Area.
iii. Ascertain if fuel subsidy removal has reduced people chances of accessing healthcare in Uyo Local Government Area.

Research Hypotheses

i. Fuel subsidy removal is likely to influence peoples' affordability of food in Uyo Local Government Area.
ii. People ability to afford shelter in Uyo Local Government area tends to be affected by fuel subsidy removal.
iii. Reduced healthcare accessibility by the people of Uyo Local Government Area is likely a function of fuel subsidy removal.

Review of Related Concepts and Literature

Subsidy/Fuel Subsidy: A subsidy is any policy that keeps consumer prices for commodities below market rates while keeping producer prices above market rates (Kotchen, 2021). It refers to aid provided to organizations or people by the government in the form of money, a tax break, or a decrease in the price of products and services (Holton, 2012). The fundamental goal of subsidies is to assist companies and individuals in getting the necessary goods and services that they would not otherwise be able to afford. There are many distinct types of subsidies, both direct and indirect that affects pricing which are grants, price restrictions, and tax reductions are examples of subsidies that have immediate effects (Barany and Grigonyte, 2015). Subsidy exists when the government helps the consumers of a particular product to pay a price lower than the prevailing market price of that commodity (Couharde, 2023). Musa (2009), sees subsidy as a kind of market manipulation whereby the government fixes the price of the commodity below its actual market price and pays the difference to the retailers. In this case, the government fixes the pump price of fuel below the actual market price and the difference is paid to the importers and marketers by the

government. Subsidy exists when the government helps the consumers of a particular product to pay a price lower than the prevailing market price of that commodity (Couharde, 2023). When subsidies are in place, consumers would pay below the market price per litre of the petroleum product. Globally, there are debates about fuel subsidy because of its huge amount and its effect on citizens welfare and the fiscal health of a nation.

The term fuel is a generic name that refers to any material used to power a machine or equipment. Fuel is basically used as sources of energy through which human activities are undertaken. However, what is regarded as a fuel may vary from situation to situation. A fuel may include nuclear, bio and fossil, and in some other contexts it may be Gasoline, Kerosene, diesel or Premium Motor Spirit (petrol). Fuel in this paper denotes the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) popularly known as petrol. The PMS is a major source of energy in the Nigerian economy. It is used as a source of energy for over 90% of motor vehicles involved in transportation of goods and persons (Oladimeji and Umar 2024). It is also the preferred energy source for generating sets in many small scale businesses and households as alternative to electricity. Fuel subsidy is a government discount on the market price of fossil fuel to make consumers pay less than the prevailing market price of fuel (Ovaga and Okechukwu, 2022). This means that a fraction of the price that consumers are supposed to pay for the use of petroleum products is paid by the government so as to reduce the price burden. Fuel subsidy can be properly defined as government effort in paying for the difference between the pump price of fuel at the petrol station and the actual cost of importation of the product. So, by paying the difference, the government enables fuel to be sold at a lower price to help ease the burden of its people especially lower-income groups, A Fuel subsidy is a grant of financial aid from the government used to maintain the low price of petroleum products (Ozili *et al*. 2023).

Fuel subsidy refers to a government policy designed to reduce the retail price of fuel below the market equilibrium by compensating oil marketers or producers for the difference. This mechanism aims to make fuel affordable for consumers, thus lowering the cost of transportation, production, and energy-dependent goods (Adenikinju, 2012). Subsidies are often justified on social welfare grounds, especially in developing countries, where high fuel prices could significantly impact low-income households (Ebrahim, 2019). However, fuel subsidies in Nigeria have been criticized for fostering inefficiencies, corruption, and fiscal burdens on government budgets (Adenikinju, 2014). The policy has historically been a double-edged sword: while it cushions consumers from global oil price volatility, it also distorts market prices and discourages investment in alternative energy sources (Onyeiwu and Akinyemi, 2018). The removal of such subsidies, therefore, aims to correct these distortions but risks immediate socio-economic shocks, particularly for vulnerable populations (Udoakah and Imoisi, 2023).

The Concept of Well-being

In a very broad sense, well-being is a good, satisfactory, and desirable state of existence or life. It represents a personal aspect of the quality of life. Wellbeing is multidimensional, covering aspects of life including housing, income, work and job quality, health, knowledge and skills, civic engagement, social connections, safety and work-life-balance. A person's wellbeing can be influenced by environmental, social and economic factors at the individual, family and community level, and each person's unique circumstances and experiences contributes to their wellbeing (OECD 2020). It encompasses various aspects of human experience, including physical (good health, proper nutrition and sleep etc), mental and

emotional (low stress level, emotional stability self-awareness and acceptance), social (supportive relationships with family, friends and community, sense of belonging), and spiritual dimensions (sense of purpose and meaning in life, mindfulness, gratitude and inner peace). Well-being is not merely the absence of disease but a dynamic state of thriving, balance, and fulfilment.

Impacts of Subsidy Removal on Food Affordability

Nigeria has struggled to control its fuel subsidies, a policy with significant impacts on economic sectors like food prices and agriculture. Fuel subsidies have strained Nigeria's budget and distorted market dynamics, despite their intent to make energy and transportation more affordable. The removal of these subsidies has notably affected food prices and the cost of living. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023) report pointed out that food inflation rate in May of 2023 stood at 24.82 percent on a year-on-year basis, driven by increases in prices of essential commodities like oil and fat, yam, bread, cereals, fish, and meat. This underscores the cascading effects of subsidy removal on various sectors of the economy, potentially exacerbating inflationary pressures. The analysis of month-on-month and year-on-year data highlights the upward trajectory of inflation in the wake of subsidy removal. Year-on-year inflation in May 2023 was 4.70 percentage points higher compared to May 2022, and month on- month inflation in May 2023 was 0.03 percent higher than in April 2023 (NBS, 2023). This trend indicates that the subsidy removal has contributed to persistent inflationary pressures. Given the importance of fuel in daily activities, subsidies ensure access and affordability, especially when crude oil prices are volatile. Additionally, subsidies lower and stabilize fuel prices, thus contributing to price stability in the economy. Moreover, fuel subsidies support various industries by keeping input costs, particularly transportation, relatively lower, which sustains economic activities (NES Group, 2023). Market distortions and inefficiencies arise from the deviation of prices from market clearing prices, which can lead to shortages and disruptions in the supply chain. As Nigeria grapples with the economic implications of subsidy removal, policymakers need to adopt a comprehensive approach that considers not only short-term inflationary effects but also broader economic dynamics and potential mitigative measures.

Interestingly, the removal of fuel subsidies impacts food prices primarily through increased transportation costs. Subsidies lower fuel costs, reducing transportation expenses for goods. Without them, fuel prices rise, increasing transportation costs for farmers and distributors, which leads to higher food prices (NBS, 2024). A report by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024) noted that food prices, including grains, vegetables, and meat, surged significantly due to increased fuel costs. Food inflation spiked by 30% within six months of subsidy removal. Edo, Kogi, and Cross River were identified as States with the highest food prices in June 2024. The food sector is likely to experience a surge in prices due to increased transportation and production costs. This could lead to higher food prices, which disproportionately affect low-income households that spend a larger proportion of their income on food. The resulting inflation could heighten food insecurity and reduce access to nutritious food for many Nigerians, thereby impacting their overall well-being and quality of life (Brown and Nguyen, 2023). According to the NBS (2024), the Consumer Price Index (CPI) surged by 15.3% in the month following the subsidy removal, highlighting a major increase in consumer inflation and reduced purchasing power (NBS, 2024). Lower-income households, which spend a larger share of their income on food, have been disproportionately impacted, leading to reduced consumption and economic. Despite these

immediate challenges, the long-term outlook could be more positive. The subsidy removal may lead to economic stabilization by reducing fiscal deficits and improving resource allocation. However, the transition period requires government action to alleviate adverse effects on vulnerable populations (United Nations Development Programme, 2024).

Impacts of Subsidy Removal on Healthcare Accessibility

The provision of healthcare services in Nigeria is a mix of public and private efforts, with private health facilities playing a significant role in urban centers. Over the years, the Nigerian government has implemented various subsidy regimes to ease the financial burden on citizens and businesses, especially in essential sectors like fuel and energy. On May 29th, 2023, fuel subsidy was eventually removed by President Ahmed Bola Tinubu in his inaugural speech leading to a sharp increase in fuel prices across the country (Ikenga, and Oluka, 2023). This policy change has triggered significant socio-economic consequences, including increased transportation costs, higher prices for goods and services, and a reduction in the purchasing power of households. (Akinola and Uche, 2023). Subsidies, particularly on petroleum products, have long served as an indirect support mechanism for healthcare providers by reducing operational costs associated with electricity generation, transportation, and supply chain logistics (Nwachukwu *et al.* 2022). With the removal of these subsidies, private health facilities are now facing increased costs of operation, which may directly impact their ability to provide affordable and accessible care to patients. For instance, power generation, which is largely dependent on diesel and petrol, has become significantly more expensive, thereby affecting service delivery and pricing in many clinics and hospitals (Okonjo- Iweala, 2023).

Uyo Metropolis, like many urban centers in Nigeria, is heavily reliant on private health facilities due to inadequate public health infrastructure. These facilities cater to a significant portion of the population, particularly in middle and high-income brackets. However, the rising cost of medical supplies, transportation, and utilities could threaten the sustainability of these services (Eze and Akpan, 2023). Furthermore, the economic burden may be transferred to patients through increased service charges, which could reduce healthcare accessibility, especially among low-income earners. In accessing healthcare services, therefore, money is very important. However, with the withdrawal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria recently, the cost implication for accessing healthcare services would be very grave for a number of people as this fuel subsidy spells higher cost of production of drugs and even higher fare to and from healthcare centres and hospitals. Even the healthcare personnel who are also affected by the impact of fuel subsidy removal in many ways would also demand higher fee for treatment. Majority of people cannot afford health centre services as it is today. The economic crisis facing Nigeria as a result of fuel subsidy removal continues to deteriorate and prevent many households from gaining access to basic healthcare since the salaries of workers are not upgraded; they find it difficult to provide food for their immediate families and also take care of health issues (Nolan, 2014). This situation may reduce the family's demand for healthcare, and thus introduce adverse implications on health care spending. The access to healthcare system would be seriously hampered as a result of the withdrawal of fuel subsidy which has introduced a lot hard time for the average Nigerians. Omotayo (2023) is right when he observed that, the access to healthcare system has drastically reduced due to the high rate of poverty and deprivation in Nigeria. Eko (2017) also shared Omotayo's (2023) view, when he noted that, the Nigerian health sector is still striving to provide basic healthcare services with the collaborative

efforts of the three tiers of government, but efforts to achieve this seem impracticable due to the current state of the economy.

Impacts of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Affordability of Shelter

It would be necessary for us to understand what is meant by "affordable house" for a proper grasp of the discussion that follows. Affordable housing is any housing that a household can pay for, while still having money left over for other necessities like food, transportation and healthcare. Put differently, affordable housing refers to housing units that are affordable by that sector of society whose income is below the median household income. This is, to say, that affordable housing is housing which is deemed affordable to those with a household income at or below the median as rated by the national government. Of course, the median household income is the number in the middle when the incomes of every household from the poorest to the richest are listed according to Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (FMHUD). From the foregoing explanations, it is apparent that "affordable housing" is meant for a household of income earners and also, it is accommodation that is for not-so-rich and not-so- poor families or those slightly below the middle or median position. This means an average income earning family could afford or access this type of housing without much hassles or financial inconveniences. Now the question is: How has the removal of fuel subsidy affected the access of the not-so- rich income earners to affordable housing? With the increasing costs in every aspect of the economy as a result of the withdrawal of fuel subsidy there are indications that times are really hard for income earners. Bond (2014) observed that a growing number of low-income tenants are leaving the city centres in Nigeria for the suburbs as house rent and inflation continue to surge, adding to the pain of rising cost of living in the country due to fuel subsidy removal. This, of course, should be expected as the prices of construction supplies including cement, steel, and other building materials are increasing as a result of the elimination of fuel subsidies. Real estate development projects have become more expensive as a result of this cost increase. It is difficult for developers and builders to strike a balance between expenses and profit margins, which naturally has caused development projects to be delayed or housing prices to rise. A rise in home prices could result from higher building costs and rising living expenses.

In fact, the issue has become complicated as prospective homeowners find it more difficult to afford homes due to the price increase, especially those in the middle- and lower-income brackets. In most cities, especially those of Lagos, Abuja and Kaduna, some locations that were affordable in terms of rent are no longer so as they have gone out of the reach of low-income renters due to the removal of fuel subsidy. This situation has made the number of renters or tenants to swell without any restraints. Also, property conversion has added to the night-mare of tenants and prospective tenants. As landlords have embarked on changing many houses from residential to commercial houses for companies, this has reduced the supply of residential accommodation for individual tenants. Moreover, the high cost of building materials which has limited the ability of developers to put more property on the market has combined to make situations for tenants more excruciating. Thus, these conditions, combined with the ever-rising inflationary trend are forcing landlords to increase their rents so that they could pay their bills, maintain their houses and respond to the rising cost of living generally. Over the years, it is known that rents normally rise as a result of limited supply and high demand for both residential and commercial property, but recently, high inflation that came in the wake of the withdrawal of the fuel subsidy, has contributed to a poor economy, unfriendly economic policy and inadequate employment, and these equally

have resulted in reduced productivity and erosion of earning power of many Nigerians. As a matter of fact, according to the latest figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024), the Bureau observed among other things that:

> The yearly inflation rate in Nigeria accelerated to 21.91 per cent in February from 21.82 per cent in January. House rent, soaring food prices and weaker currency were some of the main drivers of the further rise in inflation rate. This is so because the cities are centres for higher cost of living, higher property taxes, increase in cost of building materials and utility costs. In this instance, landlords are finding it difficult to offer affordable rents, more so when the costs of building materials such as cement, roofing sheets, sticks and paints, have risen by over 150 per cent in recent years.

Apart from the above situation, more and more dire conditions have contributed to make access to affordable housing difficult for people. The recession experience in Nigeria which has continued to take its toll on the country has cause the nation to witness a massive crash in the price of stocks and shares in the stock exchange market. Of course, the real estate sector is not exempt from this economic situation. It is common knowledge that one of the most notable hallmarks of a recession is the scarcity of funds. This scarcity of funds is further complicated by the fluctuation in the value of the Naira against the Dollar/Pounds. Then, as a fall-out from this fluctuation, a lot of people find it very difficult to afford or access affordable housing at this time. The effect of fuel subsidy removal has resulted in numerous challenges; with one of the most pressing needs is the need for affordable housing in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

A study by Idisi, Musa, Madueke, Isa, Idiege, Emmanuel, Ogunfinde, and Atteh (2024) assessed how the removal of fuel subsidies affected households' standard of living in Bwari Area Council, Federal Capital Territory-Abuja, Nigeria. Using multi-stage and random sampling methods, a sample of 80 respondents was chosen from eight communities. The data was analyzed using Garrett ranking, multiple regression, and descriptive statistics. According to the regression analysis, household size was significant at the 10% level, while age, monthly income, and primary livelihood were significant at the 1% level. The coefficient of determination (R2) shows that the independent variables account for 64% of the effect of the variables on households' income (the dependent variable) on the government's removal of fuel subsidies. Noah, Jubril, and Bello (2024) investigated the effect of fuel subsidy removal on Nigeria's supply chain, focusing on fuel prices, transportation costs, and food prices. The Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.93$, $p < 0.0001$) between petrol prices and food prices. Regression analysis showed that petrol prices significantly impact transportation costs ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.0001$), suggesting that rising fuel prices lead to higher transportation costs that could be passed on to consumers. Co-integration analysis provided evidence of a long-term equilibrium relationship between petrol prices, transportation costs, and food prices.

The study of Adepoju, Balogun and Bekesuomowei (2023) titled impact of fuel subsidy removal on gross domestic product and transportation cost in Nigeria. The study identified economic problem arising from transportation cost due to removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria. Secondary data were collected from Statista, World Bank web link and prices of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) from 2011-2023. Data on the three variables i.e GDP, the price of PMS and inflation rate were correlated to determine their level of relationships. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse the secondary data with the

aid of SPSS software. The result from the analysis indicated that, inflation increased by 64% with increased fuel price decreasing GDP by 42.5%. Inflation is witness sed to have increased and GDP decreases. It can be seen that fuel is very critical to the development of Nigeria. It has a direct effect on GDP and surprisingly price inflation has impact on Nigerians. Solving one problem perhaps of fuel has a significant effect on economy. The study recommended that two things that should be done as alternatives to subsidy removal; the first is to make the supply of fuel more than the demand. The second option is to find alternative fuel like other countries because the demand for crude oil as major revenue may dwindle over time if the buyers who are planning vigorously on alternative fuel are able to do away with our crude oil. The use of electric vehicle, solar powered vehicles, hybrid vehicles and policy that will encourage non-motorized transport can assist Nigeria to forestall future challenges of global oil demand.

In the same vein, Ikenga and Oluka (2023) examined the benefits and challenges of the fuel subsidy removal on Nigeria's economy during the Fourth Republic. The study employed descriptive analysis and a qualitative data collection method. The study submitted that the previous attempts at reversing fuel subsidy brought untold hardship on the citizens due to increased price of petroleum products, food and transportation. Consequently, the study urged that the federal government to pay a closer attention to the impact fuel subsidy removal has on the citizens while providing palliatives, improved electricity supply and other essential amenities to curb the effects. Onuoha (2023) conducted a study investigating the discourse surrounding the removal of fuel subsidies and its impacts on the Nigerian economy. The research revealed a surge in transportation costs, a steep increase in food prices, and a corresponding upswing in the prices of other essential commodities. The study also observed stagnation in financial situations for certain households lacking a substantial source of income, contributing to a decline in overall income and exacerbating poverty levels within the nation. The study however recommended that government should put in place measures such as the provision of food palliatives especially to low income earners and rural areas where the issue of fuel subsidy removal is biting more, and government should also increase her social investment programs such as the N-Power and school feeding programmes etc.

Nwachukwu and Tumba (2023) conducted a study on the ripple effects of petroleum subsidy removal on consumer buying behaviour in Nigeria. Findings from their study revealed that subsidy removal resulted in an abrupt increase in fuel price, which cascaded into higher costs of transportation and essential goods and services, thereby leading to poor consumer behaviour such as panic buying and hoarding. Hence, they recommended that in order to mitigate the harsh effect of subsidy removal, government should implement a portfolio approach to compensate the poor, including measures such as transport vouchers, mass transit schemes, and e-wallets for small scale businesses. Obiora and Ozillis (2023) analysis of the macroeconomic and microeconomic implications of the 2023 fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria, employing the discourse analysis methodology, provided valuable insights into the potential consequences of this policy shift. They highlighted several positive outcomes, including the freeing up of financial resources for other sectors, incentivizing domestic refineries, reducing dependence on. Imported fuel, boosting employment, and addressing critical public infrastructure needs. However, their study also acknowledges the negative implications, such as potential short-term economic growth reduction, increased inflation, poverty levels, fuel smuggling, and job losses in the informal sector. While the study offers a comprehensive overview of these aspects and provides policy

recommendations, it is important to note some limitations. One significant drawback is the absence of empirical data to substantiate the claims regarding the impact 'of fuel subsidy removal. Additionally, the study does not delve into the potential challenges of implementing these policies, the complexities of subsidy removal in practice, or the Political and social implications in detail. A more robust analysis that incorporates empirical evidence and a deeper exploration of the practical challenges would enhance the study's credibility and utility for policymakers.

In a similar vein, Omotosho (2019) conducted an in-depth analysis of the macroeconomics implications of oil price shocks and the fuel subsidy regime in Nigeria. The study utilised a New-Keynesian DSGE model to estimate the effects of international oil price fluctuations on the retail price of fuel. The findings revealed that oil price shocks significantly impacted Nigeria's economic output, accounting for around 22 percent of output variations over a four-year period. In the benchmark model, which included fuel subsidies, a negative oil price shock led to a contraction in aggregate GDP, stimulated non-oil GDP, increased headline inflation, and depreciated the exchange rate.

Theoretical framework

This study is rooted in the framework of Structural Functionalism, a sociological perspective that traces its origins back to early scholars such as Herbert Spencer 1820-1903), and Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) and Robert Merton (1910-2003). Central to functionalism, often referred to as structural functionalism, is the concept of the "organismic analogy," which envisions society as a cohesive whole. The primary focus of this sociological approach is on the overarching social structures and institutions within society, examining their interconnectedness and the impact they exert on individuals. Durkheim, a prominent figure in the development of functionalism, articulated several key assumptions for understanding society. In Nigeria, various structures (Ministries, Institutions etc.) have been established with the responsibility of delivering services to the citizens. While some structures are multifaceted, some are particularly tailored for specific functions. Notably, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and the Ministry of Petroleum, often overseen by the President, have as their duty to formulate and implement policies that govern the country's oil and gas industry. In other to make fuel affordable to the citizens, fuel subsidy was introduced as a mechanism to support economic stability by making fuel affordable, thus reducing transportation and production costs. However, its removal by the president (Minister of Petroleum), without putting in place adequate measures to curb its effects disrupts this balance, hence increasing the cost of living, reducing disposable income, and straining other sectors and institutions alike.

Methodology

The design adopted for the study was descriptive research and survey. The study utilised both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was gathered through the use of a structured questionnaire. Adult residents living in Uyo LGA within the age bracket of 18-55 and above (413,318) made up the population of study (NBS 2020). A sample size of 382 (three hundred and eighty-two) was drawn from the population using Krejcie and Morgan's table of sample determination. Stratified sampling technique was adopted to divide the population into four strata (civil servants, business men/women, artisans and students) and simple random sampling technique was employed to pick 150 (one hundred and fifty) respondents each from the stratum consisting of civil servants and business men/women while 52 (fifty-two) and 30 (thirty) respondents were chosen from the stratum consisting of

students and artisans respectively. Descriptive statistics such as simple percentages, frequency counts, and Chi-square statistical tool were employed as methods for data analysis. However, out of the 382 (three hundred and eighty-two) copies of questionnaire sent out, only 370 (three hundred and seventy) copies were retrieved and used for the analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Demographic and Socioeconomic Information of the Respondents, N=370

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	258	69.7%
	Female	112	30.3%
Age	18-24	22	5.9%
	25-34	73	19.7%
	35-44	196	53.0%
	45-54	55	14.9%
	55 and above	24	6.5%
Marital Status	Married	211	57.0%
	Single	113	30.5%
	Widowed	31	8.4%
	No response	15	4.1%
Educational	Informal	24	6.5%
Attainment	Primary	69	18.6%
	Secondary	90	24.3%
	Tertiary	187	50.5%
Occupation	Civil servant	150	40.5%
	Business man/ woman	150	40.5%
	Artisan	18	4.9%
	Student	52	14.1%
Level of Income	20,0000	5	1.4%
	20,001-50,000	22	5.9%
	50,001-100,000	188	50.8%
	100,001-200,000	97	26.2%
	200,001-300,000	38	10.3%
	300,001-400,000	15	4.1%
	400,001-500,000	10	2.7%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics. The result was presented in Table 1 above and discussed according to the research objectives. From the table, gender distribution shows that 69.7% of the respondents were male and 30.3% were female. The age range of the respondents between 18-24, 25–34, 35-44 and 45-54 are 5.9%, 19.7%, 53.0% and 14.9% respectively. Only about 6.5% were 55 years and above. This implies that a total of 93.5% of the respondents are in active age and engage in various activities that involve the use of fuel in the study area. Classification of marital status from the distribution of the respondents revealed that 57.0% are married, 30.5%,

8.4% are widows while there was no response from 4.1% of the respondents with regards to marital status. It can be seen that most of the respondents are married. The marital status of a person is expected to determine the extent of responsibility of that person and the manner in which he or she will allocate scarce resources at his or her disposal. This implies that majority of the respondents may require high quantity of fuel, hence the effect of subsidy removal on the goods and service demanded for daily sustenance. The marital status indicates the weight of responsibility, the extent of commitment to his or her job as well as the quantity of fuel he or she is likely to use at a point in time. Single individuals are more likely to demand less of the fuel energy due to the small size of their dwelling compared to those who are married with dependents to take care of.

The distribution of the respondents according to educational background showed that 50.5% and 24.3% had tertiary and secondary qualifications respectively, while only 6.5% had informal education. Implicatively, most of them are literate with majority having tertiary educational qualification. Respondents that possess high educational qualifications are more likely to feel less impact of subsidy removal owing to higher income earned as well as high propensity in optimum utilisation of resources at their disposal. The distribution of the respondents by occupation revealed that 40.5% were civil servants, 40.5% have their own businesses, 14.1% are students while 4.9% are artisans. This implies that the civil servants, with a fixed income level, stand higher chances of being affected by subsidy removal than the rest of the respondents due to their inability to increase income monthly.

As for the business men/women, they could effect increase in price of inputs emanating from subsidy removal on to the consumers so as to offset the differences thereby maintaining a desired income level. Income distribution of the respondents from Table 1 above revealed that about 50.6% of the respondents earn more than ₦100,000, while 1.4% earn below ₦20,000 per month. According to economic theory, the level of consumption of an individual depends largely on his level of current income as propounded by Keynes, the absolute income hypothesis; it states that, “the current real income is the most important determinant of consumption in the short run”. In other words, the higher the individual’s level of income, the higher will be his consumption level. Keynes used the parameter marginal propensity to consume in explaining this. Thus, respondents who fall within the income level between ₦80,000 to ₦100,000 (39.1%) will be less affected compared to those in other groups. This implies that 23.3% of the respondents (with monthly income of less than ₦20,000- ₦60,000) were the most affected owing to high cost of goods and services brought about by subsidy removal.

Table 2: Fuel Subsidy Removal and the Well-being of People in Uyo LGA

	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Government has removed fuel subsidy in Nigeria.	370 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
2.	Fuel subsidy removal has increased overall cost of living.	135 36.5%	159 42.9%	12 3.2%	54 14.6%	10 2.7%
3.	The changes in fuel price has increased my financial stress.	120 32.4%	170 45.9%	10 2.7%	52 14.1%	18 4.9%
4.	The fuel subsidy policy has led to increase in the cost of goods and services in my area.	141 38.1%	190 51.4%	8 2.1%	27 7.3%	4 1.1%
5.	Fuel subsidy removal has affected my ability to afford food.	80 21.6%	138 37.3%	15 4.1%	110 29.7%	27 7.3%
6.	My ability to save money has declined since the removal of fuel subsidy.	108 29.9%	157 42.4%	2 0.5%	70 18.9%	33 8.9%
7.	I can barely afford my house rent due to increase in rent resulting from fuel subsidy removal.	85 22.9%	120 32.4%	6 1.6%	82 22.2%	77 20.8%
8.	Fuel subsidy removal has affected my means of livelihood adversely.	80 21.6%	102 27.6%	58 15.7%	70 18.9%	60 16.2%
9.	My access to healthcare has reduced due to high cost of medical services arising from subsidy removal.	60 16.2%	148 41 .0%	21 5.7%	80 21.6%	61 16.5%
10.	My overall standard of living has declined due to fuel price changes resulting from fuel subsidy removal.	136 36.8%	138 37.3%	5 1.4%	76 20.5%	14 3.8%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows the impact of fuel subsidy rem oval on the well-being of people in the study area. The results from the survey revealed that 100% being the total of all the respondents strongly agreed that fuel subsidy has been removed. This means that all the respondents are aware and up to date on fuel subsidy policies. 36.5% 42.9% of the respondents strongly agree and agree that the overall cost of living has increased due t subsidy removal, 14.1% and 2.7% disagree and strongly disagree respectively while 3.2% remained neutral in their response. Also, 32.4% strongly agree that the change in fuel price caused by subsidy removal has increased their financial stress, 45.9% agree to the statement while 14.1% and 4.9% disagree and strongly disagree respectively, 2.7% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. With regards to statement 4, 38.1% of the respondents strongly agree that the cost of goods and services in Uyo metropolis has increased as a result of government's removal of fuel subsidy. 51.4% agreed, 2.1% were neutral in their response while 7.3% and 1.1% disagreed and strongly disagreed. 21.6% and 37.3% strongly agreed and agreed that their ability to afford food has declined since the removal of subsidy, 29.7% disagreed, 7.3% strongly agreed while 4.1% remained neutral in their response.

Furthermore, 42.4% and 29.9% agreed and strongly agreed that their ability to save money has declined since fuel subsidy was removed. 18.9% disagreed to the statement, 8.9% strongly disagreed and 0.5% neither agreed nor disagreed. 22.9% and 32.4% strongly agreed and agreed that the can barely afford to pay their house rent due to increase in rent occasioned by fuel subsidy removal.22.2% and 20.8% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, 1.6% of the respondents gave a neutral response. On the statement about subsidy removal having an adverse effect on people's livelihood, 21.6% strongly agreed, 27.6% agreed, 15.7% were neutral in their response while 18.9% and 16.2% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.16.2% strongly agreed to decreased access to essential services such as healthcare due to the rising cost of medical services as a result of subsidy removal. 40.0% agreed, 21.6% disagreed and 16.5% strongly disagreed, 5.7% remained neutral.

36.8% and 37.3% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that their overall standard of living has declined to fuel price changes resulting from subsidy removal. 20.5% and 3.8% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, while 1.4% remained neutral. 54.1% and 15.4% disagreed and strongly disagreed that provides sufficient financial relief to lessen the effect of fuel subsidy removal. 23.0% agreed, 7.0% strongly agreed and 0.5% remained neutral.

Table 3: Results of the observed and expected frequencies on the rrelationship between subsidy removal and the ability of people to afford food, shelter as well as accessibility of critical services, such as healthcare in Uyo local government area following fuel subsidy removal.

STATEMENTS	SA	A	N	D	SD	TOTAL
S5	80	138	15	110	27	370
S7	85	120	6	82	77	370
S9	60	148	21	80	61	370
TOTAL	225	406	42	272	165	1110

Source: Field Survey 2024

To calculate the expected frequency for each cell is to multiply the row total by the column. Total for the cell and divide product by the grand total.

Expected frequency = $\frac{\text{Row total X Column total}}{\text{Grand total}}$

S5 ⇒ SA = $\frac{370 \times 225}{1110} = 75$

A = $\frac{370 \times 406}{1110} = 135.33$

N = $\frac{370 \times 42}{1110} = 14$

D = $\frac{370 \times 272}{1110} = 90.67$

SD = $\frac{370 \times 165}{1110} = 55$

S7 ⇒ SA = $\frac{370 \times 225}{1110} = 75$

A = $\frac{370 \times 406}{1110} = 135.33$

N = $\frac{370 \times 42}{}$

1110 = 14

D = 370 X 272 / 1110 = 90.67

SD = 370 X 165 / 1110 = 55

S9 ⇒ SA = 370 X 225 / 1110 = 75

A = 370 X 4 / 1110 = 5

Table 4: Contingency Table

R–C	Fo	Fe	fo–fe	$(fo–fe)^2$	$\frac{(fo–fe)^2}{fe}$
1–1	80	75	5	25	0.333
1–2	138	135.33	2.67	7.1289	0.053
1–3	15	14	1	1	0.071
2–1	110	90.6	19.4	376.36	4.154
2–2	27	55	–28	784	14.255
2–3	85	75	10	100	1.333
3–1	120	135.33	–15.33	235.0089	1.737
3–2	6	14	–8	64	4.571
3–3	82	90.6	–8.6	73.96	0.816
4–1	77	55	22	484	8.8
4–2	60	75	–15	225	3
4–3	148	135.33	12.6	160.5289	1.186
5–1	21	14	7	49	3.5
5–2	80	90.6	–10.6	112.36	1.240
5–3	61	55	6	36	0.655
Total					45.704

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(fo–fe)}{fe}$$

hence, the calculated $X^2 = 45.704$

DF= (R-1) (C-1)

(5-1) (3-1)

4 X 2 = 8

X^2 = 45.704 > 15.507

Decision: Since the calculated Chi-square value of 45.704 is greater than the Chi-square table value of 15.507 at 0.05% level of significance, we therefore reject the null hypotheses (H_0) and accept the alternative hypotheses and conclude that Subsidy Removal has affected people's ability to afford food, house rent (shelter) as well as their accessibility to essential service like healthcare in Uyo local government. In essence, fuel subsidy removal has direct impact on the welfare of people living in Uyo Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

From the study, it is revealed that basically everyone from the study is aware that fuel subsidies have been removed and 42.9% of the respondents affirmed that because of this (subsidy removal), the overall cost of living has increased. Similarly, 51.4% of the respondents agreed that prices of goods and services have also increased due to fuel subsidy removal. Subsidy removal led to a sharp increase in petrol prices and also since fuel is essential for transportation and power generation, the price increase had a ripple effect on the economy as well as the well-being of the people as revealed in the studies conducted by

Omotosho (2019), Ikenga and Oluka (2023). Findings from the study also revealed that 45.9% of the respondents agreed that the changes in fuel price has increased their financial stress, this is inevitable because as earlier mentioned fuel is an essential commodity for everyone, whether you are a business man/woman, a civil servant or even a student. A change in the price of fuel affects basically every aspect of one's daily life; from transportation to buying goods and services etc.

Also, the study revealed that fuel subsidy removal affected the volume of savings of respondents. About 42.4% of the respondents affirmed that their savings decreased as fuel subsidy was removed. This indicates that subsidy removal has been an additional liability to respondents in terms of reduction in the level of their savings. This could be as a result of shock that emanated from subsidy removal that has direct connection with income and savings. Saving as one of the household's or individual's well-being components has been negatively affected as most of the respondents have experienced reduction in their savings caused by a fall in the disposable income. Furthermore, the study disclosed that 27.6%% of the respondents agreed that the removal of fuel subsidy has an adverse effect on the means of livelihood (occupation) while 15.7% were undecided. The survey therefore, indicates that removing subsidy on fuel had triggered a decline in prospect of individual's occupations due to increased cost. Many people experienced decline in their day to day activities ranging from reduction in hour of work per day, and reduction in income as a result of low customer turnover (in the case of business men/women). The reduction in hours of work experienced by some individuals coupled with linkage and spillover effects associated with some type of occupation has caused some people to move from one form of job to another that might not necessarily be suitable for their skills.

Conclusion

The removal of fuel subsidies has significant and far-reaching effects on people's welfare, impacting economic stability, cost of living, and overall quality of life. While it can improve government finances by reducing fiscal burdens and encouraging investment in critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, it also raises fuel and transportation costs, leading to inflation in goods and services. This disproportionately affects lower-income households, increasing financial strain and reducing access to essential commodities. To mitigate these challenges, government must implement targeted social welfare programs, invest in alternative energy sources, and promote policies that cushion the most vulnerable groups.

