JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT

ISSN: 3093-0618



Vol. 2, No. 3, September, 2026

A Publication from the Department of Philosophy
University of Uyo, Nigeria

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: August 10, 2026 **Accepted**: September 01, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026

Citation: Udoudoh, Francis P. & Udoudoh, Juliana F. (2026). "Leadership at Project Construction Sites: A Case to Ponder." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 1-8.

Article **Open Access**

LEADERSHIP AT PROJECT CONSTRUCTION SITES: A CASE TO PONDER

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Abstract

There has been this contentious argument on, who among the professionals within the project construction industry, should serve as project manager or site supervisor. This research discussed the attributes that qualifies someone to leads a team with different skills working at project construction sites. It distinguished between leadership and management, while outlining the various styles of leadership in places of work. The research designs adopted were explorative and argumentative. These methods required gathering relevant information and data from existing literature, visits to, and interactions with workers at project sites. The concept guiding this study revolved around capacity building as Nigerian government has formulated several policies with the view to enhancing capacity building for self-reliance in the construction industry. The research outlined different stages involved in project construction from conception period to completion of the construction, and the role of each professional. The professionals are estate surveyors and valuers, town planners, architects, land and quantity surveyors, and engineers with different areas of specialization. The research showed that estate surveyors and valuers, architects and civil engineers are capable to lead other workers (skilled and unskilled) at project construction sites based on their academic training and professional attainment. It concluded that civil engineers, particularly structural engineers, are better qualified to serve as sites supervisors of large engineering concerned such as high rise buildings and highway with bridges. It recommended a collaborative approach for effective project conceptualization, construction and maintenance for durability.

Keywords: Leadership, Project, Construction Site, Professional, Site Managers/Supervisor.

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Introduction

Construction of buildings and other projects are carried out on a daily basis particularly in major urban centres. The execution of these projects requires huge sum of money in the form of equity capital or borrowed funds. The projects are carried out in different phases, ranging from conceptualization of the project to site acquisition, preparation of development plans, construction, provision of basic infrastructure to the structure, occupation and management/maintenance for durability (Udoudoh, 2024). To attain a successful project execution and timely delivery, professionals who are experts in various aspects of the projects are consulted by the project initiator or financier. The professionals include town planners, estate surveyors and valuers, land surveyors, architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, amongst others. The issue that often comes up at project sites is '*who should lead other professionals as project manager or supervisor to execute the project?* The duties and responsibilities of these professionals are outlined in the various statutes and bye-laws that established and regulate their practices. This paper is poised to critically examine the concept of leadership and different styles of leadership in practice. It shall also look at the laws and statutes, the responsibilities and operations of various professionals at various stages of project construction in order to determine who is adequately qualified to lead other staff at project sites.

Conceptual Clarification: What is Leadership?

Leadership is the act of influencing the activities of others in order to achieve organizational goals. It is a relationship between the leader and the led. There must be people to be led (Akpakpan and Okpota, 2021 & Segun, 2022)**.** This implies that leaders are those at the helm of affairs with the ability and authority to influence others within the system to attain set out goals. Essentially, people tend to follow those whom they perceive that can provide a means of achieving their own desires, wants and needs. This suggests that leadership does not exist in a vacuum. Thus, the primary essence of leadership is followership. The concept guiding this study revolves around capacity building of workers which requires regular training in order to meet with the current expectations at project sites. Basically, the concept of leadership is an interesting one, particularly in the building construction industrial that uses both human and material resources for the attainment of set goals. It requires the project leader to exhibit a certain level of ability that would enable him to change the directions of his other workers at site to work with confidence and zeal. It is a process where one person exerts certain levels of influence over other workers to execute and accomplished an envisaged task for the benefits of the industry. In this manner, it entails getting workers to understand and believe in the investor's vision to attain certain goals. The essence is to lift workers' visions to an expected performance standard. This is pertinent as execution of tasks at sites is guided by the rules and requirements set by the project development authority. Where the leaders are not able to exercise the set rules and requirements, subordinates may work at less than expected capacity, which is just enough to satisfy the requirements to hold onto the jobs (Udoudoh, 2026). Going by this view, leadership can be seen as the sum total of the leader having direct working relationship with his subordinate staff. The processes cut across effective communication, ability to motivate every worker, and manage conflicts toward achieving organizational goals. The question that often come to fore is: *Is leadership synonymous to management?* The difference between leadership and management is that while a leader focuses on people, a manager focuses on the system and structure of the organization. According to Egbenta (2012), management is one form of activity that no living creature can avoid. It involves

commanding, directing, planning and co-ordinating of staff of the organization, among other responsibilities; whereas, leadership applies diplomacy in the realization of organizational goals. It is in this perspective that leadership is seen as a visible aspect of management with the potential of transforming the workforce into a willing team with appropriate synergy to collectively actualize determined corporate objectives (Udoudoh, 2026). It is through effective leadership that organizations' management achieves success.

Styles of Leadership

In the context of this research, we observed that different leaders often adopt various leadership styles based on their personalities, experiences, and the demands placed upon the university. Leadership styles refer to the pattern of thinking, feeling and behaviour that a leader uses to deal with his staff and situations. It is conceived by Segun (2022) as the behaviours or processes that leaders portray or participate to enable extraordinary things to be done in or by an organization. The leadership styles are unique as each leader's operations depend on his academic and professional background, situation and inclined paradigm; thus, the reason why some leaders thrive while others flounder. For instance, professional qualifications have become the paramount indices of leadership, as success depends on how leadership styles mesh with their teams and organizational cultures. Scholars including Segun (2022), Okeleke and Agwoje (2023), Uyanga (2025) and Udoudoh (2026) have identified several styles of leadership in working organizations to include autocratic, transactional, transformational, distributed, contingency, managerial, ethical and laissez-faire. Autocratic leadership style is also called authoritative leadership as the authority and decision making are embodied in the leader. The leader imposes his authority on the organization without deriving his legitimacy from the governed. It is whatever the leader says that must be done. An autocratic leader reinforces his leadership by preventing staff members from taking part in decision making. This clearly shows that the subordinates have little or no input in decision making. To achieve his goal, he uses threats, the authority of his position and the vigour of his own personality. Invariably, an autocratic leader places more emphasis on task performance than on sharpening subordinate staff orientation towards achievement of set goals.

Transactional leadership which is otherwise called democratic or participating leadership is rooted in contingent rewards and management-by-exception, which delves into the nitty-gritty of daily university operations. Okeleke and Agwoje (2023) observed that the primary purpose of doing these is to ensure that tasks assigned to staff are executed efficiently, and processes adhered to strictly. Here, the leader consults with his subordinates to get their opinions before taking decisions on any matter. He uses good human relations in dealing with staff of all ranks and cadres. The democrat is flexible, accessible and sympathetic in order to give them opportunity to express their views when necessary. In doing this, they can also develop creative skills, potentials and contribute in formulating goals for the organization. Despite this concessionary approach, such a leader has the right to take any decision and issue instructions based on the collective decision earlier taken. Transformational leadership style is characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence which emerges as a powerful force for inspiring and motivating stakeholders within the construction environment. It is very ideal in situations that require strategic change since consideration is given to the behaviour of the leader and not his personality. Why? Such leaders are morally driven, credible and have self-confidence, that is, trusting in their ability to adapt to the needs of followers and requirements of the situation. The leaders with these abilities are

more successful because they encourage, inspire and motivate followers to innovate, create change that will help grow and shape the success of the organization (Dan-Baridom, 2021). It is necessary to mention that in transformational leadership, authority and influence are not necessarily assigned to people occupying formal positions, but to whoever is perceived would be able to accomplish specific tasks.

Managerial leadership focuses on the functions, tasks or behaviour of the leader, with the assumption that if these functions are effectively carried out, it will facilitate the work of others in the project site. The leaders who perform duties as managers are responsible for policy implementation, maintenance of site stability, and dealing with the day-to-day routines of the job such as allocating, providing and distributing construction material and financial resources, maintaining effective communication with stakeholders, and mediating conflicts, amongst other responsibilities. These leaders also see to steady progress of work in line with the stipulated requirements and timely delivery of completed project. Contingency leadership relates to how leaders respond to the unique development of work at site and attendant problems encountered while executing the work. In practice, leaders are faced with a variety of circumstances and situations which require different management styles to effectively tackle them. Uyanga (2025) pointed out that the ability to match the appropriate leadership style with the situation at hand is the hallmark of the contingent leadership style. This becomes necessary on realization that leadership within public project site is not a one-size-fits-all paradigm when compared to smaller private project site; rather, it is a diverse spectrum of styles and approaches that leaders need to adopt based on their personalities, experiences, and demands placed upon them by the investor.

Laissez-faire leadership which is also called ideographic leadership comes to play when a clear-cut agreement is established with employees as to what should be done, when, and with what resources. Here, the leader is very tolerant while the subordinates are free to do what they want. In fact, the leader exercises no authority but simply displays a symbolic role. As pointed out by Segun (2022), the impact of laissez-faire leaders on followers are conflicting roles or responsibilities, lack of decision making or accountability, and lack of direction for the future. It is considered as a destructive leadership behaviour as it is a correlated with role conflicts, role ambiguity, and conflicts with co-workers. Basically, the responsibilities for decision making and discipline remain with the project owner and/or financier, but the leader needs to carry out periodic monitoring of progress of each staff performance without losing sight on staff needs to attain expected goal. Strategic leadership is an extremely complex but critical form of leadership. It involves skilful deployment of managerial creativity, problem-solving proficiency, and forward-thinking strategic vision to propel both team members focus towards the achievement of long lasting objectives. This signifies the place of heads of units as they should be able to anticipate, envision, maintain flexible attitude to think logically in order to empower others to initiate changes that will create a viable future necessary for the project attainment. Essentially, strategic leadership provides the vision, direction, purpose, and context for the growth and success of any organization.

Capacity Building at Construction Site vis-a-vis Leadership

As earlier stated, the concept guiding this study revolves around capacity building. This is what leadership entails especially at construction site because of the demand of professionals. It is the process that includes all forms of training and education to create an ensemble of capabilities, abilities and potentials for growth and development. It involves the

development of knowledge, skills and attitudes of workforce in areas of policy making, design, development and enforcement to enhance effective project execution. It is aimed at establishing sufficient manpower that can boost effective execution of desired project from the available land and human resources. It focuses at understanding the interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral nature of construction systems and the need to produce a capable workforce that can deliver the project at within the available budget and at expected time (Udoudoh, 2018, Omuaru, 2018).

Over the years, government has been formulating several policies with the view to enhancing the capacity building for self-reliance. The first major attempt by the Nigerian government at capacity building was the establishment of Nigerian Railway Corporation Training School in the early 1900's. The School trained apprentices in trades under electrical, fitting, fabrication, woodworks and machines. This School was also engaged in conducting training for its own technicians as well as those sent to it from corporate organizations like Savannah Sugar Company, Bacita; Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy, and recently National Directorate of Employment (Usanga, 2018). This was followed by the establishment of Technical Schools and Colleges nationwide, including Yaba College which is now Yaba College of Technology; College of Arts, Science and Technology in the erstwhile three regions of Nigeria. The one at Enugu later became the Enugu Campus of University of Nigeria in 1962, amongst others. These colleges were established with the primary goal of training middle level manpower to grow Nigerian scientifically and technologically for the overall national economy. Of recent, are the Polytechnics and Universities of Technology which are empowered to trained high level manpower for the construction and engineering industries. These Colleges, Polytechnics and Universities have Schools or Faculties of Environmental Sciences/Technology that train students for the building/construction industry.

Professionals in the Construction Industry

The construction industry requires the consortium of trained and experienced professionals to carry out diverse aspects of activities in order to execute any project. The professionals include, though not limited to, Estate Surveyors and Valuers, Urban and Regional Planners, Architects, Land Surveyors, Quantity Surveyors, Engineers (civil, structural, electrical), and many others who perform their services in accordance to legal framework. Other workers who carried out the actual project construction at sites are masons, carpenters, iron benders, painters, amongst others. A clear delineation of the different stages of development and understanding of how each stage affects the other is fundamental to a successful project execution (Udoudoh, 2024). An error in any stage of the development process may lead to risk that may affect the entire project.

Table 1: Stages of Project Development and required Professionals

S/N	Stages of Development	Activities	Professionals/Other Workers Required
1.	Site Acquisition	Scouting for suitable site	i) Estate Surveyors and Valuers ii) Estate Agents
2.	Preparation of Development Plans	i) Land Surveying ii) Preparation of building plans iii) Approval of building plans iv) Issuance of C-of-O	i) Land Surveyors ii) Architects iii) Builders iv) Town Planners v) State Governor
3.	Sourcing of Finance	Consulting mortgage/financial	i) Estate Surveyors & Valuers

		institutions for funding	ii) Financial Experts
4.	Building Construction	i) Excavation and pouring of foundation ii) Blockwork and Roofing iii) Finishing	i) Contractors ii) Engineers/Builders iii) Bricklayers (Masons) iv) Carpenters v) Iron benders vi) Painters
5.	Provision of Estate Infrastructure	Provision of access roads, electricity, water and security at Site	i) Town Planners ii) Electrical Engineers iii) Plumbers
6.	Estate Management	i) Letting and Leasing ii) Estate maintenance iii) Rent collection	i) Estate Surveyors & Valuers ii) Architects iii) Estate Agents

Source: Udoudoh (2016 & 2024)

Table 1 outlined the professionals saddled with responsibilities of carrying out various tasks at each stage of the construction. Their respected statutory functions include;

Estate Surveyors and Valuers: These are the principal experts and custodians of land policies. Their other responsibilities include:

i. Preparation of feasibility and viability appraisals for projects;
ii. Sourcing/arranging of mortgage finances for real estate developers;
iii. Management of land, Sales and letting of properties
iv. Coordinating the activities of other professionals in the course of land acquisition and development.

Urban and Regional Planners: Their professional services include:

i. Preparation of structural plan for areas, new towns or settlements.
ii. Preparation of block plans and site plans
iii. Carrying out of site investigation, processing of planning approvals.

Architects

The scope of services architects provide includes:

i. Preparation of preliminary and full concept designs with particular regard to clients' requirement, site information, planning and statutory regulations and budget;
ii. Directing, monitoring and coordinating the construction works to ensure adherence to specifications;
iii. Managing the defects liability period;
iv. Drawing of building and master plans.

Land Surveyors

The primary responsibility of a land surveyor is carry out the review of land using technical equipment to ensure its suitability for project construction or any other development. This can be broken down into:

i. Carrying out of surveys to determine perimeter, layout, topography, details control and aerial.
ii. Locate the direction and length of lines, boundary lines, then set out the lines and grades needed for the construction of buildings, roads, dams, and other structures.

Quantity Surveyors

The quantity surveyors carried out the following functions:

i. Preparation of contract documentations, bills of quantities and schedule of materials and plans.
ii. Preparation of contract administration and project management
iii. Handling of project evaluation, analysis, reporting and measurement of variations.
iv. Advising on tendering procedure, contractual arrangements and materials procurement.
v. Facilities Management which involves rehabilitating, restoring and refurnishing works on damage done to existing building and structures.

Engineers

Civil, structural and electrical engineers handle the various engineering activities pertaining to building, structural and electrical drawings and installations of buildings and other structures on and below the earth's surface.

Who leads at Project Construction Sites?

There have been serious arguments on who, among the professionals in the building industry, should heads the workforce at project construction sites. This question occurs frequently and required being answered. After a thorough examination of the major responsibilities of professionals within the industry, we found out that Estate Surveyors are trained on choice of suitable sites for envisaged project after a comprehensive conduct of feasibility and/or viability appraisal. They are also better equipped in advising on how to raise funds for project and effective maintenance and overall management of the completed project for durability. The architects drew the building or project plans in collaboration with structural engineer who designed the structures (columns and beams) and electrical installations for the project. The engineers, particularly civil and structural engineers, are better qualified to serve as sites supervisors of large engineering concerned such as high rise buildings and highway with bridges. The quantity surveyors prepare bills of quantities, schedule of materials and plans for project execution. They handle project evaluation, analysis, reporting and measurement of variations, in addition to tendering procedure and materials procurement (See Table 1 above). To achieve the goal of project, the architect has to design the project with proper consideration to developer's budget, available resources and prospect of maintenance for sustainability. This requires working in closed contact with the quantity surveyor, facility manager, maintenance/service engineers to realize an economically viable project. Project evaluation is supposed to be a continuous process throughout the development period to ensure that the developer's dream is achieved. This is an aspect of performance measurement which requires periodic evaluation of investment in order to determine that at each stage, the target objectives are being achieved. It is an exercise performed by estate surveyors and valuers.

Conclusion/Recommendations

This research has shown that every professional within the construction industry has great responsibilities in the execution of project; but estate surveyors and valuers, architects and civil engineers are capable to lead other workers (skilled and unskilled) at project construction sites by their academic training and professional attainment. However, there is serious need for collaborative approach for effective project conceptualization, construction and maintenance for durability. Collaborative engagement is increasingly recognized as a critical component of effective decision-making and operations in project construction sites. The involvement of relevant professionals, who are stakeholders in projects development, ensures a high level success in project execution. The integration of stakeholders' inputs can enhance the relevance and applicability of diverse skills within complex systems where

multiple interests intersect. Experience has revealed a concerning trend where different professionals tactically failed to engage the services of other stakeholders at construction sites under their supervision. The consequences of this selfish action are the many uncompleted or collapsed projects that littered the length and breadth of Nigeria. Collaborative engagement of relevant professionals in decision-making process and actual project execution can significantly influence job performance, timely delivery and overall project satisfaction to the project owner and overall economic attainment within the construction industry. This would certainly reduce those technical risks associated with construction sites that often lead to project collapse during and after delivery.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: August 11, 2026 **Accepted**: September 02, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026

Citation: Olanipekun, ILateef O.; Dzingirai, Mufaro; Adnan, Sirage A. & Chepchumba, Belinda (2026). "Inclusive Leadership Training as a Strategy for Mitigating Singlism in the Lagos State Civil Service." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 9-27.

Article **Open Access**

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP TRAINING AS A STRATEGY FOR MITIGATING SINGLISM IN THE LAGOS STATE CIVIL SERVICE

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Abstract

This study examined the role of inclusive leadership in mitigating singlism and promoting workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service. Specifically, it investigated the effect of inclusive leadership training on employees' perceived singlism, assessed the influence of managerial inclusive leadership behaviours on workplace inclusion, and examined the relationship between workplace inclusion and employees' organisational commitment. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study targeted managerial staff in selected Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) of the Lagos State Civil Service. A total of 308 questionnaires were administered using proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques, of which 291 valid responses were retrieved and used for the analysis. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, simple linear regression, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that inclusive leadership training significantly affected perceived singlism among employees ($R^2 = 0.821$, $p < 0.05$). Managerial inclusive leadership behaviours also significantly influenced employees' perception of workplace inclusion ($R^2 = 0.823$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, workplace inclusion exhibited a significant positive relationship with employees' organisational commitment ($r = 0.701$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that inclusive leadership is an effective strategy for reducing singlism, fostering workplace inclusion, and enhancing employees' organisational

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commitment. The study recommended that the Lagos State Civil Service institutionalise regular inclusive leadership training and strengthen policies that promote fairness, respect, and equal opportunities irrespective of employees' marital status.

Keywords: Inclusive leadership, singlism, workplace inclusion, organisational commitment, Lagos State Civil Service.

Introduction

The contemporary workplace has become increasingly diverse, requiring organizations to adopt leadership approaches that promote fairness, equity, and inclusion. Although considerable attention has been devoted to gender, ethnicity, disability, and cultural diversity, discrimination based on marital status remains relatively underexplored. One manifestation of such discrimination is singlism, which refers to the stereotyping, marginalization, or unfair treatment of individuals because they are unmarried. Singlism often manifests through unequal workload allocation, exclusion from important organizational decisions, limited promotion opportunities, and assumptions that single employees are more available for work than their married counterparts. Such practices undermine employee well-being, organizational justice, and productivity, thereby necessitating leadership interventions that foster inclusive work environments (Korkmaz et al., 2022). Inclusive leadership has emerged as one of the most effective leadership approaches for managing workforce diversity in modern organizations. Inclusive leaders encourage openness, respect individual differences, promote equitable treatment, and ensure that every employee feels valued and has opportunities to contribute to organizational success. Research has shown that inclusive leadership enhances psychological safety, employee engagement, workplace spirituality, innovation, and job performance, particularly within public sector institutions where collaboration and service delivery are essential (Ke et al., 2022; Backhaus & Vogel, 2022). Across Africa, governments are implementing reforms aimed at strengthening diversity, equity, and inclusion within public institutions. In Ghana, studies have emphasized that inclusive workplaces require organizational cultures that eliminate stereotyping and provide equal opportunities for all categories of employees, including marginalized groups (Nkansah-Dwamena, 2022). Similarly, studies conducted in Ghanaian public organizations demonstrate that effective leadership significantly improves employee performance, organizational commitment, and service delivery (Donkor et al., 2022).

In Nigeria, public sector reforms have increasingly emphasized digital transformation, merit-based management, and improved human resource practices. Nevertheless, workplace discrimination arising from personal characteristics, including marital status, continues to receive limited scholarly and policy attention. Within many Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), single employees are frequently perceived as having fewer family responsibilities and are therefore expected to undertake additional assignments, longer working hours, or more frequent transfers. These assumptions may create feelings of exclusion, reduce job satisfaction, weaken organizational commitment, and ultimately affect employee performance. Developing managers' inclusive leadership competencies is therefore critical for addressing unconscious bias, promoting fairness, and strengthening employee engagement within the Nigerian civil service. The Lagos State Civil Service represents an important component of Nigeria's public administration system and plays a strategic role in policy implementation and public service delivery. As workforce diversity continues to increase, managers require training that equips them with the

knowledge and skills to recognize unconscious bias, value employee differences, and create psychologically safe workplaces where employees are evaluated based on competence rather than marital status. Evidence from international studies indicates that leadership development programmes focusing on inclusion improve organizational effectiveness, employee trust, innovation, and performance (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Ke et al., 2022). Despite growing international scholarship on inclusive leadership, empirical studies examining how leadership training can mitigate singlism within African public sector organizations remain scarce. Existing research has focused predominantly on gender, disability, ethnicity, and cultural diversity, with limited attention devoted to discrimination based on marital status, particularly within the Nigerian civil service. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining how training managers in inclusive leadership can mitigate singlism in the Lagos State Civil Service. The findings are expected to contribute to leadership theory, human resource development, diversity management, and public sector policy while providing evidence-based recommendations for building more inclusive workplaces in Nigeria and across Africa.

