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Article

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### DISTRIBUTIVE AND CORRECTIVE JUSTICE IN ARISTOTLE: A PANACEA FOR ADDRESSING INEQUALITY AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION IN NIGERIA

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#### Abstract

Persistent inequality, inequitable resource allocation, and systemic injustice remain central challenges within the Nigerian political system. Despite constitutional commitments to equity and social welfare, disparities in wealth distribution, access to public resources, and public appointments continue to undermine social cohesion and political legitimacy. This article interrogates these challenges through the lens of Aristotle's concept of justice, focusing specifically on his distinction between distributive and corrective justice as articulated in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. Distributive justice, grounded in proportional equality and merit, provides a normative framework for the fair allocation of resources, offices, and honors in accordance with contribution and common good. Corrective justice, by contrast, addresses injustice arising from wrongdoing by restoring balance through legal redress and accountability. Employing a philosophical-analytical method, the study examined how these two complementary forms of justice illuminate structural flaws in Nigeria's systems of economic distribution, public appointments, and governance. It argued that the neglect of distributive justice fosters inequality and exclusion, while weak application of corrective justice perpetuates corruption, impunity, and abuse of power. By integrating Aristotle's insights with Nigeria's socio-political realities, the article revealed that distributive justice can serve a preventive role in reducing inequality, while corrective justice plays a remedial role in addressing violations of law and public trust. The paper concluded that a reappropriation of Aristotelian justice, suitably adapted to contemporary democratic contexts, offers a compelling ethical framework for promoting equity, accountability, and sustainable national development in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Aristotle, Distributive Justice, Corrective Justice, Inequality, Nigerian Political System.

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## Introduction

Inequality and inequitable resource allocation remain enduring features of Nigeria's political and socio-economic landscape. Despite abundant natural and human resources, the Nigerian state continues to grapple with stark disparities in wealth distribution, uneven development across regions, and limited access to basic social goods such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Scholars have observed that these inequalities are not merely accidental but are often structurally embedded in governance practices, fiscal federalism, and political patronage systems (Iheonu & Nwachukwu, 2021). The concentration of resources and opportunities in the hands of a few has contributed to widespread poverty, social resentment, and a crisis of political legitimacy, raising fundamental questions about justice and fairness in the Nigerian polity. Economic distribution in Nigeria is characterized by extreme income inequality, regional imbalance, and elite capture of public wealth. Oil revenues, for instance, have not translated into broad-based development but have instead intensified corruption and distributive injustice (Watts, 2015). Similarly, public appointments and access to political office are frequently shaped by ethnic affiliations, nepotism, and patron-client networks rather than merit and competence. Such practices undermine social justice, weaken public institutions, and erode citizens' trust in the state (Joseph, 2014). These realities highlight a deeper moral and philosophical deficit in governance, suggesting the absence of a coherent ethical framework guiding distribution and rectification of injustice.

While these challenges are often analyzed through economic, legal, or political lenses, there is increasing recognition of the relevance of classical political philosophy in illuminating contemporary governance crises. Classical thinkers provide normative frameworks that interrogate not only how societies function, but how they ought to function. Political philosophy, in this sense, supplies moral standards for evaluating institutions, laws, and practices (Strauss, 1959). Engaging Aristotle's theory of justice allows for a critical reassessment of Nigeria's distributive mechanisms and corrective institutions, offering ethical criteria against which existing practices can be judged and reformed. Aristotle occupies a central place in the history of moral and political philosophy, particularly in his systematic treatment of justice in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. For Aristotle, justice is both a moral virtue and the organizing principle of political life, inseparable from the pursuit of the common good (Aristotle, *NE* V). His distinction between distributive justice, concerned with the fair allocation of goods, honors, and offices, and corrective justice, concerned with rectifying wrongs and restoring balance, remains one of the most influential conceptual frameworks in the philosophy of justice (Kraut, 2002). Unlike modern egalitarian theories, Aristotle emphasizes proportional equality, merit, and social purpose, making his thought particularly relevant to debates on governance and public responsibility.