Recommendations

i. Government should adopt good food security measures such as subsidised agricultural inputs, to provide farmers with subsidies on seeds, fertilizers, and equipment to reduce production cost; strengthen local food production by investing in local farming and agricultural business to reduce dependence on expensive imported food; implement price control mechanism or targeted food subsidies for vulnerable populations; and improve transportation and storage infrastructure to minimise food wastage and ensure affordability.
ii. Government should aim at providing affordable housing and shelter by introducing regulations to prevent excessive rent increases caused by rising building material costs; provide low-income housing schemes with flexible payment options or government backed financing; and promote the use of alternative energy sources to reduce dependency costly fossils fuel.

iii. Accessible healthcare should be the concern of the government. This can be achieved by expanding healthcare coverage by offering subsidized insurance plans for low-income groups; increasing investment in public healthcare to make services more affordable and reduce out-of- pocket expenses; supporting pharmaceutical companies to produce affordable generic medicines locally; and expanding access to healthcare services to remote areas through mobile health units' digital healthcare solutions.

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Article **Open Access**

HUMAN DIGNITY, SOCIAL INEQUALITY, AND THE CAPABILITY APPROACH IN AMARTYA SEN'S PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract
Against dominant development paradigms that equate human well-being with income growth or resource accumulation, Amartya Sen advances a normative vision centered on substantive freedoms and human agency. Although Sen does not explicitly theorize human dignity as a foundational concept his capability approach is a framework for evaluating well being ad development, This study argued that dignity is implicitly embedded in his understanding of capability, agency, and freedom. Human dignity, on this account, is realized not merely through formal rights or material resources but through the genuine ability of individuals to lead lives they have reason to value. The article conceptualizes social inequality as disparities in capability sets rather than as differences in income or utility. It demonstrates how structural factors such as gender discrimination, poor health systems, educational deprivation, and political exclusion systematically undermine human dignity by restricting individuals' opportunities for functioning and participation. By foregrounding heterogeneity and context-specific conversion factors, Sen's framework offers a more ethically sensitive account of inequality that acknowledges diverse human needs and social conditions. The article concludes by highlighting the policy and ethical implications of Sen's philosophy for development practice, social justice, and human rights discourse, particularly in contexts marked by deep and persistent inequalities.

Keywords: Human Dignity, Social Inequality, Capability Approach, Freedom, Amartya Sen.

Introduction
Amartya Sen's philosophy links human dignity and social inequality through his Capability Approach. He argued that true inequality is a deprivation of people's fundamental freedoms and opportunities to live lives they have reason to value. In this context he shifts the focus of

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incapability from traditional metrics like income to the actual abilities individuals possess. Contemporary debates on human dignity and social inequality have intensified in response to the paradoxical coexistence of unprecedented global wealth and enduring, and in many contexts deepening, forms of deprivation and exclusion. While economic globalization and technological advancement have generated significant aggregate growth, they have also exposed structural inequalities that challenge the assumption that economic progress necessarily translates into human well-being (Piketty, 2014; Stiglitz, 2022). Within philosophical, ethical, and policy-oriented discourses, human dignity has emerged as a central normative concern, invoked to contest social arrangements that reduce individuals to mere instruments of production or consumption. Increasingly, scholars have argued that social inequality should be understood not merely as income disparity but as a multidimensional phenomenon involving unequal access to health, education, political participation, and social recognition (Sen, 1999).

Amartya Sen's core philosophical argument, the Capability Approach, redefines development and well-being not by income or utility, but by people's real freedoms (capabilities) to achieve valuable functionings (like being healthy, educated, or participating in community). He critiques utilitarianism for ignoring individual differences and resource-focused views (like Rawls') for overlooking conversion issues (e.g., how disability affects turning resources into functionings). Sen argues development should expand these real freedoms, emphasizing individual agency, choice, and the ability to lead flourishing lives. The primary objective of this study is to critically examine the relationship between human dignity and social inequality through the lens of Amartya Sen's capability approach. Specifically, the article seeks to: (i) elucidate the implicit conception of human dignity embedded in Sen's philosophy; (ii) analyze social inequality as a disparity in capability sets rather than merely in income or resources; and (iii) assess the ethical and policy implications of Sen's framework for addressing persistent inequality in contemporary societies.

Conceptual Clarifications

Human Dignity: Philosophical and Ethical Perspective: Human dignity remains a core concept across moral philosophy, human rights theory, and critical social thought, yet its meaning is contested in current academic literature. Analyses in contemporary philosophy emphasize both intrinsic worth and social recognition as essential dimensions of dignity. In recent scholarship, human dignity is defined as an inherent moral worth that belongs to all persons by virtue of their humanity and grounds fundamental ethical and political duties (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2024). This foundational understanding resonates with long-standing philosophical accounts and incorporates contemporary concerns about social identity, recognition, and relationality. Under this view, dignity is not only a static metaphysical quality but also entails dynamic social norms that govern how persons ought to be treated within communities (Killmister, 2020). Contemporary philosophical literature further distinguishes intrinsic dignity the idea that every human being has worth regardless of circumstances from social recognition dignity, which emerges through social norms, institutional practices, and mutual respect. Recognition dignity emphasizes that societal practices and structures either affirm or violate human dignity by enabling or obstructing the realization of a person's self-worth in social contexts. In this respect, human dignity functions not merely as an abstract ideal but as a normative criterion for assessing social practices and injustices (Gilabert, 2024). This dual perspective responds to concerns that dignity can become hollow if treated purely as a metaphysical attribute divorced from real-

world inequalities. By foregrounding social recognition, contemporary theorists highlight the importance of social participation, voice, and respect as constitutive of dignity in ways that intersect with structural disadvantages.

Social Inequality

Social inequality refers to systematic disparities in the distribution of opportunities, resources, and social conditions that shape individuals' life chances. Recent scholarship underscores that inequality is multidimensional**,** encompassing economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions. These forms of inequality are interdependent and often mutually reinforcing in ways that are not reducible to simple income differences. Contemporary analyses emphasize that "inequality of what?" is a central question for social theory and policy, with answers that highlight opportunity sets and substantive freedoms rather than resources alone. Following the capability approach, inequality is best understood as deprivation of opportunities specifically, unequal access to capabilities, which are the real freedoms individuals have to pursue lives they value. This view challenges resource-based and utility-based metrics by shifting the focus from what people possess to what they can actually do and be (capabilities), thereby capturing the normative significance of inequality as a barrier to human dignity and freedom.

Core Concepts and Structure of Sen's Capability Approach

Functionings and Capability: When evaluating well-being, Sen argued that the most important thing is to consider what people are actually able to be and do. The commodities or wealth people have or their mental reactions (utility) are an inappropriate focus because they provide only limited or indirect information about how well a life is going. Sen illustrated his point with the example of a standard bicycle. This has the characteristics of 'transportation' but whether it will actually provide transportation will depend on the characteristics of those who try to use it. It might be considered a generally useful tool for most people to extend their mobility, but it obviously will not do that for a person without legs. Even if that person, by some quirk, finds the bicycle delightful, we should nevertheless be able to note within our evaluative system that she still lacks transportation. Nor does this mental reaction show that the same person would not appreciate transportation if it were really available to her. The Capability Approach focuses directly on the quality of life that individuals are actually able to achieve. This quality of life is analyzed in terms of the core concepts of 'functionings' and 'capability'. In Sen analysis Functionings are states of 'being and doing' such as being well-nourished, having shelter. They should be distinguished from the commodities employed to achieve them (as 'bicycling' is distinguishable from 'possessing a bike'). Capability refers to the set of valuable functionings that a person has effective access to. Thus, a person's capability represents the effective freedom of an individual to choose between different functioning combinations – between different kinds of life – that she has reason to value. In later work, Sen referred to 'capabilities' in the plural (or even 'freedoms') instead of a single capability set, and this is also common in the wider capability literature. This allows analysis to focus on sets of functionings related to particular aspects of life, for example, the capabilities of literacy, health, or political freedom. The capability approach, originally developed by Amartya Sen and further refined by subsequent scholars, constitutes a normative framework for evaluating human well-being, social arrangements, and development outcomes. In recent scholarship, the approach is increasingly recognized as a flexible yet robust alternative to income-based, utility-based, and resource-centered

models of social evaluation, particularly in contexts marked by persistent inequality and dignity deficits (Robeyns, 2023; Sen, 2020).

Freedom as both the Means and End of Development

A defining feature of Sen's capability approach is its conception of freedom as both the primary means and the ultimate end of development. In this view, development is not reducible to economic growth or institutional expansion but consists fundamentally in the enlargement of human freedoms political, social, economic, and cultural (Sen, 2020). Freedoms function instrumentally by enabling individuals to pursue valued goals and intrinsically by constituting an essential component of a dignified human life. Recent scholarship highlights the continued relevance of this dual conception of freedom in assessing development policies and social justice claims. Empirical studies demonstrate that economic growth without corresponding expansion of political freedoms, social protections, or access to public goods often exacerbates inequality and undermines human dignity (UNDP, 2023). By contrast, policies that prioritize health, education, democratic participation, and social security tend to expand capability sets in ways that enhance both individual agency and collective well-being. Understanding freedom as an end also situates the capability approach within broader ethical debates about human dignity. Freedom, as substantive opportunity, affirms individuals as agents capable of practical reasoning and choice, rather than passive recipients of welfare or policy interventions (Nussbaum, 2023).

Valuation: Which Functionings Matter for the Good Life?

Sen argues that the correct focus for evaluating how well off people are is their capability to live a life we have reason to value, not their resource wealth or subjective well-being. But in order to begin to *evaluate* how people are performing in terms of capability, we first need to determine which functionings matter for the good life and how much, or at least we need to specify a valuation procedure for determining this. One way of addressing the problem is to specify a list of the constituents of the flourishing life, and do this on philosophical grounds (Martha Nussbaum does this for her Capability Theory of Justice). Sen rejected this approach because he argued that it denies the relevance of the values people may come to have and the role of democracy (Sen 2004b). Philosophers and social scientists may provide helpful ideas and arguments, but the legitimate source of decisions about the nature of the life we have reason to value must be the people concerned. Sen therefore proposes a social choice exercise requiring both public reasoning and democratic procedures of decision-making. One reason that social scientists and philosophers are so keen to specify a list is that it can be used as an index: by ranking all the different constituents of the flourishing life with respect to each other it would allow easier evaluation of how well people are doing.

Sen's social choice exercise is unlikely to produce collective agreement on a complete ranking of different functionings, if only because of what Rawls called the 'fact of reasonable disagreement'. But Sen argues that substantial action-guiding agreement is possible. First, different valuational perspectives may 'intersect' to reach similar judgments about some issues, though by way of different arguments. Second, such agreements may be extended by introducing 'ranges' of weights rather than cardinal numbers. Sen does suggest that in many cases a sub-set of crucially important capabilities associated with basic needs may be relatively easily identified and agreed upon as urgent moral and political priorities. These 'basic capabilities', such as education, health, nutrition, and shelter up to minimally adequate levels, do not exhaust the resources of the capability approach, only the easy agreement on what counts as being scandalously deprived. They may be particularly helpful

in assessing the extent and nature of poverty in developing countries. However, taking a basic capability route has implications for how the exercise of evaluating individuals' capability can proceed, since it can only evaluate how well people's lives are going in terms of the basics.

Evaluation: What Capability do People have to Live a Good Life?

Evaluating capability is a second order exercise concerned with mapping the set of valuable functionings people have real access to. Since it takes the value of functionings as given, its conclusions will reflect any ambiguity in the valuation stage. Assessing capability is more informationally demanding than other accounts of advantage since it not only takes a much broader view of what well-being achievement consists in but also tries to assess the freedom people actually have to choose high quality options. This is not a purely procedural matter of adding up the number of options available, since the option to purchase a tenth brand of washing powder has a rather different significance than the option to vote in democratic elections. For example, Sen argued that the eradication of malaria from an area enhances the capability of individuals living there even though it doesn't increase the number of options those individuals have (since they don't have the 'option' to live in a malarial area anymore). Because the value of a capability set represents a person's effective freedom to live a valuable life in terms of the value of the functionings available to that individual, when the available functionings are improved, so is the person's effective freedom.

The capability approach in principle allows a very wide range of dimensions of advantage to be positively evaluated ('what capabilities does this person have?'). This allows an open diagnostic approach to what is going well or badly in people's lives that can be used to reveal unexpected shortfalls or successes in different dimensions, without aggregating them all together into one number. The informational focus can be tightened depending on the purpose of the evaluation exercise and relevant valuational and informational constraints. For example, if the approach is limited to considering 'basic capabilities' then the assessment is limited to a narrower range of dimensions and attempts to assess deprivation – the shortfall from the minimal thresholds of those capabilities – which will exclude evaluation of how well the lives of those above the threshold are going. In sen's (Sen 1999, 70-71) argument the Capability Approach can be used to examine the underlying determinants of the relationship between people and commodities, including the following:

i. Individual physiology, such as the variations associated with illnesses, disability, age, and gender. In order to achieve the same functionings, people may have particular needs for non-standard commodities such as prosthetics for a disability or they may need more of the standard commodities such as additional food in the case of intestinal parasites. Note that some of these disadvantages, such as blindness, may not be fully 'correctable' even with tailored assistance.
ii. Local environment diversities, such as climate, epidemiology, and pollution. These can impose particular costs such as more or less expensive heating or clothing requirements.
iii. Variations in social conditions, such as the provision of public services such as education and security, and the nature of community relationships, such as across class or ethnic divisions.
iv. Differences in relational perspectives. Conventions and customs determine the commodity requirements of expected standards of behaviour and consumption, so that relative income poverty in a rich community may translate into absolute poverty in the

space of capability. For example, local requirements of 'the ability to appear in public without shame' in terms of acceptable clothing may vary widely.

v. Distribution within the family – distributional rules within a family determining, for example, the allocation of food and health-care between children and adults, males and females.

The diagnosis of capability failures, or significant interpersonal variations in capability, directs attention to the relevant causal pathways responsible. Note that many of these interpersonal variations will also influence individuals' abilities to access resources to begin with. For example, the physically handicapped often have more expensive requirements to achieve the same capabilities, such as mobility, while at the same time they also have greater difficulty earning income in the first place. In sum, Sen's core argument is that social arrangements should be evaluated not by aggregate wealth or average utility, but by the extent to which they expand the "substantive freedoms" of all people. In his distinction between Capabilities and Functionings, he explained the later in terms "doings and beings" of a person (e.g., being well-nourished, having shelter, participating in the community). While the former refers to the real opportunities or the "feasible set" of these functionings from which a person can choose. In his analysis of human dignity Sen emphasizes that individuals have different abilities to convert resources into actual well-being due to factors like age, gender, genetics, social background, and location. Recognizing this diversity is crucial for any theory of social justice.

Human Dignity in Sen's Thought

Human dignity occupies a significant, though largely implicit, place within Amartya Sen's philosophical framework. Unlike theories that explicitly foreground dignity as a foundational moral principle, Sen's approach embeds dignity within a broader evaluative concern for freedom, agency, and the conditions that enable individuals to lead lives they have reason to value. This implicit treatment has generated extensive scholarly discussion, particularly regarding whether Sen's capability approach can adequately ground normative claims about dignity and justice in the absence of an explicit dignity doctrine. Sen deliberately refrained from offering a formal or metaphysical definition of human dignity. His reluctance stems from a broader methodological commitment to pluralism and public reasoning, which resists grounding ethical evaluation in a single, comprehensive moral doctrine (Sen, 2020). Instead of positing dignity as an abstract intrinsic property, Sen situates normative concern within observable and assessable conditions of human life - namely, the presence or absence of substantive freedoms.

Dignity as Capability, Agency, and Freedom

Within Sen's framework, dignity is most plausibly understood as grounded in capability, agency, and freedom. Capabilities represent the real opportunities individuals possess to achieve valued ways of being and doing, while agency reflects their ability to pursue goals they have reason to value (Sen, 2020). Contemporary interpreters emphasize that dignity, on this account, consists not merely in survival or minimal welfare but in the possession of genuine choices and meaningful participation in social life (Nussbaum, 2023). Freedom plays a dual role in the conception of dignity. Substantive freedom is intrinsically valuable because it affirms individuals as autonomous agents, and it is instrumentally valuable because it enables the pursuit of other capabilities. Recent analyses highlight that when individuals are denied freedom through poverty, discrimination, or political exclusion, their dignity is

compromised even if basic needs are met (UNDP, 2023). Thus, dignity is violated not only by overt coercion or humiliation but also by social arrangements that systematically restrict agency and choice.

Respect for Persons Through Enabling Substantive Freedoms

Sen's account of dignity places particular emphasis on respect for persons as agents rather than passive recipients of aid or policy interventions. Respect, in this sense, is expressed through social, political, and economic arrangements that expand individuals' substantive freedoms and enable their participation in shaping collective outcomes (Sen, 2020). This approach challenges paternalistic models of development that prioritize outcomes without regard for choice or voice. Recent ethical scholarship underscores that enabling substantive freedoms constitutes a practical expression of respect for human dignity, especially in contexts of structural inequality (Robeyns & Byskov, 2023). Policies that improve access to education, healthcare, political participation, and social security do more than enhance welfare; they affirm individuals' standing as equal members of society whose lives and choices matter. From this perspective, dignity is realized through institutional arrangements that support agency, rather than through abstract declarations alone. Sen's implicit conception of dignity differs in important ways from both rights-based and explicitly dignity-centered ethical frameworks. Rights-based approaches typically ground dignity in the possession of universal human rights and emphasize legal protection and entitlement (Habermas, 2020). While Sen acknowledges the importance of rights, he argues that formal recognition alone is insufficient if individuals lack the actual capabilities to exercise those rights meaningfully (Sen, 2020). Similarly, dignity-centered capability theories - most notably Martha Nussbaum'sexplicitly ground the capability approach in a thick conception of human dignity and propose a fixed list of central capabilities necessary for a life worthy of human respect (Nussbaum, 2023). Sen diverges from this position by resisting definitive lists, favoring democratic deliberation and contextual judgment. Recent comparative analyses suggest that while Nussbaum's approach offers greater normative clarity, Sen's open-ended framework provides greater flexibility and sensitivity to pluralism (Robeyns, 2023). Taken together, Sen's treatment of dignity can be understood as relational, practical, and freedom-centered. Rather than anchoring dignity in abstract moral status alone, his approach evaluates social arrangements by their capacity to expand human agency and substantive freedoms. This conception provides a powerful normative lens for assessing social inequality, particularly in societies where formal rights coexist with profound capability deprivation.

Human Dignity and Freedom

For Sen, human dignity is intrinsically linked to the ability to exercise agency and make reasoned choices about one's own life. A life without basic capabilities - such as the ability to be healthy, educated, and participate politically is one marked by deprivation and a lack of dignity.

i. **Poverty as Capability Deprivation:** Poverty is seen not merely as a lack of income, but as a deprivation of basic capabilities. Living without access to clean water, food, healthcare, or education hinders people's ability to function and live with self-respect.
ii. **Agency and Self-Respect:** The capability approach values individual agency and the freedom to pursue goals one has reason to value, not just the satisfaction of needs. The ability to form a conception of the good and reflect on one's life plan is a key aspect of a life with dignity.

iii. **Social and Political Freedoms:** Civil and political rights are not secondary to economic development; they are essential instruments for promoting economic security and human dignity. A free press and democratic accountability, for example, empower citizens to demand public action and prevent disasters like famines.

Social Inequality through the Lens of Capabilities

Amartya Sen's capability approach provides a normative framework for understanding social inequality as a matter of unequal substantive freedoms rather than merely differences in income or material resources. This perspective shifts attention from traditional economic measures to the actual opportunities available to individuals to lead lives they have reason to value (Sen, 2020; Robeyns, 2023). Inequality, on this view, is expressed in terms of unequal capability sets the differential ability of individuals and groups to achieve valued functionings due to variations in social, economic, political, and environmental conditions.

Inequality as Unequal Capability Sets

Inequality is most appropriately assessed through the lens of capabilities, as these reflect what people can do and be in practice. Two individuals with similar incomes may experience vastly different life outcomes if their access to education, health, or political participation is constrained. Recent research emphasizes that measuring inequality requires examining the range of options genuinely available to people, which captures both deprivations and freedoms (UNDP, 2023; Nussbaum, 2023). This approach foregrounds opportunity inequality rather than merely resource or outcome inequality, revealing structural disadvantages that conventional metrics often obscure.

Gender, Disability, Education, and Health Inequalities

Empirical studies highlight that inequalities are highly differentiated across social dimensions such as gender, disability, education, and health. Women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized ethnic groups frequently face systemic barriers that restrict their capabilities, from limited access to education and employment to exclusion from political participation and healthcare (World Bank, 2022; Robeyns & Byskov, 2023). In the health sector, for example, unequal access to quality care and nutrition directly constrains individuals' ability to function, reinforcing intergenerational cycles of deprivation. Similarly, educational inequalities limit future capabilities and agency, undermining both individual dignity and broader societal development (UNICEF, 2023). Recognizing these disparities underscores the moral imperative of assessing inequality through the capability lens.

The Role of Social Arrangements and Institutions

Social arrangements and institutions play a central role in either mitigating or exacerbating inequality. Structural factors such as labor market policies, legal frameworks, social norms, and governance practices determine how resources and opportunities are converted into real capabilities (Sen, 2020; Robeyns, 2023). Institutions that fail to ensure equitable access to education, healthcare, or political participation systematically disadvantage certain groups, while inclusive institutions can enhance freedoms and promote social justice. The capability approach therefore directs attention to the institutional and systemic determinants of inequality**,** highlighting that ethical evaluation of social arrangements must consider their impact on human freedoms and dignity.

Public Reasoning and Democratic Participation as Corrective Mechanisms

Sen emphasizes that addressing capability-based inequalities requires public reasoning and participatory democratic processes. Deliberative engagement enables communities to identify relevant capabilities, prioritize collective action, and hold institutions accountable for inequalities (Sen, 2020; Byskov, 2021). Democratic participation ensures that policies respond to lived realities rather than abstract models of welfare, allowing marginalized groups to influence decisions that affect their opportunities. Contemporary scholarship underscores that participatory mechanisms are not only instrumental for reducing inequality but also intrinsically linked to the realization of human dignity, as they recognize individuals as agents capable of shaping their own lives (Robeyns & Byskov, 2023; UNDP, 2024). Through this lens, social inequality is understood as a deprivation of substantive freedoms shaped by structural arrangements, systemic barriers, and the differential capacity to convert resources into valued functionings. Addressing inequality therefore entails not merely redistributing resources but actively expanding the capability sets of disadvantaged groups and fostering social and institutional environments that enable equitable participation and agency.

Toward an Integrated Account of Dignity and Equality

Building on the preceding analyses of human dignity and social inequality, an integrated account situates both concepts within the framework of Amartya Sen's capability approach, emphasizing their mutual reinforcement in normative evaluation. Such an account underscores the ethical and policy significance of ensuring that all individuals possess the substantive freedoms necessary for a life of dignity.

Synthesizing Dignity and Capability as Mutually Reinforcing Concepts

Human dignity and capabilities are conceptually and practically intertwined. Dignity, when understood relationally, is realized through the possession and exercise of substantive freedoms, which are captured by the notion of capability (Sen, 2020; Robeyns, 2023). Conversely, capabilities are normatively significant because they expand the conditions under which individuals can live lives consistent with dignity (Nussbaum, 2023). Contemporary scholarship highlights that treating dignity and capability as mutually reinforcing allows for a more nuanced assessment of inequality: individuals are not simply evaluated by material possessions or formal rights, but by the real opportunities available to them to exercise agency and participate meaningfully in social life (Byskov, 2021; UNDP, 2024). This integration also addresses critiques of both concepts when used separately. Dignity-focused frameworks risk abstraction if they ignore the material and institutional conditions necessary for its realization, while capability-centered approaches may understate the moral and symbolic significance of human worth. By synthesizing the two, scholars and policymakers can anchor social evaluation in both practical freedom and moral respect, yielding a robust framework for justice-sensitive development (Robeyns & Byskov, 2023).

Normative Foundations for Reducing Inequality

The integrated framework provides a normative foundation for interventions aimed at reducing social inequality. Inequalities are morally significant not merely because they reflect differences in wealth or status, but because they restrict individuals' substantive freedoms and thereby compromise dignity (Sen, 2020; World Bank, 2022). Ethical reasoning, grounded in both capability and dignity, supports policies that expand access to education,

health, political participation, and social protections, particularly for historically marginalized groups. Recent empirical analyses confirm that such capability-enhancing interventions yield both human and social development gains, reinforcing the moral imperative to prioritize freedom and agency in policymaking (UNDP, 2024; UNICEF, 2023).

The Role of Ethics in Economic and Social Policy

Ethics plays a central role in shaping economic and social policies that promote both dignity and equality. Policies guided solely by efficiency, growth, or utilitarian calculations often fail to address capability deprivation or the social conditions necessary for human flourishing. By contrast, an ethics-informed approach foregrounds agency, participatory decision-making, and equitable opportunity**,** ensuring that policy outcomes are not only materially beneficial but also morally legitimate (Robeyns, 2023; Nussbaum, 2023). Contemporary debates emphasize that ethical evaluation should inform the design of institutions, regulatory frameworks, and public programs, particularly in pluralistic societies, so that individuals' dignity is respected and substantive inequalities are actively mitigated (Sen, 2020; Byskov, 2021). Synthesizing dignity and capability provides a coherent theoretical and practical lens for addressing social inequality. It grounds normative claims in both the moral worth of persons and the real freedoms they can exercise**,** thereby offering an ethically robust foundation for development, social policy, and justice-oriented governance.

Addressing Social Inequality

Sen argues that severe social inequality, often rooted in systemic barriers like racial and gender disparities, distorts power dynamics and hinders overall human development. In order to solve the problem of social inequality, he focused the role social institution and adaptive performance.

i. **Role of Institutions**: He emphasizes the need for public policy and institutions to actively support the expansion of capabilities for all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable. This involves moving beyond formal rights to ensuring the actual, effective freedom for people to function well.
ii. **Challenging Adaptive Preferences**: Sen highlights the problem of "adaptive preferences," where disadvantaged people adjust their desires and aspirations to their limited circumstances, which can mask the true extent of inequality. A focus on objective capabilities rather than subjective satisfaction helps to address this issue.

In summary, Amartya Sen's philosophy makes the case that social inequality is fundamentally an affront to human dignity because it deprives individuals of the *real freedom* to live fulfilling lives. True social justice requires ensuring an equal opportunity (capability) for all people to achieve the functionings they value.

Conclusion

This article has examined the complex relationship between human dignity and social inequality through the lens of Amartya Sen's capability approach, highlighting both the theoretical and practical significance of integrating these concepts. The analysis began by clarifying human dignity as a concept encompassing both intrinsic worth and social recognition, and social inequality as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing economic, social, political, and cultural disparities. Drawing on Sen's framework, the study demonstrated that dignity is best understood as realized through substantive freedoms and

human agency, while inequality should be evaluated in terms of unequal capability sets rather than income alone.

The discussion of the capability approach emphasized the centrality of functionings, capabilities, and freedom as both the means and ends of development, highlighting the critical role of human agency and broad evaluative space in assessing well-being and justice. The article further explored the ways in which social arrangements, institutional structures, and participatory democratic processes shape capability distribution and, by extension, the realization of dignity. By situating dignity implicitly within capabilities and freedoms, Sen provides a framework for ethical evaluation that bridges moral philosophy, development studies, and social policy. The integrated account of dignity and equality presented in this article demonstrates how normative claims about justice can be grounded in both the moral worth of persons and the practical opportunities available to them. This approach underscores the ethical imperative for policies and institutions that expand capabilities, reduce structural inequalities, and enable meaningful participation in social and political life.

In terms of scholarly contribution, the study advances understanding of human dignity as relational and practice-sensitive, offers a nuanced interpretation of social inequality as capability deprivation, and situates Sen's thought within contemporary debates on development ethics and social justice. By linking dignity, agency, and capabilities, the article provides a robust theoretical foundation for analyzing inequality and guiding policy interventions aimed at fostering equitable and dignified human development.

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CULTURE AND IDENTITY: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract
Culture and identity nexus indicates a deep dynamic and intertwined relationship. While culture shapes individuals identity, identity tends to influence cultural practices, thus creating a continuous feedback loop , social cohesion and the navigation of heritage and modernity. This article examined the interrelationship between culture and identity from an anthropological perspective, emphasizing culture as the primary framework through which identities are formed, expressed, and transformed. Drawing from classical and contemporary anthropological theories, the study conceptualizes identity not as a fixed or essential attribute but as a dynamic and socially constructed process shaped by shared meanings, symbols, practices, and power relations. The paper explores how cultural norms, language, rituals, and collective memory contribute to both individual and collective identities, while also attending to differences related to ethnicity, gender, class, and religion. Particular attention was given to the impact of globalization, migration, and modernity on identity formation, highlighting processes of hybridity, negotiation, and cultural change. The article further interrogated the role of power, colonial histories, and inequality in shaping identity politics and cultural representation. Methodologically, the paper relies on ethnography, reflexivity, and ethical sensitivity in the anthropological study of identity. By synthesizing theoretical insights with empirical considerations, the article contributes to ongoing debates on cultural relativism, identity fluidity, and belonging in contemporary societies. It concludes by affirming anthropology's relevance in understanding identity as a lived, contextual, and evolving cultural phenomenon.

Keywords: Culture; Identity; Anthropology; Social Construction; Globalization; Ethnography

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Introduction

The relationship between culture and identity remains one of the most enduring and contested themes in anthropological scholarship. In recent years, this relationship has gained renewed significance as globalization, digital mediation, migration, and political polarization increasingly challenge stable notions of belonging and selfhood. Culture, understood anthropologically as a shared yet contested system of meanings, symbols, and practices, provides the horizon within which identities are formed, interpreted, and transformed. Identity, in turn, reflects the ways individuals and communities locate themselves within cultural narratives, social structures, and historical trajectories (Eriksen, 2020). Contemporary anthropology has moved decisively away from essentialist interpretations of identity toward constructivist and relational approaches. Identity is now widely understood as a dynamic and ongoing process shaped by social interaction, power relations, and cultural interpretation rather than as a fixed or inherited essence (Jenkins, 2024). From this perspective, culture does not merely transmit identity; it actively mediates and reshapes it through language, ritual, memory, and everyday practice. As Hall (2020) argues, identity emerges not from origins alone but from positions formed through difference, representation, and historical context.

Philosophically, this shift aligns with interpretive and phenomenological traditions that emphasize meaning, embodiment, and lived experience. Anthropological theorists increasingly foreground how identities are performed and negotiated within concrete cultural worlds rather than abstractly defined categories (Desjarlais & Throop, 2021). Moreover, postcolonial and critical anthropology have drawn attention to the role of power in identity formation, particularly how colonial histories, global inequalities, and epistemic dominance shape whose identities are recognized or marginalized (Mbembe, 2021). In the context of late modernity, globalization has intensified cultural encounters, producing hybrid, transnational, and digitally mediated identities that resist singular classification (Appadurai, 2021). These developments compel anthropology to rethink culture not as bounded or homogeneous but as fluid, intersecting, and continually reconstituted. This article situates culture and identity within this evolving anthropological and philosophical landscape, arguing that identity is best understood as a culturally embedded, historically situated, and ethically significant human process.

Conceptual Clarifications and Theoretical Framework

A rigorous anthropological analysis of culture and identity requires careful conceptual clarification and a coherent theoretical framework. Both concepts have been subject to extensive debate and revision, particularly as anthropology has moved away from essentialist and deterministic models toward interpretive, constructivist, and critical approaches. This section clarifies the key concepts of culture and identity and situates them within major anthropological and social theories that continue to inform contemporary scholarship.

Defining Culture in Anthropological Thought

The concept of culture has occupied a foundational position in anthropology since the discipline's emergence. Classical definitions, such as E.B. Tylor's characterization of culture as a "complex whole" encompassing knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, and custom, framed culture as a cumulative and transmissible system acquired through socialization. Although influential, such early formulations have been criticized for their evolutionary assumptions and tendency toward homogenization (Eriksen, 2020). Franz Boas' cultural relativism marked

a decisive shift by rejecting unilinear evolutionary models and emphasizing the historical particularity of cultures. Boasian anthropology underscored that cultural practices and meanings must be understood within their specific social and historical contexts, a principle that continues to shape contemporary anthropological methodology (Stocking, 2021). Recent anthropological scholarship reaffirms this contextual approach while acknowledging that cultures are neither closed nor static but internally diverse and externally interconnected (Ingold, 2020). Symbolic and interpretive anthropology, most notably associated with Clifford Geertz, further transformed the understanding of culture by conceptualizing it as a system of symbols and meanings through which humans interpret their world. Culture, from this perspective, is not merely behavior but the webs of significance that make behavior intelligible. Contemporary scholars continue to draw on this interpretive legacy while expanding it to include embodiment, affect, and materiality (Desjarlais & Throop, 2021). Increasingly, culture is understood as practice something people actively do rather than passively inherit. Practice-oriented approaches emphasize lived experience, everyday action, and the negotiation of meaning in concrete social contexts. This shift aligns with phenomenological anthropology, which foregrounds how culture is embodied and experienced rather than abstractly represented (Csordas, 2020). Culture, therefore, emerges as dynamic, processual, and inseparable from human agency.

Understanding Identity

Identity, like culture, has undergone significant reconceptualization in recent decades. Early sociological and psychological approaches tended to treat identity as a stable attribute of individuals or groups. Contemporary anthropology, however, conceptualizes identity as multifaceted, relational, and context-dependent. Personal identity refers to an individual's sense of self, while social and collective identities emerge through membership in groups defined by ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, or profession (Jenkins, 2024). Rather than being fixed or essential, identity is now widely understood as socially constructed and continuously negotiated through interaction, discourse, and practice. Individuals draw upon cultural resources to articulate who they are, while also responding to external classifications imposed by institutions and power structures (Brubaker, 2020). Identity formation is thus an ongoing process shaped by both self-ascription and social recognition. Anthropological theory also distinguishes identity from related concepts such as selfhood and subjectivity. Selfhood refers to the reflexive awareness of oneself as a person, often explored through phenomenological and psychological lenses. Subjectivity, by contrast, emphasizes how individuals are shaped by social norms, power relations, and discursive regimes. Identity occupies an intermediate space, linking personal experience with collective meaning and social positioning (Ortner, 2021). This distinction is crucial for understanding how individuals experience agency while remaining embedded in cultural and structural contexts.

Theoretical Approaches to Culture and Identity

Multiple theoretical traditions have contributed to anthropological understandings of culture and identity. Structural-functionalism, associated with scholars such as Radcliffe-Brown, emphasized social roles and institutions as mechanisms that maintain social order. While criticized for neglecting conflict and change, this approach remains relevant for analyzing how cultural norms shape identity through role expectations and social integration (Eriksen, 2020). Symbolic interactionism, originating in sociology but influential in anthropology, focuses on identity as emerging through social interaction and shared symbols.

From this perspective, identities are produced and reproduced through everyday encounters, language, and symbolic exchange. Contemporary interactionist approaches highlight identity as performative and situational, particularly in pluralistic and multicultural settings (Fine, 2022). Post-structural and constructivist perspectives have further challenged stable notions of identity by emphasizing discourse, power, and contingency. Influenced by thinkers such as Foucault, these approaches argue that identities are constituted through regimes of knowledge and power rather than simply chosen or inherited. Identity categories such as race, gender, and ethnicity are understood as historically produced and politically charged (Mbembe, 2021). Power and discourse play a central role in identity formation, particularly in postcolonial and global contexts. Anthropologists have shown how colonial histories, state practices, and global inequalities shape whose identities are legitimized and whose are marginalized. Identity thus becomes a site of struggle, resistance, and ethical contestation, rather than merely a marker of belonging (Escobar, 2020).