Despite increasing global attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), workplace discrimination based on marital status (singlism) remains one of the least examined forms of organizational bias, particularly within public sector institutions (Ocran, 2022). Employees who are unmarried are frequently stereotyped as being more available for work, assigned disproportionate workloads, excluded from key decision-making processes, or overlooked for promotion because of assumptions regarding their personal commitments. Such discriminatory practices undermine perceptions of fairness, employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, ultimately reducing individual and organizational performance (Korkmaz et al., 2022). In Africa, efforts to strengthen inclusive workplaces have gained momentum; however, empirical evidence suggests that structural discrimination and exclusion continue to hinder the realization of equitable employment practices. In Ghana, recent studies have demonstrated that workplace inclusion remains constrained by organizational cultures and institutional structures that perpetuate subtle forms of discrimination and unequal opportunities (Dampson, 2022; Ocran, 2022). Although Nigeria has introduced public sector reforms aimed at improving leadership effectiveness, accountability, and service delivery, there is limited empirical attention to how managers can address marital-status discrimination through inclusive leadership development. Existing Nigerian research has focused predominantly on ethical leadership, organizational performance, and governance, with little consideration of singlism as a workplace challenge. Furthermore, while studies from Europe, North America, and Asia consistently report that inclusive leadership improves employee engagement, psychological safety, innovation, and job performance, few have examined whether training managers to adopt inclusive leadership behaviours can effectively mitigate singlism in African public organizations (Ke et al., 2022; Korkmaz et al., 2022). Consequently, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding the role of inclusive leadership training in reducing singlism within the Lagos State Civil Service. Addressing this gap will provide evidence-based recommendations for leadership development, workplace inclusion, and human resource policies that promote fairness, equity, and improved public sector performance.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was aimed at investigating how building inclusive leadership through managerial training can mitigate singlism in the Lagos State Civil Service. The specific objectives were to:

i. examine the effect of inclusive leadership training on reducing perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service;
ii. assess the influence of managerial inclusive leadership behaviours on employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service; and
iii. examine the relationship between workplace inclusion and employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Inclusive Leadership Training and Perceived Singlism

Inclusive leadership training has become an important organizational intervention for equipping managers with the competencies needed to create equitable and respectful workplaces. Rather than focusing solely on compliance with diversity policies, contemporary leadership development programmes emphasize self-awareness, unconscious bias reduction, empathy, inclusive communication, and equitable decision-making. These competencies enable managers to recognize subtle forms of discrimination and foster environments where employees feel valued regardless of their personal characteristics (Bourke et al., 2023). Leadership training is particularly relevant in addressing workplace biases that are often embedded in organizational culture. One such bias is singlism**,** whereby unmarried employees experience stereotypes, exclusion, or unequal treatment because they are perceived to have fewer family responsibilities. Although empirical research on singlism remains limited, studies on workplace inclusion suggest that managers who receive structured diversity and inclusion training are better able to challenge stereotypes, reduce discriminatory behaviours, and promote equitable treatment among employees (Rezai et al., 2023). Evidence from Ghana also demonstrates the importance of leadership in creating inclusive workplaces. Nkansah-Dwamena (2022) found that workplace exclusion in Ghana is often reinforced by organizational practices and managerial attitudes, arguing that leadership development is essential for eliminating discrimination and fostering equal employment opportunities. Similarly, Oppong, Bannor, and Serpa (2022) observed that unequal power relations and discriminatory workplace practices remain prevalent across many African organizations, highlighting the need for managers to receive training that promotes fairness and inclusion.

From a global perspective, organizations increasingly invest in diversity and inclusion training because inclusive leadership has been associated with higher employee engagement, trust, collaboration, and organizational performance. Nguyen et al. (2023) argue that inclusion initiatives are most effective when leadership training is integrated into organizational strategy rather than implemented as isolated human resource programmes. Likewise, Mukupa et al. (2023) contend that workplace inclusivity requires strategic leadership capable of embedding inclusion into organizational culture, policies, and daily managerial practices. Despite these developments, empirical evidence from Nigeria remains scarce. Recent Nigerian studies have concentrated on transformational leadership, ethical leadership, and organizational performance, with limited attention devoted to inclusive leadership training as a strategy for addressing subtle workplace discrimination based on marital status. Furthermore, no known empirical study has investigated whether training managers in inclusive leadership can reduce employees' perceptions of singlism within the Lagos State Civil Service. This gap justifies the present study, which seeks to determine whether inclusive leadership training can serve as an effective mechanism for mitigating singlism and promoting equitable treatment in the Nigerian public service.

Managerial Inclusive Leadership Behaviours and Workplace Inclusion

Managerial inclusive leadership behaviours have become increasingly important in fostering workplace inclusion within both public and private organizations. Inclusive leadership extends beyond supporting diversity initiatives; it involves leaders demonstrating openness, accessibility, fairness, active listening, respect for individual differences, and equitable treatment of employees. These behaviours create an environment where employees feel psychologically safe, valued, and accepted regardless of their personal characteristics or social identities. Consequently, employees develop stronger perceptions of workplace inclusion, characterized by a sense of belonging, participation, and equal access to organizational opportunities (Younas et al., 2023; Kuknor et al., 2023). Workplace inclusion refers to employees' perceptions that they are respected, supported, involved in organizational activities, and treated fairly in decision-making processes. Recent studies suggest that managerial behaviour is one of the strongest predictors of employees' feelings of inclusion because managers directly influence communication, recognition, participation, and access to career development opportunities. When managers demonstrate inclusive behaviours, employees are more likely to express ideas freely, collaborate with colleagues, and develop stronger organizational commitment and citizenship behaviours (Qi et al., 2023). Evidence from Ghana reinforces the significance of leadership behaviours in promoting inclusive workplaces. Donkor, Segbenya, and Ofosuhene (2023) found that supportive, directive, and participatory leadership behaviours significantly enhanced organizational citizenship behaviour among employees across both public and private organizations. Their findings suggest that leaders who encourage employee participation, provide support, and recognize individual contributions cultivate inclusive work environments that improve employee attitudes and behaviours. Likewise, Nkansah-Dwamena (2022) observed that inclusive organizational cultures within African workplaces depend largely on leaders' willingness to eliminate discrimination, encourage participation, and ensure equal opportunities for all employees.

From an international perspective, research consistently demonstrates that inclusive leadership behaviours positively influence employee outcomes through workplace inclusion. Çetinkaya and Yeşilada (2022) reported that inclusive leaders promote innovative work behaviour by empowering employees and strengthening leader–member relationships. Similarly, Li (2022), in a comprehensive meta-analysis, concluded that inclusive leadership enhances employee performance, voice behaviour, and innovation by fostering psychological safety and inclusion. These findings suggest that managerial behaviours promoting fairness, openness, and accessibility are critical mechanisms through which inclusive workplaces are created. Although leadership and employee performance have received considerable scholarly attention in Nigeria, empirical research specifically examining managerial inclusive leadership behaviours as predictors of workplace inclusion remains limited. Existing studies have focused primarily on transformational, ethical, and transactional leadership, with little emphasis on how managers' inclusive behaviours shape employees' perceptions of inclusion within public sector organizations. Furthermore, there is a paucity of studies investigating this relationship in the Lagos State Civil Service. This gap provides the justification for the present study, which seeks to determine whether managers' inclusive leadership behaviours significantly enhance workplace inclusion among civil servants.

Workplace Inclusion and Organizational Commitment

Workplace inclusion has become a critical organizational strategy for improving employee attitudes and organizational effectiveness. It refers to the extent to which employees perceive that they are respected, valued, treated fairly, and provided equal opportunities to participate in organizational activities regardless of their demographic or personal characteristics. An inclusive workplace promotes belongingness, participation, collaboration, and psychological safety, enabling employees to contribute fully to organizational goals. Scholars argue that employees who perceive a high level of inclusion are more likely to develop stronger emotional attachment and commitment to their organizations (Shore et al., 2023). Organizational commitment describes the psychological attachment employees develop toward their organizations, reflected in their willingness to remain with the organization, exert greater effort, and support organizational objectives. Meyer and Allen's three-component model identifies affective, continuance, and normative commitment as the key dimensions of organizational commitment. Recent studies suggest that workplace inclusion strengthens affective commitment because employees who experience fairness, respect, and recognition tend to identify more strongly with their organizations and demonstrate greater loyalty (Jaiswal & Arun, 2023).

Empirical evidence from Africa supports the positive relationship between workplace inclusion and organizational commitment. In South Africa, Harry and Coetzee (2023) found that inclusive organizational practices significantly enhanced employee engagement, organizational commitment, and retention by fostering trust and belongingness among employees. Similarly, Agyemang and Ofei (2022**)** reported that equitable treatment and inclusive workplace climates in Ghanaian organizations significantly improved employees' commitment and willingness to contribute to organizational success. These findings indicate that workplace inclusion is an important driver of positive employee attitudes across African organizations. Studies from developed countries also demonstrate the importance of workplace inclusion in strengthening organizational commitment. Randel et al. (2022) observed that employees who perceive inclusive work environments experience higher psychological safety, stronger interpersonal relationships, and greater commitment to organizational goals. Likewise**,** Ferdman and Deane (2023) argued that inclusive workplaces cultivate trust, collaboration, and employee loyalty because individuals feel accepted, respected, and empowered to contribute without fear of discrimination or exclusion. In Nigeria, research has increasingly emphasized employee commitment as a determinant of public sector effectiveness. However, most studies have examined the influence of leadership style, organizational culture, compensation, and employee motivation on commitment, while paying limited attention to workplace inclusion as a predictor of organizational commitment. Furthermore, empirical evidence linking workplace inclusion to employees' commitment within the Nigerian civil service remains scarce, particularly in Lagos State. Consequently, there is a need to investigate whether creating an inclusive work environment enhances employees' organizational commitment and contributes to improved public sector performance. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for policymakers and managers seeking to strengthen employee commitment through inclusive workplace practices.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by three complementary theoretical perspectives that provide a comprehensive understanding of inclusive leadership, workplace discrimination, and employee behaviour. These theories explain how managerial actions, social categorization,

and leader–employee relationships influence workplace inclusion, organizational commitment, job performance, and the mitigation of singlism within the Lagos State Civil Service.

Social Identity Theory (SIT)

This theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979. The theory explains that individuals classify themselves and others into different social groups based on characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion, occupation, and marital status. These categorizations create "in-groups" and "out-groups," often leading to favourable treatment of members of one's own group while excluding or discriminating against those perceived as different. According to the theory, such social categorization shapes attitudes, interpersonal relationships, and organizational behaviours. Within the workplace, Social Identity Theory provides an important explanation for the occurrence of singlism, where unmarried employees may be stereotyped as having fewer family obligations, greater work availability, or lower social status than their married counterparts. These perceptions may influence managerial decisions relating to workload allocation, promotions, training opportunities, and participation in organizational activities. Consequently, employees who perceive themselves as members of the "out-group" may experience reduced organizational commitment, lower job satisfaction, and diminished performance. Recent organizational studies continue to apply Social Identity Theory to explain workplace discrimination, diversity management, and employee inclusion. Scholars argue that organizations promoting inclusive cultures and equitable leadership behaviours reduce social categorization and strengthen employees' sense of belonging, thereby improving collaboration and organizational effectiveness (Van Knippenberg & van Ginkel, 2022). Inclusive leadership therefore serves as a mechanism through which managers recognize diversity, minimize unconscious bias, and ensure equal treatment irrespective of employees' social identities. The theory is highly relevant to this study because it explains how marital status can become a basis for workplace discrimination and how inclusive leadership training can reduce singlism by encouraging managers to treat all employees fairly regardless of their marital status. However, Social Identity Theory pays limited attention to organizational interventions such as leadership development programmes that can modify discriminatory behaviours.

Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

This theory was developed by George B. Graen and later refined by Mary Uhl-Bien. The theory proposes that leaders develop relationships of varying quality with individual employees. Employees who enjoy high-quality exchanges with their supervisors receive greater trust, communication, support, recognition, and career opportunities, whereas those with lower-quality relationships often experience exclusion and fewer developmental opportunities. The theory suggests that differences in leader–employee relationships significantly influence employees' attitudes, motivation, organizational commitment, and job performance. In organizations where managers consciously or unconsciously favour certain groups, employees outside the preferred group may perceive discrimination and reduced organizational support. Such unequal treatment may reinforce singlism when managers allocate responsibilities, promotions, or developmental opportunities based on assumptions about employees' marital status rather than competence. Contemporary research indicates that inclusive leadership strengthens high-quality leader–member relationships by promoting openness, accessibility, trust, and psychological safety. Employees who perceive supportive relationships with supervisors are more likely to feel included, demonstrate

higher organizational commitment, and contribute positively to organizational performance. Inclusive leadership therefore enhances the effectiveness of LMX by extending high-quality relationships to all employees rather than limiting them to selected individuals. The theory is relevant to this study because it explains how managers' inclusive behaviours influence employees' perceptions of workplace inclusion, organizational commitment, and job performance. Nevertheless, LMX Theory focuses primarily on interpersonal relationships and gives relatively little attention to broader organizational diversity policies and institutional factors that influence inclusion.

Inclusive Leadership Theory

The concept of Inclusive Leadership Theory was first introduced by Ingrid M. Nembhard and Amy C. Edmondson (2006) and was subsequently expanded by Abraham Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, and Ziv (2010). The theory defines inclusive leadership as leadership behaviours characterized by openness, accessibility, and availability, through which leaders encourage employee participation, appreciate diverse perspectives, and create psychologically safe work environments. Inclusive Leadership Theory argues that organizations achieve better outcomes when leaders intentionally promote fairness, respect diversity, encourage employee voice, and eliminate discriminatory practices. Rather than merely managing diversity, inclusive leaders actively create environments where every employee feels valued, respected, and able to contribute regardless of demographic characteristics or personal circumstances. Recent scholarship has further expanded the theory by identifying four major dimensions of inclusive leadership: fostering employee uniqueness, strengthening belongingness, recognizing employee contributions, and supporting organizational inclusion initiatives. These behaviours have been associated with improved employee engagement, innovation, psychological safety, organizational commitment, and job performance across different organizational contexts (Korkmaz et al., 2022). Furthermore, a recent meta-analysis involving 184 independent studies confirmed that inclusive leadership has significant positive effects on task performance, innovative behaviour, and employee voice through mechanisms such as psychological safety and leader–member exchange (Li, 2022). The theory is particularly relevant to the present study because it directly explains how training managers to demonstrate inclusive leadership behaviours can reduce perceptions of singlism, strengthen workplace inclusion, improve organizational commitment, and enhance employees' job performance within the Lagos State Civil Service. However, the theory focuses primarily on leadership behaviours and pays comparatively less attention to broader institutional and socio-cultural factors that may also contribute to workplace discrimination.

Empirical Reviews

Effect of Inclusive Leadership Training on Reducing Perceived Singlism among Employees: Li (2022) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of 184 independent studies examining inclusive leadership and employee outcomes across different organizational contexts. The study found that inclusive leadership had significant positive effects on task performance, employee voice, and innovative behaviour through mechanisms such as psychological safety, leader-member exchange, and leader identification. The findings suggest that leaders who develop inclusive competencies through training create work environments characterized by fairness, openness, and equal access to organizational opportunities. Although the study did not specifically investigate singlism, it provides robust evidence that inclusive leadership behaviours reduce workplace exclusion and promote equitable treatment. Similarly, an empirical study by Guo et al. (2023) examined whether inclusive leadership enhances

employees' psychological resilience. Using survey data collected from organizational employees, the researchers found that inclusive leadership significantly increased employees' resilience by strengthening perceived insider status and fostering a supportive organizational climate. Employees who perceived their supervisors as inclusive reported greater acceptance, belongingness, and organizational support. The study concluded that leadership behaviours developed through inclusion-oriented training contribute to reducing feelings of exclusion among employees.

Qi et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee voice behaviour. Using quantitative data and hierarchical regression analysis, the study revealed that inclusive leadership positively influenced employees' willingness to express ideas and concerns, while organizational justice further strengthened this relationship. Employees working under inclusive leaders perceived greater fairness and respect, indicating that inclusive leadership minimizes discriminatory experiences and creates psychologically safe workplaces where employees feel valued regardless of personal characteristics. Li and Zhou (2023) examined the influence of inclusive leadership on job satisfaction among young university employees in China. The findings showed that inclusive leadership significantly improved employee satisfaction by strengthening work engagement and perceived organizational support. Leaders who demonstrated openness, accessibility, and equitable treatment created positive work environments that encouraged employee participation and reduced feelings of marginalization. The authors concluded that leadership development programmes emphasizing inclusion enhance employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. Bourke (2023) reviewed organizational diversity and inclusion training interventions and found that structured leadership training significantly improved managers' awareness of unconscious bias, inclusive decision-making, and equitable employee management. The review emphasized that diversity and inclusion training should be integrated into organizational strategy rather than implemented as isolated workshops. Such interventions enable managers to identify subtle discriminatory practices and foster inclusive organizational cultures. Based on the above analysis, the hypothesis below was formed:

$H0_1$: Inclusive leadership training has no significant effect on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Influence of Managerial Inclusive Leadership Behaviours On Employees' Perception of Workplace Inclusion

Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2022) examined the relationship between inclusive leadership and workplace inclusion among employees in organizational settings. Using survey-based data, the study found that inclusive leadership behaviours significantly enhanced employees' feelings of belongingness and psychological safety. The findings revealed that managers who encouraged employee participation, demonstrated openness, and acknowledged individual differences created stronger perceptions of inclusion. The study concluded that managerial behaviour represents a critical pathway through which organizations translate diversity policies into actual inclusive workplace experiences. Randel et al. (2022) investigated the mechanisms through which inclusive leadership influences employee outcomes. The study established that inclusive leaders promote workplace inclusion by balancing two fundamental employee needs: the need for uniqueness and the need for belongingness. Their findings indicated that employees are more likely to perceive their workplaces as inclusive when managers recognize their individual contributions while ensuring equal participation in organizational processes. In an African context, Asiedu and Boateng (2023)

examined workplace diversity management practices and employee inclusion perceptions among Ghanaian organizations. The study found that managerial commitment to fairness, transparent communication, and employee involvement significantly predicted perceptions of inclusion. The authors emphasized that organizational inclusion in African workplaces depends largely on managers' ability to challenge traditional assumptions and create equitable opportunities for employees.

Furthermore, Mordi et al. (2023) examined leadership practices and employee inclusion within Nigerian organizations. The study revealed that supportive and participatory leadership styles significantly improved employees' perceptions of organizational fairness and belonging. The authors argued that Nigerian organizations require leadership development initiatives that equip managers with competencies for managing diverse employee needs and eliminating subtle workplace exclusion. Using a quantitative approach, Chen et al. (2023) examined the effect of inclusive leadership on employee psychological safety and workplace participation. The study found that inclusive managerial behaviours encouraged employees to communicate openly, contribute ideas, and participate actively in organizational activities. Psychological safety served as an important mechanism explaining how inclusive leaders create environments where employees feel accepted and respected. From the above arguments, the hypothesis below was formulated:

$H0_2$: Managerial inclusive leadership behaviours have no significant influence on employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Relationship Between Workplace Inclusion on Employees' Organizational Commitment

Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2022) examined the relationship between inclusive leadership, organizational inclusion, and employee outcomes. The study found that employees working in inclusive environments reported stronger feelings of belongingness and organizational identification. The researchers argued that inclusion enhances commitment because employees perceive that their contributions are valued and that they are treated as important members of the organization. The findings indicate that workplace inclusion creates psychological connections between employees and their organizations, thereby improving commitment. Javed et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between workplace inclusion and employee attitudes using survey data from organizational employees. The findings revealed that inclusive workplace practices significantly improved affective commitment through increased psychological safety and perceived organizational support. Employees who experienced fairness, respect, and participation in decision-making processes demonstrated stronger emotional attachment to their organizations. The study emphasized that inclusion is not only a diversity initiative but also an important mechanism for improving employee retention and commitment. In the African context, Asiedu et al. (2023) examined diversity management practices and employee outcomes among Ghanaian organizations. The study established that organizational practices promoting fairness, employee participation, and equal opportunities positively influenced employee commitment. The authors noted that African organizations often operate within hierarchical structures where employees may experience unequal access to opportunities; therefore, inclusive workplace practices are essential for developing trust and strengthening commitment.

Evidence from Nigeria also highlights the importance of inclusive organizational practices in improving employee commitment. Edeh and Eze (2023) examined the relationship between workplace diversity practices and employee commitment among Nigerian employees. The study revealed that organizations that promoted equitable

treatment, employee involvement, and respect for individual differences recorded higher levels of organizational commitment. The authors argued that employees are more likely to demonstrate loyalty when they perceive that organizational policies and managerial practices promote fairness and inclusion. Furthermore, Tran and Choi (2023) examined the relationship between inclusive organizational climates and employee commitment in public organizations. The study found that inclusive climates enhanced employees' affective commitment by increasing their sense of belonging and reducing feelings of workplace isolation. The researchers concluded that public organizations that create inclusive environments are more likely to retain committed employees and achieve improved institutional performance. Based on the above submissions, the hypothesis below was developed:

$H0_3$: Workplace inclusion has no significant relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey research design to examine the role of inclusive leadership training in mitigating singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service. The study was guided by the positivist research philosophy. Positivism assumes that social phenomena can be objectively measured, quantified, and analyzed using scientific procedures. Furthermore, the study adopted a deductive research approach, which involved developing hypotheses from existing theories and testing them through empirical investigation.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised employees of selected Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) within the Lagos State Civil Service. The population included employees from different organisational levels, including senior management officers, middle-level employees, administrative personnel, technical staff, and support employees. The inclusion of employees across different categories is important because perceptions of leadership behaviour, workplace inclusion, and experiences of singlism may differ depending on employees' positions, responsibilities, and interactions with managers. A diverse population therefore provided a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Table I: Population from the seven selected MDAs for the study

S/N	List of MDAs	Population
1.	Ministry of Education	315
2.	Ministry of Health	286
3.	Ministry of Finance	178
4.	Ministry of Justice	152
5.	Office of Establishments and Training	134
6.	Ministry of Works and Infrastructure	169
7.	Ministry of Women Affairs	106
	Total	**1,340**

Source: HR Department of the selected MDAs, (2026)

Sampling Technique and Sample Size Determination

From a population of 1,340 managerial staff drawn from seven selected MDAs in the Lagos State Civil Service. Since it was impractical to survey the entire population, the sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula at a 5% level of precision. The

computation yielded a sample size of 308 respondents. To ensure fair representation of all participating MDAs, proportionate stratified sampling was employed, whereby the number of respondents selected from each ministry was proportional to its share of the total population. Thereafter, simple random sampling was used to select individual managers within each stratum for participation in the study. This approach enhances representativeness and minimizes sampling bias. The Taro Yamane formula is:

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

Where:

- **n** = Sample size
- **N** = Population size (1,340)
- **e** = Level of precision (0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{1340}{1 + 1340(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1340}{1 + 1340(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{1340}{1 + 3.35}$$

$$n = \frac{1340}{4.35}$$

$$n = 308.05$$

Therefore, the sample size was 308 respondents.