The central problem addressed in this study is the apparent disconnect between Nigeria's formal commitment to justice and equality and the persistent realities of inequality, exclusion, and impunity. Existing distributive practices often ignore merit and proportional fairness, while corrective mechanisms especially judicial and anti-corruption institutions frequently fail to restore justice or deter wrongdoing. The absence of an integrated ethical vision linking fair distribution with effective correction of injustice has deepened socio-economic disparities and weakened public confidence in governance. This study therefore asks whether Aristotle's distinction between distributive and corrective justice can provide a coherent philosophical framework for diagnosing and addressing these challenges within the Nigerian political system. The primary objective of this study is to critically examine

Aristotle's concepts of distributive and corrective justice and explore their applicability to issues of inequality and resource allocation in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Clarify Aristotle's understanding of distributive and corrective justice;
- ii. Analyze patterns of inequality, public appointments, and economic distribution in Nigeria through an Aristotelian lens;
- iii. Assess the extent to which Nigeria's institutions reflect or deviate from principles of proportional fairness and rectification of injustice; and
- iv. Propose a normative framework for governance grounded in Aristotelian justice.

The study adopts a philosophical analytical methodology, relying on critical textual analysis of Aristotle's primary works, supported by contemporary interpretations in political and moral philosophy. This is complemented by a contextual application of Aristotelian concepts to Nigeria's socio-political realities. Rather than offering empirical measurement, the approach is normative and interpretive, aimed at evaluating institutions and practices against ethical standards of justice (Beauchamp, 2019).

### **Conceptual Clarifications and Theoretical Framework**

**Concept of Justice:** Justice occupies a foundational place in political philosophy as the normative principle governing social order, institutional legitimacy, and moral evaluation of human relations. From classical to contemporary thought, justice has been understood as the standard by which benefits and burdens are allocated and wrongs are rectified within a political community. Contemporary political philosophers such as John Rawls conceptualize justice primarily as fairness, emphasizing impartiality, equal basic liberties, and fair equality of opportunity (Rawls (2015). Rawls' framework, though modern and contractarian, reflects a longstanding philosophical concern with structuring social cooperation on morally acceptable terms. Beyond Rawls, political theorists like critique purely institutional or procedural accounts of justice and argue for a comparative, realization-focused approach that emphasizes actual social outcomes. Sen's perspective broadens the understanding of justice to include lived experiences of deprivation, exclusion, and inequality. Similarly, Martha Nussbaum links justice to human dignity and capabilities, stressing those political arrangements must enable individuals to flourish according to their essential human capacities. Within African political philosophy, scholars like Claude Ake and Segun Gbadegesin argue that justice must be understood in relation to communal values, moral responsibility, and social harmony. Justice, in this sense, transcends legal correctness and becomes an ethical demand rooted in shared human values (Ake, 2022). These perspectives converge on the idea that justice is both a moral ideal and a practical criterion for evaluating political institutions.

Justice is often articulated through the interrelated notions of fairness, equity, and moral rightness. Fairness, as emphasized by Rawls, requires that social rules be impartial and that like cases be treated alike. However, fairness alone may be insufficient in contexts marked by deep historical and structural inequalities (Rawls 2015). This is where equity becomes philosophically significant. Equity introduces sensitivity to context, social disadvantage, and unequal starting positions, allowing justice to respond to concrete human conditions rather than abstract equality (Nussbaum, 2016). Legal philosophers argue that justice as moral rightness must be grounded in ethical reasoning that evaluates not only procedures but also outcomes. In the Nigerian context, Nwabuoku and Gasiokwu contend that justice must harmonize legal norms with moral conscience, especially in adjudication

and governance. Justice, therefore, functions as a moral compass that integrates fairness, equity, and ethical correctness in both law and public policy (Nwabuoku and Gasiokwu 2022).