Culture as a Framework for Identity Formation

Culture functions as the primary medium through which identity is formed, sustained, and transformed. Rather than operating as an external structure imposed upon individuals, culture shapes identity through ongoing processes of socialization, symbolic interaction, and shared meaning-making. Anthropological scholarship increasingly emphasizes that identity formation is not a linear or deterministic process but a dynamic engagement between individuals and the cultural worlds they inhabit (Eriksen, 2020).

Socialization, Enculturation, and the Internalization of Norms

Socialization and enculturation refer to the processes by which individuals acquire the values, norms, and practices of their society. From early childhood, individuals learn culturally appropriate ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, which gradually become internalized as part of their identity. Contemporary anthropology highlights that this process is not passive; individuals actively interpret and negotiate cultural expectations, especially in pluralistic or rapidly changing societies (Jenkins, 2024).

Enculturation involves both formal and informal mechanisms, including family structures, education, religious institutions, and peer interactions. Through these channels, cultural norms are transmitted and embodied, shaping moral dispositions, gender roles, and social identities. Recent studies emphasize that internalization is uneven and contested, particularly where cultural norms conflict with personal aspirations or global influences (Ortner, 2021). Identity thus emerges at the intersection of cultural continuity and individual agency.

Language, Symbols, and Meaning-Making

Language occupies a central role in identity formation, serving as both a communicative tool and a symbolic system through which cultural meanings are articulated. Anthropologists argue that language does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs social worlds by categorizing experience and shaping perception (Duranti, 2021). Through linguistic practices naming, storytelling, and discourse individuals position themselves within cultural narratives of belonging and difference. Symbols further extend this process of meaning-making. Cultural symbols, whether material or immaterial, condense shared values and historical experiences, allowing identities to be expressed and recognized. Interpretive anthropology emphasizes that symbols are polysemic and context-dependent, making identity formation an ongoing interpretive act rather than a fixed outcome (Desjarlais & Throop, 2021). In

contemporary settings, digital media have expanded symbolic repertoires, enabling new forms of identity expression and negotiation (Miller et al., 2021).

Rituals, Traditions, and Collective Memory

Rituals and traditions play a vital role in reinforcing collective identities by linking individuals to shared histories and communal values. Anthropological research shows that rituals function not only as symbolic performances but also as embodied practices that reaffirm social bonds and moral orders (Bell, 2020). Through repeated participation in rituals such as rites of passage, festivals, or commemorative ceremonie individuals internalize cultural narratives that shape their sense of self and belonging. Collective memory further anchors identity by preserving and transmitting shared interpretations of the past. Memory, as understood anthropologically, is not a neutral record of events but a culturally mediated process that selectively emphasizes certain experiences while marginalizing others. Recent scholarship highlights how collective memory is actively constructed and contested, particularly in postcolonial and post-conflict societies where identity is closely tied to historical trauma and resilience (Assmann, 2021).

Religion and Worldview as Identity Anchors

Religion and worldview constitute powerful cultural frameworks for identity formation, offering comprehensive systems of meaning that address fundamental questions of existence, morality, and purpose. Anthropologists emphasize that religious identities are not merely belief-based but are embodied through rituals, ethical practices, and communal belonging (Csordas, 2020). Religious worldviews shape how individuals interpret suffering, success, and social responsibility, thereby deeply influencing personal and collective identities. In many societies, religion remains a central marker of identity, intersecting with ethnicity, politics, and national belonging. Contemporary anthropological studies note that religious identities are increasingly shaped by globalization, migration, and digital communication, resulting in both renewed forms of religious commitment and hybrid expressions of belief (Beyer, 2021). As identity anchors, religion and worldview provide continuity and meaning while also serving as sites of negotiation and contestation in rapidly changing cultural contexts.

Identity, Difference, and Belonging

Identity is inseparable from processes of difference and belonging. Anthropological inquiry has consistently shown that identities are not formed in isolation but emerge through relational distinctions between self and other, insider and outsider, familiar and foreign. Difference, therefore, is not merely a descriptive category but a constitutive dimension of identity formation. Belonging, in turn, reflects the affective and moral dimensions of identity, expressing how individuals locate themselves within social, cultural, and political communities (Yuval-Davis, 2020).

Ethnicity and Cultural Boundaries

Ethnicity remains a central axis through which identity and difference are articulated. Contemporary anthropology understands ethnicity not as a primordial or biological given but as a socially constructed and historically contingent form of collective identity. Following Barth's influential insight, recent studies emphasize that ethnic identities are maintained through the negotiation of cultural boundaries rather than the possession of fixed cultural traits (Eriksen, 2020). Ethnic boundaries are shaped by interaction, migration, state policies,

and power relations. In plural societies, ethnicity often becomes a key marker of belonging and exclusion, influencing access to resources, political representation, and social recognition. Anthropologists note that ethnic identities are increasingly flexible, situational, and strategically mobilized in response to changing social conditions (Brubaker, 2020). Thus, ethnicity exemplifies how identity is simultaneously cultural, political, and relational.

Gender and Identity Across Cultures

Gender is another crucial site where identity and difference intersect. Anthropological research consistently demonstrates that gender identities are culturally constructed and historically variable rather than universally fixed. Gender norms shape expectations concerning behavior, roles, and moral worth, thereby deeply influencing personal and social identities (Connell & Pearse, 2023). Cross-cultural studies reveal diverse configurations of gender that challenge binary and biologically reductionist models. Recent anthropological scholarship foregrounds how gender identities are negotiated through everyday practices, institutional structures, and symbolic representations (Ortner, 2021). Moreover, feminist and queer anthropology emphasize the intersection of gender with other identity markers such as ethnicity, class, and religion, highlighting how systems of inequality shape experiences of belonging and marginalization (Butler, 2020).

Class, Status, and Social Stratification

Class and social status play a significant role in shaping identity by structuring access to material resources, cultural capital, and symbolic recognition. Anthropologists argue that class identities are not merely economic positions but culturally mediated experiences that influence self-perception, aspirations, and social relations (Bourdieu, 2021). Through everyday practices such as consumption, language use, and educational attainment class distinctions become embodied and normalized, reinforcing social hierarchies. Recent studies show that class-based identities are increasingly fragmented in late modern societies, yet remain powerful determinants of belonging and exclusion (Savage et al., 2021). Anthropology thus reveals how social stratification operates not only through material inequality but also through symbolic boundaries that shape identity.

In-Group and Out-Group Dynamics

In-group and out-group distinctions are fundamental mechanisms through which identities are formed and sustained. Anthropological research highlights that belonging is often defined negatively, through the exclusion of those perceived as different or threatening. These distinctions are reinforced through cultural narratives, stereotypes, and institutional practices (Tajfel, 2020). While in-group identification can foster solidarity and social cohesion, it can also generate exclusion, discrimination, and conflict. Contemporary anthropology emphasizes that such dynamics are not natural but socially produced, often intensified by political rhetoric, media representation, and historical grievances (Mbembe, 2021). Understanding identity therefore requires attention to the moral and political implications of boundary-making.

Identity and the Politics of Recognition

The politics of recognition has emerged as a central theme in contemporary identity studies. Recognition refers to the social and institutional affirmation of individuals' and groups' identities as legitimate and valuable. Anthropologists argue that struggles for recognition are not merely symbolic but deeply tied to material conditions, dignity, and justice (Fraser &

Honneth, 2020). Marginalized groups often mobilize identity claims to challenge exclusion and demand inclusion within political and cultural frameworks. However, recent debates caution against reifying identities in ways that obscure internal diversity or reinforce new forms of exclusion (Benhabib, 2022). Anthropology contributes a critical perspective by emphasizing the contextual, negotiated, and ethical dimensions of recognition and belonging.

Globalization, Modernity, and Cultural Change

Globalization and modernity have profoundly reshaped the relationship between culture and identity, challenging earlier anthropological assumptions about bounded cultures and stable identities. Contemporary anthropology increasingly recognizes that cultural identities are formed within translocal, transnational, and digitally mediated contexts, where social life is structured by flows of people, capital, ideas, and technologies. These processes do not simply erode cultural identities but reconfigure them in complex and often contradictory ways (Appadurai, 2021).

Cultural Hybridity and Transnational Identities

One of the most significant consequences of globalization is the emergence of cultural hybridity. Rather than conceiving cultures as discrete and internally homogeneous, anthropologists now emphasize the mixing, borrowing, and rearticulation of cultural forms across boundaries. Hybrid identities emerge as individuals draw simultaneously on local traditions and global cultural repertoires, producing new forms of belonging that resist singular classification (Kraidy, 2020). Transnational identities are particularly evident among migrant communities who maintain social, economic, and emotional ties across national borders. Anthropological studies show that such identities are not transitional but enduring, enabling individuals to inhabit multiple cultural worlds simultaneously (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2021). These identities complicate conventional notions of citizenship, nationality, and cultural loyalty, underscoring the need for more flexible anthropological frameworks.

Migration, Diaspora, and Identity Negotiation

Migration has become a defining feature of the contemporary world, intensifying processes of identity negotiation. For migrants and diasporic communities, identity formation often involves navigating tensions between cultural continuity and adaptation. Anthropological research highlights how migrants selectively reinterpret cultural norms, balancing inherited traditions with the demands of host societies (Eriksen, 2020). Diaspora identities are shaped by memory, displacement, and the politics of belonging. Collective narratives of origin and loss play a crucial role in sustaining group identity, while everyday practices such as food, language, and religious observance—anchor cultural continuity (Clifford, 2021). At the same time, experiences of exclusion and racialization in host societies often sharpen identity consciousness, transforming culture into a resource for resistance and self-assertion (Mbembe, 2021).

Media, Technology, and Identity Reconstruction

Digital technologies and media platforms have become central arenas for identity construction and expression. Anthropologists increasingly examine how social media, virtual communities, and digital storytelling enable individuals to curate, perform, and negotiate identities in novel ways (Miller et al., 2021). Digital spaces facilitate both the reinforcement of cultural traditions and the experimentation with alternative identities, particularly among

younger generations. However, digital identity formation is also shaped by algorithms, surveillance, and unequal access to technology. Critical anthropological perspectives highlight how power operates within digital environments, influencing visibility, recognition, and exclusion (Couldry & Mejias, 2020). Identity in the digital age is thus simultaneously empowering and constrained, reflecting broader global inequalities.

Tradition, Modernity, and Cultural Tensions

Globalization often intensifies tensions between tradition and modernity, particularly in societies undergoing rapid social change. Anthropologists caution against framing this tension as a simple opposition, emphasizing instead that traditions are continuously reinterpreted in response to modern conditions (Ingold, 2020). Cultural continuity is maintained not through rigid preservation but through adaptive transformation. Modernity introduces new moral frameworks, economic structures, and political institutions that reshape identity aspirations. Yet traditional values and practices often persist as sources of meaning, authority, and resistance. Recent anthropological studies demonstrate that individuals actively negotiate these tensions, and by so doing constructing identities that integrate both inherited and emergent cultural elements (Ortner, 2021). Identity formation under conditions of globalization thus reflects creative agency rather than cultural loss.

Culture and Identity Nexus: Discourse and Conclusion

This article has examined culture and identity from an anthropological perspective, arguing that identity is best understood not as a fixed or essential property but as a dynamic, relational, and culturally mediated process. Drawing on classical anthropological insights while engaging contemporary theoretical developments, the analysis has shown that culture provides the symbolic, normative, and practical frameworks within which identities are formed, negotiated, and transformed. Identity emerges through socialization, language, ritual, memory, and worldview, yet remains open to reinterpretation in response to historical change, power relations, and global interconnectedness (Eriksen, 2020). Philosophically, the study affirms a relational ontology of the human person. Identity is neither reducible to subjective self-consciousness nor fully determined by social structures; rather, it arises in the tension between agency and cultural embeddedness. This position aligns with interpretive and phenomenological traditions that emphasize meaning, embodiment, and lived experience as central to human self-understanding (Desjarlais & Throop, 2021). Culture, in this sense, is not an external constraint but a horizon of intelligibility that enables individuals to recognize themselves and others as meaningful social beings.

Globalization and modernity further complicate identity formation by destabilizing traditional cultural boundaries while generating new forms of hybridity and transnational belonging. Rather than signaling the erosion of culture, these processes reveal its adaptive and generative capacities. Individuals actively rework cultural resources to construct identities that respond to changing economic, technological, and political realities (Appadurai, 2021). Anthropology thus challenges deterministic narratives of cultural loss, emphasizing instead human creativity and interpretive agency in the face of global transformation. At the same time, the analysis has shown that identity formation is deeply entangled with power. Colonial legacies, state practices, digital infrastructures, and global inequalities shape whose identities are recognized, marginalized, or rendered invisible. Postcolonial and critical perspectives remind us that identity is not merely self-expressive but also governed by regimes of knowledge and authority (Mbembe, 2021). Philosophically,

this calls for a critical anthropology attentive to asymmetries of power and committed to ethical reflexivity. In the light of the analysis of this paper, culture and identity must be understood as mutually constitutive, historically situated, and ethically significant dimensions of human life. Anthropology's enduring contribution lies in its capacity to illuminate how identities are lived, contested, and transformed within concrete cultural worlds. By integrating philosophical reflection with empirical sensitivity, this article affirms the relevance of anthropological inquiry for addressing contemporary questions of belonging, difference, and human dignity in an increasingly interconnected yet unequal world.

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RESOURCE CONTROL, EXTRACTIVES, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY ISSUES IN THE SOUTH-SOUTH REGION OF NIGERIA

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Abstract
The South-South region of Nigeria, which houses a fair measure of the country's petroleum reserves, remains at the heart of consistent and persistent wrangles over resource control, extractive industrial activities, together with endemic environmental insecurity. Despite its economic primacy to Nigeria, the region suffers from years of ecological degradation, negligence, exploitation, underdevelopment, and socio-political marginalization. This work explored how centralized resource governance systems contribute to environmental insecurityand degradation in the Niger Region of Nigeria. It is Premised on the Resource Curse Theory and the Environmental Security Framework. The findings shows that the combination of oil dependency, elite rent-seeking, and environmental damage has precipitated poverty, catalyzed conflict, and exacerbated regional ambivalences. The article concludes with a set of policy options emphasizing participatory resource governance, stronger environmental accountability, a dignified community engagement, and sustainable development strategies aimed at stabilizing the South-South region of Nigeria.

Keywords: Resource control, Extractive Industries, Environmental Security, South-South Nigeria, Niger Delta, Resource Curse Theory, Ecological Degradation, Negligence.

Introduction
The region referred to as the South-South of Nigeria, consists largely of the Niger Delta, remains one of the most resource-endowed yet environmentally affected regions in West Africa. This region accounts for over 80% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and a significant proportion of federal revenue. It occupies a central position in national economic stability. But, the exploitation of petroleum resources has precipitated a complex interplay of environmental degradation, existential negligence, political agitation, security threats, and

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developmental challenges. Issues surrounding resource control, environmental justice, and the activities of multinational oil corporations have shaped regional politics for decades.

Irrespective of the varied regulatory frameworks, intervention agencies, and environmental management policies, the South-South region continues to experience oil spills, gas flaring, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and livelihood disruptions. Such challenges, compounded by centralized control of natural resources, have created fertile ground for militancy, socio-political movements, and persistent demands for restructuring. Understanding these dynamics requires a theoretical grounding that links natural resource exploitation with governance, conflict, and environmental security.

Theoretical Framework

Resource Curse Theory: The Resource Curse Theory posits that countries endowed with abundant natural resources often experience poor governance, economic stagnation, corruption, and conflict.[i] The Resource Curse Theory is often called the paradox of plenty. It describes the tendency of resource-rich nations to perform worse in economic development, institutional quality, and political stability than nations with few natural resources.

The theory argues that abundant natural wealth can distort economic incentives, weaken non-resource sectors, inflate currencies, and make governments dependent on easy revenues rather than productive taxation. Politically, resource rents can foster corruption, rent-seeking, elite competition, and violent conflict as groups struggle to control lucrative assets. Rather than becoming a catalyst for prosperity, natural wealth may instead entrench underdevelopment when institutions are weak. This concept was first systematically developed by the economist Richard M Auty, who coined the term “resource curse” in his seminar work, Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis (1993). Auty’s framework demonstrates how mineral-dependent economies often stagnate due to poor governance, volatile revenues, and policy distortions. His contributions laid the foundation for later empirical studies, especially the macroeconomic analyses of Jeffrey Sacks and Andrew Warner. There is no doubting the fact that Nigeria embodies this paradox. Oil wealth has created high levels of dependency on petroleum rents while weakening other productive sectors of the economy. Relevant propositions of the theory include:

i. **Rentier Dynamics:** Oil revenues enable central actors to accumulate wealth without broad-based economic productivity. Nigeria represents a classic case of rentier-stage dynamics within the Resource Curse framework. Since the 1970s, the country has relied overwhelmingly on oil rents for export earnings and government revenue. This dependence means that the state earns more from selling crude oil to international markets than from taxing its own citizens or stimulating productive sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. As a result, political elites prioritize the control and distribution of oil revenues rather than the development of a broad-based economy. In this structure, loyalty networks, patronage, and rent-seeking becomes more profitable than innovations or diversification. This has heavily affected the Nigerian economic organogram to the point that the country now appears irredeemable.
ii. **Weak Institutions:** Resource rents undermine accountability and incentives for good governance. Rentier configuration has contributed significantly to weak institutional development. Since the Nigerian state can finance itself without extensive domestic taxation, the incentive to build strong, transparent, and accountable institutions has been historically low. Weak oversight allows corruption to thrive, bureaucracies to

remain underperforming, and public financial management to reel between oil booms and buts.

iii. **Conflict Inducement:** Struggles over access to petroleum wealth escalate group tensions and violence. Most mineral-dependent structures also increase the risk of conflict inducement, a well-organized pattern in the Resource Curse literature. The intense competition over oil revenues has fueled inter-elite struggles, electoral violence, and regional tensions. The Niger Delta conflict is a clear example: communities that bear the environmental costs of extraction but receive limited benefits developed grievances that escalated into militancy. Applying this theory helps explain why the Niger Delta remains underdeveloped despite being the main source of national wealth.

Environmental Security Framework

The Environmental Security Framework emphasizes how environmental degradation, scarcity, and ecological risks threaten human wellbeing and national stability. Extractive activities in the Niger Delta generate severe environmental insecurity - manifesting in loss of arable land, polluted water bodies, declining fishery resources, health hazards, and disrupted livelihoods. The framework argues that environmental stress can undermine livelihoods, intensify competition over resources, and ultimately contribute to social instability or conflict. It is widely used today in security studies, environmental policy, and conflict-prevention research. Lester Brown is often credited as an early pioneer for framing environmental degradation as a security threat in the late 1970s and early 1980s. his work helped popularize the notion that ecological stress could destabilize states just as serious as military thread. This framework was later significantly formalized by Richard Ullman in his influential 1983 article “Redefining Security,” where he argued that environmental degradation should be considered a national security threat because it can undermine political and economic stability. Jessica Tuchman Mathews further advanced the framework in her 1989 Foreign Affairs article “Redefining Security,” which elevated environmental concerns into mainstream global security discourse. Together, these scholars helped redefine security studies, giving birth to what is now known as the Environmental Security Framework.

Consequences of Environmental Insecurity

Competition over Shrinking Resources: Environmental insecurity reduces the availability and quality of essential natural resources such as water, arable land, forests, and fisheries. As these resources shrink, communities, regions, and even nations compete for what is left. Similarly, farmers compete for fertile land as soil quality declines and desertification spreads. Herdsmen and farmers clash over dwindling grazing routs and water points. In the same vein, the government might tighten control over resources, leading to tensions with local populations.

Increased Migration and Urban Pressure

When rural livelihood collapse due to environmental decline – crop failure, flooding, droughts, or coastal erosion – people are forced to move. They can internally migrate, moving to cities and increasing over-crowding. At times they cross-borders, fleeing to neighbouring countries seeking safety and stability. This leads to the emergence of environmental refugees who are often not officially recognized under international law.

Youth Restiveness and Militancy

Environmental degradation undermines economic opportunities – especially in agricultural, fishing, and local industries that young people rely on. With rising unemployment and frustration. This unfortunate reality makes youths to become restive, expressing anger through protests and disruption of social activities. In this same light, militant groups may exploit this frustration, offering financial incentives or a sense of purpose. More so, in resource-rich but environmentally degraded regions such as the oil-producing areas, youth may turn to militancy to protest pollution, marginalization, or exploitation. The reason of most of these challenges is that environmental insecurity breaks traditional livelihoods, creates a pool of economically idle youth, and fuels resentment against the government and corporations perceived as neglectful or exploitative.

Health Crises and Reduced Life Expectancy

There are enough evidences to prove that environmental degradation overtly harms public health and reduces life expectancy in various ways. This degradation may lead to the pollution of water which can be responsible for cholera typhoid, and other water-borne diseases. Air pollution cause respiration infections, asthma, lung cancer, and cardiovascular diseases. The same environmental degradation can lead to heatwaves and extreme temperatures that are capable of increasing heat-related deaths. In the same light, malnutrition rises due to declining agricultural productivity caused by environmental degradation. Vector-borne diseases, such as malaria and dengue, spread as climate conditions change. Toxic waste and chemical spills contaminate land and water, causing long-term illnesses.

Resource Control Dynamics in the South-South Region

Resource control remains one of the most politically charged issues in Nigeria's federal system. Historically, the derivation principle granted regions 50% of revenues from resources produced within their territories. However, with the rise of oil, constitutional amendments reduced this to a meager 1.5% before it was later increased to 13%. The South-South region – comprising Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers States – is the hearts of Nigeria's oil and gas industry. Despite producing the bulk of the nation's revenue, the region has long experienced environmental degradation, underdevelopment, and contestations over ownership and management of natural resources. This situation has shaped complex dynamics involving the federal government, regional elites, militant groups, and broader socio-political movements.

Key issues include:

i. **Federal Dominance of Resource Governance:** The 1999 Constitution vests full control of mineral resources in the federal government. This centralization fuels perceptions of injustice among oil-producing communities who bear the ecological burden without equivalent benefits. The structure of resource ownership and revenue sharing has historically favored centralized control. The federal government retains ownerships of all national resources, including oil and gas, under the Constitution and the Petroleum Act. Revenues allocation formulas heavily prioritize national distribution, with the deprivation principle reduced drastically. Federal agencies such as the NNPC (now NNPL Ltd), the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, and regulatory bodies dominate licensing, exploration and profit-sharing. State and host communities have limited authority, resulting in feeling of alienation and dispossession.

ii. **Elite Capture and Rent-Seeking:** Both federal and local elites benefit from oil rents at the expense of community welfare. This reproduces underdevelopment and hinders democratic accountability.[ii] Within the region itself, resource control conflict are further complicated by elite capture. Local political elites, contractors, and traditional leaders often benefit disproportionately from oil-related rents, patronages, newels and compensations. Oil companies negotiate with powerful intermediaries, who may divert benefits from local communities. Development agencies created to channel resources into the region - such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and various state-level intervention bodies - have faced allegations of corruption, project abandonment and mismanagement. This internal inequality undermines trust within the region and fuel the perception that not only the federal government, but also local elites, profit at the expense of ordinary people. Elite capture therefore creates a double layer of marginalization – from the federal center and from the local leaders.

iii. **Militancy and Regional Agitations:** By the early 2000s, frustration over environmental degradation, employment, and perceived exploitation led to the rise of militant movements. Groups such as MEND and the Niger Delta Avengers emerged as violent responses to environmental degradation and economic exclusion. Though the 2009 Amnesty Programme reduced armed conflict, it did not resolve structural grievances.[iii] Militancy was framed as a struggle for resource justice, demanding greater control of oil wealth, compensation for pollution, and development of host communities. The Nigerian government responded with a combination of military force and negotiation, culminating in the 2009 Amnesty Programme, which reduced violence but did not eliminate underlying grievances. Illegal bunkering, pipeline vandalism, and artisanal refining continue, often involving networks of militants, community actors, and criminal syndicates. Militancy remains both a symptom of deeper structural issues and a bargaining tool in the politics of resource control.

iv. **Persistent Calls for Restructuring:** The push for true federalism and greater regional autonomy continues, driven largely by demands for environmental justice and equitable distribution of resource revenues. These demands have dove-tailed, within the South-South, into a debate over restructuring. The proponents of this idea request for a greater derivation – often up to 25% or even 50% of the oil revenue retained by producing states. Such states demand for true federalism, in order that states could be allowed to control their resources and remit an agreed-upon portion to the center. They call for an enhanced autonomy and recognition of regional security, within the aim of protecting oil installations and communities. The persistence of these calls reflects widespread belief that Nigeria's centralized system is inequitable and unsustainable, especially given the environmental and economic burdens borne by the oil-producing states. Resources control dynamics in the South-South region of Nigeria are shaped by a long history of centralized federal authority, internal elite manipulation, militancy resistance, and persistent demands for restructuring. These dynamics reveal deeper tensions within Nigeria's federal system - particularly, the struggle to balance national unity with local justice, environmental sustainability, and equitable development.

Extractive Activities and Environmental Degradation

Oil extraction in the Niger Delta has produced some of the worst ecological outcomes in the world.

i. **Oil Spills:** Thousands of oil spills have contaminated rivers, farmlands, and mangrove forests. Communities dependent on fishing and farming suffer significant livelihood losses.[iv] Oil spills release hydrocarbons and toxic substances into soil and water systems, causing long-term contamination. These spills smother vegetation, disrupt soil chemistry, and reduce agricultural productivity. Aquatic ecosystems are particularly vulnerable – oil films block sunlight, reduce photosynthesis, and impair fish production. Persistent pollution such as PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) bloaccumulate, posing long-term ecological risks.[v]

ii. **Gas Flaring:** Despite legal provisions for its reduction, gas flaring persists at high levels. It releases toxic chemicals linked to cancer, respiratory diseases, acid rain, and climate change.[vi] Gas flaring emits greenhouse gases and harmful substances such as nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide, contributing to air pollution and acid rain. Continues heating from flare stacks alters local microclimates, reducing soil moisture and increasing evapotranspiration. These environmental changes diminish crop yield and degrade nearby vegetation. Exposure to soot and particulate matter also affects wildlife health.[vii]

iii. **Loss of Biodiversity:** Continuous pollution damages delicate ecosystems such as mangroves and freshwater swamps. Biodiversity loss undermines food security and traditional livelihoods. Oil exploration and associated industrial activities fragment habitats, decrease species richness, and alter ecological community structures. Pollution can cause mass mortality events among fish, invertebrates, and birds. Over time, sensitive species decline while more tolerant species dominate, reducing overall ecosystem resilience. This loss of biodiversity undermines essential ecological services such as nutrient cycling and water purification.[viii]

iv. **Socioeconomic Impacts:** Environmental degradation from oil spill and gas flaring affects human livelihood – especially communities dependent on fishing, farming and forest resources. Declining soil fertility and contaminated water sources increase poverty levels and food insecurity. Health impacts such as respiratory illnesses and skin disorders further burden local economies. Conflicts and social unrest often emerge when communities perceive inequitable resource management or compensation.[ix]

Security Issues in the South-South

i. **Livelihood Insecurity:** Disruptions to agriculture and fisheries have deepened poverty, forcing many youths into criminal activities or migration.[x] The South-South region, dominated by fishing, farming, and forest-based livelihoods, faces severe disruptions due to oil pollution, gas flaring, and land degradation. Frequent oil spills contaminate farmlands and rivers, reducing group yields and fish stocks. Coastal erosion and loss of mangroves further undermine community resilience. As natural resources decline, households experience reduced incomes, food insecurity, and forced migration.

ii. **Health Risks:** Oil spills and air pollution contribute to skin diseases, respiratory problems, and other chronic conditions. Exposure to benzene and other toxins is a known cancer risk.[xi] Environmental contamination exposes communities to significant health threats. Gas flaring generate toxic compounds, contributing to respiratory diseases, eye irritation, and skin disorder. Oil contaminated water sources heighten risks of gastrointestinal infections, heavy-metal poisoning, and long-term carcinogenic effects.

iii. **Conflict and Militancy:** Environmental damage intensifies grievances, feeding into cycles of activism, protest, sabotage, and militancy. Some communities see illegal bunkering as an economic alternative. The degradation of the environment, combined with perceived

exploitation and unequal distribution of oil wealth - creates fertile ground for grievances. Loss of livelihoods and frustration over pollution drive community unrest, protests, and in extreme cases, militancy.

iv. **Governance Challenges:** Regulatory agencies such as NOSDRA face constraints including limited funding, political interference, and inadequate enforcement powers. Weak regulatory frameworks, poor enforcement of environmental laws, and corruption undermine effective resource management. Regulatory agencies often lack the capacity or political backing to hold oil companies accountable. Inadequate compensations for environmental damage fuels distrust between communities, government, and corporations. Fragmented institutional coordination and slow implementation of remediation afforests, such as the Ogoniland clean-up, further erode public confidence and perpetuate insecurity.

Policy and Governance Responses

i. **Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC):** Created to address development deficits but hampered by corruption, duplication of roles, and inadequate coordination.[xii] The NDDC was established in 2000 to address the developmental deficits and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. Its mandate includes infrastructure development, environmental remediation, economic empowerment, and poverty reduction. The commission has executed projects such as road construction, water supply systems, and skill acquisition programs. However, its performance has been frequently critiqued due to issues of corruption, projects abandonment, and weak oversight, which have limited its overall impact in improving living conditions.

ii. **Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs:** This was created in 2008, the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs oversees policies and programs aimed at addressing the root cause of underdevelopment and environmental insecurities. It supervises the NDDC and coordinates key regional interventions, including infrastructural projects (e.g., the East-West Road) and community development initiatives. The ministry also engages with stakeholders to reduce tensions and promote sustainable development. Despite its mandate, bureaucratic delays and funding constraints have undermined its effectiveness.

iii. **Amnesty Programme (2009):** Focused on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. Though it reduced violence, it did not address long-term environmental rehabilitation.[xiii] This programme was launched in 2009. The Amnesty Programme was designed to end militant activities disrupting oil production, it granted amnesty to ex-militants in exchange for disarmament, demobilization, and participation in rehabilitation and training. The program significantly reduced violence and improved oil output in the early years. It also provided vocational training, scholarships, and spends to participants. However, dependency on stipends, political interference, and irregular payments have weakened long-term reintegration and created new grievance in some communities.

iv. **Petroleum Industry Act (PIA, 2021):** Enacted in 2001, the PIA represents a major reform of Nigeria's oil and gas governance. It aims to improve transparency, attract investment, and ensure better community benefits. A key provision is the creation of Host Communities Development Trusts, which allocate a percentage of oil company operating expenses to local communities for development projects. This Act also establishes stricter environmental standards and clearer regulatory structures. While

the PIA is seen as a step forward, critics argue that the percentage allocated to host communities is inadequate, and successful implementation will depend heavily on transparent management and enforcement.

Conclusion

The nexus of resource control, extractive industry practices, and environmental insecurity in Nigeria's South-South region represents a profound developmental paradox. While the region generates enormous wealth for the Nigerian state, it remains ecologically threatened and politically marginalized. The Resource Curse Theory and Environmental Security Framework jointly illustrate how oil dependency, weak institutions, and governance deficits have exacerbated insecurity. To mitigate these issues, Nigeria must pursue decentralized and participatory resource governance that is strong in the enforcement of environmental regulations, and prioritizing large-scale ecological remediation. Community-driven development frameworks have to be put in place and be effectively executed to foster a transparent management of oil revenues, and diversification of regional economies. This will best be realized if Nigeria succeeds in strengthening institutions responsible for oversight. Without a doubt, it is only through systemic governance reforms and sustained environmental accountability can the South-South region achieve lasting peace, sustainability, and socioeconomic justice.

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Article **Open Access**

WEAK STATE INSTITUTIONS AND THE RISE OF NON-STATE ARMED ACTORS IN WEST AFRICA

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Abstract
The proliferation of Non-state Armed Actors (NSAs) in West Africa has become a pressing security concern, undermining state authority, governance, and socio-economic stability. This article examined the nexus between weak state institutions and the rise of NSAs, arguing that institutional fragility manifested in corruption, limited capacity, poor rule of law, and political exclusion. These factors create security vacuums that armed non-state groups exploit. Employing a qualitative, case-study approach, the study analyzes contexts in Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso, highlighting diverse forms of NSAs, including jihadist insurgencies, ethnic militias, and criminal networks. The findings reveal that weak governance not only facilitates the emergence of NSAs but also sustains their operations by limiting state responsiveness and eroding citizen trust. Furthermore, socio-economic deprivation, marginalization, and historical grievances amplify susceptibility to armed mobilization. The study underscores that addressing the NSA phenomenon requires multidimensional strategies that strengthen institutional capacity, enhance rule of law, and promote inclusive governance while simultaneously addressing economic and social inequalities. Regional cooperation, particularly through ECOWAS and AU frameworks, alongside community-based peace building initiatives, is essential to mitigate the influence of NSAs. By linking theoretical perspectives on state fragility, governance, and conflict dynamics with empirical analysis, the article contributes to scholarship on security governance in fragile contexts and informs policy interventions aimed at sustainable peace in West Africa.

Keywords: Non-state Armed Actors, Security Governance, State Fragility, West Africa.