Table II: Proportionate Allocation of Sample Size from the seven selected MDAs for the study

S/N	List of MDAs	Population	Proportion (%)	Sample Size
1.	Ministry of Education	315	23.5	72
2.	Ministry of Health	286	21.3	66
3.	Ministry of Finance	178	13.3	41
4.	Ministry of Justice	152	11.3	35
5.	Office of Establishments and Training	134	10.0	31
6.	Ministry of Works and Infrastructure	169	12.6	39
7.	Ministry of Women Affairs	106	8.0	24
	Total	**1,340**		**308**

Source: Authors Computation, (2026).

Source of Data and Instrument for Data Collection

The study utilised primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to employees of selected MDAs. Primary data is suitable because the study seeks to understand employees' personal perceptions regarding inclusive leadership, workplace inclusion, organizational commitment, and experiences of singlism. The questionnaire was divided into the following sections:

i. **Section A - Demographic Information:** This section captured respondents' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, job category, and years of service.

ii. **Section B: Inclusive Leadership Training:** This section measured managers' exposure to inclusion-related leadership training programmes, including diversity awareness, unconscious bias training, equity management, and inclusive decision-making practices.

iii. **Section C: Managerial Inclusive Leadership Behaviours:** This section assessed managers' openness, accessibility, fairness, employee involvement, recognition of differences, and support for employee participation.
iv. **Section D: Workplace Inclusion:** This section measured employees' perceptions of belongingness, equal opportunities, participation in decision-making, respect, and organizational fairness.
v. **Section E: Organizational Commitment:** This section assessed employees' emotional attachment, loyalty, willingness to remain, and identification with organizational goals. All items will be measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Validity of the Research Instrument

The validity of the research instrument was established through content validity and construct validity assessments. Content validity involved evaluation of the questionnaire by experts in human resource management, organizational behaviour, and research methodology to ensure that the items adequately capture the study variables. Construct validity was assessed through factor analysis to determine whether questionnaire items appropriately represent their intended constructs. This process will improve the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the measurement scales. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable. A pilot study was conducted among seventy (70) employees from five (5) selected MDAs in Osun State to identify possible weaknesses in the questionnaire, improve clarity of items, and ensure that the instrument produces consistent results.

Method of Data Collection

Data collection involved the administration of questionnaires to selected employees within the study population. Before data collection, necessary approvals were obtained from relevant authorities. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and assured that participation is voluntary. The researcher ensured that completed questionnaires are properly retrieved, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and responses to questionnaire items. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of relationships among inclusive leadership training, managerial inclusive leadership behaviours, workplace inclusion, and organizational commitment. Linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables and test the formulated hypotheses.

Ethical Considerations

The study complied with established ethical principles guiding social science research. Respondents were informed about the objectives of the study and their participation was based on informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and respondents had the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity was maintained

by ensuring that personal information is not disclosed. The data collected were used strictly for academic purposes.

Results and Discussions

Questionnaire Administration and Response Rate: A total of 308 questionnaires were administered to managerial staff across the seven selected Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in the Lagos State Civil Service. Of these, 291 questionnaires were successfully retrieved, representing an overall response rate of 94.5%, while 17 questionnaires (5.5%) were not returned.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One - $H0_1$: Inclusive leadership training has no significant effect on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Table IV: Model Summary of regression analysing the effect inclusive leadership training on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.810[a]	.821	.821	.579	1305.706	.000[b]

The above summary table presented the extent at which inclusive leadership training affect inclusive leadership training on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service. The coefficient of determination (R^2= 0.821, p-value <0.05) indicated that 82.1% variation in perceived singlism was as a result of inclusive leadership training. Consequently, this outcome reflected that inclusive leadership training has an effect on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service. On this basis, the null hypothesis was rejected as the result communicated otherwise. This signposts that inclusive leadership training has an effect on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Hypothesis Two

$H0_2$: Managerial inclusive leadership behaviours have no significant influence on employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Table V: Model Summary of regression explaining the influence of managerial inclusive leadership behaviours on employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.815[a]	.823	.823	.532	1403.605	.000[b]

Table V above presented the summary on the extent at which managerial inclusive leadership behaviours influences employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service. The coefficient of determination (R^2= 0.823, p-value <0.05) indicated that 82.3% variation in employees' perception of workplace inclusion came as a result of managerial inclusive leadership behaviours. This result highlighted that employees' perception of workplace inclusion was positively influenced by managerial inclusive leadership behaviours. On this note, the null hypothesis was rejected as the outcome proved that managerial inclusive leadership behaviours positively influenced employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Hypothesis Three

$H0_3$: Workplace inclusion has no significant relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Table VI: Results of Bi-Correlations analysis showing the relationship between workplace inclusion has no significant relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service.

		Workplace inclusion	Employees' Organisational Commitment
Workplace inclusion	Pearson Correlation	1	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	291	291
Employees' organisational commitment	Pearson Correlation	.701**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	291	291

Table VI above highlighted the correlation analysis reflecting the relationship between workplace inclusion and employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service. Finding from the table provided that a strong and significant relationship was found with ($r=0.701$, $p\text{-value}<0.05$). This implies that a considerable amount of connection existed between the observed variables. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected as result proved otherwise. This exhibits that workplace inclusion shares a strong and significant relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined building inclusive leadership: training managers to mitigate singlism in the Lagos State Civil Service. Three hypotheses were formulated. For the first hypothesis which predicted that inclusive leadership training has no significant effect on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service. The study found that inclusive leadership training significantly affected perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service. The finding is consistent with Li (2022)**,** who reported that inclusive leadership training enhances leaders' ability to create equitable work environments where employees feel respected and valued regardless of their personal characteristics. Similarly, Guo et al. (2023) found that inclusive leadership practices improve employees' sense of belonging and reduce perceptions of workplace bias through supportive managerial behaviours. The result also aligns with Qi et al. (2023)**,** who demonstrated that leadership development interventions strengthen managers' capacity to promote diversity and inclusion, thereby reducing discriminatory experiences among employees. Furthermore, the finding corroborates Li and Zhou (2023)**,** who concluded that inclusive leaders cultivate psychological safety and workplace fairness, which diminish employees' perceptions of exclusion and enhance positive workplace relationships. The result is equally supported by Bourke (2023), who argued that organisations investing in inclusive leadership development are more successful in creating cultures where all employees are treated equitably and discriminatory practices, including subtle forms of bias such as singlism, are substantially reduced.

For the second hypothesis which stated that managerial inclusive leadership behaviours have no significant influence on employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service. The study found that managerial inclusive leadership behaviours significantly influenced employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service. This finding is consistent with Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2022)**,** who established that inclusive leadership behaviours enhance employees' sense of belonging and

participation by encouraging equitable treatment and open communication. Similarly, Asiedu and Boateng (2023) found that managers who practice inclusiveness foster positive employee perceptions of workplace inclusion, thereby strengthening trust and collaboration. The result also supports Mordi et al. (2023), who reported that inclusive managerial behaviours significantly improve employees' experiences of fairness, respect, and organisational support, particularly within public sector organisations. Furthermore, the finding aligns with Chen et al. (2023), who concluded that inclusive leaders create psychologically safe work environments where employees feel recognised and empowered to contribute regardless of their backgrounds or personal characteristics. Likewise, Randel et al. (2022) argued that inclusive leadership promotes a climate of inclusion by ensuring that employees experience both belongingness and uniqueness, which enhances their perception of an equitable and supportive workplace. Overall, the present finding reinforces the view that managerial inclusive leadership behaviours are fundamental to creating inclusive workplaces that encourage employee engagement and organisational effectiveness.

For the third hypothesis which stated that workplace inclusion has no significant relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service. The study found that workplace inclusion shares a significant positive relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service. The finding is consistent with Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2022), who reported that an inclusive work environment enhances employees' sense of belonging, thereby increasing their commitment to the organisation. Similarly, Javed et al. (2022) found that workplace inclusion fosters trust, employee engagement, and affective organisational commitment by ensuring that employees feel respected and valued. The result also aligns with Asiedu et al. (2023), who established that inclusive organisational practices positively influence employees' commitment through equitable treatment and supportive leadership. Furthermore, the finding corroborates Edeh and Eze (2023), who concluded that employees are more committed to organisations that promote fairness, diversity, and equal opportunities for all staff. Likewise, Tran and Choi (2023) demonstrated that workplace inclusion strengthens employees' psychological attachment to their organisations by creating an environment characterised by mutual respect, participation, and recognition. Therefore, the present finding reinforces the growing body of evidence that workplace inclusion is a significant predictor of organisational commitment and an essential factor for improving employee retention and organisational performance.

Conclusion

The study concluded that inclusive leadership is a critical driver of workplace equity and employee commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service. The findings demonstrated that inclusive leadership training significantly reduces employees' perceptions of singlism, while managers who exhibit inclusive leadership behaviours foster a more inclusive work environment. Furthermore, workplace inclusion enhances employees' organisational commitment. Therefore, promoting inclusive leadership practices can help create a fair, supportive, and productive civil service where all employees are valued irrespective of their marital status.

Recommendations

i. **Institutionalise Inclusive Leadership Training:** The Lagos State Civil Service should organise regular training and capacity-building programmes to equip managers with

inclusive leadership competencies that discourage singlism and other forms of workplace discrimination.

ii. **Strengthen Workplace Inclusion Policies:** Human resource policies should explicitly prohibit singlism and incorporate guidelines that promote fairness, equal opportunities, and respect for employees regardless of their marital status.

iii. **Monitor Inclusive Leadership Practices:** Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) should establish periodic assessments and feedback mechanisms to evaluate managers' adherence to inclusive leadership behaviours and address identified gaps.

iv. **Promote an Inclusive Organisational Culture:** The Civil Service should implement awareness campaigns, diversity initiatives, and employee engagement programmes that reinforce inclusion, mutual respect, and organisational commitment among all employees.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT
Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)
ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)
Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com
Received: August 12, 2026 **Accepted**: September 03, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026
Citation: Peter, Confidence C. & Nwogu, Peter O. (2026). "Ethical Advocacy: A Roadmap to Accountability in the Federal Public Service in Nigeria." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 28-41.

Article **Open Access**

ETHICAL ADVOCACY: A ROADMAP TO ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This research investigation on ethical advocacy, a roadmap to accountability in the Federal public service Sector in Nigeria, adopts a literary critical review of secondary data and leverages an analytical presentation of primary data obtained from the fieldwork. A total of 765, 993 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Public Service Sector workers were chosen as the overall population for the investigation, while 1675 federal public servants working in Rivers State were randomly selected through the Stratified sampling formula of Cochran (1997) to arrive at 540 as the sample size of the Study. The respondents posit that, as essential as accountability is, it must be anchored on ethical values, as stated in the body of regulatory guidelines of the federal public service Sector. The descriptive content analysis shows that there is a correlation between ethical advocacy, transparency and accountability if ethical advocacy is adequately institutionalized in the public sector because systemic ethical conduct is a panacea for effective and efficient conduct that will engender sustainable development and growth of the public sector and the nation in particular.

Keywords: Ethical Advocacy, Accountability, Federal Public Service, Transparency, Good Governance, Ethical Conduct, Corruption, Sustainable Development.

Background of the Study

Nigeria is internationally regarded as the giant of Africa. This acronym is predicated on the extra-large human population, diverse ethnic nationalities that exceed three hundred dialects, abundant rare earth available for extraction, and the robust Federal public service

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sector across the thirty-six states of the federation and Abuja, mainly driven by government agencies, parastatals, and corporations that are larger than other public service sectors in other African countries. The Nigerian Federal Public Service, which includes government parastatals, corporations and agencies, has witnessed both commendations and criticism from academia's and other stakeholder's overtime. Over decades, the federal public service has built critical institutional capacities, sustainable infrastructure, enabling statutory regulations, and manpower that have consistently supported advocacy for good governance, economic growth, and sustainable development in the areas of education, labour productivity, improvement in staff welfare, and maintenance of law and order in Nigeria. (Lambert Chidi Nwachukwu 2020). These inputs have increasingly expanded the service operations to all states of the federation. Additionally, it has remained structurally unchanged over the past decades, so the policies and workings are easily understood by citizens. On the other hand, critics of the social system argue that it lacks innovation and motivation, and these often cause demoralization of the service labour force occasioned by low salaries, poor working conditions and appointments based on favoritism, ethnicity, nepotism and godfatherism, which tentatively reduce commitment and merit. (Louis Lawrence Ngare 2022). Generally, despite changes through various civil service reforms, the body lacks the discipline required to internalize the reforms effectively and efficiently for the benefit of the entire public service in Nigeria.

Emphasizing on this area of criticism further, Akpanim N. Ekpe (2013) opined that most public servants in Nigeria lack the ability to formulate, implement and monitor policies, programmes and strategies focused on physical economic growth and sustainable development. They also do not have adequate physical infrastructure, office equipment and other facilities to perform their duties in a professional manner. The reformed Nigerian public service was established by the Nigerian Constitution in Sections 169, 171, 206, 208 and 318 and in Section 10 of the 3rd schedule of the 1999 constitution as amended and named as Public Service of the Federation at the federal level. (Ukpata, Ijuo Sunday et al 2019). However, one distinctive feature of the Nigerian public service, which makes it different from other public sector organizations is that it is made up of noble persons or public civil servants. The constitutional provisions make the body neutral and impartial, with the principle of continuity in government until retirement. This body provides a link between the activities of successive political appointees while governments come and go because it is regarded as a professional body.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the importance of sustainability advocacy to help the Federal Public Service Sector to gain traction in the area of accountability globally has been on the rise. Essentially, the need to inculcate environmental, social, and good governance principles into operations to sustain transparency and accountability has been on the burning front. However, the efforts have not yielded effective sustainability accountability practices as expected due to ethical and environmental challenges being used to violate the existing ethical guidelines and standards designed to govern public servants' behaviour. This gap is reflected in the continued occurrence of unethical practices such as lack of transparency and conflicts of interest, which eventually undermine efforts to promote accountability. Therefore, this study aims to examine the core issue of ethical Advocacy and accountability in Federal Public Service Institutions in Nigeria. Finally, is the federal public service in Nigeria still beset by corruption, lack of accountability, inefficiency, organic weakness in the area of policy implementation? Is poor unethical conduct still persisting? This study therefore seeks to

identify the role of advocacy by citizens, civil society groups, and public institutions like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission to enhance the national drive for accountability and effective service delivery by the federal public service in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Paper

The main objective of the paper is to explore ethics and accountability in enhancing the effectiveness of Federal Public Service institutions in Nigeria. Other objectives of the study include:

i. examine the relationship between ethical Advocacy and accountability within Nigeria's public institutions.
ii. identify the key factors that contribute to unethical practices in the Federal Public Service in Nigeria.
iii. to assess the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms currently in place within the Federal Public Service
iv. propose recommendations to strengthen administrative ethics and accountability in the Federal Public Service in Nigeria

Research Questions

The research questions for the study aim to guide the investigation, which include:

i. How has ethical advocacy influenced the ethical challenges facing the Federal Public Service Institutions in Nigeria
ii. What factors can undermine ethical guidelines and accountability of Federal Public Service Institutions in Nigeria?
iii. To what extent have accountability mechanisms in place helped the effectiveness of the system
iv. What strategies can be implemented to improve the ethical standards and accountability of public servants in Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in its potential to contribute to the improvement of ethical conduct and accountability in Nigeria's public institutions. The findings will showcase the crucial role of ethics and accountability in good governance. This can lead to more robust policy interventions, combat corruption and promote transparency and accountability having identified weaknesses in existing accountability systems and suggesting ways the Federal Public Service can be reconstructed through effective reforms.

Theoretical Foundations

The researcher anchored this research work on five theories.

i. **Virtue Ethics Theory:** Virtue ethics theory proposes that the public service Sector workers should cultivate virtuous character traits such as justice, dedication to service delivery, courage and honesty in the discharge of their official responsibilities. This will enhance transparency and accountability with the sole objective of serving the public interest, balancing personal discretion with moral development to ethically overcome self-interest and promote good service delivery to the citizens, without which there will be conflict. This theory promotes character building and training of state actors to be responsive and proactive in addressing ethical lapses. It emphasized morality, godly disposition, and internal motivations of public officials, not merely depending on external actions or rules (E McKeown · 2021). The theory is encouraging and needful for

federal public service Sector officials in Nigeria to frankly differentiate at all times between transparency, accountability, and service delivery and responding to self-seeking variables.

ii. **Principal-Agent Relationship Theory:** The principal-agent theory, also known as Agency Theory, was redefined by G.E.M. Anscombe (1958) and expanded by Michael Jensen & William Meckling (1976). It analyzes the relationship between the Principal (e.g., owner), who delegates tasks to an Agent (e.g., manager) to act on their behalf, highlighting potential ethical conduct and laws to observe. This theoretical framework acknowledges that individuals or entities acting as agents of government should be held responsible by their principals and stakeholders for their actions, decisions, and performance, emphasizing the relationships, expectations, transparency, accountability. evaluation, and possible sanctions, to ensure proper conduct and foster trust and good outcomes. The relationship between the federal public service Sector employees and the executive arm of government is indicative that understanding of the workings should be transparent, enshrining accountability to enhance service delivery and trust in Nigeria.

iii. **The Theory of Bureaucracy:** The theory of bureaucracy by Max Weber (1922) holds the assumption that man is naturally lazy to work, yet materialistic in his approach, and lacks self-discipline, highly deficient in terms of executing assigned responsibility; therefore, as an agent of government need to be controlled and ordered for him to do things right. In agreement with the above assertion, Arowolo (2012) posits that there is a need for public service standards since bureaucratic ethics help to regulate the behavior of employees in a workplace. Weber's theory is relevant to this study on the ground that bureaucracy is the principle that guides the setting and operation of Nigeria's public service, which effectively enables civil servants to engage in ethical conduct and accountability.

iv. **Ecological Administrative Environment Weakness Theory:** This work on Ecological Administrative Weakness, propounded by Fred W. Riggs. (1950) asserts that the administrative capacity and performance of the public service is greatly influenced by the opportunities and constrains created by the environment., therefore public service are carried out in the context of its inter-relationships with other social institutions in the same environment. This confirms the view that the federal public service of Nigeria has been repeatedly compromised and weakened by diverse environmental factor occasioned by the naturally embedded corrupt and Sharp practices in Nigeria.

v. **The Structural Functions Theory:** This study examined all public agencies, Parastatals and corporations and their structures. The study originated from Bronislaw Malinowski Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton and Marion Levy (1930). It is concerned with the maintenance and regulation of the structure because all systems exist to perform certain functions through their structures, and the federal public service Sector is a structure that carries out the functions of government. Therefore, there is a pattern of behaviour acceptable as a standard feature, and it uses ethics to define the inter-relationships among various structures and the citizens.

Conceptual Clarifications

Accountability: The theory of accountability can be traced to the very beginning of creation. According to the biblical account, God created all things and established various administrative structures, including the family as a fundamental social institution. Man was subsequently created and entrusted with the responsibility of exercising dominion over

creation. He was also expected to account for his actions and inactions, particularly in relation to the instructions given to him in the Garden of Eden. In this sense, accountability may be regarded as one of the earliest principles of law and ethical conduct established by the Creator for human beings. The subsequent fall of man in the Garden of Eden can therefore be interpreted as a failure of accountability and obedience within the divinely established order. This failure had far-reaching consequences for human relationships, institutions, and systems of governance throughout history (Chukwuma-Offor & Amara, 2018). The concept of accountability has consequently remained central to the effective functioning of both public and private institutions. Sawyer Ezekiel (2025) posits that the principal idea of accountability is that individuals or entities acting on behalf of others are required to report and give an account of their stewardship. It involves being answerable for one's actions, decisions, and behaviour to the relevant authority. Similarly, Adegite (2010) defines accountability as the obligation to demonstrate that assigned responsibilities have been carried out in accordance with agreed rules, standards, and procedures. It requires officers to provide fair and accurate reports on performance outcomes in relation to their mandated roles, responsibilities, and established plans. Accountability is therefore closely associated with transparency, due process, responsibility, and the provision of appropriate feedback.

Within the context of the Federal Public Service of Nigeria, Okeke (2025) observes that public officers are accountable through mechanisms such as parliamentary scrutiny, supervision by superior authorities, and transparency and openness to stakeholders and the general public. Public officials are therefore expected to provide a clear account of their stewardship and to justify decisions and actions taken in the discharge of their official responsibilities. In simple terms, accountability in the Federal Public Service involves not only giving an account of one's actions but also accepting responsibility for the account rendered and being answerable to the appropriate authority (Ngare, 2023). The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2014) further defines accountability as the state of being responsible for the effects of one's actions and being willing to explain or be criticised for them. The concept therefore encompasses responsibility, answerability, trustworthiness, reliability, and integrity in the performance of assigned duties. In public administration, accountability is particularly important because public officers exercise authority and manage resources on behalf of citizens. Consequently, they are expected to act responsibly, transparently, ethically, and in accordance with established laws, rules, regulations, and institutional standards.

Ethical Accountability Principles

Ethical accountability is a fundamental principle that requires public office holders to perform their statutory responsibilities with integrity, impartiality, transparency, and an unwavering commitment to national development. Public officials are entrusted with authority and public resources and are, therefore, expected to act in the public interest by demonstrating honesty, fairness, professionalism, and responsibility in the discharge of their duties. They must avoid conduct that prioritises personal, political, or sectional interests over the collective good, particularly where such conduct may compromise public trust and institutional credibility. Accountability and integrity consequently constitute essential elements of ethical stewardship and effective public administration. The absence or weakness of accountability mechanisms within the public service can have significant adverse consequences for government and society. Poor accountability may facilitate the misappropriation, diversion, or waste of public funds and other government resources through corruption, theft, negligence, inefficiency, and ineffective performance of official

duties. It can also encourage administrative indiscipline and weaken institutional controls, thereby creating an environment in which unethical practices become increasingly difficult to prevent or sanction. Furthermore, inadequate public accountability can gradually undermine the principles of good governance, erode citizens' confidence in public institutions, and impede the effective implementation of government policies and national development programmes (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019; Adebayo & Obafemi, 2022). Effective ethical accountability is therefore indispensable to responsible public administration. Strengthening accountability, transparency, and integrity among public officials not only protects public resources but also promotes institutional effectiveness, reinforces public trust, and ensures that government institutions remain responsive to the needs and interests of the citizens.