**Inequality and Resource Allocation in Nigeria:** Inequality is a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing economic, political, and social dimensions. Economic inequality refers to disparities in income, wealth, access to employment, and basic social services. Political inequality manifests in unequal access to political power, representation, and decision-making processes. According to Richard Joseph, Nigeria's political system is characterized by prebendalism, where public office is treated as a means of private accumulation rather than public service (Joseph 2019). This entrenches elite dominance and undermines democratic accountability. Social inequality, on the other hand, is reflected in disparities linked to ethnicity, gender, region, and class, which shape life chances and perpetuate structural disadvantage (Adebayo & Oloruntoba, 2020). Philosophers such as Nancy Fraser emphasize that inequality must be understood as both distributive (economic) and recognitional (social and political). Applying this framework to Nigeria reveals how misrecognition, exclusion, and marginalization reinforce material deprivation, thereby compounding injustice. Resource allocation in Nigeria operates through complex distributive mechanisms including fiscal federalism, revenue allocation formulas, budgetary processes, and political negotiations. Scholars argue that Nigeria's centralized control of resources, particularly oil revenues, has fostered distributive injustice and regional imbalance (Suberu and Onyishi 2020). Revenue-sharing arrangements often privilege political influence over need, merit, or proportional fairness. From a normative standpoint, Thomas Pogge insists that distributive institutions must be evaluated by how they affect the least advantaged members of society. In Nigeria, however, studies by Odeyemi show that public expenditure patterns frequently fail to address basic social needs, leading to deficits in healthcare, education, and infrastructure. This raises profound philosophical questions about the moral legitimacy of existing distributive practices and their alignment with principles of justice (Suberu and Onyishi 2020).

**Aristotelian Ethical and Political Framework:** Aristotle's conception of justice offers a virtue-based framework that integrates ethics and politics. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle presents justice as the "complete virtue" because it governs relationships between individuals within the political community (Aristotle, *NE* V). Contemporary Aristotelian scholars like Richard Kraut and Jonathan Barnes emphasize that for Aristotle, justice is not merely rule-following but the cultivated disposition to act rightly toward others. Modern virtue ethicists like Alasdair MacIntyre reaffirm that Aristotelian justice is inseparable from moral character and communal practices. Justice, in this sense, becomes a habit of ethical reasoning oriented toward fairness, proportionality, and social harmony (MacIntyre 2016). This moral grounding makes Aristotelian justice particularly relevant for societies like Nigeria, where legal formalism often operates without corresponding ethical integrity. In Aristotle's political philosophy, justice is intrinsically linked to the common good (*koinon sumpheron*). In the *Politics*, Aristotle argues that the purpose of the polis is not merely survival but the realization of the good life (*eudaimonia*) for its citizens. Distributive justice, for Aristotle, operates on the principle of proportional equality, meaning that goods and offices should be allocated according to merit, contribution, and civic virtue rather than arbitrary equality or brute power. This proportional framework, as interpreted by Christopher Shields avoids both extreme egalitarianism and oligarchic privilege. Corrective justice complements this by rectifying imbalances caused by wrongdoing, ensuring that injustice does not become

entrenched (Shields 2021). By grounding justice in virtue, proportionality, and the common good, Aristotle offers a comprehensive ethical and political framework that transcends procedural legality. Applied to Nigeria, this framework provides a powerful philosophical lens for critiquing inequality, reforming resource allocation, and reorienting governance toward moral legitimacy and social flourishing.