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Introduction

West Africa's security landscape has undergone profound shifts in recent decades. This is done by expanding violence, fragmented governance, and the growing presence of armed non-state actors (NSAs) that increasingly challenge state authority. In the Sahel and Lake Chad regions, groups such as jihadist insurgents and armed bandits have emerged as potent security threats, operating across borders and exploiting ungoverned spaces to establish parallel systems of control (Akinyetun, 2024). The historical roots of institutional fragility in West Africa are deeply tied to colonial legacies, post-independence governance deficits, and chronic socio-economic marginalization, which have together undermined state capacity to deliver security and basic services (ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024). As a result, NSAs have not only contested states' monopoly on violence, but, in some cases, have functioned as alternative providers of order or illicit governance (Anjide & Momoh, 2025). In other words West Africa's security landscape has undergone profound transformation over the past decade, marked by escalating violence, territorial contestation, and the entrenchment of armed non-state actors (NSAs) that challenge the authority of national governments. Militant Islamist groups such as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State-linked factions have expanded their reach across the Sahel and into coastal states, conducting high-intensity operations, seizing territory, and establishing parallel governance structures, particularly in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. These dynamics have produced one of the most lethal security environments globally, with armed groups perpetrating attacks, displacing populations, and undermining state sovereignty. Historically, the fragility of West African state institutions has deep roots in colonial legacies, post-independence governance deficits, and uneven development that have weakened central authority and bred political exclusion. Such institutional weaknesses manifested in corruption, limited state capacity, and the erosion of the rule of law have constrained governments' ability to deliver public services and maintain security, creating ungoverned spaces that are readily exploited by NSAs. As these groups evolve from local militias to formidable security and political actors, they not only contest the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force but also shape local political orders through coercion and informal governance

The persistence of weak institutions in West African contexts is reflected in endemic corruption, limited bureaucratic capacity, and unreliable rule of law, which weaken state legitimacy and responsiveness (Akinyetun, 2024). These governance deficits create security vacuums that NSAs exploit for recruitment, territorial expansion, and illicit economic activities, further destabilizing fragile states (ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024). The inability of states to enforce authority and protect populations has thus contributed to the entrenchment of violent actors and escalating insecurity. This study aims to: (1) analyze the structural causes of weak state institutions in West Africa; (2) examine the relationship between institutional weakness and the proliferation of NSAs; and (3) assess the socio-political and economic impacts of NSAs on affected communities. By critically linking institutional fragility with NSA proliferation, this study contributes to political science and security studies, offering insights relevant to scholars and regional policymakers seeking sustainable governance and peacebuilding strategies.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Defining Key Concepts

i. **Weak State Institutions:** are central to understanding the security challenges in West Africa. These institutions are defined as governmental structures that lack the legitimacy,

administrative capacity, and organizational coherence to perform essential functions, including maintaining law and order, delivering public services, and safeguarding citizens' welfare (Rotberg, 2003; Fukuyama, 2013). Weakness in state institutions is often manifested through pervasive corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, poor accountability, and uneven enforcement of laws across territories (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Indicators of institutional fragility include frequent security vacuums, inability to regulate armed groups, widespread public distrust, and ineffective judicial and administrative systems (Kahler, 2015). In West Africa, for instance, the inability of governments in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria to exert authority in rural and border regions has created a fertile environment for non-state armed actors (NSAs) to thrive (ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024).

ii. **Non-state Armed Actors (NSAs):** refer to organized groups that use violence independently of the state to pursue political, ideological, or economic objectives (Clapham, 1998; Byman, 2005). These actors vary in form and function, ranging from insurgents challenging state authority, community militias providing local protection, private security firms contracted for enforcement, to terrorist groups with transnational agendas. In West Africa, NSAs such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, JNIM in Mali, and ethno-communal militias in Burkina Faso exemplify how these actors exploit weak governance structures, porous borders, and social grievances to expand their influence and control territories (Anjide & Momoh, 2025; ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024). Beyond direct violence, NSAs often provide alternative governance or economic services, thereby embedding themselves into local political economies and challenging state legitimacy (Clapham, 1998).

iii. **State Fragility:** is an umbrella concept describing a condition where governments are unable or unwilling to perform core functions effectively (Rotberg, 2003). Fragile states typically exhibit political exclusion, weak institutional frameworks, and limited capacity to manage conflict or enforce the rule of law (World Bank, 2022). In such contexts, social grievances, poverty, and resource scarcity intersect with institutional deficiencies, creating conditions conducive to the emergence and expansion of NSAs (Fukuyama, 2013). West African states experiencing fragility often struggle with internal displacement crises, illicit economies, and cross-border insurgencies, which further undermine state authority and governance (ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024).

Theoretical Perspectives

Several theoretical lenses illuminate the nexus between weak state institutions and NSA proliferation in West Africa: State Failure Theory posits that when a state loses the capacity to enforce law, maintain order, and provide essential services, it becomes vulnerable to collapse or the emergence of parallel power structures (Rotberg, 2003). Such failure generates security vacuums exploited by NSAs, whose influence grows proportionally to the state's inability to assert authority. For example, the Sahel region's weak policing capacity and limited territorial control have allowed jihadist groups to establish semi-autonomous zones and gain local support (ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024). Security Governance and Institutionalism broadens the conceptualization of security beyond state monopoly, emphasizing interactions between formal institutions and societal actors (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). In contexts where formal governance is weak, communities often turn to NSAs for protection, creating de facto security arrangements. This theory highlights the importance of institutional quality, the rule of law, and governance mechanisms in mitigating the rise of

armed non-state groups. Resource Mobilization and Conflict Theory underscores that armed groups emerge and sustain themselves by leveraging available resources, whether human, financial, or material (Tilly, 1978; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). In West Africa, NSAs exploit illicit economies, porous borders, and local grievances to recruit members, fund operations, and challenge state authority. The theory emphasizes the interplay between structural opportunities and strategic mobilization in understanding armed group proliferation. Neo-patrimonialism describes governance systems dominated by personalistic networks where political loyalty, patronage, and clientelism undermine formal institutions (Erdmann & Engel, 2007). In neo-patrimonial contexts, resources are diverted for personal or network benefit, bureaucracies are weakened, and state authority erodes, thereby creating environments conducive to NSA emergence (van de Walle, 2001). Many West African states exhibit neo-patrimonial characteristics, explaining persistent governance deficits despite formal institutional frameworks.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework guiding this study links institutional capacity, governance quality, and NSA emergence. Weak institutions characterized by corruption, limited administrative reach, and political exclusion generate security vacuums that NSAs exploit (Rotberg, 2003; ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024). The framework posits a cyclical relationship: fragile governance structures enable NSAs, whose presence further undermines state authority and erodes social trust. By integrating state failure theory, security governance, resource mobilization, and neo-patrimonialism, this study provides a comprehensive lens to examine how institutional deficiencies interact with socio-political and economic conditions to facilitate NSA proliferation. This analytical approach also allows for policy-oriented insights, emphasizing that sustainable mitigation of NSAs requires strengthening state institutions, improving governance quality, and addressing underlying socio-economic grievances (Fukuyama, 2013; ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024).

Historical and Regional Context

Colonial Legacies and State Formation: The historical trajectory of West African states has profoundly shaped the contemporary security landscape, particularly the emergence of weak state institutions and non-state armed actors (NSAs). Colonial administrations imposed artificial boundaries that disregarded pre-existing ethnic, linguistic, and political configurations, thereby creating states with fragmented social cohesion and contested legitimacy (Herbst, 2000). These colonial borders often forced disparate communities into single administrative units, sowing seeds for post-independence ethnic tensions and identity-based conflicts. Colonial governance was primarily extractive, emphasizing resource exploitation and centralized control rather than building robust, inclusive institutions, a legacy that continues to constrain institutional capacity (Young, 1994; Mamdani, 1996).

Post-independence, West African states inherited weak bureaucracies and centralized authority structures ill-suited for managing diverse populations. Efforts at nation-building were often undermined by political instability, coups, and authoritarian regimes that prioritized elite interests over institutional consolidation (Adebajo, 2010). Consequently, the inability of post-colonial governments to deliver security, social services, and equitable governance created conditions conducive to the rise of NSAs, who filled institutional voids in both security and social governance.

Political and Economic Factors

Political and economic dynamics in West Africa further exacerbate institutional weaknesses. Corruption, patronage networks, and clientelism are pervasive, diverting public resources away from essential services and undermining the rule of law (van de Walle, 2001; Erdmann & Engel, 2007). Political exclusion and favoritism erode citizens' trust in the state, prompting reliance on alternative actors for protection and basic needs. Economic marginalization and high unemployment are key drivers of armed mobilization, particularly among youth populations. Poverty and lack of economic opportunities incentivize recruitment into NSAs, who often provide salaries, material incentives, or social support networks (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Resource competition—over land, grazing rights, minerals, or illicit economies—further fuels local conflicts, creating environments where NSAs can operate with relative impunity (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime [GI-TOC], 2023).

Social and Cultural Factors

Ethnic cleavages and identity politics play a significant role in shaping conflict dynamics and the proliferation of NSAs. In heterogeneous societies, communal loyalties often supersede national allegiance, providing fertile ground for the formation of community-based militias, vigilante groups, and insurgent networks (Richards, 2005). These groups often emerge to protect local interests or to contest perceived marginalization by central authorities. Informal justice systems and local security arrangements are also central to understanding the rise of NSAs. In many rural and peri-urban areas, traditional leaders and customary courts offer dispute resolution mechanisms where state institutions are absent or mistrusted. While these systems can enhance local governance, they also create opportunities for NSAs to embed themselves as alternative authorities, legitimizing their presence and control (Aning & Pokoo, 2014). In combination, historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural factors interact to create environments in which weak states struggle to assert authority, thereby facilitating the emergence and entrenchment of non-state armed actors across West Africa.

Dynamics of Non-State Armed Actors in West Africa

Typologies of NSAs: Non-state armed actors (NSAs) in West Africa present diverse forms, reflecting variations in objectives, organization, and operational strategies. Terrorist organizations, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) in Mali, pursue ideological and political objectives through violence and terror, aiming to destabilize states and establish alternative governance structures (Onuoha, 2014; ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024). These groups often operate transnationally, exploiting porous borders to evade state security forces and coordinate attacks across multiple jurisdictions. Criminal networks and trafficking groups focus primarily on illicit economic activities, including drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking. While their primary motivation is profit, these groups contribute to regional instability by weakening governance, bribing state officials, and forging alliances with other NSAs for protection or operational advantage (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime [GI-TOC], 2023). Community militias and vigilante groups typically emerge in response to state incapacity or perceived threats to local security. These actors provide protection to communities or specific ethnic groups and often operate outside formal legal frameworks. While they may reduce immediate insecurity at the local level, they can exacerbate intercommunal tensions and occasionally evolve into more organized armed factions (Aning & Pokoo, 2014).

Drivers of NSA Emergence

The proliferation of NSAs in West Africa is driven by multiple interrelated factors. Security vacuums and weak law enforcement remain primary catalysts. States with limited territorial reach, poorly equipped security forces, and ineffective judicial systems fail to deter or contain armed groups, allowing NSAs to establish strongholds in rural and border areas (Rotberg, 2003; ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024). Socio-economic deprivation also contributes significantly. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and lack of social services create incentives for youth to join NSAs, who offer material benefits, social networks, or a sense of purpose (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Additionally, economic marginalization exacerbates grievances that armed actors exploit to recruit members and legitimize their operations. Political exclusion and grievances further fuel armed mobilization. When communities perceive systemic discrimination, ethnic marginalization, or exclusion from political processes, NSAs present themselves as alternative authorities or champions of local interests, thereby gaining social legitimacy (Adebajo, 2010). In contexts of weak governance, these groups often blend political, social, and economic strategies to sustain operations and influence.

Synopsis of NSA operation in West Africa

i. **Nigeria**: Boko Haram, active since 2002, initially emerged as an Islamist insurgent group seeking to implement Sharia law in northern Nigeria. Over time, it evolved into a transnational terrorist network, exploiting governance gaps, socio-economic deprivation, and local grievances to expand operations across the Lake Chad Basin (Onuoha, 2014). Concurrently, Fulani militias have engaged in violent clashes over land and grazing rights, reflecting both ethno-communal tensions and the state's inability to manage resource conflicts (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2022).

ii. **Mali**: The Tuareg insurgencies and jihadist groups such as JNIM in northern Mali illustrate the fusion of ethnic grievances with Islamist ideology. Weak state presence in the Sahel, coupled with underdevelopment and porous borders, allowed these groups to establish operational strongholds and influence local governance structures (Thurston, 2020).

iii. **Other Regional Examples**: In Côte d'Ivoire, post-election violence and community militias have periodically destabilized political transitions. Burkina Faso has witnessed the rapid rise of Islamist insurgents exploiting fragile state institutions, while Guinea-Bissau experiences organized crime networks and armed factions that manipulate political instability for economic gain (ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024; GI-TOC, 2023). These cases demonstrate that the rise of NSAs is not limited to a single country or conflict type; rather, it reflects broader regional dynamics shaped by weak institutions, socio-economic deprivation, and historical grievances. Understanding these patterns is critical for designing policy interventions aimed at mitigating armed violence and enhancing governance capacity.

Impact of Non-State Armed Actors

Security Implications: Non-state armed actors (NSAs) significantly exacerbate insecurity in West Africa by directly contributing to violence and instability. Groups such as Boko Haram, JNIM, and Fulani militias have carried out attacks on civilians, security forces, and infrastructure, resulting in widespread fear and disruption (Onuoha, 2014; Thurston, 2020). The escalation of violence often occurs in cycles, where state counterinsurgency measures

trigger retaliatory attacks, leading to prolonged conflict and humanitarian suffering (ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024). Beyond domestic insecurity, NSAs pose threats to regional peace and cross-border security. The transnational operations of groups in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin demonstrate how porous borders and weak regional coordination allow armed actors to evade capture, recruit across states, and smuggle weapons and resources (ICG, 2022). Consequently, instability in one state frequently spills over into neighboring countries, complicating regional security governance and coordination efforts by bodies such as ECOWAS and the African Union (Aning & Pokoo, 2014).

Political Implications

The proliferation of NSAs undermines state legitimacy and authority, as citizens increasingly perceive the state as incapable of ensuring their safety or delivering essential services (Rotberg, 2003). In regions dominated by armed groups, communities often rely on NSAs for security and conflict mediation, effectively transferring authority from state institutions to non-state actors (Fukuyama, 2013). Additionally, NSAs contribute to the weakening of democratic governance and state-society relations. Their presence disrupts electoral processes, constrains political participation, and pressures governments to prioritize security expenditures over development programs, which further alienates populations (Adebajo, 2010). In some cases, NSAs engage in political coercion or intimidation, manipulating local power structures and exacerbating governance deficits (ICG, 2022).

Socio-Economic Implications

NSAs profoundly affect civilian populations through displacement and humanitarian crises. Violence and insecurity force large-scale population movements, with internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees often settling in informal camps with limited access to food, healthcare, and education (GI-TOC, 2023). These conditions heighten vulnerability to disease, malnutrition, and further socio-economic marginalization.

Moreover, NSAs disrupt economic activities and livelihoods. Agricultural production, trade, and local markets are frequently targeted or abandoned due to insecurity, reducing household incomes and exacerbating poverty (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Infrastructure destruction, extortion, and illicit taxation by armed groups further erode local economies, creating cycles of economic deprivation that reinforce dependency on NSAs for survival or protection (ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024). Taken together, these security, political, and socio-economic consequences illustrate the profound destabilizing effects of NSAs in West Africa and underscore the importance of integrated state-building, governance reform, and regional cooperation in mitigating their impact.

Policy Responses and Institutional Strengthening

State-Centered Approaches: Strengthening state institutions is a primary avenue for mitigating the threat posed by non-state armed actors (NSAs) in West Africa. Security sector reform (SSR) and capacity-building initiatives aim to professionalize police, military, and intelligence services, enhancing their ability to respond effectively to insurgency, terrorism, and organized crime (Sedra, 2010). SSR emphasizes accountability, operational efficiency, and civilian oversight, thereby reducing abuse and corruption that often fuel local grievances. Complementing SSR, improvements in rule of law, anti-corruption measures, and governance structures are crucial. Transparent judicial systems, effective law enforcement, and consistent enforcement of property and contract rights reinforce state legitimacy,

reducing the incentives for citizens to rely on NSAs for protection or dispute resolution (Rotberg, 2003; Fukuyama, 2013). Anti-corruption frameworks, public financial management reforms, and merit-based bureaucratic systems are vital for curbing patrimonialism and enhancing institutional credibility (Erdmann & Engel, 2007).

Regional and International Initiatives

Given the transnational nature of many NSAs, regional cooperation is indispensable. ECOWAS and the African Union (AU) have played critical roles in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and joint security operations. Initiatives such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad Basin exemplify coordinated responses to Boko Haram and other insurgent groups, enhancing intelligence sharing, cross-border patrols, and operational synchronization (ICG, 2022). International partners also support counterterrorism, capacity-building, and humanitarian interventions. Collaborative frameworks integrate military, legal, and development-oriented responses to simultaneously address immediate threats and long-term structural vulnerabilities (Aning & Pokoo, 2014). These efforts emphasize the importance of regional burden-sharing and multilateral engagement to contain NSAs and stabilize fragile states.

Community-Based Strategies

Local communities are both affected by and key actors in the response to NSAs. Community-based peacebuilding and militia integration programs aim to formalize and regulate local security initiatives, reducing the risk of abuse while strengthening local governance capacity (Richards, 2005). Examples include incorporating vigilante groups into official security frameworks or training local defense committees under civilian oversight. Addressing root socio-economic grievances is equally critical. Poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion are significant drivers of recruitment into NSAs. Development programs focusing on education, livelihoods, and access to essential services reduce the structural conditions that NSAs exploit (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; GI-TOC, 2023). Combining security interventions with social and economic initiatives ensures that responses are not merely reactive but also preventive.

Recommendations

A holistic strategy is essential for sustainable mitigation of NSAs, integrating security, governance, and development dimensions. Policies should promote accountability, transparency, and citizen engagement, reinforcing state legitimacy and trust while constraining the operational space of armed groups (Fukuyama, 2013; Rotberg, 2003). Long-term solutions require harmonized efforts across national, regional, and local levels, ensuring that governance reforms, security sector improvements, and socio-economic interventions mutually reinforce one another. By addressing both structural weaknesses and immediate security threats, West African states can better contain NSAs and foster resilient, stable communities.

Conclusion

The proliferation of non-state armed actors (NSAs) in West Africa is both a symptom and a cause of weak state institutions, demonstrating the intricate relationship between governance deficits, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and regional instability. This study has highlighted that weak state institutions characterized by corruption, inadequate administrative capacity, limited enforcement of the rule of law, and neo-patrimonial

governance create security vacuums that NSAs exploit to expand their influence. By providing protection, alternative governance, and economic opportunities in the absence of effective state presence, NSAs have entrenched themselves as formidable actors in the West African security landscape (Rotberg, 2003; Fukuyama, 2013; ACLED & GI-TOC, 2024). Historically, colonial legacies, artificial boundaries, and post-independence institutional weaknesses have shaped state fragility, which, compounded by political exclusion, socio-economic deprivation, and ethnic cleavages, has enabled the rise of terrorist organizations, criminal networks, and community militias. The cases of Boko Haram and Fulani militias in Nigeria, JNIM and Tuareg groups in Mali, and insurgencies in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire illustrate how NSAs exploit local grievances, weak governance, and transnational networks to sustain operations (Onuoha, 2014; Thurston, 2020; ICG, 2022).

The impacts of NSAs are multi-dimensional, encompassing heightened insecurity, erosion of state legitimacy, disruption of democratic governance, displacement, humanitarian crises, and economic destabilization. These consequences underscore the necessity for integrated responses that address both immediate security threats and the structural conditions that facilitate NSA proliferation. Policy responses must combine state-centered approaches, including security sector reform, rule-of-law improvements, and anti-corruption measures, with regional initiatives led by ECOWAS, the African Union, and international partners. Furthermore, community-based strategies that integrate local militias into formal security frameworks and address underlying socio-economic grievances are essential for sustainable peace (Aning & Pokoo, 2014; Richards, 2005; GI-TOC, 2023). Recommendations emerging from this study emphasize a holistic and multi-level approach: strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing transparency and accountability, promoting citizen engagement, and integrating socio-economic development with security interventions. Only by addressing the structural drivers of fragility alongside immediate security concerns can West African states hope to reduce the influence of NSAs and foster resilient, stable societies. Finally, this study contributes to scholarship in political science, security studies, and governance by linking theoretical perspectives on state fragility, neo-patrimonialism, and resource mobilization with empirical evidence from West Africa. It also provides a framework for policymakers to design interventions that are both context-sensitive and sustainable. By advancing both theoretical understanding and practical policy insights, this study underscores that sustainable peace in West Africa requires coordinated efforts across local, national, and regional levels, addressing not only the symptoms but also the root causes of armed mobilization and institutional weakness.

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THE ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF MENTAL MAGNITUDE IN AWOLOWO'S THOUGHT: PATHWAYS TO PEACE BUILDING

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Abstract
This study investigates the ethical dimensions of mental magnitude in the philosophy of Obafemi Awolowo, with a specific focus on its relevance to peace-building in the Obudu and Vandeikya communities of Nigeria. The research problem stems from persistent communal conflicts in these areas, driven by ethnic tension, political rivalry, and moral decline. The main aim of the study is to explore how Awolowo's concept of mental magnitude, which emphasizes rational self-discipline, moral responsibility, and communal well-being, can serve as a foundational strategy for promoting peace and social cohesion. Using a qualitative philosophical method, the research critically analyzes Awolowo's writings, especially Voice of Reason and Voice of Courage, and applies these insights to the socio-ethical challenges in Obudu and Vandeikya. Supplementary data from conflict reports and community narratives were also reviewed to contextualize the ethical application. The study finds that the lack of inner moral discipline and rational leadership contributes significantly to the recurring unrest in these communities. The implication is that peace cannot be sustainably achieved without an ethical reorientation rooted in self-control, tolerance, and civic responsibility. It recommends that educational institutions, religious leaders, and traditional authorities in both communities integrate Awolowo's ethical principles into leadership training, youth programs, and peace initiatives. In conclusion, the research affirms that mental magnitude is not only a personal moral virtue but also a critical collective asset for achieving lasting peace, justice, and progress in conflict-prone regions like Obudu and Vandeikya.

keywords: Communal Conflict, Ethical Dimensions, Mental Magnitude, Moral Responsibility, Obafemi Awolowo, Obudu, Peace-building, Rational Self-Discipline, Social Cohesion, Vandeikya.

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Introduction

In contemporary Nigeria, recurrent communal conflicts continue to undermine social cohesion, ethical leadership, and sustainable development. In areas such as Obudu in Cross River State and Vandeikya in Benue State, violence persists, driven by ethnic identity struggles, land disputes, political manipulation, and institutional weakness. Beyond material grievances, scholars note that these conflicts are sustained by moral deficits, erosion of trust, breakdown of communal values, and failures of ethical restraint among leaders and citizens (Okolie and Eze 214; Mustapha 67). These conditions reveal the need for a philosophical framework that addresses not only structural causes of conflict but also the moral psychology of individuals and communities. Although state security interventions remain important, peace scholars argue that sustainable peace in plural societies must be grounded in ethical reorientation and moral leadership (Lederach 45; Galtung 112). In Nigeria's fragile socio-political context, the absence of ethical grounding has encouraged cycles of retaliation and mistrust, especially in rural and semi-urban communities. Obudu and Vandeikya illustrate how moral failure and identity manipulation can override long-standing traditions of coexistence. Within this context, the moral philosophy of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, particularly his concept of mental magnitude, offers a valuable ethical resource for peace-building. Mental magnitude denotes the disciplined capacity of the human mind to subordinate instinct, passion, and selfish interest to reason, justice, and the common good (Awolowo, Voice of Reason 31). For Awolowo, ethical governance and social harmony are impossible without rational self-control and moral elevation.

Contemporary scholars interpret mental magnitude as a moral discipline rather than mere intellectual ability (Akanmidu 98; Ogunmodede 143). Awolowo warned that societies deteriorate when leaders and citizens act from impulse, ethnic sentiment, greed, or vengeance instead of rational moral judgment. This view aligns with African moral philosophy, which emphasizes that sustainable peace depends on moral agents capable of transcending narrow group interests for communal well-being (Metz 189). Applied to Obudu and Vandeikya, mental magnitude exposes the ethical depth of communal conflicts. Leaders often exploit emotions for political gain, weakening moral restraint and responsibility (Akinwale 56). Beyond leadership, Awolowo saw society as a moral organism where peace requires shared ethical responsibility. Peace studies similarly affirm that durable peace emerges when communities internalize norms of dialogue, restraint, and mutual recognition (Boege et al. 76). Consequently, this study argues that lasting peace begins with the disciplined ethical use of the human mind rather than coercion or force (UNDP 22).

The Relevance of Mental Magnitude in the Philosophy of Awolowo to Peace Building in the Obudu and Vandeikya Communities of Nigeria

In the face of increasing communal strife and socio-political instability in Nigeria, especially in grassroots communities like Obudu (Cross River State) and Vandeikya (Benue State), the search for a sustainable peace-building strategy is urgent. Among Nigeria's foremost political philosophers, Chief Obafemi Awolowo offers a profound ethical concept known as mental magnitude, which serves as a moral compass for personal discipline and societal harmony. Awolowo's mental magnitude emphasizes the rational control of emotions, the subordination of personal interest to the common good, and the ethical use of intellect in leadership and public engagement (Awolowo, Voice of Reason 54). In communities like Obudu and Vandeikya, conflicts often stem from land disputes, ethnic rivalries, and poor leadership, all of which are exacerbated by emotional reactions and selfish agendas.

Awolowo argued that unless leaders and citizens cultivate self-control, altruism, and intellectual discipline, societal development and peace will remain elusive. According to him, "No society can rise above the level of its intellectual and moral development" (Voice of Courage 109). This highlights the necessity of nurturing individuals and institutions that prioritize rational dialogue, justice, and inclusivity. Applying mental magnitude to these communities means encouraging ethical leadership at the traditional and political levels, equipping youth with moral education, and fostering a culture of nonviolence and communal responsibility. Peace-building in Obudu and Vandeikya, therefore, requires more than political settlements, it demands a philosophical and moral reorientation grounded in Awolowo's vision of disciplined minds building just societies. By embracing this ideal, local stakeholder can transform the communities into models of cooperation, progress, and sustainable peace.

The Reasons for The Persistent Communal Conflict Between Obudu and Vandeikya Communities

The persistent communal conflict between Obudu (in Cross River State) and Vandeikya (in Benue State) is rooted in a complex interplay of historical grievances, boundary disputes, economic competition, ethnic identity politics, and weak institutional conflict resolution mechanisms. These factors, both immediate and structural, have sustained a cycle of mistrust and violence between these neighboring communities over the years. One of the primary reasons for the conflict is the dispute over land and boundary demarcation. Historically, the exact boundary between the two communities has been poorly defined, with each side laying ancestral claims to portions of land that are agriculturally and strategically valuable. This dispute is compounded by the failure of clear state demarcation and the lack of enforcement of peace agreements. As Ugiomoh observes, "In most inter-community conflicts in Nigeria, the lack of documentation and legal adjudication over land claims leads to repeated violence and unresolved tension" (Ugiomoh 78). Secondly, ethnic identity and cultural pride have intensified the conflict. The Vandeikya people, predominantly of Tiv ethnic origin, and the Obudu people, largely of the Bette subgroup, often interpret disputes through ethnic lenses. Political actors have sometimes manipulated this divide for electoral or personal gain, thereby deepening resentment. Ethnic divisions are weaponized in narratives of victimhood and entitlement, fueling retaliatory actions and worsening communal cohesion (Ojo and Aremu 114).

Another critical factor is economic competition, particularly over access to farmlands and markets. Both communities rely heavily on agriculture, and population growth has increased the pressure on land, making any encroachment or perceived takeover a potential flashpoint. Additionally, migration and settlement patterns have heightened anxiety about land ownership and local autonomy. Weak governance and poor conflict resolution mechanisms at the local and state levels have also allowed the conflict to fester. Traditional institutions and community leaders, once custodians of dialogue and peace, have in some cases lost credibility or been bypassed. Government responses have often been reactive rather than preventive, focusing on short-term peacekeeping instead of long-term reconciliation (Okoli and Ugwu 98). The persistent conflict between Obudu and Vandeikya cannot be reduced to a single cause. It is the product of interwoven historical, ethnic, economic, and political dynamics exacerbated by institutional failures. For sustainable peace to emerge, a holistic approach. combining land reform, interethnic dialogue, effective local governance, and civic education, is essential.

Voice of Reason and Voice of Courage in Awolowo's Philosophy and their Application to the Socio-Ethical Challenges in Obudu and Vandeikya

In the intellectual and political philosophy of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, two of his most influential works Voice of Reason and Voice of Courage serve as foundational articulations of his ethical, political, and philosophical ideals. These texts are not merely collections of speeches; they represent a coherent worldview centered on rational governance, moral integrity, disciplined leadership, and social justice. Awolowo's insights in these volumes offer timeless solutions to contemporary issues, particularly the socio-ethical challenges facing communities like Obudu in Cross River State and Vandeikya in Benue State. In Voice of Reason, Awolowo emphasizes the supremacy of the human intellect guided by moral values. He argues that true progress, whether personal or national can only emerge when individuals subordinate their passions to rational judgment. “Only the disciplined use of reason, in pursuit of truth and justice, can liberate and advance a people” (Awolowo, Voice of Reason 22). Here, Awolowo establishes mental magnitude the disciplined mind, as the bedrock of ethical living and national development. In Voice of Courage, Awolowo presents his unwavering commitment to moral convictions, even in the face of political adversity. His courage was rooted not in sentiment or violence but in principled action anchored in truth. He contended that leadership requires the ability to speak and act justly, especially when popular opinion resists truth: “A leader must possess the courage to speak truth to power and act for the good of all, not the pleasure of a few” (Voice of Courage 88).

Socio-Ethical Challenges in Obudu and Vandeikya: The Obudu and Vandeikya communities have faced recurring communal conflicts, often fueled by land disputes, ethnic rivalry, political manipulation, and the breakdown of traditional moral systems. These conflicts are symptoms of deeper ethical decay, such as self-centered leadership, emotional decisionmaking, and communal distrust. The failure of peace-building efforts reflects a lack of internal moral clarity and a culture of reactive rather than proactive governance. Application of Awolowo's Philosophy to Obudu and Vandeikya: Awolowo's emphasis on reason and courage offers a compelling strategy for resolving these conflicts and rebuilding fractured relationships:

i. Promoting Mental Magnitude in Leadership: Community leaders in Obudu and Vandeikya must cultivate self-discipline, empathy, and rational thinking. Decisions should not be based on ethnic sentiments or personal gains but on reasoned analysis and communal benefit (Awolowo, Voice of Reason 45).
ii. Fostering Moral Courage Among Youths and Elders: The courage to challenge wrong cultural practices, political manipulation, and violence must be instilled across age groups. Leaders must boldly reject incitement and promote truth, justice, and dialogue (Voice of Courage 101).
iii. Building Ethical Institutions: Schools, religious bodies, and traditional institutions should adopt Awolowo's writings as part of their civic education curriculum. Teaching mental discipline and moral courage will prepare future generations for ethical citizenship.
iv. Encouraging Reason-Based Dialogue: Conflict resolution must shift from emotional confrontations to rational, evidence-based dialogue. Awolowo’s thought supports inclusive discussion, where all stakeholders engage in ethical reasoning to reach peaceful agreements.

In a time when emotional extremism and shallow leadership threaten communal stability, Awolowo’s Voice of Reason and Voice of Courage stand out as guideposts for ethical

rejuvenation. His philosophy provides Obudu and Vandeikya with the tools to rise above conflict through disciplined minds, moral leadership, and rational community-building. His legacy reminds us that peace is not simply the absence of war, but the presence of justice, wisdom, and principled courage.

Ethical Dimensions of Mental Magnitude in Awolowo's Thought

The philosophical thought of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, one of Africa's most respected nationalist leaders and intellectuals, is deeply rooted in the moral transformation of the individual and society. The concept of mental magnitude, goes beyond intellectual excellence to encompass ethical strength, personal discipline, and civic responsibility. The ethical dimensions of mental magnitude are central to Awolowo's vision of national development, good governance, and sustainable peace. Awolowo defines mental magnitude as a cultivated state in which an individual consistently subordinates lower desires such as greed, hatred, fear, or pride to higher moral reasoning and rational judgment. He wrote: "Mental magnitude is the possession of the capacity to control the lower instincts and impulses, and to act from the standpoint of reason and enlightened conscience" (Voice of Reason 33). This understanding affirms that true leadership and citizenship require more than education or political power, they require ethical maturity. Mental magnitude, therefore, is not only cognitive but moral: it is the ability to make just, balanced, and compassionate decisions for the collective good.

Ethical Qualities within Mental Magnitude

The persistent communal conflict between the Obudu (in Cross River State) and Vandeikya (in Benue State) communities, characterized by land disputes, ethnic tensions, retaliatory violence, and political manipulation, calls for more than political agreements or military interventions. It demands a deep ethical transformation of individual character and communal values. Chief Obafemi Awolowo's concept of mental magnitude, with its strong ethical foundation, offers practical pathways for resolving and preventing such conflicts.

i. **Self-Discipline:** Awolowo emphasized that no individual can lead others without first mastering himself. Ethical governance, in his view, begins with the inner ability to resist corruption, bribes, vengeance, and egotism (Awolowo, Voice of Courage 67). In Obudu and Vandeikya, many conflicts escalate due to retaliatory attacks, emotional outbursts, and failure to exercise restraint. The ethic of self-discipline teaches community leaders and youths to reject immediate, emotional retaliation in favor of calm reflection and lawful action. Integrating this into peace-building training (through schools, churches, and traditional councils) can help break the cycle of revenge and allow room for nonviolent resolution.

ii. **Moral Courage:** He stressed that leaders must be courageous not in violence or bluster, but in standing for truth even in the face of opposition. Courage, as a facet of mental magnitude, means defending justice and the weak, and speaking truth to power (Awolowo, Voice of Courage 102). Conflicts in both communities are often sustained by silence, fear, and politically motivated falsehoods. Leaders with mental magnitude would speak the truth about historical grievances, call out injustice within their own ethnic group, and refuse to manipulate or be manipulated. Moral courage would empower dialogue, transparency, and fairness, even in the face of resistance.

iii. **Altruism:** Awolowo believed that mental magnitude empowers individuals to pursue the wellbeing of others over selfish interest. He saw this as key to public service, where the focus should always be on uplifting the many rather than enriching the few.

iv. **Justice and Fairness:** Ethical decision-making, rooted in mental magnitude, is grounded in fairness and the rule of law. Awolowo consistently argued that the progress of a nation depends on leaders who can rise above tribalism, nepotism, and bias to deliver justice impartially. Conflict decisions often arise from rumors, ethnic stereotypes, or political incitement, rather than verified information and rational debate. Promoting mental magnitude means encouraging deliberative conflict resolution, where elders and youth leaders are trained to assess causes, consequences, and ethical responsibilities before any group reaction. For example, a community experiencing a land dispute could establish an independent panel, guided by reasoned dialogue and traditional values, rather than impulsive community retaliation.

v. **Emotional Intelligence:** Part of mental magnitude is the ability to manage emotions like anger, fear, or despair, which often drive people toward destructive behavior. Ethical reasoning, he argued, must always take precedence over passion (Awolowo, Voice of Reason 35). Elites and political figures in both Obudu and Vandeikya have often exploited tensions for personal or political gain. Embedding Awolowo's ethics means re-orienting leadership towards altruism and self-sacrifice. When leaders begin to prioritize peace over power, the community benefits collectively, and the cycle of manipulation-driven violence breaks.

Historical injustices real or perceived fuel resentment. One group may feel they are unfairly treated in land settlements, resource allocation, or legal cases. Applying Awolowo's ethical framework means institutionalizing truth-telling, fairness in arbitration, and compensation where needed. Mental magnitude compels authorities to rise above ethnic loyalties and deliver equitable justice, thus fostering reconciliation. In both communities, youth militancy and communal aggression thrive where there is apathy, ignorance, or detachment. Peace is not just the responsibility of traditional rulers or government but of every citizen. Embedding mental magnitude into civic education programs, youth associations, and religious teachings will encourage a shared ethical duty to maintain peace. The ethical dimensions of mental magnitude self-discipline, moral courage, rationality, altruism, justice, and civic responsibility provide not only personal virtues but collective strategies for conflict resolution and peace-building. By instilling these values in the leadership, youth, and institutions of Obudu and Vandeikya, the communities can move from mutual suspicion to ethical cooperation.