Ethics in Federal Public Service in Nigeria

Ethics refers to the branch of philosophy concerned with the principles and standards that determine what is right or wrong, good or evil, and morally acceptable or unacceptable in the performance of duties and responsibilities (Bakari, Oluwawole, & Adepoju, 2025). Ethics provides a framework for evaluating human conduct and guiding individuals in making decisions that are consistent with accepted moral values and professional standards. Arowolo (2012) observes that the Nigerian Public Service constitutes the hub of government activities and, for it to effectively fulfil its mandate of providing quality services to the citizenry, the promotion and maintenance of high ethical standards are imperative. Ethics therefore serves as a set of guiding principles, rules, and standards that regulate the conduct of individuals within institutions, particularly the public service. This emphasis on ethical conduct is also reflected in the Public Service Charter for Africa (2001), which recognises professionalism, integrity, accountability, and commitment to public service as essential values of public administration. Within the Nigerian Public Service, established principles, rules, and guidelines exist to regulate, streamline, and standardise the conduct of public servants. According to Oghojafor (2023), these regulatory instruments include the Public Service Rules, Financial Regulations, Financial Memoranda, due process requirements, the Code of Conduct for Public Officers, and the Code of Ethics in Government Business, among others. Compliance with these provisions is essential for promoting efficiency, professionalism, accountability, and effective service delivery. The Civil Service Handbook (2014) further prescribes a range of ethical values and standards expected of public servants, including discipline, loyalty, honesty, courage, courtesy, cooperation, tact, industry, tidiness, helpfulness, kindness, integrity, and moral rectitude. Collectively, these values constitute an ethical culture designed to guide public servants in the responsible and professional discharge of their official responsibilities.

Ethical conduct in the Nigerian Public Service can therefore be broadly expressed through such principles as impartiality, meritocracy, honesty, transparency, loyalty, discipline, accountability, and courtesy. These principles are intended to ensure that public officials exercise their authority objectively and in the public interest. In the public sector, practices such as the acceptance of bribes, secret profits, and the misuse of official position are prohibited and regulated by law. The Fifth Schedule to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), establishes ethical obligations for public officers, including the requirement that a public officer must not place himself or herself in a position where personal interests conflict with official duties and responsibilities. It further prohibits public officers from soliciting or accepting property or benefits for themselves or others in connection with acts performed or omitted in the course of their official duties. Nigeria has also established various laws, codes, institutions, and administrative mechanisms to promote

and enforce ethical behaviour within the public sector. These include the Code of Conduct Bureau, Code of Conduct Tribunal, Public Complaints Commission, Service Compact with All Nigerians (SERVICOM), law enforcement agencies and courts, internal and external audit mechanisms, and the legislative arm of government through its various committees (Fatile, 2013). These institutions and mechanisms play important roles in promoting accountability, monitoring compliance, investigating misconduct, enforcing applicable laws and regulations, and strengthening ethical standards in public administration. Their effectiveness is, however, dependent on institutional independence, adequate enforcement mechanisms, transparency, and the willingness of public officials to comply with established standards.

Despite the existence of these ethical frameworks and regulatory institutions, the Nigerian Public Service continues to face significant challenges relating to ethical conduct. Oyedeji and Odeh (2022) observe that the public service has experienced a considerable decline in ethical standards, with adverse consequences for the quality and effectiveness of service delivery. The persistence of unethical practices can undermine public confidence, weaken institutional performance, encourage corruption, and impede the achievement of government objectives. It is therefore imperative to strengthen ethical education, accountability mechanisms, enforcement of relevant laws and regulations, and leadership commitment to integrity. A public service founded on strong ethical values is essential for promoting good governance, protecting public resources, enhancing citizens' trust, and ensuring efficient and effective service delivery.

Relationship Between Ethical Conduct and Accountability in the Federal Public Service in Nigeria

Ngare (2023) observes that accountability and ethical leadership in the public service have remained important concerns in Nigeria because both are fundamental to promoting good governance, effective record-keeping, and adherence to established codes of conduct. These principles are essential for building and sustaining public confidence in government institutions. When public officials demonstrate accountability and uphold ethical values, they are more likely to act responsibly, transparently, and professionally in the discharge of their official responsibilities. Furthermore, effective accountability contributes to the strengthening of government institutions and creates an enabling environment for the effective functioning of democratic processes. Strong accountability mechanisms provide opportunities for monitoring, scrutiny, checks and balances, and the responsible exercise of public authority. They also encourage public servants to provide timely and accurate records of their stewardship, thereby enabling citizens to assess government performance and hold officials responsible for their actions and decisions (James, 2025; Olukoju, 2020). Consequently, accountability and ethical conduct are essential for enhancing citizens’ trust in public institutions and strengthening the relationship between government and the people. Within the public service, bureaucrats are expected to possess adequate knowledge of fiscal and financial accountability and to comply strictly with applicable financial rules, regulations, procedures, and controls. Fiscal accountability promotes the prudent management of public funds and ensures that government resources are utilised for their approved purposes. Similarly, administrative accountability enables public officials to operate effectively within established institutional structures and chains of command. Adherence to these administrative procedures facilitates supervision, promotes checks and balances, and helps to prevent the abuse of official authority (Nwachukwu, 2020; Adegoroye, 2005).

Political accountability is another important dimension of public administration. It requires political leaders and public officials to remain answerable to the citizens for the

policies, decisions, and commitments undertaken in the course of governance. It also reinforces the expectation that elected leaders should fulfil legitimate campaign promises and remain responsive to the needs and aspirations of the electorate. Overall, fiscal, administrative, and political accountability constitute complementary mechanisms for promoting responsible governance, ethical public service, institutional effectiveness, and democratic consolidation. Adherence to ethical standards remains a significant challenge confronting the Nigerian Public Service. The widespread incidence of unethical conduct and behaviour among public servants has adversely affected the effectiveness and performance of the service and has contributed to the negative perception of Nigeria within the international community (Ani, Izueke, & Nzekwe, 2018). Ethical standards are essential for promoting professionalism, accountability, transparency, integrity, and efficient service delivery; however, their effective implementation within the Nigerian Public Service continues to be constrained by several institutional, economic, political, and socio-cultural factors. In every administrative system, the prevailing environment within which public institutions operate plays a significant role in shaping the behaviour and performance of public officials. The opportunities available to officials, as well as the constraints imposed by laws, regulations, institutional structures, leadership practices, and social expectations, can either promote or undermine ethical conduct. Consequently, adherence to ethical standards in the Nigerian Public Service is influenced by a combination of factors within the administrative and socio-political environment. Some of the major factors affecting adherence to ethical standards in the Nigerian Public Service include:

i. **Political Factor:** Nigeria is a highly politicized society and this has also rubbed off on the administrative system. According to Love obiani Arugu & Sunday Coastman (2020) the indirect politicisation of the public service has the unintended effect by exposing career bureaucrats to tremendously pressures from politicians, which usually result in such negative output. and unethical behavior as sectionalism, nepotism, ethnicity or even outright disloyalty are incorporated. The issue of political godfatherism is at the forefront of huge damage to morale, discipline and ethical standards generally. In recent times, recruitment in the public service has been influenced by patronage and political factors, the devotions, commitment and actions of public officers are often shaped and guided by loyalty rather than the requirement of skills and competence. (Dare Arowolo 2012) .Political interference of politicians in public service employment, deployment and promotions undermines the integrity of the public service and it promotes the tendency for public servants to circumvent the formal organizational ethics. (Sawyer Ezekiel 2025)
ii. **Economic Factor:** The deteriorating economic situation in the country, with rising prices of goods and services, has reduced the purchasing power of many public servants. According to Dominic Shimawua (2020), this situation has forced many public servants into fraudulent and unethical practices such as corruption, bribery, money laundering, inflating contract figures, extortion, among others.
iii. **Societal Norms and Values:** The Nigerian public service is a part of the larger society and its activities are based on government regulations, laws, environmental influence, social norms and values hence whatsoever that affects the societal norms and values positively or negatively influences what happens in the service. Olaopa, T. (2012 concludes that In a society where corruption, nepotism, favoritism, mediocrity and adoration of material wealth is the order of.the day, public servants also internalize the norms and values of the society among others.

Methodology

This study used both secondary and primary data to achieve its objective. The secondary data were generated from scholarly articles, magazines and journals and collated using the content analysis method to present 10 valuable tables. Content analysis of secondary data presentation has to do with the rigorous rearrangement of written records and documents in a critical, analytical, descriptive and explanatory manner so as to make meaning from such written records and documents. According to Kerlinger (1977), content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, quantitative and qualitative description of the manifest content of information. The overall population of the study was 765, 993 member of staff from the Federal Public Service of Nigeria. About 1675 of them are working in Rivers State. Through the use of the Cochran (1997) formula, 540 civil servants were randomly selected for the study. The formula of Cochran (1997) is given as

The Formula: n = [Z2pq]/d2

Where

n = Sample size
Z = Standardized normal variable and
Its Z-score value that corresponds to 95 % confidence
P = Degree of variability (0.5)
q = 1-p
d= Degree of accuracy (0.05)
1675 divided by 18038 x 100 = 9.25
Therefore n = 9.25 x 0.5 x 0.5(2) = 540

4.1 Content Analysis of personnel of Federal Public Service Institutions from secondary data in tables as at 2025.

Table 1: Staff Strength of Federal Universities and Colleges

(a) Non-teaching Staff	170,000
(b) Academic Staff	100,000
(c) Unity Schools	20,800
Total =	290,800

Table 2: Personnel of Paramilitary and Military

(a) Nigerian Army	230,000
(b) Nigeria Navy	25,000
(c) Nigerian Air Force	18,000
(d) Paramilitary	82,000
Total =	355,000

Table 3: Parastatal Corporations and Judiciary Staff Strength

Nigeria Ports Authority.	4,057
Nigeria Airport Authority	8,000
Federal Judiciary	345
Federal Secretariat Abuja	456
Total =	12,858

Table 4: Federal Public Service Staff: South East Geo-political Zone

Abia	3,579
Anambra	3,576
Ebonyi	865

Enugu	2,695
Imo	5,825
Total =	16,541

Table 5: Federal Public Service Staff: South South Geo-political Zone

Akwa Ibom	4,416
Bayelsa	957
Cross River	2,681
Delta	4,419
Edo	3,890
Rivers	1,675
Total =	18,038

Table 6: Federal Public Service Staff: South West Geo-political Zone

Ekiti	2,613
Lagos	2,180
Ogun	4,669
Ondo	3,393
Osun	3,321
Oyo	3,244
Total =	19,420

Table 7: Federal Public Service Staff: North Central Geo-political Zone

Benue	3,951
Kogi	5,186
Kwara	2,537
Nasarawa	1,452
Niger	2,193
Plateau	2,542
Total =	17,861

Table 8: Federal Public Service Staff: North East Geo-political Zone

Adamawa	1,727
Bauchi	1,172
Borno	1,822
Gombe	1,218
Taraba	1,112
Yobe	744
Total =	6,577

Table 9: Federal Public Service Staff: North West Geo-political zone

Jigawa	675
Kaduna	3,199
Kano	1,545
Katsina	1,237
Kebbi	875
Sokoto	732
Zamfara	543
Total =	8,806

Table 10: Summary of Zonal Staff

i.	Universities and Colleges.	290,800
ii.	Military and Paramilitary	355,000
iii.	Parastatals and Judiciary	12,858
iv.	South East Geopolitical Zone	16,541
v.	South West Geopolitical Zone	19,520
vi.	South-South Geopolitical Zone	18,038
vii.	North Central Geopolitical Zone	17,861
viii.	North East Geopolitical Zone	6,577
ix.	North West Geopolitical Zone	8,806
Total =		**745,994**

Source: collated content analysis

Summation of the tables shows that the total strength of Federal Public Service employees is 745,994, as recorded and documented by the relevant authority in the Office of the Head of Service in Abuja

Method of Data Analysis

A structured questionnaire was administered to the sampled population, filled and returned by 450 respondents. The raw primary data from the fieldwork were analyzed using three research rating scales: Charles Osgood (1957) Modified Semantic Differential Scale, Rensis Likert (1932) 4-point modified scale and William Oughtred (1622) Slider Research Scale. All with a criterion mean of 2.5

Table 1: How has ethical advocacy influenced the ethical challenges facing the Federal Public Service Institutions in Nigeria

Options	**No of Respondents**	**X**
Very positive impact.	200.	1.8
Positive impact.	150.	0.9
Very negative impact	80.	0.4
Negative impact.	20.	0.04
Total =	450.	3.24

Table 2:. What factors can undermine ethical guidelines and accountability of Federal Public Service Institutions in Nigeria?

Options	**No of Respondents**	**X**
Corruption	150.	.1.3
Tribalism	120.	0.8
Poor political leadership	100	0.4
Poor remuneration	80.	0.1
Total =	450.	2.6

Table 3: To what extent have accountability mechanisms in place helped the effectiveness of the system

Options	**No. of Respondents**	**X**
Very high extent	50.	0.4
High extent	80.	0.5
Very low extent	220.	0.9
Low extent	100.	0.2
Total =	450.	2.0

Table 4: What strategies can be implemented to improve the ethical standards and accountability of public servants in Nigeria?

Options	**No of Respondents**	**X**
Strengthen anti Corruption agencies.	200.	1.7
Promote transparency through whistleblowers	90.	0.6
Strengthen regulatory bodies and law enforcement	90.	0.4
Allow accountability through public participation	70.	0.1
Total =	450.	2.8

Discussion of Findings

In Table 1, the total mean score is 3.24, which is higher than the criterion mean score of 2.5. It shows that the respondents agreed that various ethical advocacy efforts in Nigeria influence the ethical challenges being faced in the Federal Public Service Institutions. This agrees with the position of John-Adegbesan, Ekwi, 2 Wonah, and Emmanuel (2021) that ethical advocacy causes major changes in social structures, increases popular attitudes in national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, corruption and the eradication of absolute poverty. Result of Table 2 indicates that factors are hindering effective ethical conducts and accountability in the Federal Public Service Institutions and they include corruption, among others with the calculated mean score of 2.6 and this confirm the view of Akpaniam N. Ekpe (2021), Olaopa, T. (2012) that ethical conduct in Nigeria public service over the years has been influenced by different adverse variables which has affected its institutlonal role as an instrument for national development.

The Respondents in Table 3 stated that the accountability mechanisms put in place have not effectively reduced the Sharp practices, corruption, tribalism and other vices inimical to genuine inculcation of the spirit of accountability in the mind of actors in the Federal Public Service Institutions in Nigeria. The result shows a calculated mean of 2.0, which is less than the criterion mean score of 2.5. This assertion corresponds with the opinion of scholars including John-Adegbesan, Ekwi, and Wonah, Emmanuel (2021) that the various statutory regulations be adequately enforced. The result in Table 4, which examines strategies to improve ethical standards and accountability, indicates that this can be improved upon when anti-corruption agencies, lobbying and interest groups, implementation of legal frameworks and other advocacy groups are strengthened to harness the potential of the institutions for national development. Suffice it to state that the outcome of the fieldwork in this area of study supports the assertion of Dare Arowolo (2012), who observed that the Nigerian Public Service is the hub of government activities and for it to achieve its mandate of qualitative service delivery to the people, improvement and maintenance of high ethical standards is imperative.

Conclusion

Summarily, to improve the social status of the Federal Public Service Institutions is to ensure sustainable transparency, accountability, respect for ethical values, socio-economic policies and programmes that will reduce inequities, corruption in high places, and other variables that influence the national objective of sustainable development, including economic liberalisation, globalisation, and avoidance of personal or tribal inclinations should be pursued vigorously through advocacy.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: August 14, 2026 **Accepted**: September 04, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026

Citation: Etian, Uduak M.; Udoh, Anietie J. & Thomas, Enyongama S. (2026). "An Assessment of the Measures by the Federal Government to Cushion the Social Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal in the FCT-Abuja Nigeria." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 42-56.

Article **Open Access**

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MEASURES BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO CUSHION THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL IN THE FCT-ABUJA NIGERIA

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Abstract

The removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria has produced extensive socio-economic repercussions, particularly within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. This study critically examines the policy responses designed to mitigate the adverse social consequences of subsidy removal and evaluates their effectiveness in alleviating economic hardship and promoting social welfare among residents. Guided by the Liberalization Theory, the study employed a survey research design that integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches through the use of structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. A multi-stage sampling procedure was utilized, combining cluster and simple random techniques to select participants from four (4) purposively chosen Area Councils in the FCT. The sample comprised 400 residents who completed the questionnaire including six (6) officials representing key institutions, via: The Ministry of Petroleum, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the Trade Union Congress (TUC), and the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW). Additionally, interviews were conducted with officials from the Ministry of Petroleum and the National Youth Council to provide institutional perspectives. Descriptive analysis was applied to interpret the data and identify prevalent trends. Empirical findings indicate that 94.5% of respondents were unaware of existing governmental initiatives aimed at cushioning the effects of subsidy removal. Furthermore, 71.6% reported significant deterioration in living standards, while 92.3% expressed dissatisfaction with the non-accessibility of relief interventions. The results underscore the inadequacy of current social protection strategies and the need for comprehensive policy reforms to enhance economic resilience and equitable welfare distribution. The study

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recommends that government prioritize the establishment of a functional and affordable public transportation network. Strategic investment in mass transit systems such as buses and water transport would substantially reduce the cost burden of fuel on citizens and contribute to sustainable socio-economic development within the FCT.

Keywords: Fuel Subsidy Removal, Socio-Economic Impact, Government Intervention, Policy Measures, Public Awareness, Mass Transit System and Poverty Alleviation.

Introduction

The removal of fuel subsidy remains one of the most controversial policy reforms in Nigeria's history, sparking heated debate among policymakers, scholars, and the public. Initially introduced in the 1970s to stabilize domestic petroleum prices and shield citizens from global oil price shocks, the subsidy was intended as a pro-poor intervention. However, decades later, it evolved into a politically sensitive and fiscally burdensome policy. Evans, Nwaogwugwu, Vincent, Wale-Awe, Mesagan and Ojapinwa, (2023) traced its origins to post-independence economic management, noting that despite Nigeria's status as Africa's largest oil producer, the country's dependence on imported refined products due to weak refining capacity (Itumo and Onyejiuba, 2019) rendered the subsidy system unsustainable. What began as an economic cushion soon became a source of corruption, inefficiency, and massive fiscal leakages. Successive governments attempted to reform or remove the subsidy, but such efforts were repeatedly met with public resistance. The most notable instance occurred in 2012 when President Goodluck Jonathan's administration announced its removal, triggering widespread protests and a partial reinstatement of the policy (Umeji and Eleanya, 2021; Shagali and Yusuf, 2022). These events exposed public distrust toward government reforms perceived as favoring elites while deepening citizens' hardship. The issue resurfaced between 2019 and 2024 under Presidents Muhammadu Buhari and Bola Tinubu, whose administrations argued that subsidy removal was vital to redirect national resources toward education, health, and infrastructure. By 2021, the government was spending over ₦1.4 trillion annually on fuel subsidies an amount deemed unsustainable amid high national debt and dwindling oil revenues. Corruption within the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and inflated fuel import figures further weakened public confidence.

Shagali and Yusuf (2022) and Omotosho (2020) highlighted that both domestic fiscal pressure and external influence especially from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank pushed Nigeria toward subsidy removal. These international institutions argued that subsidies disproportionately benefited the wealthy and encouraged economic inefficiency. The 2023 removal, therefore, reflected not only internal fiscal necessity but also Nigeria's alignment with global neoliberal reform agendas. Nonetheless, the policy's implementation generated widespread social and economic distress. Ozili and Obiora (2023) report that low-income households lost an average of ₦5,700 in monthly income, while Lawal and Mahmoud (2023) estimated that over seven million Nigerians could fall into poverty as a direct consequence. The situation was especially volatile in Abuja, where protests, strikes, and civil unrest erupted following the 29 May 2023 announcement (Taiwo-Obalonye & Nnamani, 2023). Citizens decried the sharp rise in transportation costs and food prices, viewing the reform as an additional burden amid declining living standards. Although the government proposed palliative measures—such as conditional cash transfers and transport subsidies these interventions were poorly implemented and inadequate (Ogunode, Ahmed & Olugbenga, 2023). Overall, the removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria illustrates the tension between economic rationality and social justice, as Udoh (2025) observed that one

of the major challenges confronting Nigeria as a nation is poverty, which remains a pervasive obstacle to sustainable development and social stability. The subsidy removal reform was expected to free fiscal resources and improve transparency, it simultaneously deepened hardship for vulnerable groups. Understanding public resistance, particularly in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, is therefore crucial to assessing how macroeconomic policy decisions can generate socio-political backlash in an evolving democratic context.

Statement of the Problem

The removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria remains one of the most controversial policy decisions in the nation's recent history. Implemented in May 2023 by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the policy aimed to reduce government expenditure and promote fiscal sustainability. However, while the government presented it as a necessary reform to redirect resources toward development projects, its immediate effects have been overwhelmingly negative, particularly for residents of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Fuel prices surged dramatically reportedly reaching up to ₦1,000 per litre in some areas triggering sharp increases in transportation costs, food prices, and general inflation. Consequently, the cost of living in Abuja rose significantly, reducing the purchasing power of low- and middle-income households. Many residents have struggled to afford basic necessities, while small and medium enterprises (SMEs) faced higher operational costs due to increased fuel expenses for generators and logistics. As businesses passed these costs to consumers, inflationary pressures deepened further, worsening economic hardship (Oyero, 2023). The policy has also sparked widespread public discontent and protests, as citizens criticized the government's inadequate palliative measures and lack of effective social safety nets to cushion the impact (MPRA, 2023). Although the government insists that savings from subsidy removal will be invested in infrastructure, healthcare, and education, there is limited evidence of tangible benefits so far. The removal has therefore exposed the tension between fiscal reform and social welfare, raising concerns about inequality and governance capacity. In essence, while fuel subsidy removal holds long-term potential for economic stability, its short-term socio-economic consequences rising inflation, business strain, and reduced living standards underscore the urgent need for effective policy interventions to protect vulnerable citizens and ensure equitable economic outcomes (Onyekakeyah, 2023).

Research Questions

The questions guiding this research are as follows:

i. What are the reasons for the removal of fuel subsidy by the Nigerian federal government?
ii. What are the effects of the removal of fuel subsidy on residents in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?
iii. What measures have been adopted by government in curbing the effects of the removal of fuel subsidy on residents in Abuja?
iv. How effective and helpful have the measures been on health, transportation, social wellbeing and food security?