### **Aristotle's Concept of Distributive Justice**

**Definition and Philosophical Foundations:** In Aristotle's ethical and political philosophy, distributive justice (*dikaíosynē dianemētikē*) concerns the fair allocation of shared goods such as wealth, honor, and public office within the political community. In Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines distributive justice as operating according to proportional equality, not strict numerical equality. Justice, for Aristotle, does not mean giving everyone the same share, but giving each person what is due in proportion to relevant criteria (Aristotle, *NE* V). Contemporary Aristotelian scholars such as Richard Kraut and Fred Miller emphasize that proportional equality reflects Aristotle's broader teleological worldview, according to which social goods must be distributed in a way that promotes the purpose (*telos*) of the political community namely, the common good. Distribution is therefore a moral act, guided by reason and oriented toward collective flourishing, rather than a mechanical or purely egalitarian exercise. Unlike modern liberal egalitarian theories that prioritize equal shares or equal opportunities, Aristotle's distributive justice is context-sensitive and value-laden. As Shields explains, proportional equality presupposes judgment about which differences among persons are morally relevant. This evaluative dimension makes Aristotelian distributive justice both ethically demanding and politically consequential. Central to Aristotle's theory is the idea that distribution must be based on merit (*axia*), contribution, and worth. However, Aristotle acknowledges that different political systems define merit differently. Democracies emphasize freedom and equality, oligarchies emphasize wealth, and aristocracies emphasize virtue (Aristotle, *Politics* III). For Aristotle himself, moral and civic virtue provides the most just basis for distribution because they directly contribute to the flourishing of the polis. Recent interpretations by Susan Collins and Jonathan Barnes clarify that Aristotle does not equate merit with inherited privilege or economic advantage (Shields 2021). Rather, merit refers to the capacity to serve the common good through excellence of character and civic responsibility. This distinction is crucial for contemporary applications, as it guards against the misuse of "merit" to justify entrenched inequality or elite dominance. From a normative perspective, MacIntyre (argues that Aristotelian merit must be understood within social practices that cultivate virtue and shared standards of excellence. Applied to modern states like Nigeria, this raises important questions about how merit is defined, measured, and institutionalized in public life.

**Equality, Proportionality, and the Common Good:** Aristotle famously distinguishes between arithmetical (mathematical) equality and geometrical (proportional) equality. Mathematical equality treats all persons identically, while geometrical equality distributes goods in proportion to relevant differences (Aristotle, *NE* V). Distributive justice, Aristotle argues, must follow geometrical proportion because political communities consist of unequal individuals contributing differently to the common good. Philosophers emphasize that this distinction allows Aristotle to avoid both unjust favoritism and rigid egalitarianism. Justice requires balance, not sameness. Proportional distribution acknowledges human diversity while maintaining moral order within the political system. In contemporary political philosophy, Amartya Sen echoes this Aristotelian insight by arguing that equality must be

assessed in terms of what people are able to do and be, rather than what they possess in identical quantities. This convergence suggests that Aristotle's proportional framework remains relevant for modern debates on justice and inequality. For Aristotle, unjust equality treating unequal persons as equals can be as harmful as unjust inequality. Justice, therefore, lies in appropriate differentiation, not uniformity. This view challenges contemporary policy approaches that rely exclusively on numerical equality without addressing structural disadvantages or differences in contribution. At the same time, Aristotle warns against extreme inequality, which undermines civic friendship (*philia*) and destabilizes the political community (*Politics* V). This balance between equality and proportionality underscores Aristotle's commitment to the common good. Justice is not about maximizing individual advantage but about sustaining a political order in which all citizens can flourish according to reason and virtue.

**Relevance to Economic Justice in Nigeria:** Nigeria's persistent economic inequality raises profound questions of distributive justice. Despite substantial national wealth, access to public goods such as healthcare, education, housing, and infrastructure remains uneven. From an Aristotelian perspective, this pattern represents a failure of proportional justice. As Fred Miller notes, distributive injustice arises when political institutions allocate goods based on power or privilege rather than contribution to the common good (Miller 2017). Applied to Nigeria, Aristotle's framework demands that public resources be distributed in ways that enhance social welfare and civic participation, particularly for marginalized populations. Aristotle's distributive justice provides a normative lens for evaluating these arrangements. Proportionality, in this context, would require balancing population, need, contribution, and developmental disparities rather than privileging political dominance. As Thomas Pogge argues, distributive institutions are unjust if they foreseeably perpetuate severe deprivation, even when formally legal (Pogge 2016). Extreme wealth inequality undermines Aristotle's vision of civic friendship and political stability. Aristotle warns that vast economic disparities divide the polis into hostile camps of rich and poor, leading to injustice and conflict (*Politics* IV–V). Contemporary Nigerian scholars such as Adebayo and Oloruntoba echo this concern, linking inequality to insecurity, social unrest, and weakened democratic legitimacy. An Aristotelian approach to distributive justice thus supports policies aimed at poverty reduction, social inclusion, and equitable access to opportunities not as acts of charity, but as requirements of justice grounded in the common good (Pogge 2016).