Awolowo's philosophy is more than historical it is urgently relevant, offering a Nigeriangrown, values-driven framework for resolving today's deep-rooted communal crises. As such, peacebuilding efforts in these communities should move beyond dialogue and security presence, and toward ethical re-education and leadership transformation based on mental magnitude. The prolonged communal conflicts between the Obudu (in Cross River State) and Vandeikya (in Benue State) communities are rooted in historical grievances, resource competition, ethnic mistrust, and political manipulation. While these tensions are often addressed through security deployment and political mediation, they persist due to deep moral and ethical fractures within the communities and their leadership structures. Obafemi Awolowo's ethical concept of mental magnitude, particularly the values of altruism, justice and fairness, and emotional intelligence, provides an enduring philosophical and ethical framework that can guide long-term peacebuilding in these communities. Communal leaders, politicians, and youth leaders in Obudu and Vandeikya have often allowed selfish interests land control, ethnic superiority, and political dominance to override the communal

good. This self-centeredness leads to decisions that prioritize revenge, personal gain, or political relevance, rather than harmony and justice.

The ethical dimensions of mental magnitude altruism, justice and fairness, and emotional intelligence are critical for addressing the communal conflict between Obudu and Vandeikya. These values transcend political quick-fixes and aim at inner transformation of individuals and ethical renewal of communities. If integrated into peacebuilding efforts, local governance structures, and inter-communal dialogue, they can usher in a sustainable peace rooted not just in the absence of war but in the presence of justice, compassion, and disciplined leadership. As Awolowo aptly observed, "Only those with mental magnitude can rise above personal passions and prejudices to serve as true leaders of society" (Voice of Reason, 38). It is this kind of leadership and citizenship that Obudu and Vandeikya now desperately need. In today's world marked by corruption, ethnic tension, youth restiveness, and moral decay Awolowo's call for mental magnitude remains urgent. Nigeria's political, religious, and social leaders often falter not due to a lack of intellect, but due to ethical failure. For young people, the concept serves as a moral compass for navigating the temptations of modern life. In public life, it provides a framework for just policies and civic engagement. The ethical dimensions of mental magnitude in Awolowo's thought offer a holistic pathway to personal transformation and national renewal. It challenges citizens and leaders to live by principle, discipline their desires, and commit to the good of others. As Awolowo wisely stated, "Only those with mental magnitude can rise above personal passions and prejudices to serve as true leaders of society" (Voice of Reason 38). By returning to this ethic of disciplined thought and moral action, societies like Nigeria can build a future based not merely on politics or power, but on justice, responsibility, and peace. Solution Pathway:

i. Youths, who are often at the frontlines of violence, can be trained in emotional intelligence and nonviolent communication. When people learn to pause, reflect, and choose reason over rage, conflict escalation can be curbed.
ii. Religious and educational institutions can use Awolowo's philosophy to teach conflict de-escalation techniques, empathy, and patience.
iii. Leaders with high emotional intelligence can model restraint and forgiveness, showing that true strength lies in peaceful resolution, not reactive aggression.

Conclusion

The ethical dimensions of Obafemi Awolowo's concept of mental magnitude offer a profound and contextually relevant pathway to sustainable peace-building in the conflict-prone communities of Obudu (Cross River State) and Vandeikya (Benue State). Awolowo's idea of mental magnitude emphasizes self-discipline, rational decision-making, moral responsibility, and the subordination of base impulses to higher communal ideals. These qualities are not merely personal virtues but essential foundations for building harmonious, just, and progressive societies. In both Obudu and Vandeikya, communal crises have frequently arisen due to a breakdown of trust, ethnic suspicion, political manipulation, and failure of moral leadership. This research has shown that without an ethical reorientation grounded in mental magnitude, no amount of external intervention or security enforcement can yield lasting peace. Awolowo's insistence on the disciplined and ethical use of the mind directly addresses the internal moral and psychological conditions that often ignite and sustain conflicts. The study concludes that true peace-building begins with the cultivation of mental and moral strength among individuals and leaders within the

community. It is through education, ethical mentoring, civic enlightenment, and responsible governance that the principles of mental magnitude can be internalized and lived out. Specifically, traditional rulers, community-based organizations, youth associations, religious institutions, and schools must play active roles in fostering the values of rationality, patience, self-control, and altruism as taught by Awolowo. Ultimately, Awolowo's ethical vision reminds us that peace is not merely the absence of war, but the presence of conscious, morally upright individuals working together for the collective good. In applying these insights to Obudu and Vandeikya, there lies a hopeful model for healing divisions and building a culture of sustainable peace and shared progress.

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LABOUR MARKET GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA: A PUBLIC ADMINSTRATION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract
Despite Nigeria's demographic advantages, the labour market remains constrained by pervasive informality, high under-employment, skills mismatches, and weak institutional coordination, limiting productivity and inclusive growth. In this context therefore, labour market outcomes are not solely determined by economic forces but are profoundly shaped by governance structures and administrative capacity. This paper examined the governance of Nigeria's labour market and its implications for national economic performance from a public administration perspective. Drawing on data from the Nigeria Labour Force Survey (2024) and a critical review of relevant literature, the study analyses how institutional arrangements, policy design, and implementation capacity influence economic performance within Nigeria's macroeconomic context. It argues that deficiencies in labour market governance rather than labour supply constraints alone are central to persistent employment challenges. Recent policy initiatives, including the revised National Employment Policy (2025), are examined as potential instruments for strengthening coordination, improving skills development, and promoting employment formalisation. The paper concluded by advancing policy recommendations grounded in public administration principles, emphasizing institutional strengthening, inter-agency coordination, accountability, and evidence-based policymaking as essential for repositioning the labour market as a catalyst for sustainable national development.

Keywords: Labour Market Governance, Public Administration, Economic Performance, Informal Employment, Institutional Capacity, Nigeria.

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Introduction

Labour markets occupy a central position in national development. It serves as the primary mechanism through which human resources are mobilised, incomes are generated, and economic growth is translated into social welfare. Beyond their economic function, labour markets shape patterns of inequality, social mobility, and political stability, making them a critical concern for public administration and governance (World Bank, 2023). For developing economies in particular, the effectiveness of labour market governance often determines whether demographic change becomes a demographic dividend or a source of persistent socio-economic strain. Nigeria presents a compelling case for examining labour market governance. As Africa's most populous country, with a rapidly expanding and predominantly youthful working-age population, Nigeria possesses significant human capital potential. However, this potential has not been fully harnessed. Despite its status as one of the continent's largest economies, Nigeria's labour market continues to be characterised by widespread informal employment, high levels of underemployment, and persistent structural mismatches between labour supply and demand (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2024). These challenges have constrained productivity growth, weakened income security, and limited the capacity of the labour market to contribute meaningfully to inclusive and sustainable economic development. The performance of Nigeria's labour market cannot be understood solely through market-based explanations. Labour market outcomes are deeply shaped by governance arrangements, institutional capacity, and policy coherence. Well-governed labour markets facilitate efficient allocation of labour, support fair and productive employment relationships, and enhance economic resilience in the face of shocks. In contrast, weak labour market governance—manifested through fragmented policy frameworks, inadequate enforcement of labour regulations, limited inter-agency coordination, and weak data systems—undermines employment quality and economic performance. These governance challenges are particularly pronounced in Nigeria, where historical policy inconsistencies and institutional capacity constraints have limited the effectiveness of labour market interventions.

Against this backdrop, understanding the relationship between labour market governance and economic performance is both timely and necessary. For policymakers and public administrators, improving employment outcomes requires more than macroeconomic growth; it demands deliberate governance strategies that align labour market institutions, education and training systems, and social protection mechanisms. This study contributes to the public administration literature by examining how governance structures and administrative capacity shape labour market outcomes in Nigeria, and how these outcomes, in turn, influence broader economic performance. Specifically, the paper analyses current labour market conditions in Nigeria, with particular attention to informality, underemployment, and skills utilisation. It examines the role of labour market governance frameworks including policy design, institutional arrangements, and implementation mechanisms and assesses their interaction with macroeconomic conditions. By adopting a public administration lens, the study highlights the centrality of institutional effectiveness, coordination, and accountability in shaping employment outcomes. Ultimately, the paper seeks to demonstrate that strengthening labour market governance is essential for repositioning Nigeria's labour market as a driver of productivity, social inclusion, and national development.

Conceptual Framework and Definitions

Labour Market Terminology: The labour market refers to the institutional mechanisms through which workers supply labour and employers demand labour under negotiated conditions, including wages, working hours, and contract terms (International Labour Organization, 2023). It is not only a market for labour transactions but also a system shaped by formal laws, social norms, and administrative practices that determine employment relations, social protections, and workforce development. Two sectors dominate the Nigerian labour market: the formal and informal sectors. The formal sector includes regulated employment with clear legal protections and social security benefits. In contrast, the informal sector comprising petty trading, subsistence agriculture, and unregulated small enterprises lacks formal contracts, social protections, and clear wage structures (NBS, 2024). Evidence indicates that over 93% of Nigeria's employed population engages in informal employment, underscoring the pervasive nature of informality (NBS,2024).

Economic Performance Indicators

Economic performance refers to measures of how well an economy uses available resources to produce goods and services, support employment, and achieve equitable growth. Common indicators include gross domestic product (GDP), labour force participation rates, employment-to-population ratios, unemployment and underemployment rates, and productivity measures. In Nigeria, labour force participation improved to about 79.5% in the second quarter (Q2) of 2024, accompanied by an employment-to- population ratio of 76.1% and a decline in the unemployment rate to 4.3%. These outcomes represent a notable quarter-on- quarter improvement relative to the first quarter (Q1) 2024 when labour force participation was 77.3%, the employment-to- population ratio stood at 73.2%, and unemployment was higher at 5.3% (NBS, 2024).

Labour Market Governance

Labour market governance encompasses the regulatory frameworks, institutional arrangements, and administrative capacities that influence labour market outcomes. Effective governance involves clear policies, strong institutions (such as ministries of labour), data systems, compliance mechanisms, and coordination among stakeholders. In the Nigerian context, labour governance also intersects with broader public administration challenges, including policy coherence, institutional capacity, and implementation fidelity.

Theoretical Perspectives

Analysing labour market governance and economic performance requires grounding in both economic and administrative theories. This is because labour markets are influenced not only by market dynamics but also by institutional structures, policy frameworks, and governance mechanisms. The theoretical foundation provides a lens for understanding how labour markets function, why inefficiencies persist, and how policy interventions can shape outcomes. A combination of Classical, Keynesian, Human capital, Segmented labour market, and institutional theories is particularly useful in the Nigerian context.

Classical and Neoclassical Theories

Classical and neoclassical economic theories posit that labour markets operate as self-regulating systems. According to these theories, wages adjust to balance the supply of and demand for labour, eventually leading to full employment in the long run (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010). Markets are therefore assumed to be efficient, with rational actors

responding to price signals such that labour allocation occurs optimally. However, these theories often assume perfect competition, complete information, and flexible wages conditions that rarely exist in developing economies. In Nigeria, rigidities such as minimum wage laws, weak enforcement of labour regulations, skill mismatches, and geographic disparities prevent the labour market from achieving full equilibrium. While classical theory highlights the potential for labour markets to self-correct, it underestimates the role of institutions, governance, and government interventions in shaping labour outcomes.

Keynesian Economics

Keynesian economics challenges the notion of automatic market equilibrium. Keynes (1936) argued that labour markets could experience persistent unemployment due to insufficient aggregate demand, even when wages are flexible. From this perspective, government intervention through fiscal policies, monetary stimulus, and public employment programmes become essential to stimulate economic activity and absorb excess labour supply. In the Nigerian context, Keynesian insights are particularly relevant. The high levels of youth unemployment, underemployment, and informality suggest that demand-side constraints, not just supply-side issues, limit employment opportunities. Social investment programmes, youth empowerment schemes, and government-sponsored vocational training are examples of Keynesian-inspired interventions that aim to increase aggregate demand and stimulate labour market participation. This perspective underscores the importance of policy design, timely implementation, and macroeconomic coordination as critical elements of labour market governance.

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory emphasises that investments in education, training, and skills development. These enhance worker productivity, earning capacity, and employability (Becker, 1993). In this framework, the quality of a nation's workforce is directly linked to its economic performance. Economies with highly skilled labour forces are better positioned to innovate, attract investment, and compete globally. In Nigeria, disparities in educational attainment and vocational skills contribute to structural inefficiencies in the labour market. A significant proportion of the workforce operates in informal sectors due to limited formal qualifications or technical skills, highlighting the need for robust human capital development strategies. Labour market governance that integrates education policy, vocational training, and lifelong learning initiatives can help align workforce skills with industry demands, improving productivity and economic outcomes.

Segmented Labour Market Theory

Segmented labour market theory recognizes that labour markets are not homogeneous but divided into distinct segments, each with different characteristics, wages, mobility, and working conditions. Typically, the formal sector offers regulated wages, social protections, and career progression, whereas the informal sector is unregulated, low-wage, and precarious. In Nigeria, the labour market is highly segmented. While the formal sector is concentrated in urban centers, government institutions, and multinational corporations, the informal sector dominates employment, particularly in agriculture, small-scale trade, and artisanal work. This segmentation contributes to inequality, underemployment, and low productivity. The theory underscores the importance of governance mechanisms that address disparities between segments through formalization policies, social protections, and skills development to reduce labour market duality.

Institutional and Governance Frameworks

Institutional economics and public administration theories emphasise that formal and informal rules, governance structures, and administrative capacity shape economic outcomes (North, 1990). Labour market governance is influenced by the effectiveness of institutions, the quality of regulatory frameworks, and the capacity of government agencies to implement policies. Public administration theories highlight that effective governance requires coordination, accountability, transparency, and evidence-based policymaking. Weak institutional capacity in Nigeria manifested through inconsistent policy implementation, limited enforcement of labour laws, and fragmented data systems has hindered labour market efficiency. Integrating public administration insights into labour market governance allows policymakers to design and implement interventions that address structural inefficiencies, improve service delivery, and align employment outcomes with broader economic objectives.

Synopsis of Theoretical Framework

Among the theories discussed, the researcher finds the Institutional and Governance Framework as the most appropriate for analysing labour market governance and economic performance in Nigeria. While Classical, Keynesian, Human capital, and Segmented labour market theories each offer valuable insights into specific dimensions of Nigeria's labour market, their explanatory power remains partial when considered in isolation. By contrast, the institutional and governance perspective provides a more comprehensive framework by capturing the structural, regulatory, and policy mechanisms through which labour market outcomes are shaped. Nigeria's labour market challenges cannot be sufficiently explained by market dynamics or aggregate demand conditions alone. Persistent unemployment, widespread informality, and weak job quality are closely linked to institutional deficiencies, including ineffective enforcement of labour regulations, fragmented policy implementation, limited inter-agency coordination, and weak labour market information systems. These governance failures lie beyond the analytical scope of classical and Keynesian models, which primarily emphasise price adjustments and demand management. Although, Human capital theory rightly underscores the importance of education and skills development, the continued prevalence of unemployment and informal employment despite rising educational attainment highlights the constraining role of institutional bottlenecks. Inadequate alignment between education systems, labour market institutions, and industry needs limits the translation of human capital investments into productive and decent employment, reinforcing the centrality of governance structures.

Similarly, Segmented labour market theory accurately characterises Nigeria's dualistic employment structure, where a small formal sector coexists alongside a dominant informal sector. However, the persistence of this segmentation is itself a product of institutional and regulatory weaknesses, including limited social protection coverage, weak formalisation incentives, and regulatory burdens that discourage firm compliance. Ultimately, labour market governance is an inherently policy-driven and administrative process. Institutional and governance frameworks explicitly foreground state capacity, accountability, regulatory effectiveness, and coordination factors that are critical for understanding why well-intentioned labour market policies often fail at the implementation stage in Nigeria. Consequently, this framework offers the most robust foundation for analysing the interaction between labour market governance and economic performance in the Nigerian context.

Labour Market Structure in Nigeria

Employment and Unemployment Patterns: Nigeria's labour market is characterized by significant heterogeneity in employment outcomes, reflecting variations across demographic, regional, and sectoral lines. Unemployment remains a persistent challenge**,** although recent indicators suggest modest improvements. In Second Quarter (Q2) 2024, the national unemployment rate declined to 4.3%**,** down from 5.3% in First Quarter (Q1) 2024, signaling gradual progress in job creation and labour absorption (Nairametrics, 2024). However, aggregate unemployment rates mask deeper structural issues. Youth unemployment (ages 15-24) remains disproportionately high, reflecting systemic barriers such as skills mismatches, limited access to formal employment, and insufficient alignment between education systems and labour market demands (World Bank, 2020). High youth unemployment not only constrains immediate income generation but also poses long-term socio-economic risks, including increased poverty, social unrest, and underutilization of human capital. Time-related underemployment**,** defined as individuals working fewer hours than desired or below their skill level, also remains elevated at 9.2%**,** highlighting underutilization of labour capacity (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Underemployment constrains aggregate productivity, reduces household incomes, and limits the capacity of the labour market to contribute meaningfully to economic growth (Osabuohien et al., 2021).

Informal Employment Dominance

A defining characteristic of Nigeria's labour market is the overwhelming prevalence of informal employment**,** which accounts for approximately 93% of all employed persons (NBS, 2024). This structural dominance has significant implications for productivity, job quality, income security, and social protection coverage. Informal sector work is typically unregulated, low-paid, and highly precarious, limiting workers' access to health insurance, pensions, and employment protections. Informality is disproportionately concentrated among workers with limited formal education. Individuals without formal qualifications are almost entirely absorbed into informal employment, whereas those with tertiary education experience lower rates of informality (Nairametrics, 2024). This divide illustrates the interplay between educational attainment, skill acquisition, and labour market segmentation. High levels of informality also constrain government revenue mobilization and complicate efforts to implement coherent employment and social protection policies.

Self-Employment and Workforce Participation

Self-employment represents another prominent feature of Nigeria's labour market. A substantial proportion of workers operate their own businesses or engage in subsistence activities, particularly in rural areas where agriculture, small-scale trade, and informal enterprises dominate. While self-employment provides resilience and livelihood opportunities, it is often associated with low productivity, limited access to finance, and inadequate social protections (African Development Bank, 2021). Self-employment patterns reflect both opportunity-driven and necessity-driven labour participation. Some individuals pursue entrepreneurship as a means of economic advancement, while others resort to self-employment due to the scarcity of formal job opportunities. This duality underscores the importance of labour market governance in facilitating supportive frameworks such as access to microcredit, skills training, and formalization incentives to enhance productivity and economic contribution of self-employed workers.

Regional and Gender Disparities

Labour market outcomes in Nigeria exhibit pronounced regional disparities**,** influenced by variations in economic structure, industrial development, and access to education. Urban areas, while offering more formal employment opportunities, often experience higher unemployment rates due to intense competition and concentrated labour supply. Rural areas, by contrast, display higher rates of self-employment and informal work, reflecting limited industrialization and subsistence-oriented economies (Osabuohien et al., 2021). Gender disparities are also persistent. Women continue to face systemic barriers to labour market participation, including cultural norms, limited access to education and training, and discriminatory hiring practices. As a result, women are overrepresented in informal and low-productivity sectors, which constrains their earning potential and economic empowerment (International Labour Organization, 2022). Addressing these disparities through targeted policies such as gender-sensitive education programme, entrepreneurship support, and formal sector inclusion is essential for promoting inclusive economic growth.

Governance Frameworks and Labour Policies in Nigeria

This section examines key governance frameworks and labour policies in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on the National Employment Policy (NEP) 2025, institutional capacity for enforcement, and the regulatory and social protection environment. Labour market outcomes in Nigeria are shaped not only by economic conditions but also by the quality of governance frameworks and the effectiveness of labour related policies. Over time, successive governments have introduced reforms aimed at addressing unemployment, informality, and skills deficits. However, the persistence of labour market challenges highlights the central role of institutional design, administrative capacity, and policy coherence in determining outcomes.

National Employment Policy 2025

In response to enduring labour market challenges, the Government of Nigeria introduced the Revised National Employment Policy (NEP) 2025, developed with technical support from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other development partners. The NEP 2025 represents a comprehensive policy framework aimed at repositioning employment creation as a central pillar of national development. It seeks to strengthen employment services, enhance labour market information systems, promote skills development, and expand access to inclusive and decent work opportunities across demographic groups, sectors, and regions. A defining feature of the NEP 2025 is its emphasis on governance and coordination. Rather than treating employment as the responsibility of a single ministry, the policy adopts a cross-sectoral approach that integrates education, skills development, industrial policy, social protection, and private sector development. This reflects a public administration perspective that recognises employment outcomes as the product of coordinated institutional action. The policy also highlights the importance of evidence-based decision-making, improved data systems, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure responsiveness to changing economic conditions. If effectively implemented, the NEP 2025 has the potential to address longstanding structural weaknesses by aligning labour supply with demand and strengthening the institutional foundations of labour market governance.

Institutional Capacity and Enforcement

Effective labour market governance depends critically on the capacity of institutions to design, implement, and enforce policies. In Nigeria, responsibility for labour market

regulation and employment promotion is primarily vested in the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, supported by specialised departments and agencies responsible for employment services, wage determination, industrial relations, and occupational safety. At the subnational level, state and local government institutions also play important roles in labour administration and service delivery. Despite this institutional architecture, enforcement and coordination challenges persist. Public administration constraints such as limited financial and human resources, overlapping mandates, weak inter-agency coordination, and insufficient monitoring systems have historically undermined the effectiveness of labour market institutions. As a result, labour laws are often unevenly enforced, particularly in sectors dominated by informal employment. Strengthening institutional capacity requires sustained investment in administrative systems, professional training for labour inspectors and administrators, and clearer mechanisms for coordination across ministries, departments, and levels of government. Without such reforms, even well-designed labour policies are unlikely to achieve their intended outcomes.

Labour Regulations and Social Protections

Nigeria's labour regulatory framework provides legal standards governing wages, working conditions, and employment relations. However, the practical reach of these regulations remains limited, especially in informal, rural, and small-scale economic activities where regulatory oversight is weak. The large size of the informal sector poses significant challenges for enforcement, contributing to precarious employment conditions, low wages, and limited worker protections. Social protection systems in Nigeria remain underdeveloped and fragmented, with coverage largely concentrated in the formal sector. A significant proportion of workers lack access to unemployment benefits, health insurance, or pension schemes, leaving them vulnerable to economic shocks and income instability. From a governance perspective, strengthening social protection is not only a welfare objective but also a labour market intervention that enhances resilience, supports productivity, and stabilises aggregate demand. Expanding social protection coverage, particularly for informal and self-employed workers, is therefore integral to improving labour market governance and fostering inclusive economic growth.

Labour Market Challenges and Economic Impacts

Structural Mismatches and Skills Gaps: One of the most persistent challenges confronting Nigeria's labour market is the growing disconnect between the skills produced by the education and training system and those demanded by the economy. Despite increasing levels of educational attainment, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels, many graduates lack the technical, vocational, and soft skills required by employers. This structural mismatch has resulted in a paradoxical situation in which a large pool of educated job seekers coexists with unfilled vacancies in key sectors such as manufacturing, construction, information and communication technology, and agribusiness. The roots of these skills gaps lie in weak coordination between education policy, labour market institutions, and the private sector. Curricula in many educational institutions remain overly theoretical and insufficiently responsive to evolving labour market needs. Limited emphasis on technical and vocational education and training (TVET), inadequate internship and apprenticeship opportunities, and outdated training facilities further constrain the development of job-relevant skills. As a result, graduates often enter the labour market without practical

experience or competencies aligned with industry requirements, leading to prolonged job searches, underemployment, or absorption into low-productivity informal activities.

From an economic perspective, structural mismatches and skills gaps impose significant costs on productivity and competitiveness. Firms face higher recruitment and training costs, reduced efficiency, and slower innovation due to shortages of appropriately skilled labour. At the macroeconomic level, the under-utilisation of human capital limits potential output and weakens the economy's capacity to diversify beyond resource-dependent sectors. Persistent skills mismatches also contribute to youth unemployment and underemployment, exacerbating income inequality and social vulnerability. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated governance interventions that integrate education and training systems with labour market demands. Strengthening partnerships between government, educational institutions, and the private sector, expanding TVET and work-based learning programmes, and improving labour market information systems can help reduce skills mismatches. From a public administration perspective, effective coordination, policy coherence, and institutional capacity are essential to ensuring that investments in human capital translate into improved employment outcomes and stronger economic performance.

Informality and Economic Productivity

The predominance of informal employment remains one of the most defining features of Nigeria's labour market and a major constraint on economic productivity. A substantial proportion of the workforce is engaged in informal activities characterised by low wages, unstable employment relationships, and limited regulatory oversight. While the informal sector plays a critical role in absorbing labour and providing livelihoods, particularly in the absence of sufficient formal employment opportunities, its dominance has profound implications for productivity, fiscal capacity, and long-term economic transformation. Informal jobs are typically associated with low levels of capital investment, limited access to formal credit, and minimal use of modern technology. Small and micro-enterprises operating informally often lack legal recognition, which restricts their ability to access financial services, participate in formal value chains, or benefit from government support programmes. Consequently, productivity levels in the informal sector remain low, and opportunities for innovation, skills upgrading, and economies of scale are severely constrained. This limits the capacity of both workers and enterprises to move into higher value-added activities.

From a macroeconomic perspective, widespread informality weakens economic performance by reducing aggregate productivity and hindering economic diversification. Informal enterprises tend to operate in low-productivity sectors such as subsistence agriculture, petty trade, and small-scale services, reinforcing structural dependence on low value-added activities. In addition, informality narrows the tax base, constraining public revenues and limiting the government's ability to invest in infrastructure, education, and social services that are essential for productivity growth. The absence of social protection for informal workers further increases vulnerability to economic shocks, undermining labour market stability and aggregate demand. Addressing informality therefore requires a governance-oriented approach that balances livelihood protection with productivity enhancement. Policies aimed at simplifying business registration, expanding access to finance, providing targeted business development services, and extending social protection coverage can create incentives for gradual formalisation. From a public administration perspective, improving institutional coordination, reducing regulatory barriers, and

strengthening enforcement mechanisms are critical to integrating informal workers and enterprises into the formal economy. Such integrations are essential not only for improving job quality but also for enhancing national productivity and supporting Nigeria's broader economic development objectives.

Youth Unemployment and NEET Challenges

Youth labour market outcomes represent one of the most pressing challenges for Nigeria's socio-economic development. A substantial proportion of young Nigerians particularly those aged 15 to 24 are classified as NEET, meaning they are Not in Education, Employment, or Training**.** This disengagement reflects both structural deficiencies in the education system and limited access to formal employment opportunities, creating a vulnerable demographic cohort that is poorly integrated into productive economic activity. The NEET phenomenon has significant long-term economic and social implications. Economically, high levels of youth disengagement translate into under-utilisation of human capital, lower aggregate productivity, and constrained innovation potential. Many NEET youths are forced into informal or precarious work when opportunities arise, perpetuating low-income cycles and limiting the accumulation of skills or experience that could enhance employability. This dynamic hamper Nigeria's capacity to diversify its economy and limits the effectiveness of broader human capital investments. Socially, youth disengagement poses risks to social cohesion and political stability. Extended periods of unemployment or underemployment can foster frustration, increase vulnerability to criminality or radicalisation, and exacerbate regional inequalities, particularly in conflict-prone areas of northern Nigeria. These risks underscore the importance of integrating youth employment strategies within the broader framework of national development and public administration.

Addressing youth NEET challenges requires a multi-pronged governance and policy approach. The Revised National Employment Policy (NEP) 2025 explicitly prioritises youth engagement through targeted skills development programmes, entrepreneurship support, apprenticeship schemes, and improved access to information about employment opportunities. Enhancing coordination between educational institutions, training providers, and the private sector is essential to ensure that curricula and vocational programmes equip young people with skills relevant to labour market demands. Furthermore, expanding access to finance, mentorship, and social protection for youth-led enterprises can foster inclusive employment and promote economic resilience. From a public administration perspective, the NEET challenge highlights the critical role of institutional effectiveness, inter-agency coordination, and policy implementation capacity. Policies that fail to account for local labour market realities, gender disparities, and regional economic differences risk leaving significant portions of the youth population disengaged. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems, improving labour market information dissemination, and designing evidence-based interventions are therefore essential for reducing NEET rates and enabling young Nigerians to participate fully in the economy.

Gender Disparities and Labour Market Access

Gender disparities remain a persistent challenge in Nigeria's labour market with important implications for both economic efficiency and social equity. Qualitative evidence suggests that women's labour market performance are shaped not only by participation rates but also by the nature and quality of employment available to them. Women are disproportionately concentrated in informal, low-wage, and low-productivity activities, particularly in small-scale trading, subsistence agriculture, and domestic work sectors characterised by limited

job security, weak social protection, and constrained opportunities for skills upgrading. Beyond sectoral segregation, women's experiences within the formal labour market reveal systematic disadvantages. Interviews and institutional assessments point to gender-based wage differentials, occupational crowding, and restricted access to career progression often reinforced by workplace norms that undervalue women's leadership potential. Women remain markedly underrepresented in managerial, technical, and decision-making positions, reflecting both discriminatory hiring practices and limited access to professional networks and mentorship. These outcomes are underpinned by a combination of structural, social, and institutional barriers.

Social norms related to caregiving responsibilities and mobility constraints continue to shape women's job choices, while institutional weaknesses such as inadequate childcare infrastructure, limited enforcement of labour protections, and gender-blind employment policies further constrain women's ability to engage in stable and productive work. Collectively, these qualitative factors help explain why improvements in aggregate labour market indicators have not translated into equitable gains for women's economic empowerment. Cultural and social norms play a critical role in shaping labour market outcomes for women. Societal expectations around caregiving, household responsibilities, and mobility restrictions constrain women's employment choices and limit their availability for formal or full-time work. In addition, inadequate childcare infrastructure and family support policies exacerbate these constraints, forcing many women to opt for informal, flexible, or part-time employment that is typically less secure and lower paying. Access to finance, technology, and markets is another key barrier. Women entrepreneurs often face difficulties in obtaining credit due to limited collateral, restrictive lending practices, and exclusion from formal financial networks. This limits the capacity of women-led businesses to scale, innovate, or participate effectively in value chains, perpetuating cycles of low productivity and income inequality.

The economic implications of gender disparities are substantial. By under-utilising women's skills, knowledge, and labour potential, Nigeria's economy foregoes significant productivity gains, reduced poverty, and broader human capital development. Studies indicate that narrowing gender gaps in employment and entrepreneurship could substantially increase GDP and improve the inclusivity of economic growth. Addressing these disparities requires deliberate governance and policy interventions. The Revised National Employment Policy (NEP) 2025, emphasises gender-responsive measures, including targeted skills development programmes for women, incentives for female entrepreneurship, and mechanisms to promote equal access to employment opportunities. From a public administration perspective, successful implementation depends on institutional capacity to design and enforce gender-sensitive policies, integrate gender considerations into labour market planning, and monitor outcomes effectively. Expanding social protection, improving childcare infrastructure, and promoting flexible work arrangements are also critical to enabling women to balance economic participation with caregiving responsibilities. Ultimately, reducing gender disparities is not only a matter of social justice but also a strategic economic imperative. By creating an inclusive labour market that supports women's full participation, Nigeria can harness untapped human capital, enhance productivity, and achieve more equitable and sustainable economic growth.

Labour Market Governance and Economic Performance

Mechanisms Linking Governance and Growth: Effective labour market governance strengthens economic performance through multiple interrelated mechanisms. First, efficient resource allocation ensures that labour supply aligns with demand across sectors, reducing skills mismatches and underemployment. Transparent and responsive labour market information systems are essential in this process, providing policymakers, employers, and workers with accurate data to guide employment decisions, wage setting, and workforce planning (OECD, 2019). Second, skills development represents a critical pathway through which governance influences growth. Public investment in education, vocational training, and lifelong learning enhances human capital, improves worker productivity, and fosters innovation. Countries with well-developed skills ecosystems experience higher rates of technological adoption, industrial competitiveness, and economic diversification (Becker, 1993; World Bank, 2020). Third, formalisation incentives play a central role in bridging the gap between the informal and formal labour markets. Policies such as tax breaks, simplified registration procedures, and access to social protections encourage informal enterprises to integrate into the formal economy. This transition increases social security coverage, enhances government revenue mobilization, and strengthens the capacity of the state to regulate and support labour market development (ILO, 2018). Fourth, inclusive labour policies targeting youth, women, and marginalized regions expand labour force participation and promote equitable growth. By reducing systemic barriers, such policies not only improve social cohesion but also tap into underutilized human capital, thereby increasing overall economic productivity (African Development Bank, 2021).

Empirical Evidence from Nigeria's Labour Market

Empirical evidence from Nigeria's labour market reveals a pattern of measured short-term improvement alongside deep-seated structural constraints in labour market governance. The national unemployment rate declined to 4.3% in the second quarter (Q2) of 2024, while labour force participation increased to 79.5%, indicating improved labour absorption and utilisation relative to earlier periods (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). These gains may reflect the combined effects of public employment programmes, skills acquisition initiatives, and post-pandemic labour market adjustments. Notwithstanding these positive trends, informal employment remains overwhelmingly dominant, accounting for approximately 93% of total employment. The prevalence of informality continues to suppress labour productivity, weaken access to social protection, and limit the transmission of employment gains to sustained formal-sector growth (NBS, 2024). As a result, improvements in headline labour market indicators have not translated into commensurate gains in job quality or economic security. This coexistence of improving aggregate indicators and persistent informality underscores the structural dualism of Nigeria's labour market. It highlights the limits of employment expansion in the absence of effective labour market governance, institutional enforcement, and human capital alignment. The evidence points to the need for comprehensive governance reforms that address informality, regional employment inequalities, and skills mismatches in order to fully mobilise Nigeria's labour force as a driver of inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Policy Coherence and Public Administration

The effectiveness of labour market governance in promoting economic growth is contingent on adherence to key public administration principles**,** including accountability, transparency,

coordination, and evidence-based policymaking (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). Policies targeting the labour market must be coherent with broader economic strategies**,** such as industrial development, education reform, and social protection programme to maximize their impact. For instance, aligning vocational training programme with the needs of emerging industries improves employability and reduces skills mismatches. Integrating social protection schemes with formalisation incentives encourages informal sector workers to participate in the formal economy, thereby increasing revenue mobilization and enhancing economic resilience. In essence, policy coherence ensures that labour market interventions are mutually reinforcing**,** creating a governance environment that not only improves labour outcomes but also drives sustainable economic performance.