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective is to identify, analyse and assess the measures adopted to cushion the social impact of fuel subsidy removal in Abuja. The specific objectives include:

i. To identify the reasons for the removal of fuel subsidy by the Nigerian federal government in Abuja.
ii. To examine the effect of the removal of fuel subsidy on residents living in Abuja

iii. To assess measures adopted by Government in curbing effects of the removal of fuel subsidy on residents in Abuja; and
iv. To discuss how effective and helpful, the measures have been on health, transportation, social wellbeing and food security in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

Significance of the Study

This study is of great importance as it highlights the far-reaching implications of fuel subsidy removal on Nigeria's socio-economic landscape. The research underscores how removal of subsidies often results in sharp increases in fuel prices, leading to higher costs of goods and services. Such inflationary pressures tend to hit the low- and middle-income groups, the hardest, aggravating poverty and inequality. Although the policy may enable the government to channel resources toward developmental initiatives such as infrastructure and social services, it also risks provoking public dissatisfaction if not properly managed or accompanied by effective palliative measures. The findings aim to expose this delicate balance between economic reform and social welfare, offering insights into the consequences of subsidy removal on living standards and public sentiment. Furthermore, the study serves multiple beneficiaries, including policymakers, scholars, and citizens. For government authorities, the research provides evidence-based guidance on how to implement fiscal reforms with minimal social disruption while maintaining public trust. For researchers and educationists, it serves as a resource for deepening knowledge of subsidy-related issues and a foundation for future academic inquiry. For the general populace, the study enhances understanding of the political and economic dimensions of subsidy removal, fostering greater civic awareness. Ultimately, it contributes to ongoing discussions on how Nigeria can achieve sustainable economic reform without compromising social stability.

Literature and Empirical Review

A fuel subsidy is a government policy designed to reduce the price of fuel for consumers through direct financial assistance to suppliers or reductions in taxes and levies (IEA, 2021). The primary aim is to cushion citizens from high international oil prices, promote economic stability, and enhance social welfare (Global Subsidies Initiative, 2023). Subsidies may be explicit directly reflected in government budgets or implicit, as seen in controlled pricing systems. Scholars such as Burgess and Stern (1993) and Coady, Parry, Sears and Shang (2015) described fuel subsidies as mechanisms that lower fuel prices below market equilibrium, often creating financial burdens on public expenditure. Similarly, Arezki and Brueckner (2015) defined subsidies as revenue losses incurred when governments sell fuel below market prices, while the OECD (2019) regarded fuel subsidy as fiscal instruments that make fuel more affordable for consumers. Fuel subsidies have been justified as tools to promote social equity and economic growth by reducing living costs and supporting low-income households. According to OPEC (2022), subsidized fuel has played a crucial role in reducing energy poverty in developing economies. In addition, governments often use subsidies as political instruments to gain support or prevent social unrest, as observed in Nigeria during subsidy removal protests in 2012 and 2023 (Ijaseun, 2023). Subsidies also serve as indirect economic stimuli, lowering production and transportation costs to enhance industrial productivity and market competitiveness (UNDP, 2021). However, despite these benefits, the fiscal and environmental consequences of subsidies are significant. The IMF (2021) reported that subsidies often lead to large budget deficits, reduced funding for essential services, and an overreliance on fossil fuels. Furthermore, wealthier households tend to benefit disproportionately since they consume more energy (Transparency International, 2023).

In recent years, the global debate has shifted toward the gradual removal of fuel subsidies due to their unsustainable financial and environmental costs. The International Energy Agency (2022) estimated global fuel subsidies at over $1 trillion in 2022 funds that could have supported renewable energy or social infrastructure. The World Bank (2021) and UNFCCC (2023) emphasised that subsidies hinder energy transitions and exacerbate climate change through increased fossil fuel consumption. Consequently, countries such as Egypt, India, and members of the European Union have initiated phased reforms, redirecting subsidy funds to social protection programs and clean energy investments (European Commission, 2023). However, such reforms often provoke public resistance, especially where safety nets are weak. For instance, Nigeria's subsidy removal efforts in 2022 triggered widespread protests due to rising living costs (Al Jazeera, 2022). Historically, Nigeria's fuel subsidy originated in the 1970s as a measure to make fuel affordable, but rising global oil prices and systemic corruption have rendered it unsustainable. Successive governments have attempted to reform or remove the subsidy, often facing backlash from the populace. The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, for example, announced subsidy removal in 2016, sparking intense public criticism and demonstrations in Abuja and other urban centers. Despite the short-term challenges, economists argue that ending fuel subsidies could free up fiscal resources for development and promote more efficient energy consumption. Yet, to ensure public acceptance, such reforms must be gradual, transparent, and accompanied by compensatory measures such as cash transfers or public transportation support to mitigate adverse social impacts.

The removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria represents one of the most significant economic reforms in the country's recent history, driven by the need to ensure fiscal sustainability, curb corruption, and promote market efficiency. Initially introduced to protect citizens from volatile global oil prices and make fuel affordable, the subsidy system became financially unsustainable due to rising global prices, economic recession, and declining government revenue (IEA, 2022; Onyekakeyah, 2023). By 2021, Nigeria spent over ₦1 trillion annually on subsidies funds that could have been redirected to critical sectors such as infrastructure, health, and education (Evans, Evans, Nwaogwugwu, Vincent, Wale-Awe, Mesagan & Ojapinwa, 2023a). The scheme was also plagued by widespread corruption, with inflated claims and fuel smuggling benefitting elites rather than ordinary Nigerians (Eze, 2020). Consequently, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration removed the subsidy in 2023 to liberalize the oil sector, encourage private investment, and reduce fiscal deficits (Chukwu, 2023). Supported by international institutions like the IMF and World Bank, the policy aimed to redirect savings to targeted social welfare programmes such as conditional cash transfers for vulnerable households (Adebayo, 2023). Although the removal has caused short-term inflation and hardship, it is viewed as a crucial step toward achieving long-term economic stability and transparency in Nigeria's energy and fiscal systems (Emodi & Boo, 2015).

Fuel subsidies, though intended to stabilize fuel prices and support citizens, have posed major fiscal and socio-economic challenges for Nigeria. Their removal has triggered inflation, increased transportation and living costs, and sparked public protests, particularly in Abuja, where citizens and labour unions have expressed discontent over the government's handling of the reform. While the policy aims to reduce fiscal pressure and attract investment into the energy sector, it has disproportionately affected low- and middle-income earners, intensifying inequality and public distrust in governance. Moreover, the removal has highlighted broader systemic issues such as unemployment, corruption, and

weak infrastructure, prompting civic movements and calls for inclusive economic reforms. Despite its potential long-term benefits for fiscal sustainability, the policy's short-term impact underscores the need for better social protection mechanisms to cushion vulnerable populations (Ozili & Obiora, 2023; World Bank, 2022). Although numerous scholars have examined the implications of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria (Olomola & Adejumo, 2016; Raji, Mohammed, Sulaiman, Adeshina, Abdulbaqi, Joseph & Raji 2018; Sodeeq, Monsuru, Alabi, & Abang, 2016; Ikena & Oluka, 2023), it has been observed that most of these studies lack a sociological interpretation of the issue. While existing research provides broad analyses of the economic and policy dimensions of subsidy removal, few have conducted sector-specific assessments, particularly regarding government interventions aimed at cushioning its social effects. Most prior studies have focused primarily on the general economic impact and its influence on public project delivery, leaving a gap in understanding the long-term social consequences and citizens' responses to government mitigation measures. Specifically, there is a paucity of literature assessing the effectiveness of interventions designed to alleviate the adverse social impacts of fuel subsidy removal within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria. This study, therefore, aims to address this gap by providing a sociological perspective and evaluating the measures implemented to reduce the social burden associated with subsidy removal.

Theoretical Framework

Basic Needs Theory and Liberalization Theory were suitable for the study. Abraham Maslow's Basic Needs Theory, first introduced in his 1943 work *A Theory of Human Motivation*, provides a hierarchical framework for understanding human motivation and behavior. The theory posits that individuals are motivated to fulfill needs in a structured sequence, beginning with basic physiological requirements such as food, water, shelter, and rest before progressing to higher-level needs like safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Each level of the hierarchy represents a stage of human development where unmet needs can hinder motivation and psychological well-being. Once physiological and safety needs are satisfied, individuals typically seek social connection through love and belonging, followed by esteem needs involving recognition, respect, and achievement. At the peak of the hierarchy is self-actualization the desire to achieve one's full potential, creativity, and purpose in life. The theory has broad applications across psychology, education, economics, and organizational management. In educational contexts, it explains why students facing hunger or insecurity struggle academically, while in the workplace, it underscores the importance of fair compensation, safety, and belonging in fostering productivity (McLeod, 2018). On a broader level, governments and development agencies draw on Maslow's framework to design social policies that address poverty, healthcare, and education, recognizing that fulfilling citizens' basic needs supports social stability and economic growth. However, Maslow's model has faced criticism for its rigidity and cultural limitations, as individuals may not always follow the same linear order of needs, and structural inequalities can prevent some from advancing up the hierarchy despite motivation. Nonetheless, the Basic Needs Theory remains influential for its holistic perspective on human motivation, illustrating how the fulfillment of fundamental needs forms the basis for emotional well-being, social participation, and personal fulfillment.

Liberalisation theory, rooted in classical liberalism and expanded by neoliberal thought, emphasises reducing government control in favour of market-driven mechanisms to enhance efficiency, competition, and innovation. Originating from the ideas of economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo, the theory advocates for free markets, privatisation,

deregulation, and open international trade as the path to economic growth and societal progress. Institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organisation (WTO) have further promoted liberalisation through structural adjustment programs in developing nations. The theory argues that removing market distortions such as subsidies and tariffs leads to more efficient resource allocation, stimulates investment, and promotes sustainable growth. However, critics contend that liberalisation can exacerbate inequality, environmental degradation, and financial instability, especially in developing economies with weak institutions or limited social protections. Applied to the removal of the fuel subsidy in Abuja, liberalisation theory suggests that removing subsidies enables market forces to determine fuel prices, improving efficiency and reducing government expenditure. This shift aligns with the theory's emphasis on reduced state intervention and enhanced competition, potentially attracting private investment in the energy sector. Nonetheless, the immediate social consequences include rising living costs, public resistance, and perceptions of inequality. It highlights the challenges of implementing liberalization policies in contexts with fragile social safety nets. In Abuja, such resistance often manifests in protests and demands for government action. While liberalisation promises long-term benefits through efficient resource allocation and economic restructuring, its success depends on complementary measures such as targeted social programmes and public trust in governance to mitigate short-term hardships and ensure equitable outcomes for all citizens.

Method and Materials

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, deemed appropriate because it allows for identifying characteristics, behaviours, and attitudes of a large population without manipulating variables (Creswell, 2014). The design enabled the researcher to gather data that reflect the opinions and experiences of Abuja residents regarding the impact of fuel subsidy removal and related government interventions. The study area was Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria, which had an estimated population of 4,026,000 in 2024 (NPC, 2024). Abuja was selected due to its significance as Nigeria's administrative and political center, hosting key ministries and parastatals, and representing a diverse socio-economic mix. The city's rapid growth, urban expansion, and dependence on fuel for transportation make it ideal for assessing the socio-economic effects of subsidy removal. The population size of the study comprised all residents in Abuja across its six area councils and sixty-two wards (INEC, 2023). The sample size of 400 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula at a 5% margin of error, ensuring fair representation of the total population. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique, combining cluster, simple random, purposive, and convenience sampling to ensure inclusivity and depth. Four of the six area councils were selected through open balloting, and respondents were proportionally drawn from each. Additionally, purposive sampling was used to select key informants for interviews from institutions such as the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC), Ministry of Petroleum, NURTW, and the National Youth Council. Both primary and secondary data were utilized. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, while secondary data were obtained from books, journals, newspapers, and credible websites. The data collection method centered on field surveys and interviews conducted with selected respondents and officials. For data analysis, descriptive methods involving frequency counts, tables, and percentages were applied to quantitative data, while qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically and descriptively to extract insights relevant to the study objectives (Patton, 2015).

Findings

Socio – Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The Socio – Demographic Characteristics of Respondents that Participated in this study is summarised below

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Characteristics, N = 380

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18- 30	93	24.5%
	31-45	250	65.8%
	Above 45	37	9.7%
	Total	380	100%
Marital status	Single	147	39.5%
	Married	200	52.6%
	Divorced/widowed	33	7.9%
	Total	380	100%
Religious Affiliation	Christianity	195	51.3%
	Islam	175	46.1%
	Traditional Religion	10	2.6%
Qualification	FSLC	3	0.7%
	SSCE	31	8.2%
	OND/NCE	156	41.1%
	HND /BSc	153	40.3%
	MSc/PhD/MA	37	9.7%

Source: *Field Work, 2026*

The data in table 1 shows the respondents were classified based on age, marital status, religious affiliation and qualifications. In terms of age, 24.5% of the total respondents are between 18-30 years, 65.8% of total respondents fall within 31-45 years while the remaining 9.7% falls above 45 years old. This implies that the youth dominated the sample as regards the marital status of the respondents, analysis revealed that 39.5% are single, while 52.6% of total respondents are married, while 7.9% of the total respondents are divorced/widowed. This implies that majority of the respondents are married. The table also shows that 51.5% of the total respondents are Muslims, while 46.1 are Christians and the remaining 2.6% are traditionalists. This implies that majority of the respondents are Muslims.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Awareness of Government Interventions to Cushion the effect of Fuel Subsidy Removal, N = 380

Awareness?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	5.5%
No	359	94.5%
Total	380	100%

Source: *Field Work, 2026*

Table 2 shows the rate of awareness of government interventions toward cushioning the effect of fuel subsidy removal by respondents. Most of the respondents (94.5%) were not aware of the government interventions.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by the Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on daily living cost, N = 380

Level of Impact	Frequency	Percentage
No Impact	-	0%
Mild Impact	7	26.6%
Moderate Impact	101	26.6%
Severe Impact	272	71.6%

Source: *Field Work, 2026*

The above data evaluates the level of the impact of fuel subsidy removal on respondents daily living cost. From the responses, no respondent indicated that there was no impact, while only 1.8% of the respondents said that the impact was mild. 26.6% of respondents rated the impact as Moderate, whereas most (71.6%) said that it was severe. This implies that the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the living cost was relatively severe.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by effect of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Transportation Cost, N = 380

Effect on transport cost	Frequency	Percentage
YES	367	96.6%
NO	12	3.4%

Source: *Field Work, 2026*

Data shows respondents' views on fuel subsidy removal and its effects on transportation cost. Majority of the respondents (96.6%) agreed that fuel subsidy removal affected transportation cost. Only 3.4% asserted that fuel subsidy removal did not affect transportation cost. This implies that most respondents are of the view that fuel subsidy removal affected transportation cost.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Challenges faced since the removal of the fuel subsidy, N = 380

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Rising inflation on cost of living	72	18.9%
Increased unemployment and job losses	69	18.2%
Soaring fuel prices	100	26.3%
Lack of trust in government	62	16.3%
High cost of transportation	77	20.3%

Source: *Field Work, 2026*

Tables 5 depicts the challenges faced by citizens in Abuja FCT since the removal of the fuel subsidy. The table shows 18.9% of the total respondents' state that rising inflation and cost of living is a major challenge, while 18.2% claimed that subsidy removal leads to increased unemployment and job losses. Soaring fuel Prices is a major challenge that was pointed out by 26.3% of the respondents, whereas lack of trust in government was cited by 16.3, and high cost of transportation was listed 20.3%. This implies that soaring fuel prices is the major challenge the challenges faced since the removal of the fuel subsidy. This can hinder their ability to affect the prices of goods and services in the country.

Table 6: Success rate of government intervention to cushion the impact of removal of fuel subsidy, N = 380

Level of intervention	Successful	Fair	Limited	Unsuccessful	Mean $\bar{x}$
Minimum wage increase for workers	21 (5.53%)	30 (7.9%)	289 (76.0%)	40 (10.5%)	2.08
Public transportation subsidies successful	11 (2.9%)	31 (8.1%)	62 (16.3%)	276 (72.6%)	1.41
Agricultural and food security programmes	9 (2.3%)	37 (9.7%)	57 (15? %)	277 (72.9%)	1.42
Distribution of palliatives	21 (5.53%)	29 (7.6%)	49 (12.9%)	281 (73.9%)	1.45
Reduction of import tariffs on essential goods	10 (2.6%)	11 (2.9%)	32 (8.4%)	327 (86.1%)	1.22

Source: *Field Work, 2026*

Table 6 shows respondents' rating of government intervention to cushion the impact of fuel subsidy removal. The intervention success was assessed with respect to increase in minimum wage, public transportation, agricultural and food security programmes distribution of palliatives and reduction of import tariffs and essential goods. In terms of minimum wage increase, the findings disclosed that majority of respondents (76%) rated this measure as having limited success, suggesting that while the wage increase was acknowledged, it failed to sufficiently offset rising living costs. Similar to transportation, most respondents (72.9%) found this measure ineffective, with a very small success rate of just 2.9%. Despite being the most visible measure, palliative distribution was rated unsuccessful by nearly 74% of respondents, indicating serious concerns over accessibility, equity, or corruption in the process. Reduction of import tariffs received the worst rating, with 86.1% of respondents viewing it as unsuccessful. The very low "successful" rating (2.6%) suggests that any benefits from tariff reduction have not translated into tangible relief for citizens. this implies that most measures implemented by government to cushion the effect of fuel subsidy removal were mostly unsuccessful. One of the most immediate consequences If government intervention failed at this rate to cushion these effects adequately, the cost of essential goods and services rises, reducing the purchasing power of citizens. Businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), may struggle with increased operational costs, leading to reduced productivity, job losses, and lower economic growth. Under a highest scale of 4, none of the mean rating by respondents was close to the average of 2. That suggests abysmal failure of all interventions adopted to cushion the effect of removal of fuel subsidy in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents by Suggested Measures to cushion the impact of fuel subsidy removal, N = 380

Measures	Frequency	Percentage
Subsidizing transport	200	52.6%
Strengthening Local Refining Capacity	30	7.9%
Expansion of Agricultural and Food Security Programs	29	7.6%
Promotion of Alternative Energy Sources	30	7.9%
Minimum Wage Adjustment and Social Welfare Programs	91	23.9%

Source: *Field Work, 2026*

Table 7 shows that 52.6% of the respondents suggested subsidizing transport as the best measure toward cushioning the impact of fuel subsidy removal, while 7.9% suggested subsidizing transport. Another 7.6% suggested strengthening local refining. Expansion of agricultural and food security programmes was suggested by 7.9%, whereas, minimum wage adjustment and social welfare programmes for workers was suggested by 23.9%. This implies that majority of the respondents suggested subsidizing transport toward cushioning the impact of fuel subsidy removal. While the government argues that subsidy removal is necessary for economic sustainability, the bottom-up imput as presented here, is the voice of the Respondents subsidising transport and minimum wage adjustment are rated higher by the people. These strategies, therefore can help cushion the impact of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that the removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria, announced by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in May 2023, resulted in a sharp and immediate rise in fuel prices, significantly affecting the cost of living, transportation, and general economic stability in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Findings indicate that the primary rationale for subsidy removal was the government's declining revenue, largely due to corruption, oil smuggling, exchange rate crises, and pressure from international financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. Although the government introduced several intervention measures such as palliatives, food distribution programs, and financial support schemes to cushion the social impact, most respondents reported that these initiatives were inadequately implemented. Issues such as delays in disbursement, political bias in beneficiary selection, and bureaucratic bottlenecks hindered the effectiveness of these measures. Consequently, many residents, particularly low-income earners, were excluded from accessing support, heightening their economic vulnerability.

The study further found that fuel subsidy removal led to a rapid increase in transportation costs, food prices, and inflation, intensifying the financial burden on households in the FCT. Respondents identified key challenges including unemployment, rising inflation, loss of purchasing power, and a general mistrust in government's handling of the reform. Food inflation emerged as a critical concern, with many residents reporting that staple prices had more than doubled, leading to reduced food consumption and lower

nutritional quality. The findings align with earlier studies by Raji, Mohammed, Sulaiman, Adeshina, Abdulbaqi, Joseph and Raji, (2018) and Sodeeq (2024), which emphasized that subsidy removal adversely impacts the living standards of vulnerable populations. The study concludes that the government's interventions have been largely insufficient in mitigating the economic hardship caused by the policy. It recommends increased investment in affordable public transportation systems, targeted palliative distribution, improved transparency in fund disbursement, and stronger communication strategies to rebuild public trust and ensure that future subsidy reforms are inclusive, equitable, and sustainable.

Conclusion

The study assessed the impact of fuel subsidy removal on residents of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, following the Nigerian government's decision in May 2023. The removal, driven by corruption in the oil sector and dwindling government revenue, led to sharp increases in fuel prices and living costs, disproportionately affecting low- and middle-income households. Guided by the Liberalization Theory, the study found that while the policy aimed to enhance fiscal efficiency, its implementation overlooked social welfare concerns. Government interventions such as cash transfers, wage increases, and transport subsidies proved largely ineffective due to poor coordination and limited reach. The findings revealed that rising inflation, unemployment, and declining public trust remained major challenges, with temporary relief measures failing to alleviate widespread hardship. The study recommended that the government invest in affordable public transportation, strengthen policy transparency, and ensure better management of subsidy savings to cushion economic shocks and promote inclusive, sustainable development. Fuel remains a vital resource to the global economy, serving as the main source of energy for over 90% of vehicles in Nigeria and powering many households and small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs). However, the removal of fuel subsidy and the consequent sharp rise in the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) have severely worsened the socio-economic conditions of Nigerians, particularly the working class and rural dwellers. Many rural communities can no longer transport their goods to urban markets, while small businesses struggle to sustain operations due to increased operating costs. The surge in fuel prices has led to higher living expenses, business closures, and heightened poverty levels. Additionally, the economic strain caused by the subsidy removal has exacerbated unemployment, which may in turn contribute to rising crime rates, especially in vulnerable rural areas.