**Distributive Justice and Public Appointments:** Public appointments represent a critical arena for distributive justice, as offices and positions of authority are among the most valuable goods distributed by the state. Aristotle explicitly includes public office among the objects of distributive justice (*NE* V). For him, offices should be allocated based on merit and capacity to serve the common good. From an Aristotelian standpoint, unjust appointments damage both individual character and institutional integrity. MacIntyre argues that when practices lose their internal goods and standards of excellence, they become corrupt. This insight applies directly to public service recruitment and promotion in Nigeria, where compromised meritocracy undermines efficiency, accountability, and public trust. Ethically, distributive justice demands transparent criteria, fair competition, and commitment to excellence in public service. As Susan Collins notes, Aristotle views justice in office-holding as essential to sustaining the moral fabric of political life. Applied to Nigeria, this implies that reforming appointment processes is not merely an administrative task but a moral imperative central to just governance (Collins 2020).

## Aristotle's Concept of Corrective Justice

**Meaning and Scope of Corrective Justice:** Aristotle's concept of corrective justice (*dikaioσynē diorthōtikē*) addresses injustice arising from interactions between individuals, particularly where one party suffers loss due to another's action. In Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes corrective justice from distributive justice by noting that it does not concern the allocation of common goods but the rectification of unfair gain or loss in transactions (Aristotle, *NE V*). Corrective justice operates in both voluntary transactions (such as contracts, loans, and exchanges) and involuntary transactions (such as theft, fraud, assault, and corruption). The corrective justice is fundamentally restorative rather than punitive. Its aim is to re-establish equality between parties by removing unjust advantage and compensating unjust loss. The moral focus is not on the character of the offender but on restoring fairness in relationships disrupted by wrongdoing. This makes corrective justice particularly relevant to legal systems concerned with redress, compensation, and accountability. Corrective justice seeks to restore arithmetical equality, unlike distributive justice which relies on geometrical proportion. Aristotle uses the metaphor of a balance scale to illustrate this function: where one party has more and another less due to injustice, corrective justice removes the excess and restores balance (Aristotle, *NE V*). This restoration is essential for maintaining trust and stability within the political community. Philosophers argue that corrective justice reflects Aristotle's broader ethical commitment to fairness as rational order. Wrongdoing introduces moral disorder, and correction restores equilibrium. In modern terms, this aligns with restorative and compensatory approaches to justice that prioritize fairness and social repair over retribution alone.

**Corrective Justice, Law, and Accountability:** For Aristotle, law is the primary institutional mechanism through which corrective justice is enforced. Law functions as reason without passion, providing objective standards for judging wrongdoing and determining appropriate remedies (*Politics III*). Corrective justice thus depends on a legal framework capable of identifying injustice, assigning responsibility, and restoring fairness. Contemporary legal philosophers emphasize that justice as rectification requires impartial institutions, procedural fairness, and moral integrity. Where legal systems fail to correct injustice, wrongdoing becomes normalized, and public confidence in governance erodes. This insight resonates strongly with Aristotle's warning that unjust laws and weak enforcement undermine the moral foundation of the polis. The judiciary occupies a central role in Aristotle's account of corrective justice. Judges are tasked with applying the law to particular cases, ensuring that unjust gains are reversed and losses compensated. Aristotle describes judges as "living justice" (*empsychos dikē*), underscoring their ethical responsibility to embody fairness and reason (Aristotle, *NE V*). Susan Collins and Melissa Lane argue that judicial integrity is essential for sustaining corrective justice in contemporary states. Judges must exercise practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) to interpret laws equitably, especially in complex cases where rigid application may perpetuate injustice (Collins 2020). In contexts like Nigeria, where judicial independence is frequently contested, the Aristotelian emphasis on moral judgment and impartiality remains profoundly relevant.