Policy Recommendations

To strengthen labour market governance and enhance its contribution to sustainable economic performance in Nigeria, a comprehensive and coordinated set of policy interventions is required. These recommendations address structural weaknesses in skills development, informality, data systems, social protection, inclusivity, and institutional capacity.

i. **Enhance Skills Development and TVET Systems:** Nigeria's labour market is characterized by persistent skills mismatches between labour supply and industry demand. Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems is therefore critical. Education and training curricula should be regularly updated in collaboration with the private sector to reflect current and emerging labour market needs, particularly in areas such as digital skills, renewable energy, agro-processing, and manufacturing. Expanding apprenticeship programmes, work-based learning, and public–private partnerships can improve school-to-work transitions. Additionally, investment in teacher training, modern training facilities, and certification frameworks will enhance the quality and credibility of vocational qualifications, thereby improving employability and productivity.

ii. **Formalise Informal Employment:** Given that the informal sector accounts for a large proportion of employment in Nigeria, policies aimed at formalisation are essential for improving job quality and expanding the tax base. Formalisation should be incentive-based rather than punitive. Measures such as access to microcredit, business development services, digital financial tools, and simplified business registration processes can lower the cost of entering the formal economy. Providing legal recognition, access to markets, and social protection benefits can further encourage informal enterprises and workers to formalise. Gradual and sector-specific approaches are necessary to avoid disrupting livelihoods while promoting productivity and decent work.

iii. **Strengthen Labour Market Information Systems (LMIS):** Effective labour market governance depends on reliable and timely data. Strengthening labour market information systems will improve evidence-based policymaking and labour market forecasting. This includes investing in regular labour force surveys, integrating administrative data across ministries and agencies, and leveraging digital platforms for real-time data collection. Improved data disaggregation by age, gender, region, and sector will enable policymakers to design targeted interventions for vulnerable groups, particularly youth and women. A robust LMIS will also enhance transparency, reduce policy fragmentation, and support private sector decision-making.

iv. **Expand Social Protections:** Expanding social protection coverage is vital for improving economic security and labour market resilience. Current social safety nets in Nigeria cover only a limited segment of the workforce, particularly excluding informal workers. Extending social protection to informal and self-employed workers through contributory and non-contributory schemes can reduce vulnerability and income shocks. Strengthening unemployment insurance mechanisms, occupational health and safety standards, and minimum wage enforcement will improve job quality and worker welfare. Enhanced social protection also supports aggregate demand by stabilizing incomes during economic downturns.

v. **Promote Inclusive Employment Policies:** Labour market policies must be inclusive to ensure broad-based economic growth. Gender-responsive employment policies such as equal pay enforcement, childcare support, and workplace protections can increase female labour force participation. Youth employment initiatives should focus on entrepreneurship support, digital skills development, and targeted wage subsidies to ease entry into the labour market. Regionally targeted employment programmes are also necessary to address spatial inequalities, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas. Inclusive policies not only reduce disparities but also maximize the productive potential of Nigeria's diverse labour force.

vi. **Improve Institutional Capacity and Governance:** Weak institutional capacity remains a major constraint on effective labour market governance in Nigeria. Strengthening institutions requires investment in human resources, digital systems, and administrative efficiency within labour-related ministries and agencies. Improved inter-agency coordination is essential to align education, employment, and social protection policies. Establishing clear monitoring and evaluation frameworks will enhance accountability and ensure that labour market interventions achieve their intended outcomes. Transparent and participatory governance processes can also build trust among stakeholders and improve policy compliance.

Conclusion

This study affirms that labour market governance plays a central role in shaping Nigeria's economic performance. While recent improvements in employment indicators are encouraging, structural issues such as pervasive informality, skills gaps, and weak institutional capacity continue to limit the labour market's potential contribution to inclusive growth. Public administration frameworks that prioritise coordinated policy action, institutional strengthening, and evidence-based interventions are essential for enhancing labour market governance. By aligning policy instruments with human capital development, formalisation initiatives, and inclusive employment strategies, Nigeria can achieve more resilient and equitable economic performance.

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Article **Open Access**

DIGITAL TRIBALISM AND ETHNO-RELIGIOUS POLARISATION IN THE NEW CONFLICT FRONTIER OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study explores the phenomenon of digital tribalism and its role in deepening ethno-religious polarisation within Nigeria's increasingly networked society. In recent years, social media platforms such ase Facebook, Twitter (now X), and WhatsApp have evolved into powerful spaces for identity expression, political mobilisation, and social discourse. However, these platforms have also facilitated the formation of echo chambers, the spread of hate speech, and the reinforcement of divisive narratives along ethnic and religious lines. The study examined how social media influences the formation and reinforcement of ethno-religious identities, analysed the mechanisms through which digital tribalism fuels conflict, and identified strategies to mitigate its harmful effects. Adopting Social Network Theory and descriptive research design, the study found that digital tribalism thrives through mechanisms like algorithmic amplification, identity-based mobilisation, and virality of hate speech. High and even low-profile events served as flashpoints, generating a surge of divisive rhetoric online. Examples include the 2023 elections and the trial of separatist leader, Nnamdi Kanu. Inflammatory posts, particularly those dehumanising Igbo, Fulani, Yoruba and indeed, other ethnic groups, illustrate how ethnic identities become politicised and weaponised in digital spaces. Findings therefore revealed an urgent need for strategies to improved media literacy, content regulation, and inter-ethnic dialogue online. The study concludes that digital tribalism significantly contributes to ethno-religious polarisation in Nigeria. Recommendations include a multi-stakeholder approach involving tech platforms, government agencies, educators, and peacebuilders to curb the rise of digital tribalism.

Keywords: Digital Tribalism**,** Ethno-religious Polarisation, New Conflict Frontier, Social Media.

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Introduction

As of 2025, global social media usage has grown to approximately 5.24 billion users, accounting for about 63.9% of the world's population (Statista, 2025). Users spend an average of 141 minutes per day on various platforms. Such time frame suggests the centrality of social media in daily life and global communication (Statista, 2025). In Nigeria, the rise is equally significant. As of early 2025, there were approximately 47.8 million social media users aged 18 and above, representing 38.2% of that age group (DataReportal, 2025). This is a marked increase from 36.7 million users recorded in early 2024 (BusinessDay, 2024). Furthermore, Nigerians rank among the highest globally in daily social media engagement, spending an average of 3 hours and 23 minutes per day, placing the country fifth in the world for time spent on social platforms (Graphic Online, 2024). This rapid growth underscores the increasing influence of digital media in public discourse, political mobilisation, and socio-cultural interaction within Nigeria's dynamic communication landscape. With this new playground or battlefield (as the case may be), the digital space of social media has become the ultimate melting point for personal, economic, socio-cultural, identity expression, public discourse, and political engagement. Without doubt, the media has brought about unprecedented opportunities for communication and mobilisation in all aspects of human endeavours. Nigeria's ethno-religious cleavages have long been central to its social and political dynamics (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Nevertheless, the rise of digital technologies has introduced a new layer: social media platforms now enable individuals and groups to assert identity‐based affiliations with unprecedented immediacy and reach (Cheeseman, Fisher, Hassan, & Hitchen, 2020). In Nigeria today, the question arises—are the nation's deepening ethnic and religious divides merely reflections of historical legacy, or has the digital era provided a more volatile stage for identity‐based confrontation? Once hailed as tools for democratising information and fostering national unity, platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and WhatsApp have instead morphed into battlegrounds where tribal and religious identities are weaponised.

Disinformation campaigns, coordinated trolling, viral tribal hashtags, and ethnically charged memes now reconfigure national conversations, especially during elections, security crises, or periods of unrest (Uwa & Ronke, 2024; Adewunmi et al., 2024). In this context, the fusion of digital media and identity politics gives rise to a new frontier of conflict, a phenomenon that may be aptly termed digital tribalism. This study seeks to explore how social media's evolving architecture is reshaping Nigeria's identity-based hostilities, complicating efforts at peacebuilding and national cohesion. The country's already fragile ethno‐religious landscape is being reshaped by algorithms and echo‐chambers that reward outrage, reinforce biases, and deepen divisions. Rather than serving as venues for inclusive dialogue, social‐media spaces are increasingly functioning as digital battlegrounds; where ethnic affiliations are absolutised, and dissenting perspectives are delegitimised. Misinformation, hate speech, and disinformation campaigns now thrive, often going viral within hours and producing tangible spill‐over effects, from inter-group hostility to election‐related violence (Centre for Democracy and Development [CDD], 2023; Jimada, 2023).

Despite growing interest in online disinformation and cyber-ethics, a significant gap remains in understanding how digital tribalism, a distinct fusion of ethnic nationalism, religious identity and digital behaviour, propels political polarisation and social fragmentation in Nigeria. Existing studies have predominantly investigated offline ethno-religious conflict, with less attention paid to the ways in which novel digital tools are

reshaping age-old rivalries in more volatile, less regulated arenas (Oladokun et al., 2024). Moreover, regulatory responses have remained reactive and haphazard, with critics pointing to the risk of censorship even as root causes of polarisation remain unaddressed (DW, 2023). There is thus an urgent need to explore the mechanisms through which digital tribalism operates, how tribal narratives are curated, identities mobilised for conflict, and how these dynamics undermine democratic engagement and national unity. Without a critical and context‑specific understanding of this new frontier, Nigeria risks normalising a culture of online hostility that may further fracture its already delicate social fabric. In order to achieve the above, the following specific objectives guided the study:

i. Examine how social media platforms influence the formation and reinforcement of ethno-religious identities in Nigeria;
ii. Analyse the mechanisms through which digital tribalism contributes to ethno-religious polarisation and conflict; and
iii. Identify practical approaches to reduce digital tribalism and promote peaceful coexistence on social media in Nigeria.

Conceptual Analyses and Literature Review

In the section below, a comprehensive analysis of key concepts, the theoretical framework, and relevant literature is presented to provide a solid foundation for understanding the focus of the study.

Digital Tribalism

Digital tribalism is a relatively new concept that refers to how ethnic and tribal loyalties are manifested, expressed, reinforced, and contested in online environments—especially across social‑media platforms. Unlike traditional tribalism, which primarily unfolds in physical communities and local networks, digital tribalism transcends geographic constraints and allows individuals to group themselves around ethnic identities in virtual spaces (Agbede & Oparinde, 2024). These online groupings often prioritise in-group loyalty and may marginalise, vilify, or exclude out-groups, creating an "us versus them" dynamic in cyberspace. In Nigeria, digital tribalism has amplified pre-existing ethnic and religious tensions by offering an immediate and expansive platform for identity-based mobilisation. Research has shown that social networks serve as sites of both belonging and division, where identities are affirmed through hashtags, memes, and curated narratives that emphasise difference (Ade-wunmi et al., 2024). Algorithms further deepen this effect by creating echo‑chambers (spaces where users primarily see content that reinforces their existing beliefs), resulting in heightened polarisation and reduced exposure to dissenting views (Babalola & Sedisa, 2024). Understanding digital tribalism is therefore crucial to comprehending how social media acts not only as a tool for connection but also as a frontier for new forms of conflict. This is because of the boundless attributes that help it mirror and amplify even offline ethno-religious polarisation, thus intensifying social divisions through the rapid spread of identity-charged content in an unprecedented manner.

Ethno-religious Polarisation

Ethno-religious polarisation signifies the deepening divisions and escalating antagonism between ethnic and religious communities within a society. In Nigeria, a country with over 250 ethnic groups and a nearly equal split between Christianity and Islam, these identities have long shaped political and social dynamics (Falola & Heaton, 2008). With the expansion of digital communication—particularly social media—these fault lines have become more

pronounced. Studies have shown that these platforms heighten mobilisation around ethnic and religious identities, cultivating hostile rhetoric and facilitating misinformation that exacerbate polarisation (Ajiboye & Ajiboye, 2024). As an example, online discussions in Nigeria increasingly reflect a sharp we/us mindset, where messages vilify out-groups and reinforce in- group loyalty (Ajayi & Bamgbose, 2023). Algorithms and echo- chambers further amplify this effect by filtering content that aligns with existing beliefs, thereby entrenching distrust and division among communities (Adisa et al., 2024). The digital mediation of identity thus plays a pivotal role in reshaping Nigeria's ethno- religious landscape, not simply by reflecting existing tensions, but by magnifying them in new and volatile ways.

Algorithms and Echo-Chambers

Algorithms basically shape the digital architecture that underpins social media platforms. These are automated systems that are designed to curate and deliver content tailored to specific users' behaviour. Early conceptualisations, such as those seen in Noble's Algorithms of Oppression, highlight the neutrality of algorithmic systems and additionally, how they often incorporate broader socio- technical biases embedded within their design. These biases influence what content is surfaced and what remains hidden, with significant implications for public discourse (Noble, 2018). Algorithms contribute to the creation of filter bubbles, which are personalised content environments shaped by a user's prior clicks, likes, and viewing patterns. When these bubbles intersect with selective interaction practices, there is the emergence of echo- chambers. These are networks in which users engage primarily with like- minded peers and receive reinforcement of pre- existing beliefs (Alatawi et al., 2021). A systematic review of 55 studies finds that while computational trace- data often confirms the existence of echo- chambers, survey- based exposure studies yield more mixed results; the divergence is attributed to differences in operationalisation and data collection methods (Terren & Borge- Bravo, 2021). The dynamics through which algorithms and echo- chambers operate have, in recent times, gained academic attention and are increasingly recognised and documented. Simple mechanisms such as "unfriending" and retweeting on Twitter can rapidly lead to homogeneous, segregated communities. Meanwhile, curation algorithms on platforms like Facebook and YouTube have been shown to direct users into more ideologically extreme content over time (Cinelli et al., 2021). In turn, echo- chambers and algorithmic curation contribute to deepening social and political fragmentation. Williams (2024) argued that this phenomenon undermines democratic legitimacy by limiting exposure to dissenting views, thereby reducing the capacity for deliberative discourse and reconciliation in plural societies.

Groups carve out invisible yet potent enclaves online, Facebook pages, Telegram groups, trending hashtags, where ethnic or faith- based identity becomes the defining feature, and dissenting voices are sidelined or silenced (Adisa, 2024). Algorithms fuel this dynamic by showing users content that confirms their preferences and fears, creating echo- chambers where notions of "us" versus "them" are not just reinforced, but celebrated (Aliyu et al., 2022). Misinformation, hate speech, and disinformation campaigns now flow freely, unchecked, rapid, and viral, with deeply real consequences: flare- ups of inter- communal violence, election-related unrest, and rising mistrust between communities (Pulse Nigeria, 2024). In summary, algorithms and echo-chambers constitute intertwined socio- technical phenomena that help shape how individuals receive, engage with, and share information. For scholars of peace, conflict, and identity, these dynamics are

far from benign: they provide a new digital substrate through which polarisation, identity fragmentation, and conflict may be mediated in online spaces. Understanding these mechanisms is therefore vital to both diagnosing and designing interventions for the emerging frontier of digital conflict.

New Conflict Frontier: Social Media in Nigeria

The advent and projection of social media brought the promise of unprecedented connection and dialogue, but in Nigeria, it has simultaneously opened an uncharted frontier of conflict. Beyond being mere tools of communication, platforms such as X, Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok are now vibrant arenas where long‑ standing ethnic and religious fault lines are magnified and exploited (Uwalaka, 2023). In these digital spaces, the equation is deceptively simple: fast lanes + ever-evolving algorithms = a perfect storm for identity-based mobilisation. These phenomena point to a profound shift in paradigm: conflict is no longer contained in the bazaar or the barricade. It is projected in notifications, lives in comments, and impacts real‑ world relationships from just handheld devices or even laptops or desktops. It can reach users at any and all times of the day and night. Recognising social media as this new conflict frontier is vital for conflict experts, peace‑ builders, policy‑ makers, and local and global communities. Only by understanding how identities are curated online, how narratives are weaponised, and how these trends pull at the fabric of national cohesion can users hope to craft responses that are not reactive, but generative.

Review of Related Literature

Madubuegwu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2023) conducted a critical analysis of the impact of ethno-religious identity on voter behaviour during Nigeria's 2011, 2015, and 2019 presidential elections. Their study found that voting patterns were significantly influenced by the electorate's ethnic and religious affiliations, and that while social media served as a key platform for reinforcing these identities. They argued that social media amplified group-based loyalties and also shaped political narratives that deepened identity-based divisions. Through linking online discourse with offline electoral behaviour, this study underscores the role of digital platforms in perpetuating polarisation and influencing democratic outcomes in Nigeria's multi-ethnic society. Ajiboye and Ajiboye (2023) explore the provocative role of social media in fueling ethno-religious crises among students in higher institutions within Kaduna State, Nigeria. Their study revealed that platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp often serve as breeding grounds for hate speech, inflammatory rhetoric, and the reinforcement of ethnic and religious prejudices. The authors argued that the unregulated nature of these platforms allows for the rapid dissemination of content that can incite hostility and violence, particularly among youths. Their findings underscore the urgent need for digital literacy and proactive institutional responses to mitigate the risks of digital incitement in conflict-prone environments.

Ibebunjo (2023) explored the transformative power of non-violent resistance within the context of Nigeria's #EndSARS movement, the youth-led protest against police brutality. Unlike dominant narratives that often associate African struggles with violence and destruction, the author reframes the #EndSARS protests as a landmark example of peaceful civic engagement capable of triggering institutional reform and social transformation. The study emphasises how both physical demonstrations and digital activism played pivotal roles in mobilising public support and pressuring authorities to disband the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). His work contributes to the growing but still limited scholarly attention on non-violent resistance in Africa, using digital and physical platforms. Notably, the study

argues that remembrance of the movement should be encouraged, not suppressed, as it offers a blueprint for peaceful social change. Ewuzie and Ilo (2024) analysed how media outlets frame ethno- religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria. Their study reveals that media reports often resort to sensationalist narratives, focusing on violent events rather than underlying structural causes. This form of coverage, the authors argue, can inadvertently amplify tensions between religious and ethnic communities, rather than contributing to reconciliation and peacebuilding. The review identifies a key gap in the existing scholarship: a lack of detailed analysis on linguistic frames (word- choice, metaphors) and visual frames (photographs, layouts) in media coverage, and how these influence conflict dynamics. Further, they observe that most studies adopt short- term snapshots rather than longitudinal designs, limiting our ability to understand how media framing evolves and interacts with audience perceptions. Much of the existing research focuses on either offline identity politics or isolated online conflicts. Few studies analyse how algorithms, echo chambers, and viral disinformation escalate identity-based divisions into full-blown digital conflicts. This study fills that gap by examining how digital tribalism contributes to ethno-religious polarisation on social media in Nigeria, establishing social media as a new conflict frontier. It also investigates the implications for peacebuilding, national cohesion, and democratic stability.

Theoretical Framework

Social Network Theory (SNT) offers a valuable framework for understanding how individuals and groups interact within digital spaces, particularly social media platforms, shaping identity and conflict dynamics. Rooted in sociology and communication studies, SNT focuses on the patterns and structures of relationships, nodes (individuals or groups) and ties (connections), and how these influence behaviour, information flow, and group cohesion (Scott, 2017). In the context of digital tribalism and ethno-religious polarisation in Nigeria, SNT helps explain how online networks form around shared ethnic or religious identities, creating echo chambers that amplify group loyalty and marginalise outsiders (Kadushin, 2012). Algorithms on social media platforms often reinforce these networks by prioritising content that resonates with users' existing beliefs, intensifying polarisation (Cinelli et al., 2021). This network-driven reinforcement can accelerate the spread of misinformation and hate speech, contributing to real-world tensions (Bakshy, Messing, & Adamic, 2015).

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design aimed at providing a detailed account of digital tribalism and ethno- religious polarisation on social media in Nigeria. The descriptive approach is appropriate as it seeks to describe the current state of online interactions systematically. Descriptive research is commonly used to provide a comprehensive overview of a phenomenon without investigating causal relationships (Babbie, 2016). It allows researchers to systematically describe characteristics and patterns within a population or situation (Creswell, 2014). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), descriptive studies are valuable for exploring new or complex social issues where a detailed understanding is required before further hypothesis testing.

Findings and Discussions

Influence of Social Media Platforms on the Formation and Exacerbation of Polarised Ethno-Religious Identities in Nigeria: In Nigeria, social media platforms are contemporarily central to the construction and amplification of ethno- religious identities. These platforms enable

individuals to align strongly and express group affiliations and grievances. This often intensifies divisions and contributes to exacerbating the polarisation that already exists in Nigeria. Research indicates that online interactions significantly influence identity formation and community building among Nigerian youths (Oyewole, 2024). Furthermore, Babalola and Sedisa (2025) found that digital platforms act as cultural archives, enabling the preservation and transformation of identities across diaspora and youth networks. Together, these findings suggest that social media serves not only as a site of personal identity expression but also as a catalyst for heightened group differentiation and social fault‐ lines in Nigeria. Okeke and Omosotomhe's (2025) study shows that platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok facilitate both the assertion of ethnic pride and the deepening of inter‐ ethnic divisions among youths. Similarly, Ilevbare et al. (2024) demonstrated the prevalence of hate speech and abusive language in political discussions on Nigerian Twitter, highlighting how code‐ switched content can target specific groups. Aliyu et al. (2022) documented systemic hate speech against the Fulani ethnic group. This illustrates hate‐ speech machinery embedded within digital platforms. Complementing this, a sociolinguistic investigation titled, Limits of Language in Nigeria: The Hatred of Igbo Language reveals enduring prejudice against the Igbo language itself. The study traces historical factors, such as the legacy of the Biafran War and colonial‐ era linguistic policies, that have contributed to the marginalisation of Igbo language speakers (James et al., 2024). Expectedly, the November 2025 sentencing of Nnamdi Kanu (leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB) to life imprisonment for terrorism‐ related charges is another example of how digital and identity‐ based conflicts can erupt into real‐ world crises, with severe political and social repercussions. The aftermath of the sentencing has triggered a wave of emotions across ethnic lines. Reports indicate that many among the Igbo youth perceive the verdict as ethnically biased, especially given that the presiding judge was Yoruba. This has rekindled narratives of marginalisation, injustice, and inter‐ ethnic distrust on social media, fueling a resurgence of identity‐ based grievances and renewed mobilisation for ethnic solidarity or protest among certain groups. Indeed, no ethnic group is spared in Nigeria's digital‐ tribalism discourse. Evidence shows that the Yoruba are also subject to disparaging remarks, ethnic slurs, and negative stereotyping on social media. As an example, analyses of online rhetoric reveal frequent use of derogatory terms and stereotypes when referring to Yoruba individuals, a trend perpetuated through memes, hashtags, and coded insults designed to delegitimise their political, cultural, or social claims (Ayeni & Ibileye, 2024; Alugbin, 2025). In a 2024 nationwide content‐ analysis study of social media discussions, "Yoruba demons", a derogatory slang that caricatures young Yoruba men as disloyal or morally corrupt, was documented as a recurring trope in political and romantic‐ relationship contexts.

Mechanisms through which Digital Tribalism Fuels Ethno‐ Religious Polarisation and Conflict in Nigeria

Digital tribalism (the phenomenon of expressing, reinforcing, and mobilising ethnic or religious identities via social media) operates through multiple, often overlapping mechanisms that can exacerbate societal divisions. In the context of Nigeria, these mechanisms turn social media platforms into fertile ground for identity‐ based conflicts. The most salient pathways identified in the empirical literature include the formation of echo chambers and environments of selective exposure. Social media platforms tend to present users with content that aligns with their existing beliefs and preferences, while

filtering out opposing views. Over time, this leads to group- specific "bubbles" that reinforce in-group loyalties and biases, while minimising exposure to counter- narratives (Qaisar, Iqbal, & Mehboob, 2025). Algorithmic design, such as content recommendation systems, may further amplify this effect by prioritising posts likely to engage users, which often means emotionally provocative or identity- affirming content (Kentmen- Cin et al., 2025). In Nigeria, studies have shown that conversations on Twitter and other platforms about political or social issues often become highly polarised, especially when users cluster along ethnic or religious lines. The result is a fragmented digital public sphere, where shared facts and mutual understanding become rare, thus increasing the risk of misperceptions, hostility, and conflict that spreads beyond the social media space.

A second mechanism is the deliberate use of hate speech, ethnic/religious stereotyping, and demeaning language aimed at out- groups. The advent of annotated datasets such as HERDPhobia, focuses on online attacks against members of the Fulani community, reveals the prevalence of such content in multiple languages (Aliyu et al., 2022). This research shows that hateful or dehumanising content can spread rapidly online, especially when shared within in- group networks, normalising discrimination and hostility (Aliyu et al., 2022). Digital tribalism is not only about negative expressions, but also functions as a tool for mobilisation, group consolidation, and identity- based political communication. This is put to great negative use by political actors, interest groups, or social influencers who often exploit ethnic and religious identities in the mobilisation of supporters and funds, particularly in conflict- sensitive contexts. Social media is an effective medium for such strategies due to its anonymity, low cost, and extensive, unprecedented reach (Kentmen- Cin et al., 2025). Identity-based mobilisations can transform political competition into identity competition, where electoral or resource disputes are framed as existential struggles between ethnic or religious "communities." In Nigeria, where the politics is seemingly about "winner takes all", this raises the stakes of political participation and increases the risk of violence. This is also reinforced, especially where governance is weak, grievances pre- exist, and social cohesion is already fragile (as in the country). Beyond overt hateful content, digital tribalism also leverages misinformation and disinformation, false or misleading narratives designed to instil fear, resentment, or mistrust. Such content often frames other ethnic or religious groups as threats to economic survival, security, or moral order, tapping into existing historical grievances or structural inequalities (Kentmen- Cin et al., 2025). Once such narratives take root in echo chambers, they are difficult to counteract, given the lack of regulation and the speed at which they spread. In Nigeria, studies have shown that hate speech and misinformation campaigns during election cycles sow distrust, heighten inter- group suspicion, and reduce the chance of fair community- level reconciliation (Agbadu, Grimah, & Yahuza, 2025).

Nigeria, is characterised by religious pluralism, ethnic diversity, greed, historical grievances, and socio-economic inequalities, such mechanisms outlined transform online platforms into accelerants of social division. When identity- based online polarisation intersects with resource competition, weak governance, and socio- economic fragility, the risk of violent conflict or community breakdown increases significantly. Thus, understanding digital tribalism's mechanisms is not only of academic interest but is critical for designing interventions. Policies promoting digital literacy, proactive content moderation, counter- speech, inter- group dialogue, and regulation of social media platforms are no longer optional; they are essential to prevent a deepening of social divides and to protect national cohesion. Finally, digital tribalism is structurally continuously enabled due to the

near absence of effective moderation, oversight, or regulation of social media content in many African countries, including Nigeria. Unlike traditional media, which are subject to licensing, editorial responsibility, and more robust accountability, social media platforms often permit anonymous or pseudonymous posting and rapid dissemination of content, as long as it makes for content and data flow. In fact, many content creators and influencers purposely create and spread hateful and harmful content to garner comments, followership and dollar reward from social media operators. This structural weakness not only lowers the barriers for the spread of hate speech, propaganda, and identity‐based agitation but also creates an enabling environment in which such divisive content can proliferate.

Approaches to Mitigate Digital Tribalism and Foster Social Cohesion in Nigeria

As has been established from the foregoing, the spread of digital tribalism, which is the use of social media to amplify ethnic, religious, or tribal identities often at the expense of social unity, poses serious risks to social cohesion in Nigeria. However, social media platforms have developed community standards and automated systems that are aimed at detecting and removing harmful content, including hate speech, incitement to violence, and ethnic or religious slurs. These platforms use a combination of artificial intelligence tools, user reporting systems, and content moderation teams to limit the spread of inflammatory narratives (Meta, 2025; X., 2024). In some cases, violators face suspension, content removal, or permanent bans. These measures, though valuable, remain largely reactive and insufficient in deeply polarised societies like Nigeria, where the lines between freedom of expression and hate speech are thin and frequently blurred, leading to the rapid spread of politically charged content before moderation systems can detect and intervene. Media and Information Literacy (MIL) help users to assess information, discern truth from falsehood, and resist manipulation (UNESCO, 2025). By integrating MIL into general education, citizens become better equipped to consume, share, and respond to content online thoughtfully. According to UNESCO, MIL fosters resilience against disinformation, hate speech, and divisive content across social media platforms (UNESCO, 2025). This educational approach not only builds individual critical capacity but also cultivates norms for responsible online engagement, a key step toward sustainable social cohesion. There is, therefore, the cogent need for MIL and enhanced digital citizenship education, in this case, with emphasis on Nigeria. The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has initiated programmes aimed at improving digital literacy among Nigerians. A renewed focus can additionally be placed on this to empower individuals to navigate digital spaces responsibly and discern misinformation.

Another strategy is targeted regulation and accountability of social media platforms. It has been argued that social media platforms must be redesigned or regulated to minimise their role as “digital battlegrounds” that amplify hate speech and tribal rhetoric (Pukallus & Arthur, 2024). This includes developing content‐moderation policies sensitive to local contexts, especially in the context of Nigeria. This will ensure transparency in enforcement and holding platforms accountable for the spread of harmful content. Intestingly, global organisations have begun supporting these efforts. In 2025, under the auspices of the UNESCO and United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), Nigeria established a Media and Information Literacy Institute aimed at strengthening digital resilience against misinformation and hate speech (UNESCO, 2025; Olugbode, 2025). Beyond regulation and formal education, civil society and community-based interventions play a vital role in dealing with this menace. Pukallus & Arthur (2024) highlighted the effectiveness of combining

formal regulation with bottom-up community efforts. Civil communicative institutions, grassroots organisations, faith-based groups, and local NGOs can deploy context‑ aware, evidence-based counter‑ hate‑ speech interventions to challenge divisive narratives. These interventions should include public campaigns, community dialogues, inter-ethnic forums, and online/offline counter-speech, efforts that can foster inter-group understanding, empathy, and tolerance. Independent media and dedicated fact‑ checking organisations are also critical. Detecting, exposing, and correcting misinformation, especially hate speech or identity-based smears, limits their capacity to spread widely and incite real‑ world conflict (Liadi, 2024). It is also important that counter-narratives (positive messages that challenge divisive or prejudiced content) be employed to help reshape online discourse. Counter‑ narratives can be a more effective alternative to outright content deletion, because they serve to preserve freedom of expression while undermining hateful narratives. By promoting inclusive, respectful dialogue rather than suppression, counter-narratives can gradually shift social media cultures toward peace and tolerance.

An essential component in mitigating the negative impacts of digital tribalism lies in technological intervention. Leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to monitor, flag, and remove harmful content such as hate speech, misinformation, and inciting rhetoric can significantly reduce online polarisation. Social media platforms, in collaboration with regulatory agencies and civil society, can develop and deploy context-sensitive algorithms capable of identifying ethnically or religiously charged language and disinformation campaigns. As an example, real-time content moderation tools can help detect divisive posts before they go viral, allowing for timely intervention and minimising societal harm (Alsagheer, Mansourifar, & Shi, 2022). Thus, emphasis must be placed on platform accountability, and this must go beyond automated moderation. There must be transparency in algorithmic decisions, clear content policies, user education, and independent oversight (Pukallus & Arthur, 2024). Without such team effort between tech firms, government regulators, and community watchdogs, digital spaces may continue to serve as incubators for tribal and religious conflict. Additionally, much of the content created by Nigerian social media users is primarily driven by the desire for high traffic and associated monetisation. As a result, some creators wittily produce controversial or harmful content to attract attention and increase revenue, further exacerbating digital tribalism and online divisions. To mitigate this, stricter enforcement of platform policies combined with digital literacy campaigns can educate users on the impact of harmful content, while incentivising creators to produce responsible and constructive material that promotes social cohesion. Thus, Nigeria's complex ethno-religious and socio-political environments demand stronger, context-specific mechanisms to complement global content policies. There is a growing need for domestic legal and policy frameworks that not only hold users and digital influencers accountable but also promote civic education, digital literacy, and proactive counter-narratives. Collaborative regulation, through partnerships between government, civil society, tech companies, and local communities, is required to balance rights with responsibilities and ensure that digital spaces are not exploited to inflame ethnic and religious divisions.

Conclusion

Ethno-religious polarisation is facilitated by digital tribalism that is exacerbated by the accessibility and anonymity of social media and has lowered barriers for spreading divisive narratives, often serving as a tool for political actors to manipulate public opinion along

ethnic and religious lines. Thus, digital tribalism on social media significantly contributes to ethno-religious polarisation in Nigeria, intensifying social divisions and conflict potential. Social media platforms have thus become new frontiers where ethnic and religious identities are mobilised, often through hate speech, misinformation, and echo chambers that reinforce biases and deepen mistrust. However, the study also highlights the potential for positive interventions through digital literacy, content moderation, and peacebuilding efforts led by influencers and stakeholders. Addressing digital tribalism is therefore critical for fostering social cohesion and national unity in Nigeria's increasingly digital political landscape. In view of this, the following are recommended:

i. Digital literacy programmes should be implemented to educate users on the impact of social media on identity formation, encouraging critical engagement rather than passive consumption of divisive content.
ii. Social media platforms should be encouraged to promote inclusive narratives by amplifying diverse ethnic and religious voices, helping to reduce stereotype reinforcement.
iii. There should also be the strengthening of content moderation policies that specifically target hate speech, misinformation, and echo chambers that exacerbate ethno-religious divides, through collaborations between tech companies, civil society, and government agencies.
iv. Emphases should be placed on fostering fact-checking initiatives and rapid response teams to counter false information that fuels tensions in real-time.
v. Peacebuilding campaigns that are led by credible influencers and community leaders on social media should be promoted to help counter divisive narratives and encourage dialogue.

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THE INTERPLAY OF PHILOSOPHY, VALUES AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

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Abstract
Philosophy as an academic discipline plays a pivotal role in shaping good governance. It provides the bedrock for understanding the ethical dimensions of governance. Good governance is built on some key values such as fairness, accountability and transparency. These are shaped by philosophical reflections on what is just and right. This paper focuses on the fundamental relationship between philosophy, values and good governance. It places emphasis on how philosophical thought influences the moral principles that underpin political actions. With the method of analysis, the paper further explores major philosophical ideas on virtue and leadership as well as the concept of justice, and how they inform decisions that impact society. It argues that philosophy helps leaders prioritize the public good over personal gains by ensuring policies that benefit everyone. The paper suggests a proper understanding of how philosophical values connect with real-world governance and how it can guide leaders to navigate the complexities of balancing competing interests while striving for justice. The paper concludes that by embracing philosophy, societies can develop leadership that upholds ethical principles, paving the way for a fairer, more just, and prosperous future for all citizens.

Keywords: Philosophy, Governance, Ethical Principles, Justice, Leadership.

Introduction
Philosophy is a fundamental discipline that examines the nature of knowledge, reality, and human existence. Within the realm of governance, it becomes particularly pertinent to understand the underlying values that shape decision-making processes and policies. Good governance encompasses the principles and practices that facilitate effective decision-making, transparency, accountability, and the equitable distribution of resources within a

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society. It aims to foster an environment that promotes social justice, economic development, and the well-being of its citizens. Philosophy contributes to good governance by providing a moral compass, enabling policymakers to make informed choices based on ethical considerations and long-term societal interests. It helps establish a foundation for policies that prioritize the common good over individual or sectional interests. This paper highlights the significance of philosophical inquiry in shaping our understanding of value systems and their implications for good governance. It also emphasizes the critical role of good governance in fostering a just and prosperous society, grounded in ethical principles and guided by philosophical reflections on the nature of the good. It delves into the fundamental questions of ethics, exploring concepts such as justice, equality, and the common good. The paper concludes that through philosophical discourse, societies can critically examine prevailing values, assess their implications, and refine their understanding of what constitutes a just and virtuous society; and that by recognizing the significance of philosophy in shaping value systems and governance models, societies can strive towards more just, equitable, and prosperous futures.