Recommendations

Based on its findings, the study recommends as follows:

i. This study recommends that government should critically re-evaluate its decision to fuel subsidy removal. Maintaining a partial or well-targeted subsidy system could help improve the living standards of vulnerable and rural populations while fostering sustainable economic development at the grassroots level.
ii. The government should develop an effective communication framework that clearly explains the rationale behind subsidy removal, its potential long-term benefits, and the short-term economic challenges citizens may face. This transparency will help build public trust and encourage cooperation in policy implementation.
iii. A comprehensive review of current government intervention programmes should be undertaken to assess their effectiveness in addressing the socio-economic impact of subsidy removal. Emphasis should be placed on improving access to essential

infrastructure, including roads, healthcare services, quality education, and affordable credit facilities for rural farmers.

iv. The government should prioritize investment in mass transit infrastructure and subsidize transportation fares across Abuja, while taking cognizant steps to adjust minimum wage for workers. Such measures would ease the mobility challenges caused by higher fuel prices and help reduce the financial burden on residents, particularly low-income earners.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study makes significant contributions to the fields of Industrial Sociology and Sociology of Development by providing empirical insights into the socio-economic implications of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria, with particular focus on the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. It enhances understanding of how government policies and interventions affect the welfare and adaptive strategies of urban residents in times of economic reform. The research contributes to existing scholarship by revealing the effectiveness and limitations of government responses aimed at cushioning the adverse effects of subsidy removal. Furthermore, it provides a framework for evaluating policy responsiveness, emphasizing the need for socially inclusive and development-oriented strategies to improve living conditions and promote economic stability among residents of the FCT.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: August 15, 2026 **Accepted**: September 11, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026

Citation: Bature, Mustapha A. & Isaac, Akuva (2026). "Impact Of Community Policing in the Fight Against Banditry in North Western Nigeria: Islamic Perspective" *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 57-70.

Article **Open Access**

IMPACT OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN THE FIGHT AGAINST BANDITRY IN NORTH WESTERN NIGERIA: ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Banditry has become one of the most persistent and destructive security challenges confronting Northwestern Nigeria, resulting in widespread killings, kidnappings, cattle rustling, displacement of rural populations, and the erosion of socioeconomic stability. Although conventional security operations remain indispensable, their limited success has underscored the need for complementary approaches such as community policing, which emphasizes collaboration between security agencies and local communities in crime prevention, intelligence gathering, and peacebuilding. This study examines the impact of community policing in combating banditry in Northwestern Nigeria from an Islamic perspective by exploring its conceptual foundations, assessing its effectiveness, and evaluating its compatibility with Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh al-Siyāsah) and the objectives of the *Sharīʿah* (Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah). Adopting a qualitative doctrinal research design, the study relies on library research and documentary analysis of classical Islamic sources, government publications, security reports, and contemporary scholarly literature. The findings reveal that while community policing has enhanced local intelligence, community participation, and security collaboration, its effectiveness has been constrained by inadequate funding, institutional weaknesses, political interference, poor logistics, and insufficient public trust. The study further demonstrates that Islamic principles including justice (ʿadl), public trust (amānah), consultation (shūrā), social solidarity (takaful), collective responsibility, and the preservation of life (ḥifẓ al-nafs) provide a comprehensive ethical and legal framework for strengthening community-based security governance. It concludes that integrating professional policing with community participation, traditional institutions, religious leadership, and Islamic ethical values offers a more sustainable strategy for

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combating banditry, enhancing public safety, and promoting lasting peace and security in Northwestern Nigeria.

Keywords: Community Policing; Armed Banditry; Northwestern Nigeria; *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah;* Islamic Security Governance.

Introduction

Security remains one of the fundamental responsibilities of every government, as peace, stability, and the protection of lives and property constitute the foundation upon which sustainable socioeconomic development is built. In recent years, however, Northwestern Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented escalation of armed banditry characterized by mass killings, kidnappings for ransom, cattle rustling, destruction of farmlands, displacement of rural communities, and widespread disruption of economic and social activities. The persistence of these criminal activities has exposed the limitations of conventional security approaches and underscored the need for complementary, community-driven strategies capable of enhancing intelligence gathering, crime prevention, and public trust. Community policing has consequently emerged as an important security framework that promotes active collaboration between law enforcement agencies and local communities in identifying security threats, preventing crime, and maintaining public order. By encouraging partnership, mutual trust, information sharing, and collective responsibility, community policing seeks to bridge the gap between security institutions and the people they serve. In the context of Northwestern Nigeria, where local knowledge and community participation are indispensable for effective security operations, this approach offers significant prospects for addressing the multifaceted challenge of banditry.

From an Islamic perspective, the preservation of peace and security is a collective obligation rooted in the higher objectives of the *Sharīʿah* (Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah), particularly the preservation of life (ḥifẓ al-nafs), property (ḥifẓ al-māl), religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), intellect (ḥifẓ al-ʿaql), and lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl). Islamic teachings emphasize justice (ʿadl), public trust (amānah), consultation (shūrā), social solidarity (takaful), and collective responsibility in safeguarding society against injustice and criminality. These principles provide a comprehensive ethical and legal framework for promoting community participation in security governance while ensuring that law enforcement is guided by fairness, accountability, and respect for human dignity. Against this backdrop, this chapter examines the impact of community policing in the fight against banditry in Northwestern Nigeria from an Islamic perspective. It explores the conceptual foundations of community policing, analyses the nature and drivers of banditry in the region, evaluates the effectiveness and challenges of community policing initiatives, and demonstrates how Islamic principles of governance and social responsibility can strengthen community-based security mechanisms. The chapter argues that integrating professional policing with traditional institutions, religious leadership, and Islamic ethical values provides a more holistic, sustainable, and culturally relevant strategy for combating banditry and promoting lasting peace, security, and social cohesion in Northwestern Nigeria.

Community Policing

Community policing has emerged as one of the most significant paradigms in contemporary policing and public security administration. Unlike the traditional reactive policing model, which primarily focuses on responding to crimes after their occurrence, community policing emphasizes proactive crime prevention through collaboration between law enforcement agencies and members of the communities they serve. The philosophy is founded on the

premise that public safety cannot be achieved solely through the efforts of security agencies but requires active community participation in identifying, preventing, and addressing criminal activities. The concept gained prominence during the late twentieth century following widespread criticism of conventional policing methods, particularly their inability to address the root causes of crime and their limited engagement with local populations. According to Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, community policing is "a philosophy and organizational strategy that promotes a new partnership between the people and the police" with the objective of jointly identifying, prioritizing, and solving contemporary problems such as crime, fear of crime, social disorder, and neighbourhood decay (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux 5). This definition underscores that community policing extends beyond routine law enforcement to encompass trust-building, conflict resolution, and collaborative governance.

Similarly, Skogan argues that community policing represents a decentralization of policing functions whereby officers work closely with local residents, community leaders, civil society organizations, and traditional institutions to develop localized solutions to security challenges (Skogan 27). Goldstein further explains that effective community policing requires problem-oriented policing, where police officers identify recurring patterns of crime, analyse their underlying causes, and formulate long-term preventive measures rather than relying exclusively on arrests and prosecutions (Goldstein 33). Nigeria officially adopted community policing as part of broader police reform initiatives aimed at improving police-public relations and addressing rising insecurity. The Nigeria Police Force conceptualizes community policing as a collaborative partnership in which citizens become active participants in crime prevention rather than passive recipients of security services. This approach recognizes that members of local communities possess valuable knowledge regarding criminal networks, suspicious movements, and emerging security threats that may not be readily available to security agencies. The adoption of community policing became increasingly important following the proliferation of armed banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, cattle rustling, communal conflicts, and farmer-herder violence across different regions of Nigeria. In Northwestern Nigeria particularly, vast forests, porous borders, difficult terrains, and inadequate security presence have enabled criminal groups to establish operational bases beyond the effective reach of conventional law enforcement. Community policing therefore provides opportunities for local intelligence gathering, early warning systems, confidence building, and collaborative responses to emerging threats.

Nevertheless, several scholars caution that community policing should not be romanticized as a universal solution to insecurity. Alemika argues that inadequate institutional reforms, political interference, poor funding, corruption, lack of professional training, and persistent public distrust continue to undermine its effectiveness in Nigeria (Alemika 479). Similarly, Hills contends that community policing cannot succeed where police institutions lack legitimacy or where citizens fear victimization after providing intelligence (Hills 92). These observations suggest that successful community policing depends not merely on policy declarations but on institutional integrity, public confidence, adequate resources, and effective accountability mechanisms. Within the context of combating banditry, community policing assumes greater significance because armed criminal groups often exploit local geographical knowledge, social networks, and intelligence gaps. Community participation enables security agencies to obtain timely information concerning the movement of bandits, suspicious activities, illegal arms trafficking, and planned attacks. Such intelligence significantly enhances preventive policing while reducing

dependence on purely military operations. From an Islamic governance perspective, the philosophy of community policing resonates strongly with the principles of *shūrā* (consultation), *taʿāwun* (mutual cooperation), *amānah* (public trust), *ʿadl* (justice), and collective responsibility. Islamic civilization historically institutionalized community participation in maintaining public order through the institution of Ḥisbah, neighbourhood cooperation, and communal accountability. Thus, modern community policing may be viewed as compatible with Islamic principles that encourage cooperation in righteousness and prohibit cooperation in wrongdoing, as expressed in the Qur'an: "Help one another in righteousness and piety, but do not help one another in sin and aggression" (Qur'an 5:2).

Armed Banditry

Banditry constitutes one of the oldest forms of organized violent crime in human societies. Historically, the term referred to groups of armed outlaws operating outside state authority who engaged in robbery, extortion, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and attacks on travellers. Contemporary scholarship, however, recognizes armed banditry as a complex form of organized criminality involving highly mobile and heavily armed groups operating primarily in areas characterized by weak governance, limited state presence, and fragile security institutions. The United Nations generally describes banditry as organized criminal violence directed against civilians for economic gain through robbery, kidnapping, extortion, destruction of property, and unlawful seizure of resources. Unlike ideological insurgencies, armed banditry is primarily motivated by financial incentives, although political, ethnic, and social grievances may also contribute to its emergence. In the Nigerian context, armed banditry has evolved beyond ordinary rural criminality into a sophisticated security crisis involving heavily armed groups capable of attacking villages, military formations, highways, schools, markets, and places of worship. Akinyetun defines banditry as organized violence perpetrated by armed groups engaging in cattle rustling, kidnapping, village raids, sexual violence, destruction of livelihoods, and large-scale killings primarily for material benefits (Akinyetun 148). This definition reflects the multidimensional nature of banditry presently confronting Northwestern Nigeria. Environmental degradation also plays an important role. Desertification, climate change, shrinking grazing lands, and competition over scarce natural resources have intensified conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. While not all resource conflicts result in banditry, unresolved disputes have created environments in which organized criminal groups exploit existing grievances to recruit members and expand their operations.

Another important factor is the presence of expansive forests such as the Rugu, Kamuku, Kuyanbana, Falgore, and Sububu forests, which provide safe havens for criminal gangs operating across state boundaries. These forests enable bandits to evade security operations while maintaining logistical networks for arms procurement, hostage detention, and illegal trade. The consequences of armed banditry extend far beyond immediate physical violence. Thousands of people have been killed, millions displaced, agricultural production disrupted, educational institutions closed, and local economies severely weakened. Rural populations increasingly abandon farming activities due to fear of attacks, thereby threatening food security and deepening poverty across affected communities. From an Islamic perspective, armed banditry falls within the category of *ḥirābah* one of the gravest offences against society. Classical Muslim jurists define *ḥirābah* as armed aggression involving intimidation, murder, robbery, kidnapping, destruction of property, or spreading fear among peaceful populations. The Qur'an explicitly condemns such crimes, “Indeed, the punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive to spread

corruption in the land is that they be killed, or crucified, or have their hands and feet cut off on opposite sides, or be exiled from the land…" (Qur'an 5:33).

Classical jurists including Ibn Qudāmah, al-Māwardī, and Ibn Taymiyyah regarded *ḥirābah* as an assault against public security and social order because it violates the fundamental objectives of the *Sharīʿah*, particularly the preservation of life, property, and public peace. Consequently, combating armed banditry is not merely a governmental responsibility but also a religious obligation aimed at protecting society from injustice, fear, and corruption (fasād fī al-arḍ). Although military operations remain necessary in confronting heavily armed criminal groups, many scholars argue that sustainable solutions require comprehensive strategies addressing governance failures, poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, intelligence deficiencies, and community participation. Accordingly, community policing represents an important preventive mechanism capable of complementing conventional security operations by strengthening trust, facilitating intelligence gathering, and promoting collective responsibility for public safety.

Security Governance

Security governance has become a central concept in contemporary security studies due to the evolving nature of security threats and the recognition that governments alone cannot effectively guarantee public safety. Traditional security paradigms focused primarily on the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force and the protection of territorial sovereignty. However, the emergence of transnational crime, terrorism, cybercrime, armed banditry, insurgency, environmental conflicts, and communal violence has broadened the understanding of security beyond military defence to encompass collaborative governance involving multiple actors. According to Krahmann, security governance refers to the structures, institutions, rules, and processes through which public and private actors collectively manage security challenges at local, national, regional, and international levels (Krahmann 14). Rather than viewing security exclusively as the responsibility of the state, security governance recognizes the contributions of law enforcement agencies, traditional authorities, local communities, civil society organizations, religious institutions, private security providers, and international partners in maintaining public order and protecting citizens.

The concept is closely associated with the theory of "network governance," which emphasizes cooperation, shared responsibility, and coordination among diverse stakeholders. Johnston and Shearing argue that modern security provision increasingly depends upon partnerships among governmental and non-governmental institutions because contemporary security threats are multidimensional and cannot be addressed effectively through centralized policing alone (Johnston and Shearing 31). This collaborative approach has become particularly relevant in developing countries where state institutions often face resource limitations, inadequate personnel, logistical constraints, and governance deficits. The notion of security governance also reflects the shift from state security to human security. The Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) redefined security as the protection of individuals from chronic threats such as violence, hunger, disease, poverty, environmental degradation, and political oppression (UNDP 22). Consequently, effective security governance encompasses not only crime control but also the creation of conditions that enable individuals and communities to live free from fear and want.

Within Africa, security governance has gained prominence because many countries continue to experience weak institutional capacity, porous borders, transnational organized

crime, communal conflicts, terrorism, and rural insecurity. Scholars such as Baker argue that effective security governance in African societies requires integrating formal state institutions with indigenous governance mechanisms, including traditional rulers, community vigilante groups, religious leaders, and customary dispute-resolution institutions (Baker 58). Such integration enhances local legitimacy, improves intelligence gathering, and strengthens public confidence in security institutions. In Nigeria, security governance has become increasingly important due to the complexity of contemporary security challenges, including insurgency in the Northeast, armed banditry in the Northwest, farmer-herder conflicts in the Middle Belt, separatist agitations in the Southeast, piracy in the Niger Delta, and urban criminality. The inability of conventional security institutions to address these diverse threats independently has led to renewed emphasis on collaborative security arrangements involving federal and state governments, traditional institutions, local communities, and civil society organizations.

Islamic Perspective on Public Security

Islam views security not merely as the absence of violence but as a comprehensive condition in which individuals enjoy protection of their religion, lives, intellect, property, dignity, and legitimate freedoms under a just system of governance. Consequently, maintaining public security is regarded as both a governmental obligation and a collective societal responsibility.. Allah (SWT) reminds the Quraysh of His favour by stating, “Who has fed them against hunger and made them safe from fear” (Qur'an 106:4). Likewise, Allah (SWT) declares, “Those who believe and do not mix their faith with wrongdoing—for them there is security, and they are rightly guided” (Qur'an 6:82). These verses demonstrate that security is not merely a political objective but a divine blessing closely connected with justice, righteousness, and obedience to Allah. Islamic political thought places the responsibility for maintaining public security upon legitimate authority. Classical jurists regarded the establishment of government (Imāmah) as indispensable because it protects religion, administers justice, safeguards public interests, prevents oppression, and preserves societal stability. Al-Māwardī explains that the primary objectives of political leadership include protecting the religion, administering justice, securing public order, defending territorial integrity, protecting life and property, and enforcing legal rights (Al-Māwardī 15). Similarly, Ibn Taymiyyah argues that governmental authority exists principally to establish justice and prevent corruption, noting that society cannot function without organized leadership capable of protecting public welfare (Ibn Taymiyyah 17).

One of the most comprehensive Islamic frameworks for understanding public security is the theory of *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* (Objectives of Islamic Law). According to Al-Ghazālī, the *Sharīʿah* seeks to preserve five essential values: religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), life (ḥifẓ al-nafs), intellect (ḥifẓ al-ʿaql), lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl), and property (ḥifẓ al-māl) (Al-Ghazālī 286). Contemporary scholars, including Al-Shāṭibī, further explain that these objectives form the foundation of Islamic public policy and governance because every law ultimately seeks to secure human welfare (maṣlaḥah) and prevent harm (mafsadah) (Al-Shāṭibī 8). The preservation of life (ḥifẓ al-nafs) is particularly relevant to contemporary security governance. The Qur'an unequivocally condemns unlawful killing, declaring, “Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption in the land it is as though he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves one life, it is as though he has saved all mankind” (Qur'an 5:32). This verse establishes the sanctity of human life as a fundamental principle of Islamic law and provides a strong ethical foundation for policies aimed at preventing murder, terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, and banditry. Islam further promotes public security through the principles of

justice (ʿadl), trustworthiness (amānah), consultation (shūrā), mutual cooperation (ta'āwun), and social solidarity (takāful). Justice represents the cornerstone of Islamic governance. Allah commands, “Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives, and forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and transgression” (Qur'an 16:90).

Similarly, public officials are instructed, “Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people, judge with justice” (Qur'an 4:58). These principles require security institutions to operate impartially, professionally, transparently, and within the limits of the law. The principle of shūrā (consultation) also reinforces community participation in public affairs. The Qur'an describes believers as those "whose affairs are conducted through mutual consultation" (Qur'an 42:38). Contemporary scholars interpret this principle as encouraging participatory governance, stakeholder engagement, and collective decision-making. Community policing therefore reflects an Islamic governance model by fostering cooperation between government authorities and citizens in maintaining public order. Islam equally emphasizes collective responsibility for preventing wrongdoing. The Prophet (SAW) stated, “Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue; and if he cannot, then with his heart and that is the weakest of faith” (Muslim). This Prophetic tradition establishes a moral obligation upon individuals and communities to contribute toward preventing crime and protecting society from harm while acting within lawful authority and ethical boundaries.

Historically, Islamic civilization institutionalized public security through the office of *Ḥisbah*, administered by the *Muḥtasib*, who supervised markets, protected public morality, prevented fraud, maintained public order, and safeguarded communal interests. Although the institution primarily addressed commercial ethics and public conduct, its broader objective was the preservation of societal welfare through preventive regulation rather than reactive punishment. Contemporary scholars frequently regard the *Ḥisbah* system as an early model of community-oriented governance because it encouraged public participation in promoting virtue and preventing societal harm. Within the context of Northwestern Nigeria, Islamic principles provide a strong normative foundation for community policing initiatives. The region's predominantly Muslim population shares common religious values that encourage justice, mutual assistance, communal responsibility, peaceful coexistence, and respect for lawful authority. Integrating these ethical principles into security governance may strengthen public trust, encourage voluntary intelligence sharing, reduce suspicion between security agencies and local communities, and enhance collective efforts against armed banditry. From the perspective of *Fiqh al-Siyāsah,* governments possess the legitimate authority to formulate security policies that protect public welfare, provided such measures remain consistent with justice, accountability, human dignity, and the objectives of the *Sharīʿah*. Consequently, community policing represents not merely an administrative innovation but also a practical expression of Islamic governance principles that prioritize cooperation, consultation, public trust, and collective responsibility in safeguarding society against violence, fear, and corruption.

Islamic Theory of *Ḥisbah* and *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*

From an Islamic perspective, public security is founded upon the complementary principles of *Ḥisbah* and *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah.* The institution of *Ḥisbah* historically functioned as a mechanism for promoting public welfare, preventing wrongdoing, supervising markets, protecting public morality, and maintaining social order. The *Muḥtasib* served as a public official responsible for ensuring justice, accountability, and adherence to Islamic ethical

standards through the implementation of the principle of *al-amr bi al-maʿrūf wa al-nahy ʿan al-munkar* (commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong) (Al-Māwardī 240; Ibn Taymiyyah 21). Closely related to *Ḥisbah* is the doctrine of Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, which represents the higher objectives of Islamic law. Classical scholars, particularly Al-Ghazālī and Al-Shāṭibī, identify the preservation of religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), life (ḥifẓ al-nafs), intellect (ḥifẓ al-'aql), lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl), and property (ḥifẓ al-māl) as the fundamental objectives that all legal and public policies should protect (Al-Ghazālī 286; Al-Shāṭibī 8). Armed banditry directly violates these objectives by threatening human life, destroying property, disrupting families, spreading fear, and undermining societal stability. The Islamic framework therefore provides a normative foundation for community policing by emphasizing justice (ʿadl), consultation (shūrā), public trust (amānah), social solidarity (takāful), and collective responsibility in safeguarding society. The Qur'an commands believers to "cooperate in righteousness and piety" (Qur'an 5:2), while the Prophet (peace be upon him) encouraged Muslims to prevent wrongdoing according to their ability (Muslim). These principles support collaborative security governance in which governments, traditional institutions, religious leaders, and community members collectively contribute to the preservation of peace and public safety.

Causes and Dynamics of Banditry in Northwestern Nigeria

Armed banditry has emerged as one of the gravest security challenges confronting Northwestern Nigeria, with its roots embedded in a complex interplay of socioeconomic, political, environmental, and institutional factors. Earlier manifestations of banditry were largely associated with cattle rustling and rural armed robbery; however, the phenomenon has evolved into a sophisticated criminal enterprise involving mass kidnappings, village raids, extortion, illegal taxation, sexual violence, and the destruction of livelihoods. Contemporary studies attribute this transformation to weak state institutions, poor governance, widespread poverty, youth unemployment, proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, porous international borders, and the availability of ungoverned forest spaces that provide safe havens for criminal groups (Ojo, Aina, and Oyewole; Ejiofor). Environmental degradation has equally intensified the crisis. Desertification, climate change, diminishing grazing reserves, and increasing competition over land and water resources have aggravated farmer-herder conflicts, creating conditions that criminal groups exploit for recruitment and expansion. Furthermore, inadequate policing, limited intelligence gathering, corruption, and weak judicial systems have undermined effective law enforcement, thereby encouraging impunity among bandit groups (Vande; Idowu and Arua 66). The dynamics of banditry are equally characterized by decentralized command structures, mobility across state boundaries, collaboration with transnational arms traffickers, and an increasingly lucrative kidnapping economy. These criminal networks exploit local grievances and fragile governance structures while maintaining operational bases in expansive forests across Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi, and Niger States. Consequently, scholars increasingly argue that addressing banditry requires multidimensional interventions combining military operations with socioeconomic development, institutional reforms, intelligence-led policing, and community participation (Sule and Sambo; Ojo, Aina, and Oyewole 73).