**Application to Corruption and Abuse of Office in Nigeria:** Corruption represents a paradigmatic case of corrective injustice. It involves the illicit transfer of public resources into private hands, resulting in unjust gain for officials and unjust loss for society. Corruption is a moral and institutional failure that distorts distributive processes and undermines social

trust. From an Aristotelian perspective, corruption violates corrective justice because it disrupts the moral balance between public office and public good. Aristotle insists that offices exist for the sake of the polis, not private enrichment (*Politics* V). When officials exploit their positions, corrective justice demands restitution, legal sanction, and moral condemnation. As Alasdair MacIntyre observes, practices lose their internal goods when external rewards such as wealth and power dominate, leading to systemic corruption (MacIntyre (2016)). Corrective justice requires not only punishment but restoration. The recovery of stolen public funds aligns directly with Aristotle's rectificatory logic: unjust gains must be removed and returned to their rightful owner the community. Philosophically, Thomas Pogge contends that justice is violated when institutions allow foreseeable harm to persist through weak enforcement. Applied to Nigeria, failure to recover stolen assets perpetuates injustice and signals moral tolerance of wrongdoing. Aristotelian corrective justice therefore supports robust asset recovery mechanisms, proportionate sanctions, and public accountability as ethical imperatives rather than optional policy choices (Pogge 2016). For corrective justice to function effectively, institutions of accountability courts, anti-corruption agencies, audit bodies, and civil society must be independent, transparent, and ethically grounded. Aristotle emphasizes that stable political systems depend on just institutions capable of correcting wrongdoing and maintaining moral order (*Politics* IV). Contemporary governance scholars like Larry Diamond and Chukwudi Ibeanu argue that Nigeria's accountability institutions suffer from political interference, selective enforcement, and weak civic oversight. These deficiencies undermine corrective justice by allowing injustice to persist without remedy (Diamond and Ibeanu 2020) . An Aristotelian framework highlights the need for institutional reform rooted in virtue, rule of law, and commitment to the common good. Corrective justice, when properly institutionalized, serves not only as a response to wrongdoing but as a deterrent against future injustice. By restoring balance, enforcing accountability, and reaffirming moral norms, Aristotle's concept of corrective justice offers a compelling ethical foundation for combating corruption, abuse of office, and impunity in Nigeria.

### **Integrating Distributive and Corrective Justice in the Nigerian Context**

In Aristotle's ethical and political framework, distributive and corrective justice is not isolated principles but complementary dimensions of a coherent moral order. Distributive justice plays a preventive role by ensuring that social goods wealth, honors, and public offices are allocated fairly according to proportional equality. When distributive justice functions properly, it reduces the likelihood of social resentment, exclusion, and conflict (Aristotle, *Politics* IV). Contemporary Aristotelian scholars argue that unjust distributions are often the root causes of political instability and moral decay. In societies where public resources are inequitably allocated, citizens are more likely to perceive the political system as illegitimate, thereby increasing incentives for corruption, violence, and civil disobedience. From this perspective, distributive justice is not merely allocative but structurally preventive it forestalls injustice by addressing inequalities before they crystallize into systemic crises (Miller (2017)). They also contend that persistent regional, economic, and social inequalities have fueled grievances and weakened national cohesion. An Aristotelian approach suggests that equitable distribution of public goods and opportunities would reduce the moral and political conditions that give rise to corruption, insurgency, and ethnic polarization.