Philosophy and Good Governance

Philosophy and good governance are deeply intertwined, as philosophy provides the ethical and moral foundation upon which governance is built. Philosophy, true to its nature of critical inquisition and evaluation, explores fundamental questions about justice, power, and human well-being and ultimately guiding the principles that shape effective governance. Good governance, in turn, involves the responsible and fair management of society's resources and institutions, with a focus on transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. By drawing on philosophical ideas of justice, equality, and the common good, governance can ensure that policies and actions serve not only the interests of those in power but the entire citizenry.

Good Governance: Good governance, as defined by Bevir (2013, p. 25), is a concept that highlights the need for responsive, transparent, and accountable governing, while emphasizing equality and the rule of law . These principles ensure that government actions meet the needs of its citizens and align with core democratic values. Plato, in his *Republic*, argued that good governance requires the wisdom of philosopher-kings, rulers who make decisions based on knowledge of the common good (Plato, trans. 1992, p. 370). For Plato, governance is not only about managing resources but about ensuring that those in power act in accordance with reason and justice, which benefits all members of society. Similarly, Aristotle, in his *Politics*, identified that governance should aim at achieving the best outcome for all citizens, through a system that respects the laws and encourages active participation (Aristotle, trans. 1984, p. 136). Both philosophers stress the importance of leadership and moral responsibility, which are essential to achieving good governance in a fair and just society. In the modern context, scholars like Pierre and Peters, expanded the definition of good governance by emphasizing the interactive processes between the state, society, and market actors. They argue that effective policy-making and implementation arise from these collaborations, where various actors such as government institutions, private enterprises, and civil society; work together to achieve common goals (Pierre and Peters, 2000, p. 3). This broader view aligns with the concept of *multilevel governance*, where power and decision-making are decentralized and shared among different levels of government and private sectors. The shift towards multilevel governance emphasizes the need for inclusivity, transparency, and cooperation across various sectors of society to achieve sustainable

outcomes. Thus, good governance today is not just about the actions of the government but about the effective interplay between various actors that ensure policies are shaped, implemented, and evaluated transparently and accountably.

Principles of Good Governance

Good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the community and how this can be achieved (Stoker, G.1998, p.38). Some of these principles include:

i. **Rule of Law:** The rule of law is the cornerstone of good governance. It ensures that all individuals, institutions, and government officials are subject to and accountable under the law. Plato, in his *Republic*, emphasized that laws should be rational and serve the common good, suggesting that the state must be governed by the wisdom of the philosopher-kings to ensure justice (Plato, trans. 1992, p. 370). Aristotle, too, in *Politics*, argued that laws should promote virtue and prevent corruption, viewing them as a means to ensure the moral well-being of the community (Aristotle, trans. 1984, p. 134). In modern contexts, the rule of law entails not only the creation of laws but also their fair and equitable enforcement. This principle was highlighted by Kaufmann, Kraay, and Zoido-Lobatón, who argued that legal frameworks must be fair, transparent, and applied equally to all citizens (Kaufmann, et al, 1999, p. 4).

ii. **Accountability:** Accountability is a fundamental principle of good governance that ensures that public officials are answerable for their actions and responsive to the people who grant them authority. John Locke, in his *Second Treatises of Government*, laid the groundwork for accountability in governance, advocating for the idea that governmental power is derived from the consent of the governed and must be exercised in a manner that serves the public good (Locke, 1980, p. 255). Similarly, Machiavelli, in *The Prince*, acknowledged that rulers must maintain power but also be aware of their subjects' grievances, stressing the need for leaders to be responsive to public sentiment in order to maintain stability (Machiavelli, 1998, p. 40). Hence, accountability is vital to ensuring that public servants are held to high ethical standards, which, in turn, fosters trust between citizens and their governments (Hyden and Bratton, 1992, p. 10).

iii. **Effectiveness and Efficiency:** The principles of effectiveness and efficiency in governance demand that government institutions and processes deliver results that meet societal needs as well as make optimal use of the available resources. According to Aristotle, effective governance requires the state to operate with wisdom and foresight in ensuring the welfare of its people. His concept of human flourishing (*eudaimonia*), aligns with this principle. It suggests that governance should aim to achieve the highest good for all citizens (Aristotle, trans. 1984, p. 142). The modern interpretation of effectiveness and efficiency has become central to the functioning of public institutions. The OECD (2001, p. 20), highlights that public institutions should not only be responsive to the needs of society but must do so efficiently, ensuring that resources are used in a way that maximizes benefits for the public. Kant, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, emphasizes that reason should be used to guide actions, echoing the idea that rational, well-planned decisions are essential for achieving efficient outcomes in governance (Kant, 1998, p. 50).

Values in Decision Making

Values play a crucial role in decision-making because they act as guiding principles, helping individuals or organizations make choices that align with their beliefs, priorities, and long-term goals. Here is how values influence decision-making:

i. **Clarifying Priorities:** Values play a critical role in clarifying priorities during decision-making. According to Aristotle, the pursuit of the *good life* is guided by virtue and rationality, both of which are deeply tied to one's personal values (Aristotle, trans. 1984, p. 42). In decision-making, values help individuals and organizations determine what matters most in terms of relationships, career, health, or finances. John Locke, in *Second Treatises of Government*, also suggested that individuals are entitled to prioritize their own well-being and happiness, which ultimately reflects personal values that shape choices (Locke, 1980, p. 256). Ultimately, the clarity provided by values helps eliminate ambiguity, allowing for a clearer understanding of priorities and a more consistent approach to decision-making. For example, a healthcare organization with strong values centred on patient welfare, will prioritize care quality and patient satisfaction over financial profits.

ii. **Providing Consistency:** Values provide the necessary foundation for consistency in decision-making, which is crucial for building trust and credibility. As Kant noted in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, consistency is rooted in acting in accordance with universal principles that respect the autonomy and dignity of others (Kant, 1998, p. 52). A consistent value system allows individuals to make decisions that are predictable and aligned with their broader principles. For instance, in business, an organization that upholds values like transparency and integrity will consistently act in ways that reinforce those ideals, whether dealing with customers, employees, or shareholders. This consistency fosters trust, as people know what to expect from an individual or organization based on their values. Machiavelli, in *The Prince*, discussed how rulers must balance pragmatic decision-making with a sense of predictability in order to maintain their power (Machiavelli, 1998, p. 72). However, consistency must not be rigid; it should allow for adaptation within the context of established principles to maintain credibility and trust.

iii. **Improving Focus:** When faced with multiple decisions, values serve as a compass that helps individuals maintain focus by narrowing down options to those that align with their core beliefs. Aristotle's idea of practical wisdom (*phronesis*), illustrates how decision-makers should consider not just the immediate consequences of their actions, but their alignment with a larger, virtuous goal (Aristotle, trans. 1984, p. 200). Similarly, Locke suggests that individuals often choose options that resonate with their deepest beliefs (Locke, 1980, p. 262), leading to decisions that enhance personal fulfilment and integrity. In other words, values make complex decisions easier by removing irrelevant alternatives, which are inconsistent with one's principles. For example, a person with a strong value of environmental sustainability might reject job offers from companies with poor environmental practices, even if the compensation is attractive.

iv. **Guiding Ethical Choices:** Values are essential for maintaining ethical standards during decision-making. Kant's categorical imperative stresses the importance of making decisions based on principles that can be universally applied without compromising the moral autonomy of others (Kant, 1998, p. 30). In business or personal life, decisions aligned with deeply held values ensure that ethical boundaries are respected, even in the face of temptation or external pressures. For instance, a company's commitment to

sustainability values ensures that it does not resort to unethical practices, such as exploiting labour or polluting the environment, even when these actions might lead to higher short-term profits. Aristotle also emphasized that the pursuit of virtue entails making ethical decisions that contribute to the common good and personal flourishing (Aristotle, trans. 1984, p. 118). By guiding ethical choices, values serve as a moral compass, preventing individuals from straying into actions that could harm their integrity or reputation.

v. **Encouraging Accountability:** Value-based decision-making fosters accountability, as actions are grounded in principles that are personally significant. According to Locke, individuals are responsible for their actions and must be held accountable, particularly when those actions are guided by the pursuit of life, liberty, and property (Locke, 1980, p. 258). Accountability is easier to maintain when decisions are made in accordance with one's values, as it becomes clear whether a decision aligns with the ethical principles one has committed to. For example, a leader who values transparency will be more likely to hold themselves accountable to stakeholders, ensuring their actions reflect their stated values. Accountability also leads to higher trust and credibility, as individuals and organizations are seen as consistent and committed to doing the right thing. Machiavelli, while often seen as advocating for manipulation and power, acknowledged that rulers must maintain a sense of accountability to their subjects to avoid rebellion and loss of trust (Machiavelli, 1998, p. 56).

vi. **Promoting Long-term Thinking:** Decisions grounded in values tend to emphasize long-term benefits over short-term gains. Kant's philosophy of duty, as laid out in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, emphasizes that decisions should be made with a consideration for their long-term impact, ensuring that they respect moral laws that guide future generations (Kant, 1998, p. 60). For example, an organization that values social responsibility will invest in sustainable practices, knowing that these will yield long-term benefits, even if they are costly in the short run. Aristotle's concept of the ultimate purpose or end (*telos*), suggests that decisions should align with one's larger life goals, which are often long-term in nature (Aristotle, trans. 1984, p. 206). By promoting long-term thinking, values help individuals and organizations focus on their larger vision, whether it's securing financial stability, improving health, or fostering a meaningful legacy.

Ethical Considerations in Governance

Ethical considerations in decision-making involve evaluating choices to ensure that they align with moral principles and the well-being of all affected parties. Below is how ethics play a vital role in the decision-making process:

i. **Respect for Others:** Respect for others is a fundamental principle in ethical governance. It emphasizes fairness, equality, and human dignity. Plato, in *The Republic*, argues that justice in society can only be achieved when individuals recognize the inherent worth of others, ensuring fairness in distribution and treatment (Plato, trans. 2003, p. 20). Aristotle expands on this idea, asserting that justice is about giving each person their due, which includes treating people with respect (Aristotle, 1999, p. 32). A modern example of this principle in practice is the implementation of anti-discrimination laws in many countries, which seek to ensure that individuals are treated equally regardless of race, gender, or background.

ii. **Transparency:** Transparency in governance is crucial for maintaining public trust and accountability. Kant, in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, emphasizes that ethical actions must be performed openly and in a way that respects the autonomy of others (Kant, 2002, p. 76). Transparency allows citizens to understand the motivations behind decisions, making governance more accountable and less prone to corruption. When leaders are transparent, they make ethical decisions that can be scrutinized, improving accountability and fostering a greater sense of public trust. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, transparent communication about health policies and decision-making processes helped build public trust and compliance.

iii. **Accountability:** Accountability is a key ethical principle that ensures leaders are answerable for their actions and decisions. Locke, in his *Second Treatise of Government*, argues that rulers must be accountable to the people, who have the right to challenge government actions (Locke, 1980, p. 124). This principle ensures that leaders do not act in self-interest but instead remain responsible to those they govern. In practice, this could be seen in the role of institutions like the *Office of the Auditor-General*, which holds governments accountable by auditing public funds and expenditures. A real-world example of accountability can be found in the impeachment proceedings of politicians, such as the case of former President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, who was impeached for allegedly violating budgetary laws in August, 2016. In Nigeria for example, the *Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)*, investigates and prosecutes financial crimes, ensuring that leaders and public officials are held accountable for corruption and misuse of public funds. The case of former Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau State, readily comes to mind. By holding leaders accountable, citizens ensure that their rights and public resources are protected.

iv. **Balancing Interests:** Ethical decision-making often requires balancing various interests, such as personal, organizational, and societal needs. Aristotle, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, proposes that ethical decisions are those that strike a balance between extremes, fostering the "golden mean" (Aristotle, 1999, p. 58). In governance, this means that leaders must consider the interests of all stakeholders and make decisions that benefit the broader society. For example, when governments face budget cuts, they must balance the interests of public workers, taxpayers, and the economy as a whole. In times of economic recession, ethical decision-making requires governments to prioritize social welfare while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

v. **Integrity and Consistency:** Integrity and consistency are fundamental to ethical decision-making. Machiavelli, while often associated with pragmatic decision-making, acknowledges the importance of maintaining authority and credibility in governance (Machiavelli, 2003, p. 42). Integrity involves adhering to ethical principles even when it is difficult or unpopular. Consistency on the other hand, ensures that actions align with those principles over time. An example of integrity in governance is seen in leaders who uphold the rule of law, even when it goes against political pressure. For instance, New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, demonstrated integrity when she implemented strict gun control laws following the Christchurch Mosque shootings, despite potential political fallout (Every-Palmer et al., 2021, p.5). Her consistent ethical approach to leadership earned her public trust and respect. Thus, ethical governance requires that leaders act with integrity, maintaining consistency between their values and their actions, even in challenging situations.

vi. **Avoiding Conflicts of Interest:** Ethical governance necessitates avoiding conflicts of interest, ensuring decisions are made for the public good rather than personal gain. Locke, in his *Second Treatise*, stresses that leaders must prioritize the collective good over personal interests (Locke, 1980, p. 119). Conflicts of interest can undermine public trust and lead to decisions that benefit individuals at the expense of society. For example, the *Panama Papers* leak revealed numerous instances of world leaders and public officials hiding wealth in offshore tax havens, leading to public outcry and calls for greater transparency (International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, 2016, para. 1). Governments can mitigate conflicts of interest by instituting policies that require officials to disclose financial interests and recuse themselves from decisions where there is a potential personal gain. By avoiding conflicts of interest, leaders can ensure that their decisions are made impartially thereby reflecting ethical principles and maintaining public trust.

vii. **Long-term Consequences:** Ethical decision-making requires consideration of the long-term consequences of actions, ensuring that decisions made today do not have harmful effects in the future. Plato, in *The Republic*, advocates for the pursuit of long-term societal harmony over short-term gains (Plato, trans. 2003, p. 71). Ethical governance often requires foresight and the willingness to make difficult decisions for the sake of future generations. For instance, climate change policies that aim to reduce carbon emissions, though often costly in the short term, are essential for the long-term health of the planet.

viii. **Empathy and Compassion:** Empathy and compassion are essential components of ethical governance, as they enable leaders to understand the needs and perspectives of others. Kant, in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, argues that ethical actions must respect the dignity and autonomy of others, which can be achieved through empathy (Kant, 2002, p. 92). Empathy allows leaders to connect with the experiences of those affected by their decisions and make more informed, compassionate choices. An example is the leadership of Angela Merkel, the former Chancellor of Germany, during the 2015 refugee crisis. Merkel's decision to open Germany's borders to refugees, based on compassion and empathy for their suffering, demonstrated ethical leadership that prioritized human dignity over political expediency.

The Role of Philosophy in Good Governance

Philosophy plays an essential role in shaping the practices of good governance. Its influence is deeply rooted in ethical reasoning, critical thinking, and the pursuit of justice and truth. By studying philosophy, we gain ethical frameworks that guide governance, ensuring decisions prioritize justice, fairness, and the common good. As Aristotle argued in *Nicomachean Ethics*, the purpose of governance is to promote the "good life" for citizens by fostering virtue and well-being (Aristotle, 1999, Ch. 9, § 8). According to him, governance rooted in virtuous leadership ensures that leaders guide society in ways that enhance the moral character of individuals and the collective good. Philosophers like John Rawls emphasize fairness as a cornerstone of political and social institutions. In his *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls introduces the concept of the "original position" and the "veil of ignorance" to argue that governance systems should be built on principles of equality and fairness (Rawls, 1971, pp. 3–20). By removing personal biases in decision-making, Rawls contends that governance becomes more just, as policies are designed with the well-being of all, especially the least advantaged, in mind. This focus on fairness is crucial in a world where political systems are often skewed

by inequality and the interests of a few. Furthermore, philosophy promotes rational deliberation and critical inquiry, which are indispensable for transparent and effective governance. Immanuel Kant, in his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, emphasizes the importance of rational decision-making grounded in universal moral principles. For Kant, ethical decisions must respect the dignity of individuals and adhere to principles that could be universally applied (Kant, 2017, pp. 15–18). This focus on rationality ensures that governance is not only efficient but also morally sound, addressing complex societal issues with integrity.

One of the primary roles of philosophy in governance is to provide clarity in the concepts of justice, fairness, and morality. These concepts are often misunderstood or misapplied, and philosophy helps carve out clear definitions and understanding. By grounding governance in well-thought-out ethical principles, philosophy ensures that leaders are guided by values that promote the common good rather than personal gain. Philosophy challenges governance systems to be grounded in values that transcend individual or partisan interests, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and moral duty. Moreover, the study of philosophy encourages leaders to appreciate the necessity of critical thinking and careful deliberation before making policies. Philosophy cultivates a mindset that considers not only the immediate consequences of decisions but also their long-term impact on society. Leaders who embrace philosophical principles like truth, honesty, and accountability are more likely to enact policies that are beneficial to society as a whole. In a system of governance where these values are central, politics becomes a respected profession rather than one held in contempt.

The Relationship between Philosophy, Values and Good Governance

The connection between philosophy, values, and good governance is profound and interdependent. Philosophy provides the intellectual framework that shapes the values upon which governance is built. These values include justice, equity, transparency, and accountability. These serve as the foundation for ethical, just, and effective governance as they aligned with the well-being of society.

Philosophy as a Foundation for Value

Philosophy plays a pivotal role in identifying, defining, and prioritizing the values essential for good governance. By exploring the works of early philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, we come to understand that good governance is not merely about the exercise of power; it is about ensuring that those in power act in ways that promote justice, equity, and the public good. Philosophy shapes the foundation upon which ethical governance is built, making it central to the values that guide decision-making and leadership. In *The Republic*, Plato argues that the ideal ruler must be someone whose understanding goes beyond mere material interests and personal gain. Instead, the ruler should be guided by a deep commitment to truth and justice. This philosophy suggests that a pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, which philosophy encourages, is essential for anyone in a position of power. For Plato, good governance requires more than just a system of laws; it demands leaders who can see beyond the surface of political and social issues to understand the deeper moral implications of their decisions. This perspective reflects Plato's belief that only those trained in philosophy can ensure a system that is truly just (Plato, 2016, p. 205). This idealistic view, while influential, is further developed by modern thinkers like John Locke, who built upon these philosophical foundations to argue that a government's legitimacy stems from the natural rights of its citizens such as life, liberty, and property.

Locke's assertion that governments are formed to protect the natural rights of individuals also highlights the importance of inclusiveness in governance. He is of the opinion that people enter into a social contract not to be ruled by a tyrant but to collectively create a system that ensures the protection of their freedoms. For Locke, good governance depends on the active participation of citizens in a system that guarantees their rights (Locke, 2016, p. 15). His idea continues to serve as a cornerstone of democratic governance till date. This demonstrates how philosophical thought can shape governance structures that prioritize fairness, equality, and justice.

Values as the Basis of Good Governance

Values are essential benchmarks for evaluating the practices of governance, shaping the principles that governments and institutions should uphold to ensure they meet societal expectations. These values not only provide a foundation for the actions of political leaders but also guide the creation of policies that promote fairness, equity, and the well-being of citizens. Key values like transparency and accountability are critical in preventing corruption, promoting trust, and ensuring that governments act in the best interest of their people. As highlighted by the UNDP (1997, p. 2), these values foster a relationship of trust between the government and its citizens, which is vital for maintaining social stability and public confidence. Moreover, values such as justice, fairness, and honesty serve as the moral compass for decision-making in governance. These values ensure that policies are not only effective but also ethical, fostering a governance system that respects the rights and dignity of all stakeholders. Aristotle's concept of virtue ethics underscores the importance of the moral character of leaders. It emphasizes that the effectiveness of governance hinges on leaders who act with integrity and virtue. According to him, leaders who embody virtues such as wisdom, courage, and temperance are better equipped to make decisions that benefit society as a whole, rather than acting out of self-interest (Aristotle, 2016, p. 45). In essence, the values of justice, accountability, and ethical leadership form the bedrock of good governance. These values guide leaders in creating policies that are just, fair, and in alignment with the needs of the society.

The Influence of Philosophy on Decision-Making in Governance

Philosophy profoundly influences decision-making in governance by providing ethical frameworks, guiding principles, and analytical tools that shape how leaders address complex societal issues. Philosophical thought encourages rational deliberation, moral reasoning, and a focus on justice and fairness, ensuring governance is effective and aligned with societal well-being. Studying philosophy fosters logical reasoning and critical thinking, enabling governance to tackle complex issues systematically and effectively. In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, he emphasizes practical wisdom (*phronesis*) in decision-making, combining moral insight with practical reasoning (Aristotle, 1999, Ch. 6, § 5).

Conflicting Philosophical Perspectives

As has been shown over time, there is hardly a philosophical stance that everyone accepts. Philosophers argue about the role and importance of philosophy as the basis for good governance. Some say governance should be guided by philosophical principles, while others say practical concerns or power dynamics matter more. Plato's idealism suggests that governance should be led by philosopher-kings, people with true wisdom and understanding of justice. This idea is still discussed in scholarship that links his political thought to

contemporary debates about expertise, knowledge, and government legitimacy (Schofield, 2006, pp. 45-50).

On the other hand, Niccolò Machiavelli challenges the idea that idealistic philosophy should guide rulers. He focuses on realistic power dynamics and how leaders actually maintain power, not how they should ideally behave. His approach emphasizes practical outcomes over moral or philosophical ideals (Machiavelli, 2009, pp. 60-65), and modern interpreters argue his realism laid the groundwork for contemporary political realism. John Rawls argues for a governance system rooted in moral philosophy, with justice as fairness at its core. He claims society should be structured so that basic rights and opportunities are fairly distributed, and he defends this view in his later work that revisits and refines his *Theory of Justice* framework (Rawls, 2001, pp. 30-35). Carl Schmitt critiques the idea of governance based solely on abstract philosophical principles. He sees politics as a realm of conflict, power, and decisive action, where enforcing order matters more than achieving ideal justice (Schmitt, 2005, pp. 15-20).

Balancing Values in Governance

The debate over whether philosophy should serve as the foundation for good governance revolves around the tension between idealistic philosophical principles and the practical realities of political and social life. While some argue that governance rooted in philosophical ideals ensures fairness, justice, and moral integrity, others contend that philosophy can be too abstract or detached from the complexities of real-world decision-making. Balancing these views requires a nuanced approach that acknowledges the value of philosophical thought while also accommodating the pragmatic needs of governance. Making a case for philosophy, it can be argued that philosophy provides a moral and ethical framework that can guide decision-making, ensuring that governance is aligned with principles of justice, fairness, and respect for human dignity. Philosophical perspectives such as Rawls' *Theory of Justice* or Kant's *Deontology* advocate for creating systems where the rights and equality of individuals are central to policy-making. John Rawls proposes that good governance should aim for justice by ensuring that social inequalities benefit the least advantaged. His "difference principle" provides a philosophical basis for addressing disparities in society. (Rawls, 1971, pp.52-60). However, it must be admitted that governance involves managing a diversity of perspectives and conflicting values. What is considered "just" or "moral" can vary greatly across cultures and societies. On this ground therefore, relativists can argue that philosophy cannot impose universal principles on governance without disregarding the lived experiences and values of different groups. Michel Foucault critiques the idea of universal moral truths, asserting that power dynamics and cultural contexts must influence governance decisions. (Foucault, 1977, pp.150-155). This therefore shows that balancing views on philosophy as the foundation of good governance requires recognizing the value of philosophical principles in shaping justice, fairness, and ethical leadership, while also acknowledging the need for practical, adaptable solutions. A balanced governance model integrates philosophical insights with pragmatic considerations, allowing for governance that is both principled and responsive to the diverse, evolving needs of society.

Criticisms of Applying Philosophy as the Basis of Good Governance

While philosophy provides valuable frameworks for thinking about justice, ethics, and the role of the state, there are significant criticisms of using philosophy as the sole or primary basis for governance. These criticisms generally focus on the perceived impracticality, idealism, and limitations of applying abstract philosophical principles in real-world

governance. In the first instance, it is true that many philosophical theories that borders on politics are abstract and do not account for the complexities and contingencies of real-world political life. Political philosophers, such as Plato and Rawls, outline ideals about governance that does seem to be distant from the practical realities of managing diverse societies with competing interests. For example, Plato's concept of philosopher-kings or Rawls' "veil of ignorance," can be seen as far-fetched and unrealistic in practice, as they assume a level of rationality and moral commitment from leaders and citizens that may not exist in real-world politics. The concept of the "just ruler" or philosopher-king, as proposed by Plato, overlooks the complexities of political power, corruption, and human nature.

Again, philosophical models of governance may lack the adaptability needed to respond to changing circumstances, technological advances, and evolving societal needs. Philosophical doctrines can become dogmatic, stifling innovation and responsiveness in governance. Political systems that strictly adhere to philosophical ideals may struggle to address urgent, practical issues such as economic crises, climate change, or global pandemics. A good example is a rigid adherence to the philosophical principle of individual freedom. This may hinder the government's ability to implement public health measures during a health crisis, such as mandatory vaccinations or lockdowns. Also, philosophical ideas about universal values, such as human rights or justice, often clash with cultural relativism, which argues that values are context-dependent and shaped by cultural and historical factors. Imposing a singular philosophical framework on governance may overlook the richness of cultural diversity. A philosophy-driven approach to governance can be perceived as ethnocentric or imperialistic, especially in multicultural or post-colonial contexts. This approach might ignore or marginalize indigenous or alternative ways of governing. For example, the western concept of democracy, derived from philosophers like John Locke or Immanuel Kant, may not easily translate into governance models in societies with different political traditions and values. (Foucault, 1977, pp.150-155).

Conclusion

In its most basic form, philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom, a rigorous search into the nature of reality, morality, and human purpose. It stands as the foundation upon which systems of meaning, ethical frameworks, and societal norms are constructed. Among its myriad concerns, the question of value is pivotal, probing what is deemed important or good in both man’s individual and collective life. When stretched to governance, these philosophical inquiries become even more important, as the essence of governance itself is the establishment of society in a manner that reflects shared values that promotes the common good. Good governance therefore, is not merely the exercise of authority or the management of power; it is the embodiment of values that reflect justice, equity, and the well-being of all. At its heart, it requires a philosophical grounding in the nature of justice, the legitimacy of power, and the ethical responsibilities of leaders. Through philosophy, we are equipped to critique the moral dimensions of governance, ensuring that the systems we uphold are not only efficient but also just and humane. In this context, the exploration of value in governance raises profound questions bordering on the ultimate aim of leadership, balancing the interests of the individual against those of the collective. And most critically, what principles should guide the distribution of power in a manner that promotes fairness, accountability, and the flourishing of all citizens. Hence, philosophy is not only a tool for understanding governance but an essential companion in striving toward governance that is well and truly good.

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Article **Open Access**

A CRITIQUE OF KARL MARX'S CONCEPT OF CLASS STRUGGLE AS A PARADIGM FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
This work titled, "A Critique of Karl Marx's Concept of Class Struggle as a Paradigm for Social Development", seeks to bring to the fore Marx's theory of class struggle where he distinguished the demarcation existing between the rulers and the rule, arguing that the capitalists have deliberately made it difficult for others to come up to their class. They are perpetuating themselves within the corridors of wealth. Marx's theory has on the other hand inspired so many changes and developments both in the political and economic sectors. Evidently, Marx theory has continued to be a source of hypothesis to many theorists in the world and has created a puzzle in the realm of social reality. The quest to solve the puzzle has engendered divergent paradigms of Marxism. The capitalists are uncomfortable with Marx theorizing as it hinges on the oppressiveness and emancipation of the masses (proletariats), of the emerging modern capitalist system been brought about by the industrial revolution. He believes that the class struggle was the driving force of social change. According to Marx, men begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence .In producing their means of subsistence men indirectly produced their actual material life. This stage occurs within the framework of a progressive historical evolution. The work adopted analytic and critical methods.

Keywords: Class Struggle, Social Change and Development.

Introduction

Like Plato and Aristotle of Greek antiquity, the Philosophy of Karl Marx has had far reaching influence on the world. The influence of Marx cuts across various fields' politics, economics, education, and even family life. Hardly can anyone engage in any meaningful discussions in

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these fields without acknowledging Marx's contributions. It is due to this profound influence of Karl Marx theories in these various fields that made William Lawhead in his book, *The Voyage of Discovering: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy* remarks:

> Marx radical political philosophy eventually became both the rallying trumpet and the theoretical foundation of angry, impoverished, oppressed workers throughout Europe and the rest of the world. As a result of his theories, governments have been overthrown, maps have been changed and his name became a household word. (596).

Marx argues economics is at the root of all human existence. He begins with the undeniable claim that people cannot eat ideas but must survive on the material products of their labour. In other words, economies, for Marx, rules everything and those who can secure the means of productions are those who are also in charge of other spheres of government. As Marx put in, "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (Lawhead 596). Although, Marx employed the dialectics of Hegel and the materialism of Feuerbach, he argues that the dialectics of history in which different forces oppose themselves and give rise to another epoch, is not one of Ideas as Hegel opines, but one of matter-that underscores the historical and productive relations among men in different epoch.

> In Marx's words "the development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers" (Marx, 24).

Engels also gives us the fundamental idea underlying the Manifesto: political and intellectual ideas and therefore all of history are based on the economic system of the time, and thus on class struggles. Today, Engels says, the many exploited and oppressed proletariat (workers) can only free themselves by both overthrowing the few rich bourgeoisie (capitalists) and ending economic class altogether. Marx says that all of history is based on class struggle, and then he details the rise of the bourgeoisie. The capitalists have become the most powerful class, he says, putting the aristocracy in the shadows. The bourgeoisie control the means of production (the factories, heavy machinery, and agricultural land) and exploit and oppress the working proletariat, keeping the profit for themselves. To stay on top, the members of the bourgeoisie have to expand across the planet, finding natural resources, new customers, and new workers. They've made life impersonal and miserable for the workers, since now everything boils down to money. Some people occupy other spots in the mix of classes but this show is ultimately about the capitalists versus the workers.

Marxian Theory of Class and Class Struggle

The Marxian theory of class and class struggle is a vital part of the explanation of capitalist production. A class is made up of people who are in the same position in relation to the ownership and control of the means of wealth production. For Marx and Engels, the class struggle between the bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and the proletariat (working class) is the great lever of modern social change. Originally Marx identified three classes on the basis of source of income: "wage for labour, profit for the capitalist and rent for the landowner" But capitalism has now succeeded in absorbing the landlord class, leaving society polarised between two classes: capitalists and workers. The Marxian theory of class is opposed by those academics who explain class not in terms of ownership or non-ownership of the means of wealth production, but in terms of prestige and style of life. Society is said to

consist of a hierarchy of non-conflicting classes, with names such as upper, middle, working and under. Such a theory tends to gloss over the fact that only about 2 percent of the population own enough capital to live comfortably on the income it provides; the other 98 percent have to find an employer or live off state benefit. Brief mention should be made of a few other Marxian ideas relating to the analysis of capitalism. Marx is sometimes associated with the belief that as capitalism continues it will lead to the increasing misery of the working class. His use of the term 'misery' should be taken as relative to that of the capitalist class, not absolute:

> Although the engagements of the worker have risen, the social satisfaction that they give has fallen in comparison with the increased enjoyments of the capitalist… Our desires and pleasures spring from society, we measure them, therefore, by society and not by the objects which serve for their satisfaction. Because they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature' (Marx and Engels, 94).

Alienation is a concept much discussed by Marx but relatively neglected in commentaries on Marxism, including those by the World Socialist Movement. Alienation means the subjugation of man by his own works, which have assumed the guise of independent things. .A concept allied to that of alienation is that of what Marx called the fetishism of commodities. People are dominated by the products of their own activities but do not realize this and attribute an independent existence and power to those products. Marx (83) is of the view that the existence of things as commodities, and the value-relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connection with their physical properties and with the material relations arising there from. There is a definite social relation between men that assumes in their eyes the fantastic form of a relation between things. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. In another instance, much has been made of Marx's use of the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. A close study of his references to this idea shows that he meant something very different from our modern understanding of dictatorship as totalitarianism exemplified by Hitler and Stalin. To understand Marx's use of the term “we must return to the original Roman institution of dictatura… the classic dictator held extensive but not unlimited powers, powers to cope with an emergency but not to be left entirely unchecked” (Hunt, 1982: p.286). With this interpretation in mind we may note Marx's remarks in a speech on the 7th anniversary of the International in Marx, 1871:

> The class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat… In destroying the existing conditions of oppression by transferring all the means of labour to the productive labourer, and thereby compelling every able-bodied individual to work for a living, the only basis for class rule and oppression would be removed. But before such a change could be effected a proletarian dictature [Fr. Dictatorship] would be necessary, and the first condition of that was a proletarian army' (Marx and Engels, 197).

The hard line expressed in those words can scarcely be denied. Engels, too, foresaw a violent revolution, though he wrote of English workers being driven to the use of violence rather than choosing it. As long as other classes, and the capitalist class in particular, still exist; and as long as the proletariat fights against them… it must employ coercive measures, that is, governmental measures; so long it is still a class itself, and the economic conditions which

give rise to the class struggle and the existence of classes have not yet disappeared and must be forcibly removed… With its complete victory, therefore, its rule also comes to an end. Strong measures, then, but temporary and no doubt contemplated with the best of intentions. We must remember that Marx and Engels were men of their time, and that time was one when the use of force by workers against authority for political purposes was much more thinkable than today. Having said that, we believe that no kind of 'dictatorship of the proletariat', no matter how watered down and temporary, should form any part of the socialist program at the end of the 20th century or beyond. The socialist goal will be achieved by force of argument, by democratic methods, not by force of arms or authoritarian methods.