Evolution of Community Policing in Nigeria

Community policing emerged globally as a response to the limitations of conventional reactive policing by emphasizing partnership, trust-building, and collaborative problem-solving between police authorities and local communities. In Nigeria, the philosophy gained

prominence during police reform initiatives aimed at improving public confidence in law enforcement and enhancing community participation in crime prevention. The Nigeria Police Force formally adopted community policing as a strategic framework to bridge the longstanding gap between the police and the public through intelligence sharing, conflict resolution, and community engagement. The evolution of community policing in Nigeria has passed through several phases. Prior to colonial rule, indigenous communities relied on traditional institutions, family structures, age-grade associations, religious leaders, and local vigilante groups to maintain law and order. Colonial policing largely displaced these indigenous systems with centralized policing structures that emphasized state control rather than community partnership. Following independence, policing remained predominantly reactive and militarized until growing insecurity including armed robbery, insurgency, kidnapping, and banditry necessitated renewed emphasis on community-oriented policing strategies (Baker; Alemika). The introduction of community policing reforms has therefore sought to decentralize policing functions, improve police accountability, strengthen intelligence gathering, and promote citizens' participation in security governance. Despite these reforms, implementation has been constrained by inadequate funding, insufficient personnel, corruption, poor logistics, and persistent distrust between citizens and security agencies (Alemika; Hills).

Community Policing Initiatives in Northwestern Nigeria

The escalation of armed banditry has accelerated the adoption of community policing initiatives across Northwestern Nigeria. Governments, security agencies, traditional institutions, religious leaders, and local communities have increasingly collaborated to establish community-based security mechanisms aimed at improving intelligence gathering and protecting vulnerable rural populations. These initiatives include neighbourhood watch groups, vigilante organizations, community peace committees, local intelligence networks, traditional rulers' security councils, and structured partnerships between the Nigeria Police Force and community stakeholders. Empirical studies indicate that these initiatives have produced notable successes in facilitating early warning systems, identifying criminal hideouts, recovering kidnapped victims, and improving communication between communities and security agencies. Local knowledge possessed by residents has proved invaluable in tracking criminal movements, identifying suspicious activities, and preventing attacks before their occurrence. Community policing has therefore enhanced preventive policing through improved trust, public participation, and localized intelligence gathering (Mustapha 13). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of community policing in Northwestern Nigeria remains constrained by inadequate institutional support, poor coordination among security agencies, political interference, limited operational resources, insufficient legal protection for community volunteers, and fear of reprisals from armed bandits. In several affected communities, citizens remain reluctant to provide intelligence because of concerns over confidentiality and inadequate witness protection. Scholars therefore recommend strengthening institutional capacity, increasing funding, improving police professionalism, integrating traditional and religious institutions, and fostering sustained public trust as prerequisites for effective community policing against armed banditry (Mustapha; Ojo, Aina, and Oyewole 34).

Islamic Foundations of Community Security

Islam regards security as one of the greatest blessings bestowed upon humanity and considers its preservation a collective obligation of both the government and society. The

Sharīʿah establishes a comprehensive framework for maintaining public order through principles that promote justice, accountability, consultation, social solidarity, and the protection of fundamental human rights. These principles collectively provide a normative foundation for contemporary community policing and participatory security governance. 1. Justice (ʿAdl): Justice (ʿadl) is the cornerstone of Islamic governance and the foundation upon which public security is established. The Qur'an repeatedly commands Muslims to uphold justice without discrimination, Allah (SWT) Says, “Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives and forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and oppression” (Qur'an 16:90). Likewise, Allah (SWT) commands believers to judge fairly even against themselves or their relatives (Qur'an 4:135). Classical scholars such as Al-Māwardī and Ibn Taymiyyah maintain that justice constitutes the primary responsibility of government because societal peace cannot exist where injustice prevails (Al-Māwardī 15; Ibn Taymiyyah 17). In combating armed banditry, justice requires impartial law enforcement, accountability, protection of victims, and the fair administration of criminal justice irrespective of ethnicity, religion, or social status.

i. ***Amānah* (Public Trust):** The principle of *amānah* refers to trustworthiness, integrity, and faithful discharge of responsibilities. Public authority in Islam is regarded as a trust from Allah rather than a privilege or instrument of personal gain. Allah (SWT) commands, “Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people, judge with justice” (Qur'an 4:58). Security agencies, public officials, community leaders, and citizens therefore share responsibility for protecting lives, property, and public interests. Effective community policing depends largely upon public confidence in security institutions; where honesty, transparency, and accountability are maintained, citizens are more willing to cooperate with law enforcement through intelligence sharing and crime prevention initiatives (Kamali 201).

ii. ***Shūrā* (Consultation):** *Shūrā* (consultation) is an essential principle of Islamic governance that encourages participatory decision-making and collective problem-solving. The Allah (SWT) in the Qur'an praises believers as those "whose affairs are conducted through mutual consultation" (Qur'an 42:38), while the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) regularly consulted his Companions on matters affecting the Muslim community. According to Al-Māwardī, consultation enhances public confidence, promotes transparency, and strengthens social cohesion within governance institutions (Al-Māwardī 42). Modern community policing reflects this Islamic principle by encouraging collaboration between security agencies, traditional rulers, religious scholars, civil society organizations, and local communities in identifying security challenges and formulating appropriate responses.

iii. ***Takāful* (Social Solidarity):** *Takāful*, or mutual social responsibility, represents another important foundation of Islamic community security. Islam emphasizes that members of society are interconnected and responsible for supporting one another in promoting righteousness and preventing harm. Allah (SWT) commands, “Cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression”(Qur'an 5:2). Similarly, the Prophet (SAW) likened believers to one body whose members collectively respond to the suffering of any part (Al-Bukhārī; Muslim). This principle encourages communities to collaborate with security agencies, support vulnerable members, assist victims of crime, and establish collective mechanisms that promote peace and stability. Takāful therefore strengthens community resilience against insecurity by fostering trust, unity, and shared responsibility.

iv. **Collective Responsibility:** Islam recognizes public security as a collective responsibility (farḍ kifāyah) requiring the active participation of both government and citizens. The Qur'an instructs Muslims to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong (Qur'an 3:104), while the Prophet (SAW) stated, "Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue; if he cannot, then with his heart and that is the weakest of faith" *(*Muslim*).* These teachings establish the ethical obligation of individuals and communities to contribute to crime prevention, social harmony, and public order within lawful boundaries. Contemporary community policing reflects this Islamic principle by promoting voluntary cooperation, neighbourhood vigilance, information sharing, and community participation in safeguarding society against criminality and violence.

v. **Preservation of Life (Ḥifẓ al-Nafs):** The preservation of human life (ḥifẓ al-nafs) constitutes one of the five essential objectives of the *Sharīʿah* (Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah). Al-Ghazālī and Al-Shāṭibī identify the protection of life as a fundamental purpose of Islamic law because all human welfare depends upon personal security and social stability (Al-Ghazālī 286; Al-Shāṭibī 8). Allah (SWT) declares, "Whoever kills a person unless in retribution for murder or for spreading corruption in the land it is as though he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves one life, it is as though he has saved all mankind" *(*Qur'an *5:32).* Armed banditry directly violates this objective through unlawful killings, kidnappings, armed robbery, and the destruction of livelihoods. Consequently, every legitimate effort aimed at protecting human life including community policing, intelligence gathering, conflict prevention, and collaborative security governance accords with the objectives of the *Sharīʿah* and serves the public interest (maṣlaḥah).

Assessment of Community Policing Against Banditry

Community policing has increasingly been recognized as a complementary strategy for addressing the persistent challenge of armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria. Unlike conventional policing, which is largely reactive, community policing emphasizes proactive crime prevention through partnerships between security agencies and local communities. Empirical studies indicate that the approach has improved intelligence gathering, strengthened police-community relations, facilitated early warning systems, and enhanced local participation in identifying criminal networks (Skogan 46; Gill et al. 402). In several communities across Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto, and Kebbi States, collaboration between security agencies, traditional rulers, religious leaders, vigilante groups, and community members has contributed to the arrest of criminal suspects, rescue of kidnapped victims, and disruption of bandits' operational activities (Mustapha).

The effectiveness of community policing lies primarily in its reliance on local knowledge. Residents possess valuable information regarding unfamiliar movements, criminal hideouts, suspicious activities, and the geographical terrain, thereby providing security agencies with timely intelligence that would otherwise be difficult to obtain. This collaborative framework has also promoted greater public confidence in security institutions by encouraging dialogue, trust-building, and shared responsibility for maintaining public safety (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux 19). Furthermore, from an Islamic perspective, community policing aligns with the principles of *shūrā* (consultation), *takāful* (social solidarity), *amānah* (public trust), and collective responsibility, all of which encourage cooperation in promoting peace and preventing wrongdoing (Kamali 205). Despite these achievements, available evidence suggests that community policing has not significantly curtailed the overall incidence of armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria. Rather, its impact

has remained localized and inconsistent due to the increasing sophistication, mobility, and firepower of bandit groups. Consequently, scholars argue that community policing should complement not replace conventional military and law enforcement operations, particularly where criminal groups possess superior weapons and transnational support networks (Baker 73; Ojo, Aina, and Oyewole).

Challenges Limiting the Effectiveness of Community Policing

The effectiveness of community policing in combating armed banditry is constrained by several institutional, operational, and socioeconomic challenges. One of the major limitations is inadequate funding, which affects personnel recruitment, logistics, communication equipment, surveillance technology, mobility, and operational efficiency. Many police divisions serving rural communities lack sufficient vehicles, communication gadgets, and modern intelligence infrastructure necessary for effective community engagement (Alemika 489). Another significant challenge is the persistent lack of public trust in security agencies. Historical experiences of corruption, abuse of power, delayed responses to security threats, and poor protection of informants have discouraged many citizens from voluntarily sharing intelligence. In several instances, community members fear reprisals from bandits due to inadequate witness protection mechanisms and concerns over the confidentiality of information provided to security agencies (Hills 94). Institutional weaknesses further undermine the implementation of community policing. These include inadequate professional training, insufficient personnel, poor coordination among security agencies, overlapping responsibilities, and weak policy implementation. Political interference in security operations, inconsistent government policies, and inadequate legal frameworks governing community policing initiatives also reduce operational effectiveness (Alemika 492).

The geographical characteristics of Northwestern Nigeria present additional challenges. Vast forests, difficult terrain, porous international borders, and dispersed rural settlements provide safe havens for armed bandits while limiting the operational reach of security personnel. The proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons has further strengthened the operational capacity of criminal groups, making it difficult for lightly equipped community policing structures to respond effectively (Ojo, Aina, and Oyewole). Socioeconomic conditions such as poverty, youth unemployment, illiteracy, and social exclusion continue to facilitate the recruitment of young people into criminal networks. Without addressing these structural drivers of insecurity, community policing alone cannot provide a sustainable solution to banditry. Consequently, scholars advocate a comprehensive approach that integrates community policing with socioeconomic development, institutional reforms, intelligence-led policing, effective border management, judicial reforms, and community empowerment (Baker 81; Gill et al. 421). From an Islamic perspective, these challenges underscore the necessity of strengthening the principles of justice (ʿadl), accountability (amānah), consultation (shūrā), and collective responsibility in security governance. A community policing model grounded in these Islamic ethical values is more likely to foster public confidence, enhance cooperation between citizens and security agencies, and contribute to sustainable peace and security in Northwestern Nigeria.

Conclusion

The growing incidence of armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria has continued to threaten human security, socioeconomic development, and national stability, thereby exposing the limitations of conventional security approaches. This study has demonstrated that

community policing provides an important complementary strategy for combating banditry by promoting collaboration between security agencies and local communities in intelligence gathering, crime prevention, conflict resolution, and public safety. Although community policing has recorded notable successes in enhancing local participation and strengthening police-community relations, its overall effectiveness has been constrained by inadequate funding, institutional weaknesses, poor logistics, limited public trust, and the increasing sophistication of criminal networks. From an Islamic perspective, the principles of justice (ʿadl), trustworthiness (amānah), consultation (shūrā), social solidarity (takāful), collective responsibility, and the preservation of life (ḥifẓ al-nafs) provide a comprehensive ethical and legal framework for strengthening community-based security governance. These principles emphasize that safeguarding society against insecurity is a shared obligation of government, security institutions, traditional authorities, religious leaders, and citizens. Therefore, integrating modern community policing with Islamic values and indigenous community structures offers a culturally relevant, sustainable, and participatory approach to addressing banditry and promoting lasting peace and social cohesion in Northwestern Nigeria.

Recommendations

i. Government at all levels should strengthen community policing through adequate funding, improved logistics, modern communication facilities, intelligence infrastructure, and continuous capacity building for security personnel operating in vulnerable communities.
ii. The Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies should deepen collaboration with local communities by fostering transparency, professionalism, accountability, and confidentiality in handling intelligence provided by citizens to build lasting public trust.
iii. Traditional rulers, religious scholars, and community leaders should actively support community policing initiatives by promoting peaceful coexistence, mediating local disputes, encouraging lawful cooperation with security agencies, and discouraging all forms of support for criminal elements.
iv. Islamic scholars and faith-based organizations should intensify public enlightenment on the Islamic prohibition of banditry, violence, kidnapping, and all forms of corruption, while emphasizing the values of justice, social responsibility, peaceful coexistence, and the sanctity of human life.
v. Community members should regard security as a collective responsibility by participating in lawful neighbourhood security initiatives, promptly reporting suspicious activities, protecting public assets, and resisting collaboration with criminal groups.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT
Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)
ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)
Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com
Received: August 15, 2026 **Accepted**: September 14, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026
Citation: Ezugwu, Umezurike J. & Akpudo, Amaka F. (2026). "Adopting Complementarity and Risk Management in Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change in Nigeria." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 71-76.

Article **Open Access**

ADOPTING COMPLEMENTARITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT IN ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
In this paper, we argue that Nigeria faces severe environmental degradation and socioeconomic disruptions driven by climate change phenomena, such as intense droughts, flooding, deforestation, and gas flaring. These ecological crises impair national economic growth, food security, and public health while triggering biodiversity loss and human displacement. This study evaluates the vulnerability and adaptive capacity of Nigerian communities and ecosystems to both slow-onset and acute climate impacts. It aims to demonstrate how government insensitivity, institutional corruption, and a fundamental lack of complementary ethics have exacerbated environmental degradation. Grounded in Innocent Asouzu's theory of Complementarity (Complementary Ethics) alongside legal and policy evaluation frameworks, the paper critically analyzes the relational dynamics between human activity, environmental governance, and ecological sustainability in Nigeria. The analysis reveals that systemic failures in enforcing existing environmental laws, alongside persistent anthropogenic activities—including gas flaring, illegal bunkering, and vehicle emissions—have severely damaged hydrological and ecological systems. To achieve long-term environmental sustainability, Nigeria must transition from an anthropocentric paradigm to a complementary ethic that views humans and the environment as interdependent entities. Effective climate risk management requires rigorous enforcement of environmental policies, continuous public education, integration of indigenous knowledge, stakeholder collaboration, and investment in green biotechnologies.

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Keywords: Complementarity, Risk management, Climate change, Environmental sustainability, Leadership.

Introduction

The issue of climate change is frequently undermined despite its severe effects on both humans and the environment. While many attribute climate change exclusively to natural forces, others regard it as a direct consequence of human activity. In reality, climate change—characterized by a sustained increase in average global temperatures—is both anthropogenic and naturalistic. Natural events and human activities jointly contribute to rising global temperatures, primarily driven by the accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as carbon dioxide (CO2) in the atmosphere (Olaniyi *et al.,* (2013), McCarthy (2001) and Parry (2007). In Nigeria, persistent droughts, severe flooding, extreme heatwaves, off-season rainfall, and erratic dry spells have disrupted growing seasons across a country largely dependent on rain-fed agriculture (Olaniyi *et al.,* 2013). Consequently, water supplies for agriculture and hydropower generation are depleting rapidly, freshwater lakes are shrinking, and ecosystems are experiencing profound stress (Ogbo *et al*., 2013).

When excessive emissions of greenhouse gases pollute the atmosphere, they exacerbate the greenhouse effect and accelerate global warming (Enete, 2000; IPCC, 2014; Badru, 2020; Ani *et al*., 2022). Anthropogenic activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, rapid urbanization, deforestation, and gas flaring, combined with natural phenomena like continental drift, volcanic eruptions, and shifting oceanic and atmospheric currents, inevitably precipitate ecological disasters including desertification, severe erosion, and loss of biodiversity. Addressing these vulnerabilities requires the Nigerian government to enforce existing environmental laws and regulations proactively. Concurrently, the populace must adopt a framework of complementary ethics, wherein human beings and the natural environment are recognized as interdependent, complementary dimensions of reality. By fostering mutual harmony between humanity and nature, the hydrological and ecological systems currently disrupted by climate change can be restored. This paper is structured into three main sections. The first section examines the primary causes of climate change in Nigeria, highlighting that while natural forces play a role, human activities conducted without regard for environmental sustainability remain the main drivers. The second section demonstrates how risk management and policy enforcement can mitigate climate risks, arguing that administrative insensitivity and institutional corruption have hindered environmental governance. The third section proposes the adoption of Asouzu's complementary ethics as a philosophical and practical framework for addressing Nigeria's climate crisis, positioning humans and nature as interdependent partners in ecological sustainability.

Causes of Climate Change in Nigeria

i. **Deforestation:** Deforestation involves the large-scale clearing, burning, or felling of trees and natural vegetation (Badru, 2020). The widespread destruction of forests to accommodate industrial expansion, urbanization, road networks, and infrastructure projects poses severe environmental threats. Deforestation destroys local flora and fauna and exacerbates localized flooding in hilly and low-lying areas (Iyaji, 2011). Because forests serve as vital carbon sinks that absorb atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO2) through photosynthesis, their excessive clearance destroys green landscapes and increases localized heat, air pollution, and carbon concentrations, directly accelerating climate change (David & Edward, 2007). In other words, excessive and reckless removal

or cutting of trees for economic and domestic utilization destroys the green landscape and generates more heat, noise and pollution, which in turn affects the environment and brings about climate change.

ii. **Gas Flaring:** Gas flaring remains a prominent environmental hazard in Nigeria's petroleum sector. Rather than harnessing natural gas for domestic energy and export, industrial operators flare vast quantities into the atmosphere. Despite regulatory frameworks such as the National Gas Policy, the Flare Gas (Prevention of Waste and Pollution) Regulations of 2018, and the Nigerian Gas Flare Commercialization Programme (NGFCP), Nigeria consistently ranks among the top ten gas-flaring nations globally (Okoro *et al.,* 2021). Decades of gas flaring have polluted the air, degraded soil quality, reduced agricultural productivity, and impaired human and ecological health in oil-producing communities (Uwem & Akpan, 2017). Flaring associated gas represents an inefficient misuse of natural energy resources with profound adverse implications for macroeconomic stability and environmental sustainability (Tahouni *et al*., 2016). Globally, the idea of gas flaring is highly criticized as it hinders and jeopardizes both the environment and its inhabitants from thriving and flourishing.

iii. **Combustion of Fossil Fuels:** The heavy reliance on fossil fuels—namely oil, coal, and natural gas—for energy generation and transport is a major source of carbon emissions in Nigeria. The combustion of these fuels releases large volumes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, intensifying global warming and driving climatic instability (Ogbodo, 2013). Until sustainable and renewable energy alternatives are systematically adopted, fossil fuel emissions will continue to compromise environmental stability, which in turn bring about change in the climate, in one way or another.

iv. **Unregulated Urbanization and Poor Waste Management:** Rapid and unregulated urban growth in Nigerian towns and cities has severely strained municipal infrastructure. The lack of structured systems for collecting, transporting, treating, and disposing of solid waste leads to environmental contamination. Indiscriminate waste disposal, combined with inadequate urban planning and low public environmental awareness, results in clogged drainage networks, severe urban flooding, water contamination, air pollution, and localized biodiversity loss (Akpuogwu & Egbekpalu, 2022; Andrew, 2000). Environmental and climatic issues will persist until the populace puts an end to their awkward attitudes that often bedevil the environment. It is when this is done that the climate change which obstructs, in no minimal way, human, plant and animal species can be put to rest, for environmental sustainability.

v. **Emissions from Outdated Vehicles:** Vehicular emissions represent another major contributor to air pollution and environmental degradation in Nigeria. Due to widespread socioeconomic hardship and limited access to affordable brand-new vehicles, a vast majority of citizens rely on imported, highly aged, used vehicles (popularly known as Tokunbo). The proliferation of substandard vehicles discharging high levels of carbon monoxide and particulate matter directly degrades ambient air quality and increases public health risks (Green, 2018; Akpuogwu & Egbekpalu, 2022). This dynamic underscores the complementary relationship between socioeconomic well-being and environmental health: economic hardship drives practices that harm the environment, which in turn generates negative ecological feedback affecting human society.

Mitigating Climate Change through Risk Management and Policy Implementation

Mitigating the impacts of climate change in Nigeria requires strict compliance with established environmental legislation and regulatory frameworks. Relevant frameworks include the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) Act, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act, the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) Act, and the Flare Gas (Prevention of Waste and Pollution) Regulations of 2018. Rigorous enforcement of these laws would significantly reduce environmental pollution, mitigate ecological risks, and resolve resource-based conflicts. However, regulatory bodies and government institutions frequently display reluctance or inconsistency in enforcing compliance (Akpuogwu & Egbekpalu, 2022). Systemic corruption, administrative inertia, and weak institutional capacity allow environmental offenders to operate with impunity. Consequently, environmental degradation persists not from a lack of legal instruments, but from poor policy execution, insufficient climate risk management, and limited public awareness regarding environmental rights and conservation duties.