While distributive justice seeks to prevent injustice, corrective justice performs a remedial function by addressing injustices that have already occurred. Aristotle conceives corrective justice as the moral mechanism through which imbalance created by wrongdoing

is rectified (*Nicomachean Ethics* V). It restores fairness by reversing unjust gains and compensating unjust losses. Philosophers like Christopher Shields and Susan Collins emphasize that corrective justice is essential where distributive systems fail or are deliberately subverted. In Nigeria, where distributive injustices frequently result from corruption, abuse of office, and selective enforcement of law, corrective justice becomes indispensable for restoring moral order (Shields 2021). As Jeremy Waldron argues, the legitimacy of a political system depends not only on fair rules but on effective remedies when those rules are violated (Waldron 2019). Thus, distributive justice reduces the incidence of injustice, while corrective justice ensures that violations do not become normalized. Together, they form a mutually reinforcing ethical framework necessary for just governance. Corrective justice finds its institutional expression primarily in the judiciary and anti-corruption agencies. Aristotle assigns judges a central moral role as arbiters of fairness and restorers of balance (*NE* V). Judicial reforms strengthening independence, procedural integrity, and ethical accountability are thus essential for effective corrective justice. Similarly, anti-corruption agencies must move beyond symbolic prosecutions toward consistent enforcement, asset recovery, and institutional reform. As Rotimi Suberu notes, corrective justice loses credibility when applied selectively or politically (Suberu 2018). Aristotle's integration of ethics and politics implies that governance reform must be morally grounded. Alasdair MacIntyre emphasizes that institutions function justly only when animated by shared moral purposes and internal standards of excellence. Governance reforms in Nigeria must therefore address not only structural inefficiencies but also ethical deficits cultivating integrity, responsibility, and public-spiritedness among office holders. Embedding distributive and corrective justice into governance practices requires ethical leadership, civic education, and institutional cultures oriented toward the common good rather than personal gain.

**Justice- Social Stability, Nexus in National Development:** Justice is a foundational condition for social trust and political legitimacy. Aristotle argues that rightly political communities endure only when citizens perceive institutions as just and oriented toward shared flourishing (*Politics* V). Political theorists like Francis Fukuyama and Nancy Fraser affirmed that trust in institutions is closely linked to perceptions of fairness, inclusion, and accountability. In Nigeria, persistent injustice has eroded trust in government, contributing to voter apathy, civil unrest, and skepticism toward state authority. Scholars like Joseph argue that restoring legitimacy requires visible commitment to both fair distribution and effective correction of wrongdoing. Aristotelian justice provides the normative foundation for rebuilding this trust (Joseph (2019). Ethnic conflict, regional agitation, and social unrest in Nigeria are often rooted in perceived distributive and corrective failures. Groups that experience systematic exclusion from resources and political power frequently resort to protest or violence as alternative means of redress (Adebayo & Oloruntoba, 2020). Aristotle warns that injustice breeds faction (*stasis*), threatening political stability (*Politics* V). Integrating distributive and corrective justice offers a pathway to addressing these grievances ethically. Fair allocation of resources mitigates marginalization, while effective corrective mechanisms provide non-violent avenues for redress. As Sen argues, justice-oriented institutions reduce the need for conflict by expanding people's sense of inclusion and agency (Sen 2017). Ultimately, Aristotle's integrated vision of justice underscores that national development is not merely economic growth but the moral and political flourishing of the community. In the Nigerian context, distributive and corrective justice together

constitute indispensable ethical foundations for social stability, political legitimacy, and sustainable development.