Leadership Versus Self-Education

One major Marxian political theme is that of leadership versus self-education of the working class. Here we have a much clearer consensus that power invested in leaders is the wrong way to go, and that workers educating themselves for the revolutionary task is the right way. Engels, (335) Maintains that Communism rises above the enmity of classes, for it is a movement that embraces all humanity and not merely the working classes. Of course, no communist proposes to avenge himself against any particular individuals who are members of the bourgeoisie… Should the proletariat become more Socialist in character its opposition to the middle classes will be less unbridled and less savage… It may be expected that by the time the rising comes the English working classes will understand basic social problems sufficiently clearly for the more brutal elements of the revolution to be eventually overcome—with the help of the appearance of the Communist Party'. This is a very interesting and revealing passage. It shows a progression of Marxist thought from a capitalist present that is in many ways divisive and brutal, to a communist/socialist movement that is in a transitional stage from divisiveness/brutality, to a future society that will embrace all of humanity. Clearly Engels quite reasonably expected workers to become less brutal as they adopted socialist ideas. Reference to the help of the Communist Party should not be taken as meaning the vanguardist CP or other movements of the 20th century, rather the general movement of those in favour of communism (another name for socialism). Hunt's interpretation of Marxian views on workers' self-education is also closer to the Socialist Party's approach to this question rather than that of the Communist or any other Party. According to Hayak, (290):

> “Their [Marx and Engels'] own vision of communist revolution did not rest on the fundamental postulate of mass immaturity, but rather pre-supposed the masses' prior self-education… Perhaps the key distinguishing feature of Marx and Engels' thinking… was precisely their conviction, their ultimate democratic faith, that the masses could and would educate themselves, organize themselves, liberate themselves, and rule themselves. “

Cohen agrees with Hayak's interpretation of the Marxian concept of socialist revolution, especially its democratic character and opposition to leadership. According to (Cohen, 163), the nature of a revolutionary movement was seen by Marx and Engels as crucial for the kind of post-revolutionary society that could be expected to emerge. A mass movement of workers meant that a democratic regime was feasible after the overthrow of bourgeois rule. A small conspiracy of professional revolutionaries implied a dictatorial post-revolutionary regime.

Capitalism

To some extent the debate between materialism and idealism, in which Marx and Engels engaged so prominently, is an artificial one. Yes, we should never lose sight of the basic material nature of life. But the Hegelian dialectic, which Marx sensibly reversed, serves to remind us that ideas and ideals are also an essential part of human life. The debate between structure and action, which some philosophers and sociologists carry on today, is also not a matter of either-or but of both-and. We need society to have developed structures of (potential) production to meet all reasonable human needs, but we also need informed and educated action on the part of a majority of the world's population to change those structures. A second Marxist concern was with the analysis of capitalism. In the more than hundred years since Marx and Engels were writing, capitalism has changed drastically, though not fundamentally. It is still a system of exploitation, still one in which commodity production alienates us from what we produce and even, in a sense, from ourselves. In this line of issues Hayek argued that Marx and Engels were less concerned about poverty than about alienation. Without downplaying the suffering and deprivation caused by poverty, “we should also recognize the abjectly poor quality of life that capitalism offers its supporters. Think of rush-hour sardine-tin like mass transport, the eminently throw-away Sun newspaper, the excruciatingly dumbed-down Noel Edmunds TV show - and much more.” Hayek (57).

Most critics of Marxist economics believe in capitalism. Some of them like Cassidy, are happy to applaud Marx's analysis of where power lies in capitalist society but are opposed to overthrowing that society. However, it is possible to criticise some of Marx's views on capitalism while supporting his call to abolish it. It is true that working-class pursuit of its own self interest has so far led only to trade unionism, not socialism. As we have seen, Marx and Engels did offer to 'support any revolutionary movement against the existing society and political order of things.' They did not qualify this support by insisting that it be based on socialist/communist understanding rather than on mere physical reaction against a class of exploiters. They paid the price for this in disillusion when uprisings such as the Paris Commune failed to spark the introduction of classless society.Which brings us to the third theoretical issue of politics. Marx and Engels were spectacularly wrong in their prediction of when the communist revolution would take place. In 1845 Engels prophesied the end of capitalism by 1852–3, and he greeted the depression of 1847 in a way that leaves little doubt he believed it to be the death knell of capitalism (Hunt, 141). It is not a great crime to be guilty of over-optimism about when socialism will come (though it is unwise, to say the least, to set a target date for its achievement). What is much more worrying is the misplaced confidence Marx and Engels had in the workers' self education leading fairly rapidly to their adopting socialist ideas. Of course it may be that Marx and Engels actually equated self education with the process of becoming a socialist. But I think a more plausible explanation is that they were tinged with the idea, common among Trotskyists, some anarchists and others today, that the immediate steps to be taken by those who want revolutionary change are to encourage the workers to be 'active' in some way. Never mind that the 'activity' ('stop the closures', 'oppose the cuts', 'reclaim the streets', or whatever) is only defensive activity within the profit system—it is at least doing something and not just talking. One can imagine Marx and Engels poring over drafts of Capital and saying something like 'The workers will never understand all this stuff. What they need is something rousing but simple. Let's give them a Manifesto that has a few good slogans and includes a list of immediate demands.'

Perhaps the biggest difference between capitalism then and now is the enormous growth in the scope and pervasiveness of the mass media of communication and persuasion. And in the growth of hegemony, a concept not used by Marx and Engels, but one which is a logical extension of alienation, which they did recognize. Hegemony has different meanings, but the one most relevant to this discussion is class domination through the active participation of the subordinate class. In our daily activities, we as producers and consumers participate in creating the conditions and social relations that shape our lives. A practice is hegemonic to the degree that its structure is defined by elites, by centralized social structures, rather than being controlled by its users. The capitalism of the Marxist era was more openly class-divided and coercive than the capitalism of today. Then it was more obviously their system - now it is too often our system, if it is seen as a system at all. Marx and Engels were right to insist that 'the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself. They were no doubt sincere in urging members of the working class to educate themselves for the revolutionary task. But they failed to foresee the extent to which workers would educate themselves to run capitalism rather than overthrow it. This weakness leads us finally to what is probably the weakest element in the Marxist exposition: the nature of the socialist/communist society that is to replace capitalism. By refusing to write recipes for future cook shops, by failing to talk about the future society except in very general terms for fear of being dubbed 'idealist', they in fact signaled that the building of socialism - as distinct from the opposition to capitalism - was not high on their agenda. Yet for socialists the building of the new society, by spelling out what common ownership, democratic control, production solely for use, and free access mean as a practical alternative that people can support now, must be at the top of our agenda.

Paradigm to Social Development

There is no doubt that Marx and Engels gained a great deal of popularity in their own time - and since - by being openly on the side of the workers in their struggle for better wages and conditions. In the Communist Manifesto, their most persuasive and appealing call to revolutionary action, Marx and Engels leave no doubt about the breadth of their support for working class action “the communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing society and political order of things” (Marx and Engels, 34). The lack of socialist ideas among revolutionary movements such as the Paris Commune must have been a bitter pill for Marx and Engels to swallow, but it is right that they - and we - should do so. Marx and Engels had relatively little to say about the future, partly because they held the drawing up of blueprints for an ideal society to be the very essence of utopianism. Nevertheless, what they did say was usually positive and in line with their generally optimistic view of human nature and the capacity of workers to build a better, more equal and more truly human society than that of capitalism. In particular, Marx wrote in the Collected Works of the variety of useful and pleasurable work that would be available to people, in this well-known passage:

> In communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, to fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic (47).

On another page he summed up the same thought as follows: “In a communist society there are no painters but only people who engage in painting among other activities” (394). Commentators sympathetic to Marxism discuss his other ideas about the socialist future, sometimes pointing out that Marx was an idealist in his own way. For instance, (Kolakwski, 224), observes that the picture of a harmonious community, a society without conflict in which all human needs are satisfied, and so forth - all this can be found in Marx in similar formulations to those of the utopians. But socialism means more to Marx than a welfare society, the abolition of competition and want, the removal of conditions that make man an enemy to man: it is also, and above all, the abolition of the estrangement between man and the world, the assimilation of the world by the human subject' 'Communism, as envisioned by Marx, was to be "a society in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle", a society "in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all"… This was even more important than the material standard of living' (Cohen, 25). But some statements by Marx and Engels about the socialist/communist future seem to show that they were not entirely immune from a conception of that future still rooted in the capitalist past. Engels, arguably out of character with the bulk of his writings, let the following slip in one of his letters:

> We still lack the technicians, agronomists, engineers, chemists, architects, etc. But if worse comes to worst we can buy these just as well as the capitalists do; and if a stern example is made of a few traitors which are sure to crop up among this lot, then they will find it in their own interest to stop robbing us. But outside of such specialists, we can get along very well without the rest of the "educated people"… (Darl, 543).

Engels does seem to have suffered from a kind of inverted intellectual snobbery, a characteristic that is of doubtful value to a project designed to unite the whole of humanity: '… the "academically educated people" have far more to learn from the workers, all in all, than the latter have to learn from them' (Darl, 515).Some Marxist writing on the future socialist/communist society is concerned with what will happen, and what will be possible, in its early and later stages. A particular worry about scarcity of goods in the early stages led Marx to consider labour time vouchers or certificates: What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; and which is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birth-marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges. Accordingly, “the individual producer receives back from society - after the deductions have been made, exactly what he contributes to it. What he has contributed to it is his individual quantum of labour” (Darl, 15).

Two points may be deduced from the foregoing. One is that modern production is social, not individual. It is doubtful whether the value of the 'individual quantum of labour' could have been measured in Marx's time except in the crudest terms of time. It is even more doubtful whether such a measure could be made today. The second point is adequately dealt with in the Socialist Party (1978) publication of the article 'Labour time vouchers'. Marx made it quite clear that, if labour time vouchers were used in socialism, this would be a temporary measure resulting from the comparatively low level of technology. Today potential abundance resulting from improved technology has made the idea of labour time vouchers quite outdated. It will no doubt become even more outdated in future.Some evaluation, as well as straight reporting, of Marxist writing has been presented above. Here

we are to consider how far socialists today can usefully draw on the work of Marx and Engels, and in what ways we should frankly admit that their ideas are either now outdated or were misguided in the first place. There is no doubt that socialists should continue today, as in the past, to regard the immense sweep and authority of Marxist thought as extremely valuable to the task of replacing capitalism with socialism. Neither Marx nor Engels were specialists in the sense of concentrating on any one aspect of the socialist movement. They wrote, sometimes in a very detailed way, on economics but they were not primarily economists. They were interested in the history of humankind through all its stages of development from primitive communism to capitalism, but their history was not merely academic - it was for a revolutionary purpose.

Sometimes a writer sympathetic to the ideas of Marx and Engels can interpret them in a novel way, one that brings out the best in what they had to say and perhaps sees in their words a meaning that the original authors may not have intended but would very probably have agreed with. Communism puts an end to the division of life into public and private spheres, and to the difference between civil society and the state; it does away with the need for political institutions, political authority, and governments, private property and its source in the division of labour. It destroys the class system and exploitation; it heals the split in man's nature and the crippled, one-sided development of the individual… social harmony is to be sought not by a legislative reform that will reconcile the egoism of each individual with the collective interest, but by removing the causes of antagonism. The individual will absorb society into himself thanks to de-alienation, he will recognize humanity as his own internalized nature. Voluntary solidarity, not compulsion or the legal regulation of interests, will ensure the smooth harmony of human relations… the powers of the individual can only flourish when he regards them as social forces, valuable and effective within a human community and not in isolation. Communism alone makes possible the proper use of human abilities. This is communism/socialism in its most profound and all-embracing conception. Though it can be shown to relate to everyday life, now and in a future society that we can help to shape, it is a highly intellectual approach. We should not be afraid to combine it with a more emotive, more artistic approach, such as that of William Morris. But this is not the place to pursue that thought.

Conclusion

This hypothetical but hopefully not valueless question is necessary; Do we need a Marx and Engels today? The answer is mainly yes but partly no. We need people of the intellectual stature of Marx and Engels to help put across ideas. It would be splendid if we could publish a paperback edition of something like Capital, with an updated and critical account of the contemporary profit system. Less desirable would be a Communist Manifesto for the New Millennium, though one without immediate demands for the reform of capitalism could find a place in our list of publications. The ideas of Marx have never been more relevant than they are today. This is reflected in the thirst for Marxist theory at the present time. Alan Woods deals with the main ideas of Karl Marx and their relevance to the crisis we're passing through today. It is 130 years since the death of Karl Marx. But why should we commemorate a man who died in 1883? In the early 1960s the then Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson declared that we must not look for solutions in High gate cemetery. And who can disagree with that? In the aforementioned cemetery, one can only find old bones and dust and a rather ugly stone monument.

Even some bourgeois economists are being forced to accept what is becoming increasingly evident: that capitalism contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction; that it is an anarchic and chaotic system characterised by periodic crises that throw people out of work and cause social and political instability. The thing about the present crisis was that it was not supposed to happen. Until recently most of the bourgeois economists believed that the market, if left to itself, was capable of solving all the problems, magically balancing out supply and demand (the "efficient market hypothesis") so that there could never be a repetition of the crash of 1929 and the Great Depression. Marx's prediction of a crisis of overproduction had been consigned to the dustbin of history. Those who still adhered to Marx's view that the capitalist system was riven with insoluble contradictions and contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction were looked upon as mere cranks. Had the fall of the Soviet Union not finally demonstrated the failure of communism? Had history not finally ended with the triumph of capitalism as the only possible socio-economic system? But in the space of 20 years (not a long period in the annals of human society) the wheel of history has turned 180 degrees. Now the erstwhile critics of Marx and Marxism are singing a very different tune. All of a sudden, the economic theories of Karl Marx are being taken very seriously indeed. A growing number of economists are poring over the pages of Marx's writings, hoping to find an explanation for what has gone wrong.

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FRANCIS BACON'S CRITIQUE OF DEDUCTIVE METHOD: THE CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN MODERN SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY

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Abstract
Man's quest for a certain, reliable, truthful and fruitful knowledge is a universal problem. On the method of acquiring such knowledge, scholars are polarized. While some embrace deductive method, others like Rene Descartes and Francis Bacon strongly believe that deduction, especially Aristotle's syllogism, can not lead one to true knowledge and must not only be jettisoned, but must be replaced with inductive method. Although inductive method, according to Bacon, has its problems which emanate from man's natural inclinations (prejudices and preconceptions), he insists that through scientific and systematic induction based on empirical observation and rigorous experimentation, man can acquire true knowledge with which to unlock the secrets of nature for the benefits of mankind. This research adopts historical analysis in its attempt to expose Bacon's contribution to scientific methodology. The paper not only acknowledges the fact that Bacon's philosophy (of science) recorded in his *Novum Organum*, paved the way for modern scientific revolution (especially in the area of methodology), it equally regards Bacon's methodic input as the turning point in the praxis of modern science. However, this paper calls for a more holistic and flexible scientific method which complements Bacon's inductive method. Also, rather than dominate nature with the instrument of Bacon's new experimental induction, man should instead, use his knowledge of nature to care for it; for he is part of nature.

Keywords: Francis Bacon, Deductive Method, Scientific Induction, Modern Science.

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Introduction

The Englishman, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and the Frenchman, Rene Descartes (1596-1650) were the most influential Renaissance precursors of the seventh century scientific revolution. These two great philosophers tackled the problem of Knowledge; "how it was possible for a human being to possess a certain, reliable, truthful and usable knowledge of the world of nature" (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 155-6). Bacon and Descartes shared the skepticism of their time, and considered virtually all the beliefs of the preceding generations as worthless. They ridiculed the tendency of the modern men to rely on ancient books, especially the writings of Aristotle and other antique authorities for issues concerning the operations of nature. They criticized the earlier scholastic method of acquiring knowledge which they regarded as method of the "schoolmen." Bacon and Descartes had similar thoughts:

> They rejected medieval philosophy for being rationalistic and deductivistic; that is, for its procedure of starting with definitions and general propositions and from there(,) logically deducing further information about the particulars; this they saw as an erroneous method of discovering fruitful knowledge of nature (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 156).

However, Bacon and Descartes went beyond doubts and criticism to propose constructive programmes for the restructuring of knowledge. This qualified them to be precursors of the modern scientific revolution; although their approaches differ. If Modern Philosophy is taken to mean the philosophy from the Renaissance period (which flourished between fourteenth to sixteenth centuries) to the end of the nineteenth century, it seems more appropriate to regard Francis Bacon as the father of Modern Philosophy (of Science). Consequently, this paper concentrates on the contribution of Bacon to scientific method. Nevertheless, while Bacon is regarded as the father of Modern Philosophy in Britain, Descartes occupies that position in the continent of Europe (Omoregbe v-1).

Life and Works of Francis Bacon

Bacon was an English philosopher, lawyer, statesman, essayist and scientific methodologist. Traditionally, he was regarded as the first important figure in the history of British empiricism and in the development of the modern scientific world-view (Mautner 59). He was born in 1561 in London and equally lived in London. He studied at Cambridge University. "Though he greatly influenced the conception and direction of modern science, Bacon was not a scientist ... but a man of law by training and profession, a philosopher, essentially a public figure .... He later achieved his ambition when he became the Lord Chancellor of England under James I" (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 156). However, he lost his seat in the Parliament and retired to private life in 1621 after he was convicted for taking bribes in his official capacity as a judge. He died in 1626 (Butts 60; Omoregbe 1). Although Bacon's *Novum Organum* is said to be a book of great importance in the development of modern science and scientific method; he had planned to write a major work:

> *Instauratio magna*, but only parts of it were completed. One, *Dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* 1623 (On the dignity and growth of the sciences) was a revised version of *The Advancement of Learning* 1605 (the first major philosophical work written in English ...). The title of another part, the *Novum Organum* 1620 (The new Organon), gave a clear hint that predominant Aristotelianism ought to be superseded. Science should aim at

> collecting empirical data and use them for inductive generalization, instead of seeking explanation in terms of final causes (i.e. purposes) (Mautner 59).

Bacon's objective was "the total reconstruction of the sciences, arts and all human knowledge." His efforts at the reconstruction of knowledge were meant to be contained in his great book: *Instauratio Magna* (the *Great Instauration of Learning* or the *Great Renewal of Learning* or the *Great Plan for the Restoration of the Sciences to Their Dignity and Usefulness*). This book demanded for a total new start in science and civilization. The *Instauratio Magna* was to be divided into six parts, but unfortunately, only two parts were completed. Baccon's initial efforts were contained in the first part: *The Proficiency and Advancement of Learning* (1605) which serves as the introduction to the great book. It contains the need for a new science and it equally insists that such a novel science is possible (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 156). The second part, *Novum Organum* (the *New Method* or the *New Instrument* 1620) is the most completed part of the great book. *Novum Organum* is Bacon's highest credential or claim to being a philosopher of science. It embodies the analysis of the new scientific method, the new method or instrument as he calls it. This new method is the inductive method (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 157). Butts buttressed thus:

> The method of induction to be employed is worked out in detail in his *Novum Organum* (1620). This new logic is to replace that of Aristotle's syllogism, as well as induction by simple enumeration of instances. Neither of these older logics can produce knowledge of actual natural laws. Bacon thought that we must intervene in nature, manipulating it by means of experimental control leading to the invention of new technology. (60)

Inductive method as conceived by Bacon, "derives axiom from the senses and particulars and rises gradually by unbroken ascent to the most general axioms last of all." This, for Bacon, is the true way which is yet to be tested. This new way/method is founded on experimentation. Bacon's new method was put forward to supplant Aristotle's now considered barren or unfruitful for the acquisition of the knowledge of nature (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 157). Conscious of the significance and the boost this method will give to science and the role science could play in the life of mankind, Bacon gave momentum to it by analysing and defining this new science and its new methodology (although for some, Bacon was unaware of the future implications of his new method to science and mankind). Furthermore, Mautner (59) observed:

> In a simile, he likens the proper scientific method to that of bees, who collect systematically and erect a structure, in contrast to ants (i.e. EMPIRICS), who amass a disordered heap, and spiders (i.e. speculative metaphysicians), who spin beautiful webs that have no contact with reality. The aim of inquiry is practical: knowledge of nature gives us power over it.

The supposed part three of the great book was to be an encyclopedia (a collection) of craft lores and experimental facts. The social order that should result from applied science is depicted in Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627) (Butts 60). Here is described, the Bacon's Salomon's House – which is a fiction that portrays a perfect society where men enjoyed for the sake of their knowledge and control over nature. The Salomon's House forges co-operative endeavour that allows for the various kinds of minds to contribute equally to the progress of science:

> Salomon's House is the islands scientific research center, a scientific utopia (science fiction), a perfect society where men enjoyed because of their knowledge and command over nature. This research center contained different kinds of men, those who merely thought, these devising experiments, those analysing results and drawing conclusions as well as men who merely observe facts and performed experiments at the direction of others .... This is a kind of democratization of the scientific enterprise. In the scientific endeavour, there are people who collect facts and there are people who use them, but it does not take the same kind of mind to collect and to use; so all kinds of people are needed in the scientific endeavour... (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 162)

This contradicts the rationalistic enterprise which called for high intellectual powers. Bacon's *New Atlantis* prefigured the development of modern scientific communities. It is pertinent to note that Bacon equally wrote other works on natural history, natural philosophy and so on (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 157).

Bacon's Critique of Deductive Method

Bacon was of the view that all claims of knowledge before his time, especially science as practised in the medieval era, were doubtful because they were based upon wrong method of deduction. He vehemently attacked Aristotelian (deductive) syllogism. For Bacon, Aristotle's syllogism "is worse than useless since it can be used to confirm errors rather than establish truth because it is based on purely formal consistency rather than experience" (Omoregbe 2). Bacon strongly believed that the mind could perceive or interpret reality correctly and attain true knowledge that can bring relief to man. Again, in order to understand and control nature (which for Bacon is the purpose of knowledge), the deductive method must be jettisoned. One must adopt the inductive method which is based on empirical observation of particular things; unlike the deductive method (Aristotle's syllogism) which "does not start with observation of particular things but with general principles from which conclusions are drawn in purely formal way without reference to experience. It can therefore not prove any empirical truth and is of no practical use to man in his effort to understand and dominate nature" Omoregbe 2). Bacon's critique of both Aristotle's deductive method and induction by simple enumeration of instances is more pronounced in his discourse of the obstacles that affect the acquisition of true knowledge. These hinderances (false opinions, prejudices and preconceptions) are regarded by Bacon as idols.

The Four Idols

The supremacy of induction notwithstanding, Bacon warns that one must be careful with the method of induction. This is because there are obvious hindrances that affect the acquisition of knowledge of causal laws. These hinderances (in the form of false opinions and prejudices) tend to anticipate nature rather than explain it. Bacon labels these hinderances as Idols (Butts 60).

> To attain such true knowledge, the mind must rid itself of those prejudices, the proclivity, the tendency or disposition to error. In *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon cartooned and caricatured the prejudices besetting the human mind with the metaphorical name idols. He categorized four of these idols: Idols of the Tribe (Idola Tribus), Idols of the Cave or Den (Idola Specus),

> Idols of the Market Place (Idola Fori), and Idols of the Theatre (Idola Theatri). (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 157)

In other words, in our interpretation of experience, we have to guard against the influence of prejudices and preconceptions, for these can distort our interpretation of experience and mar our knowledge. These prejudices and preconceptions which influence and distort the interpretation of man's experience are what Bacon called *Idols* (Omoregbe 2).

Idols of the Tribe (Idola Tribus)

These are fallibilities that have their foundation in human nature itself (i.e., tribe or race of men). They are "natural mental tendencies, ... the impulse to read our own desires and needs into nature" (Butts 60). In other words, they are the natural subjective elements, preferences, biases and idiosyncrasies (in man) which the mind brings into perception that render objective interpretation impossible. "It is the tendency or disposition of the human mind to postulate more uniformity or regularity in nature than actually exists" (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 158). According to Omoregbe:

> The Idols of the tribe are certain tendencies in man which are obstacles to the search for true knowledge. There is, for example, the tendency to take things as they appear to the senses without taking the trouble to make further investigations into their real nature in order to find out whether they are really the way they appear to the senses. We cannot rely entirely on the senses because they are sometimes misleading and things should not be taken as they appear at first sight (2-3).

He continues; there is also the tendency to cling to what we believe already and to reject whatever seems to be contrary to these beliefs; the tendency to see things the way we want to see them; the tendency to see things as fixed and constant equally exists, whereas in reality, things are always changing. Lastly, there is the tendency to read finality into nature, and the tendency to take abstraction for reality (3). Since these subjective elements, which the mind brings into experience are *a priori*, native to our nature, anterior to perception, Bacon said; they ensue from the tribe or race of men. That is to say, "Idols of the Tribe are characteristics which all human share in common which interrupts and distort the objective perception and interpretation of reality" (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 158).

Idols of the Cave or Den (Idola Specus)

These are predispositions of particular individuals. "The individual is inclined to form opinions based on idiosyncrasies of education, social intercourse, reading, and favoured authorities" (Butts 60). Here, Bacon deliberately refers to Plato's Allegory of the Cave (*The Republic*, Bk VII, 514a). Buttressing this point, Obi-Okogbuo states that "every person has his own microcosm, some psychological wall erected around him, accidental circumstances, subjective experience, social status, private worlds..." (*Modern Science* 158). Mellone captures Bacon's expression thus: "... every individual has his own cave or den which intercepts and corrupts the light of nature" (283). Idols of the Cave therefore, refer not to the limiting disposition of the mind but rather to the limiting power of each individual's private world, environment, subjective experiences or social status. "They point to the unwisdom of the prisoners of their own private worlds or caves or dens. These individuals have distorted views of the world as a result of their own private world which colour their perception of reality" (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 158). Omoregbe summarizes: "Idols of

the cave are the errors peculiar to each individual, arising from his temperament, education or other factors that influence his judgment and views of things" (3). However, to eradicate the idols of the cave or den, says Obi-Okogbuo, "we need to constantly balance the influences of our micracosm(sic) with those of the general macrocosm" (*Idols of the Human Reason* 14-15).

Idols of the Market-Place (Idola Fori)

Bacon regards these idols as "the most potentially dangerous of all dispositions, because they arise from common use of language that often results in verbal disputes. Many words though thought to be meaningful, stand for nonexistent things; others, although they name actual things, are poorly defined or used in confused ways" (Butts 60). The idols of the market place, according to Omoregbe, "are errors due to the influence of language. The language in common use generally give fixed meanings to things as they are commonly conceived. But further investigation can show that the common notions expressed in language are inadequate or deficient. Language then becomes an obstacle to adequate conceptions" (3). For a better illustration, Bacon adopted the image of the market-place; He likened the 'intercourse and association' of men in society to that in the market-place and words to coins used in transactions. Just like counterfeit money; equivocal, obscure, vulgar or popular use of words conflict with the exact or denotative use and impedes or distorts understanding (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 158). Bacon further observed that although it is true that reason governs words, but it is equally true that words turn back and determine understanding. This ability of words to turn back and determine understanding, "has rendered philosophy and the sciences sophistical and inactive." This is one of Bacon's criticisms of previous learning. In solution to *Idola Fori*, Bacon admonished: "... in all controversies and disputations, to imitate the wisdom of the mathematician, in setting down in the beginning the definitions of our words and terms, ..." (Bacon qtd. in Harrison 353).

Idols of the Theatre (Idola Theatri)

These idols are as a result of the influence of received theories. They are various products of human imagination in the form of systems of thought, philosophies, various doctrines, dogmas, and theories which enjoy long tradition and authority. "The mind receives some of these systems and often perceives through them as spectacles such that they colour reality" (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 159). Similarly, according to Omoregbe, the idols of the theatre are the speculative philosophical systems of the past which are no better than stage plays representing unreal worlds created by man's imagination (3). In Bacon's words: "all these received systems are so many stage-plays, representing worlds of their own creation, after an unreal and scenic fashion" (Bacon qtd. in Mellon 284; qtd. in Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 159 and in *Idols of the Human Reason* 17). Bacon considered the ancient philosophies (of Plato and Aristotle), together with philosophies before him (scholasticism) as idols of the theatre. In fact, Bacon's important motive was to dismantle the authority of these classical thoughts, especially that of Aristotle. The only authority possessed by these antecedent theories (of Plato and Aristotle) is that they are ingenious verbal constructions. The purpose, therefore, of acquiring genuine knowledge does not depend on superior skill in the use of words (rhetorics) but rather, on the discovery of natural laws (Butts 60). Further, Bacon enumerated three kinds of false philosophies: "first, there is the sophistrical philosophy, the chief proponent of which is Aristotle. Second, there is the empirical philosophy based on few and obscure observations. Third, there is the superstitious

philosophy which introduces religion into philosophy, the chief representatives of which are the Pythagoreans and Plato" (Omoregbe 3).

Baconian Form and Scientific Induction: The Critical Juncture

As soon as the above idols are eliminated, the mind is consequently free to seek knowledge of natural laws based on experimentation. Bacon opines that demonstration via experience supersedes abstract demonstration. If the best kind of demonstration is that of experience, it follows, according to Bacon, that the best method is induction – which aims to discover the *forms* of things. It is pertinent to underscore that Bacon's conception of form is quite different from that of Aristotle, or form as understood by Plato. Bacon conceives form as "the law that governs a thing, the law that constitutes the nature of a thing" (Omoregbe 3-4). Butts clarifies:

> Bacon held that nothing exists in nature except bodies (material objects) acting in conformity with fixed laws. These laws are 'forms.' For example, Bacon thought that the form or cause of heat is the motion of the tiny particles making up a body. This form is that on which the existence of heat depends. What induction seeks to show is that certain laws are perfectly general, universal in application. In every case of heat, there is a measurable change in the motion of the particles constituting the moving body. (60)

In other words, the form of heat, "is the law of heat, the law that governs heat. To discover the form of heat therefore is to discover the law of heat, that is, the element that is essential to heat which if present there will be heat and if absent there will be no heat" (Omoregbe 4). Having understood what Bacon meant by form, the research now turns to the treatment of his procedure of scientific induction. Bacon presented two important stages of scientific induction: first, there must be observation of facts from which a working hypothesis is formed based on the observed facts. Secondly, "the hypothesis must be tested by further experimentation and observation" (Omoregbe 4). In other words, one must firstly look out for those cases where, "given certain changes, certain others invariably follow." In the above example with heat:

> ... if certain changes in the form (motion of particles) take place, heat always follows. We seek to find all of the 'positive instances' of the form that give rise to the effect of that form. Next, we investigate the 'negative instances,' cases where in the absence of the form, the qualitative change does not take place. In the operation of these methods(,) it is important to produce experimentally 'prerogative instances,' particularly striking or typical example of the phenomenon under investigation. Finally, in cases where the object under study is present to some greater or lesser degree, we must be able to take into account why these changes occur. In the example, quantitative changes in degrees of heat will be correlated to quantitative changes in the speed of the motion of the particles (Butts 60).

The above explains, for instance, why "light can be present and yet heat will be absent as in the case of the moon and the stars, meaning that light is not the form of heat otherwise, where there is light there should be heat" (Omoregbe 4). The implication of Bacon's scientific induction is that instruments need to be invented to measure changes in degree. Technological advancement is the byproduct of this implication – "Such inventions are of course the hoped-for outcome of scientific inquiry, because their possession improves the

lot of human beings" (Butts 60-61). Above all, Bacon's elevation of scientific experimental induction over and against the traditional method of deduction – which led to technological inventions, is said to be the critical juncture. In other words, it is the turning point vis-a-vis the revolution of modern science with special reference to scientific (inductive) method.

Bacon's Methodic Vision

The motive behind Bacon's critique of traditional (deductive) learning "was to wipe the slate of human knowledge clean and start all over again using a new method of assembling and explaining facts." This new method, Bacon believed, will surely unlock the secrets of nature. In other words, "Bacon hoped to make the mind surface clean and smooth so as to supply it with new and adequate instruments with which it could observe and understand the universe accurately." He hoped to achieve this by freeing science from entrenched traditional learning; "through separating scientific truth from the revealed truth of theology; through fashioning a new philosophy of science based upon a new method of observation and a new interpretation of nature" (Obi-Okogbuo 160). In order to achieve his lofty dream of correcting, restructuring or reorganization of traditional learning, Bacon employed two possible ways: organization of method and organization of men. The latter has been delt with earlier in the discourse of Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627). The interest here, is on the former. Bacon began his project by setting forth a new method for the acquisition of knowledge; "a new scientific method that would help to 'penetrate into the inner and further recesses of nature,'" against the speculations of the ancients. According to Bacon (Boas 252-53):

> ... experiment was the one truly necessary ingredient of scientific endeavour; without it ... natural philosophy was no better than metaphysical speculation and the scientists no better than the metaphysician who spun webs of *a priori* hypothesis out of his own inside. With experiment, the scientist possessed the key he needed to unlock the secrets of nature....

Due to the idols (false opinions, prejudices and preconceptions) associated with the sense perception, it is not surprising that Bacon advocated for experimentation so as to correct the errors of observation. This is because he believed that "the subtlety of experiments is far greater than that of sense itself." It must be pointed out that Bacon's idea of experiment and his method of observation relied too much upon pure induction; that is, "upon the possibility of deriving 'laws' from the simple observation of the particulars, and their series and order." Therefore, his method involves "enumerating observations and visible events and drawing conclusions from these observations by induction." Bacon's notion of the scientific method "was essentially experimental, qualitative and inductive" (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 161); hence, he distrusted the deductive logic of mathematics. The method at hand ensures a union between the theoretical interpretation and the practical control of nature; a true and lawful marriage of the empirical and rational faculties. Any asunder to this holy marriage throws the affairs of the human family into commotion. When experience has learned to read and write, says Bacon, better things are expected. "Bacon's vision was of science as a product of methods of *reasoning* from experience, methods which present scientific claims as conclusions rationally drawn from empirical data and thus as rationally justified conclusions" (Ndianefoo 21). In the final analysis, Bacon wished for a scientific experimental method that will bring about "a natural philosophy that would produce 'a line and race of inventions that may in some degree subdue and overcome the necessities and miseries of humanity.' A natural science that would endow and benefit man's life; bring about a more

true and real illumination concerning causes and axioms than is hitherto attained" (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 161).

Conclusion: Critique of Bacon's Philosophy of Science

Amongst the important shortcomings of Francis Bacon's efforts was his inability to clearly grasp the modern scientific meaning of hypothesis. "He thought that by looking at enough facts, a hypothesis would spontaneously suggest itself. On the contrary, modern scientists often first have a hypothesis before examining facts. This hypothesis acts as a guide in the choice of the facts to inspect." Secondly, Bacon underestimated the relevance of mathematics to science. Again, for the fact that Bacon was not a professional scientist, he was not abreast with the scientific progress of his time, and therefore, had a naive idea of scientific experimentation. Contemporary Environmental Ethicists like Aldo Leopold, have criticized Bacon's end or purpose of induction – which is to understand and dominate nature. This research agrees with Environmental Ethicists who opine that the purpose of knowledge or understanding of nature is not necessarily to dominate nature for man's benefits, but to care for nature, because man is part of nature. Therefore, to exploit or destroy nature is a form of self destruction. The above criticisms notwithstanding, Bacon extricated the grip of scholastic thought on learning and thus, provided the impetus for modern scientific revolution (Obi-Okogbuo, *Modern Science* 162). Finally, despite Bacon's efforts, this paper calls for a more holistic and flexible method; an inductive method that opens its door for mathematical deduction – an empirical (experiential) and rational (experimental) induction; a systematic induction, and not mere empirical unsystematic induction (i.e., induction by simple enumeration of instances). More importantly, scientists must understand that scientific method is related to and determined by the type of object under investigation. The implication is that scientific method is bound to change or vary according to the scientific subject. Scientific method properly understood refers to the totality of the procedures the scientist employs in his discovery of natural uniformities and explanation of these uniformities (Ndianefoo 23).

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