**Adapting Aristotelian Ideas to Nigeria's Socio-Political Realities:** To remain philosophically relevant, Aristotelian justice must be adapted rather than transplanted wholesale into Nigeria's contemporary socio-political environment. Scholars such as Richard Kraut and Christopher Shields emphasize that Aristotle's theory is best understood as a flexible ethical framework rather than a rigid institutional blueprint. Its core insights proportionality, moral purpose, and orientation toward the common good can be reinterpreted within modern democratic and constitutional structures (Collins 2020). In Nigeria, adaptation requires integrating Aristotelian justice with constitutionalism, human rights norms, and democratic accountability. Fukuyama and Diamond argue that modern governance must combine ethical leadership with strong institutions capable of enforcing rules impartially (Collins 2020). Aristotelian corrective justice, for instance, can be aligned with rule-of-law reforms and independent anti-corruption agencies, while distributive justice can inform ethical budgeting and inclusive economic policies. Moreover, adaptation must be sensitive to Nigeria's postcolonial realities, including weak institutions, legacy of military rule, and pervasive socio-economic inequality. Claude Ake contends that African political philosophy must engage indigenous realities rather than impose abstract ideals detached from lived experience. An adapted Aristotelian framework would therefore emphasize civic education, ethical leadership, and institutional reform as mutually reinforcing components of justice (Ake (2018)). Ultimately, while Aristotle's theory cannot fully resolve the complexities of a modern pluralistic state, its normative depth offers critical resources for ethical reflection. When critically reinterpreted and contextually applied, Aristotelian justice remains a valuable philosophical lens for diagnosing injustice, guiding reform, and reorienting Nigerian governance toward equity, accountability, and the common good.

## **Conclusion**

This study has examined Aristotle's concepts of distributive and corrective justice and their implications for the Nigerian political system. Distributive justice, grounded in proportional equality, emphasizes the ethical allocation of public goods, honors, and resources according to merit, contribution, and the common good (Aristotle, *NE V*; Miller, 2017; Shields, 2021). Corrective justice, by contrast, functions to restore balance in cases of wrongdoing, rectifying voluntary and involuntary injustices, and ensuring fairness in interpersonal and institutional transactions (Aristotle, *NE V*; Collins, 2020; Kraut, 2018). Applying these Aristotelian principles to Nigeria, the study highlighted persistent challenges of inequality, uneven resource distribution, patronage, corruption, and weak institutional accountability (Suberu, 2018; Joseph, 2019; Adebayo & Oloruntoba, 2020). Distributive justice can play a preventive role by ensuring equitable allocation of national resources, inclusive public appointments, and social programs that mitigate marginalization (Odeyemi, 2019; Eme & Onyishi, 2020). Corrective justice, in turn, offers a remedial mechanism for addressing corruption, abuse of office, and violations of citizens' rights, emphasizing restitution, sanctions, and the strengthening of accountability institutions (Waldron, 2019; Pogge, 2016).

The study also critically evaluated the limitations of Aristotelian justice in pluralistic modern states, noting tensions between merit-based allocation and affirmative policies designed to redress historical inequalities (Nussbaum, 2016; Sen, 2017). Nevertheless, when adapted to Nigeria's socio-political realities, Aristotle's framework provides a normative ethical lens for evaluating and reforming governance practices. Aristotle's thought remains

highly relevant to Nigerian governance because it integrates ethics with politics and prioritizes the common good as the ultimate aim of justice. By emphasizing proportionality, moral purpose, and civic virtue, Aristotle offers tools for assessing and guiding both resource distribution and institutional accountability in a context of systemic inequality and social diversity (Miller, 2017; MacIntyre, 2016; Collins, 2020). The study demonstrates that distributive and corrective justice is complementary mechanisms. Distributive justice mitigates structural inequalities and promotes fairness in allocation, while corrective justice restores moral and legal balance when wrongdoing occurs. Together, they provide ethical and practical guidance for reducing economic disparity, addressing social exclusion, and reinforcing public trust and political legitimacy in Nigeria (Shields, 2021; Suberu, 2018; Adebayo & Oloruntoba, 2020). Aristotle's framework of justice when critically adapted and applied offers a robust ethical foundation for addressing inequality, corruption, and governance deficits in Nigeria. By integrating distributive and corrective justice, policymakers and scholars can promote fairness, accountability, and sustainable national development in ways that honor both moral principles and practical realities.

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