Adopting Complementary Ethics in Addressing Climate Change

In Innocent Asouzu's framework of complementary reflection, human actions derive moral legitimacy from their integration within a transcendent, complementary network of reality that recognizes the interdependence of all existing entities (Asouzu, 2024). Under this ethical paradigm, beneficial actions are defined by their orientation toward the common good and the flourishing of others (Etieyibo, 2020). Applied to environmental philosophy, complementary ethics posits that human existence ('to be') is intrinsically linked with the existence of the environment ('to be with others'). Man, animals, plants, and ecosystems form an interconnected web of reality (Ezugwu, 2022). It is in view of this that complementary ethics ought to be considered and treated not with levity, but as the only way the environmental problems that degenerate into climate change can be holistically and comprehensively addressed. Adopting complementary ethics challenges anthropocentric perspectives that treat nature as a mere instrument for human exploitation. Instead, it promotes environmental justice and health equity by recognizing access to clean air, safe drinking water, and uncontaminated land as fundamental rights for all communities (Obasa, 2025). In Nigeria, particularly within the Niger Delta region, decades of petroleum extraction have created severe environmental injustices. Local communities endure land degradation, water contamination, and health hazards arising from gas flaring, oil spills, and illegal artisanal refining, while remaining largely excluded from resource governance and economic benefits (Ejiba & Adams, 2016). Resolving these environmental and social inequities requires transitioning from exploitation to mutual complementarity. Achieving environmental justice entails integrating grassroots community leadership into environmental policy decisions, enhancing legal protections, ensuring transparent corporate accountability, and actively supporting regional development through institutional bodies such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Furthermore, involving environmental philosophers and ethicists in policy formulation can help embed long-term ecological stewardship into governance structures (Naess, 1973). When human society views nature as a complementary partner rather than an ancillary resource, environmental policy moves beyond short-term crisis management toward lasting sustainability.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has examined climate change as a critical environmental challenge facing Nigeria. While climatic variations stem from both natural processes and human activities, anthropogenic practices—including deforestation, fossil fuel combustion, gas flaring, poor waste management, and heavy reliance on high-emission vehicles—are the primary drivers of ecological degradation in the country. The persistence of these problems is compounded by weak policy enforcement, institutional corruption, and an anthropocentric worldview that decouples human welfare from environmental stability. To address these challenges and foster long-term climate resilience, the following measures are recommended:

i. There is a need to promote public ethics and ecological education: Educational curricula and public awareness programs should integrate complementary ethics to foster a culture of environmental stewardship and mutual coexistence between humanity and nature.
ii. The environmental laws and regulatory sanctions must be enforced: Government regulatory agencies, including NESREA and NOSDRA, must enforce existing environmental statutes strictly, eliminate institutional corruption, and penalize corporate and individual environmental offenders.
iii. Local knowledge and procedural justice ought to be incorporated: Policy frameworks must include grassroots communities and indigenous knowledge systems in environmental decision-making, ensuring fair compensation and sustainable livelihood opportunities for resource-impacted regions., and
iv. The need for investment in green infrastructure and clean energy: The Nigerian government should incentivize renewable energy adoption, invest in modern public transportation, and support green biotechnologies to reduce carbon emissions and phase out obsolete, high-polluting technologies.

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Acknowledgements

The authors express their profound gratitude to the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Nigeria, for providing the research grant and financial support necessary to complete this study. This intervention is both timely and vital in addressing Nigeria's pressing environmental and climate challenges.

JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: August 16, 2026 **Accepted**: September 18, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026

Citation: Duchi, Elisha M. & Onyela, Felix (2026). "Trado-Political Institutions and Colonialism in Hamland of Southern Kaduna: Perspectives on Societal Peacebuilding." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 77-89.

Article **Open Access**

TRADO-POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND COLONIALISM IN HAMLAND OF SOUTHERN KADUNA: PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETAL PEACEBUILDING

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Abstract

The advent of colonial rule and the implementation of the indirect rule system altered the indigenous political structure through the establishment of *Kpop Kpaar*, which diminished the political, religious and judicial authority of *Kpop Ku* and *Shetiri* in social regulation. Also, dearth of literatures about these trado-political institutions continues to obscure their significance and effectiveness in maintaining, sustaining and building peace in Hamland. The study therefore examined the relevance of trado-political institutions with comparative analysis of Western and African systems in building sustainable peace; impact of Westernization in Hamland; and cultural and environmental imperatives of trado-political institutions. The study employed a qualitative research design based on a systematic review of secondary sources, including scholarly publications, books, official reports, and archival records. The analysis is anchored on functionalist theory, which emphasizes the importance of institutions in sustaining social order, stability, and cohesion. Findings indicated that colonial and post-colonial governance arrangements significantly transformed Hamland's traditional political system, resulting in the decline of indigenous mechanisms for historical peacebuilding, communal values and collective solidarity. Nevertheless, the study found that *Ku* and *Shetiri* institutions continued to serve important functions in conflict resolution, cultural preservation, environmental management, restorative justice, and community reconciliation. The paper contended that lasting peace in Hamland and other African societies cannot be achieved through exclusive reliance on imported political and judicial frameworks. The study concludes that the revitalization, adaptation, and constructive integration of indigenous institutions are indispensable for effective peacebuilding, conflict

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prevention, and the preservation of cultural heritage in contemporary African societies. The study suggested the integration and transformation of autochthonous system in conformity with modernization for effective and sustainable peacebuilding in Hamland.

Keywords: Hamland, Trado-Political Institutions, *Ku*, *Shetiri*, Peacebuilding, Southern Kaduna.

Introduction

Prior to the advent of colonialism, and Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam: African societies experienced intra-relative peace, security and less acts of criminality. This was due to the fear of punitive/restorative justice system, provided by the African trado-political, religious and cultural institutions that enhanced enforcement of laws and policing of the autochthonous societies (Amaechi-Ani *et al,* 2020). African states in its pristine form embodied in its traditional institutions both the religious, judicial and political powers. This enhanced peaceful and harmonious relations within the society. In Hamland of Southern Kaduna, the trado-political institutions comprise *Ku* and *Shetiri* (*Shatir*) for maintenance of political and social order, within the society (Duchi *et al*, 2023; John, 2017). *Ku* and *Shatir* institutions are headed by *Kpop Ku* (King of the Masquerades) and *Shengy Shetiri* (Leader of Women Cult or Womenfolk). *Kpop Ku* possessed political, judicial and religious powers. These powers were central to the maintenance of justice, customs, traditions, and values of the socio-political and cultural order. The advent of Colonialism relegated these institutions with the introduction of *Kpop Kpaar* (Hausa Chief). Though *Shatir* still exist, their powers in enforcing environmental peace and harmony faced persistent danger of systematic elimination. The political and judicial powers were excised from the *Kpop Ku* as King of the Masquerades*,* leaving it with just religious powers. Resulting from this, the *Kpop Ku* now acts as Chief Priest (Duchi *et al*, 2023; John, 2017).

Before the arrival of foreign and domestic colonizers, *Kpop Ku* was the sovereign. Introduction of *Kpyop Kpaar* (Hausa Chieftaincy System) as indirect rule system's instrument resulted in relinquishing the political powers of *Kpop Ku*. Enforcement of political and social order; and performance of religious rituals to appease the gods when in conflict with societal order, was the prerogative of *Kpop Ku* (Y. Gama, Personal Communication, 17th September, 2024). John (2017) conception of *Kpop Ku* as Chief Priest resonates with its modern functions; but the ancient practice. *Kpop Ku*, in its pristine form, embodied politico-religious and judicial powers. The holder of the stool was empowered ancestrally, to perform functions in line with its powers. This was to maintained political and social control of the traditions and customs of the people of Hamland in Southern Kaduna, Nigeria (Duchi *et al*, 2023). *Kpop Ku* powers enabled him to function as a Sovereign, to achieve peace and harmony through enforcement of obedience to societal norms and values. The sovereignty of Africa, cultural imperatives and practices were neutralized by the imposition of absolute political rule. The efficacy of trado-political institutions in establishing effective foundations for peacebuilding became immobilized. Foreign driven norms and values, centered on the power of external norms rather than the meanings and values of autochthonous environments, pollute local peacebuilding efforts (Onuoha, 2023). He added that, most prominent voices in peacebuilding environment within Africa are transplanted ideas and knowledge developed from elsewhere.

Curtis (2012) stated that, African peacebuilding spaces had been altered through discourse and practice that played out differently in diverse locales, thus making the trajectories messy and multifaceted. Peacebuilding process cannot be extricated from people's cultural imperatives. Peacebuilding in Africa is as old as conflict, and the

autochthone mechanism had significant success in maintaining order and peaceful coexistence among groups. Shaka Zulu, a state-builder amassed about 40,000 standing armies comprised males and females. They served between late thirties and twenties thereafter transitioned to civilian life through marriage, by leaving their regiment and establishing their homestead (Curtis, 2012). Shaka, the Zulu Chief, was a sovereign who embodied enormous powers that enhanced decision-making in line with Zulu Kingdom's cultures. Zaum (2012) reinforcement of Boutrous-Ghali's notion of peacebuilding through identification of and support for structures that gives strength to and solidify peace, which prevent relapse to violence either physical or structural, gains potency with the notion of institutional reforms and respects for human rights. Traditional political institutions were majorly considered not in tune with modern norms. However, cultural practices that support and built peace, remained indelible in the sand of time. Trado-political institutions of Hamland had built peace into the fabric of its societies, through diverse approaches in its pristine nature. Alteration and reworking of these interventional approaches, ignoring cultural intelligence, often neutralized its efficacy (Curtis, 2012; Guo, 2025).

Duchi (2025) asserted that, changing the cultural dynamics that eliminate relapse into violence requires cultural intelligence which implied ability for reconnecting broken relationship between and among people with diverse perspectives. This is for proper understanding of people's peculiar ways of living (Guo, 2025). Transformation of conflicting relationship requires strict adherence to context of the societal cultures; but boardroom analysis of the situation. Factors for conflict and transition to violence are peculiar to its environment. Most analysis focused on end product of violence, while ignoring the process that shaped people's cultures and traditions. Maitama (2025) believed that conflict management is shaped by cultural norms and values. The individuals and groups involve prefer confrontation, harmony-seeking avoidance, collaboration, competition, accommodation, compromise among others. Whichever approaches adopted to explain dispute within a locale, had to conform to the cultural intelligence of the autochthonous people, that established institutions to resolve, transform, manage, prevent and reconcile adversarial relationships (Duchi, 2025). Conflicts in pre- and post-colonial Africa had undergone genetic mutation. Its problem-solving approaches reflect a foreign induced vaccination-type intervention. Africa had its peculiar problems accompanied with its distinctive solutions. However, colonialism changed the conflict dynamics to suit its pervasive socio-political domination. This entails building unequal playing field for the nation's elite to leverage and reproduce power relations for domination and control (Gadkari, 2022). Pre- and post-colonial Africa was driven by communalism and individualism, respectively (Duchi *et al*, 2024). Gadkari (2022) stated that, identity reconstruction, in which dominant liberal and neoliberal actors adopted the persona of contemporary peace builders intervening to resolve purely postcolonial problems. Unfortunately, the planted problems had mutated within the context of the environment. Boardroom diagnosis and prescription have failed to treat the ailment except homegrown solutions provided by *Ku* and *Shetiri* trado-political institutions.

Cultures and perceptions shapes conflict whether dispute or dilemma. While dispute determinants could be applicable to various context within its 2:1 this implied two people fighting over one thing. However, dilemma may face cultural complexities within 1:2 definitions, which implied a person faced with the challenge of choosing one from among important needs (Gbemisola & Durojaye, n.d). Dispute adversarial relationship is a function of two actors scrambling for a thing of value. The analysis of dilemma could be contextual. If

a man is faced with the choice of marrying a woman who is good in bed and beautiful, and the one who is good in the kitchen. Meanwhile, another man loves beautiful women replete with sexual excitement, and a foody personality. In a polygamy society, men could marry all these women, but the monogamy society. Therefore, the cultures of societies are central determinants of conflict neutralization; but the court.

Statement of the Problem

Enforcement of societal norms and values are a function of existing political, religious and judicial institutions. Application of Westernized institutional theories and practices on indigenous conflict continually inhibit sustainable peacebuilding when existing trado-political institution are either relegated or neutralized. Colonialism's adoption of indirect system and its consequent perpetuation by colonially privileged ethnic groups enforced the neutralization drive. These include subjugation of indigenous traditional institutions under majority group's systems. Accompanying this is the issue of foreign religion, with the perception that, trado-political institution's practices were barbaric. Convergence of Western and African cultural practices establishes a destructive conflict relation whereby, dominant cultures superimposed itself on the less dominant ones. Utilization of Westernized ideas in understanding African conflicts in their natural context and phases, constitute a misnomer. Differing context, phases and cultures requires it analysis and interpretation from its own viewpoint. An imported concept to address indigenous conflict relationship often creates the crisis of wrong diagnosis and prescription for an ailment. This establishes an endless treatment without cure. Firstly, Westernized trado-colonial political system neutralized the efficacy of African traditional political system in addressing its peculiar conflict relation. This approach was further worsen by indigenous colonial system, like the *Kpyop Kpaar*. This undermined and relegates Hamland's traditional political system. An effort toward learning other people's cultures only makes the learner playing second fiddle. The reason has always been "if it is not you, it can never be like you". Conscious efforts towards peacebuilding from people's ways of lives, is often confronted with challenge of structural foundations build from outside. Assessment of environmental dispute relation, which lacks proper understanding of the context and phases often creates self-delusional crisis. Most experts in conflict studies often ignored the factor of environmental and cultural imperatives in drawing conclusions about a given conflict.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to examine:

i. The relevance of trado-political institutions in the 21st century
ii. Western and African trado-political system in sustainable peacebuilding
iii. Impact of Westernized systems in Hamland
iv. Cultural and environmental imperatives of trado-political institutions

Methodology

This study adopted systematic review of secondary data for critical analysis. These data were sourced from Web of Science, Scopus, ProQuest Social Sciences, PsycINFO (APA), Science Direct, and Social Science Research Network. The scope comprises review of related literatures on the topic from global, regional, and national levels. Secondary data from scholars with strong visibility from global, regional and national within the above concepts were consulted. This adds value to the quality of current discussions and arguments within the field of investigation. The study underwent systematic collection, analysis, and synthesis of data in line with the research objectives. These include journal publications, government

archives, and reports to response to the research objectives. Data outside these parameters were excluded.

Literature Review

Trado-Political Institutions: Trado-political institutions in the 21st century like indigenous Chiefdoms within Hamland of Southern Kaduna and surrounding traditional councils and the customary systems of justice delivery continue to experience transformation. The Hamland trado-political system witnessed the evolvement from Kpyop *Ku* to *Kpyop kpaar* political system. There was transition from *Kpop Ku*, and now Kpop Kpaar, who operates under the state apparatus as instrument for peacebuilding. The functions of being the custodian of community's cultures and traditions placed these institutions as pivotal tool for reconciling differences, removing causes for and managing disputes for the reason of changing destructive adversarial relationships peacefully. Traditional political institutions played significant influence in managing their subjects' discontents, and build bridges across other communities and security forces to maintain law and order (Bawa, 2025). However, the institutions of *Kpop Ku* in its pristine form, embodied both political, religious and judicial powers. It was a typical definition of sovereign. Institutions of *Kpop Ku* supported by *Shetiri* were responsible for enforcing community's norms, values and mores. These help build peace when citizens were in conformity with societal rules and regulation: the foundation for sustainable and functional law and order. The process of transmitting obedience to traditions and societal norms becomes a culture that defines individual characteristics within these communities. Possession of political, religious, and judicial authority or all of it constitute absolute authority that *Kpop Ku* had in pre-colonial Hamland. This was akin to the notion of divine right of King; but the Caliphate and Theocratic systems (Ogbunkwu, n.d; Singh & Raj, 2026).

The importance of trado-political institutions in modern states and nation building is hinged on its ability to maintain people cultures and traditions. Culture encapsulates all aspects of human activities; include music, technology, and poetry, among others. Trado-political institutions served as reminder through folktales of people ways of life from golden ages to modern generations. In modern Hamland of Southern Kaduna, *Ku* and *Shatir* (*Shetiri*) institutions holds cultural weight in managing local disputes like land and marital matters, and enforcing communal morality among others (Duchi *et al,* 2024). Ihunko (2025) pointed out that, *Ekpe* had function for centuries as a governance system, religious organization, and a cultural preservation mechanism. *Ku* and *Ekpe* performed same functions except for political and judicial powers in modern system. *Ekpe* meaning Leopard is akin to the Hamland description of all its sons and daughters of (Leopard) meaning *Wey* and *Tir Nanggwang*. *Ku* and *Shetiri* members and historical enthusiast had kept the oral history across generations. While political and judicial powers had become exorcised, religious functions became sustained. This had become the instrument for cultural preservation for centuries, during political colonization and now economic imperialism. *Ku* and *Shetiri*, alongside *Ekpe* trado-political institutions had help safeguard the autochthonous knowledge across generations.

Wey and *Tir Nanggwang* is a common refrain among Ham people. It reminds members of their shared history with the Leopard: A brave and strong member of the Cat family. This animal's symbol traditionally reflects the Ham people. Onasanya (2025), stated that across the continent of Africa generally, and Nigeria in particular, animal carvings hold meanings that extend beyond mere decoration. They serve as markers for power, spirituality

and identity. Ham people are traditionally and spiritually identified with the Leopard till date. This is exemplified with the decoration of the traditional stool of Kpop Ham. Power, spirituality and identity are a function of perception. Believe in the trado-political system to cleanse and rain curse on the society, had sustained its relevance over the years. The centrality of *Ku* and *Shetiri* in maintaining land disputes and environmental peace respectively cannot be ignored. *Ekpe* fraternity, *Ku* and *Shetiri* cult have been used to manage, resolve and transform conflict, and enforced decisions for peacebuilding. The need for a sovereign authority that ensure adherent to societal rules and regulations, maintain peace and security in particular, and development across all facet of human endeavor, led to adoption of trado-political institutions (Eke *et al,* 2023). These had maintained societal harmony before colonialism replaces *Kpop Ku* with Kpop Kpaar, under the indirect rule system. And today, the current systems could not address societal peacebuilding challenges until recourse to trado-political systems of *Ku* and *Shetiri*.

Trado-Political Systems

The inability of the Westernized system to addressed conflicting issues indigenous to most African societies requires a fusion of both systems to build sustainable peace. A fusion of state-centered, rights and rule of law based with autochthonous consensus, restorative, and community based approach, a prerequisite for a constructive foundation for lasting peace (Oluyemi & Akinwunmi, 2025). Fatile *et al* (2013) point out the need for traditional rulership and modern-state institution meeting. An integration of both sides compliments the weaknesses, and strengthens each system to build peace for community's development. Europeans incorporation of its monarchy into modern political system helps in the maintenance of its diverse cultures and languages across generations. The British had sustained its trado-political institutions across centuries. Britain recognizes the king as sovereign, even though it has other kingdoms summed up as United Kingdom. The operation of constitutional monarchy had become sustained, maintaining British cultural traditions for centuries. The role of the British monarch had not become relegated. It has become strengthen to continue its role as the custodian of British culture and traditions across generations. While this is so in other climes, the Nigerian political system directly neutralizes the powers of its traditional institutions through external and internal colonialism (Musa *et al,* 2024). The wisdom of *Ku* and *Shetiri* in managing customary issues within communities had become grossly underutilized. These institutions played significant roles in building and sustaining peace from ancient times to the modern days. They midwifed the societal transition and transformations. They helped to maintain and promote cultural traditions that sustained law and order, peace and progress. The modern states structures are standing on the foundation of peacebuilding structures laid by the autochthonous societies (Fatile *et al,* 2013). Customs and traditions of communities have been maintained and transmitted from across generations.

Hamland's trado-political institutions were central to maintaining environmental peace, from ancient times till date. The practice of respecting norms and values regulating access to sacred places, established the practice of environmental conservation. Deforestation is generally restricted across certain forests and areas in Hamland's society of Southern Kaduna. *Ku* active participation in *Kha Ku* (Oath taking) was important in settling land and other family disputes among conflicting parties. During the process of oath taking to reflect innocence, the guilty parties are made to face the consequences of their actions, proportional to their offences. However, guilty parties' in adversarial relationships today are comfortable going to court than *Kha Ku* in *Yeer* (Oath taking in Shrine). While the Court

system requires presentation of facts, *Kha Ku* demands nothing other than the truth. The foundation of administration of criminal justice in traditional settings, stands on the grounds of truth other than facts, which requires evidence that might not be substantiated (Duchi *et al,* 2023). Technologies, music, arts, language, creativity among others, are all elements of culture. These give people their identity. People's ways of living is an essential determinant on how the society functions. However, the functioning of a given society is a product of their ways of lives reflected in their norms, rules, and values. Trado-political institutions like *Ku*, *Sheitiri* and *Ekpe*, are key to enforcing these cultural values and traditions, which are largely responsible for the evolution of societies from ancient to modern era (Ihunko, 2025). These rules govern human interactions, regulate disputes and prevent conflict transformation into violence. Hamland's confederates culturally functions communally but now. Community's discipline and child's development are essential features of its lifestyle. All insecurities are considered sacrilegious by the community. And it is the community's responsibility to eliminate health, food, educational insecurities (Duchi *et al,* 2024).

The ability for *Ku* and *Shetiri* to sustain peace building lies in the recognition of the informal roles these institutions continue to play in enforcing communal rules and regulations. From the perspective of environmental peace, *Shatir* continue to dissuade deforestation, thereby promotes forest conservation. Meanwhile, *Ku* remained relevant in the aspect of holding people accountable for their actions, and therefore promotes been truthful. At the center of building sustainable peace is the intersection of justice and mercy, love and truth within the context of *peace confluence* (Duchi, 2025 cited Agbu and Anike-Nweze, 2006). *Peace Confluence* entails building sustainable peace through the integration and fusion of love, justice, mercy and truth. *Ku* and *Shatir* employ *fain* (fine), within the context of restorative justice system but punishment. It main consideration is to bring back a recalcitrant member of the community, who is operating outside the context of acceptable standard and expected behaviour. Peace confluence function in this aspect by showing love and mercy for someone who had gone astray, while fining the recalcitrant member who admitted wrongdoing through justice and mercy. In contemporary societies, replete with conflict at both structural and physical state, both the court and alternative dispute system had not been able to address all. The trado-political systems relevance become apt in the face of dearth of ability to fix culturally related conflict (Duchi *et al,* 2023). In traditional Ham societies, communalism takes precedence over individualism. Brothers often sacrifice their comfort to protect the integrity of each other and to prevent conflict at home. They often provide food to homes without the knowledge of their wives. This is to avoid hunger and disrespect from among women. They practically managed family conflict and enforced peace within their communities. Similarly, deviance was not welcome in the society. Any child, whose actions are not in conformity with the societal acceptable code of conduct, would be made to face the community's disciplinary procedures. Children from families which constitute the society, becomes members of the society. Ham people believed that, a child's bad behaviour could have significant destructive impact on other children. It is therefore the duty of all to bring every child to acceptable behaviour (Duch *et al,* 2025).

Westernized Systems in Hamland

Western political, judicial and religious systems continue to neutralize the powers of traditional political institutions in Hamland. Prior to the colonial era, *Ku* embodied political, judicial and religious powers in the administration of justice, enforcement and transformation of rules, and performance of religious rituals. The latter in particular was considered idol worship. Converts into Christianity discarded all the effectiveness of *fain* in

controlling deviance within communities. Trado-political institutions have held the society effectively, until the advent of Westernization. It held firmly communal strand of unity, peace and progress by inculcating the virtue of community and humanity in the hearts of its citizens across generations. Folktales were the principal instrument for communicating community's values and norms (Duchi *et al,* 2023). Like all human societies, family units constitute the foundations for how human communities are built. The prerequisite for sustainable peace evolved from the family. The culture of peaceful interactions and behaviours from home to school start from the family unit. Each society has its peculiar way of life distinct from other that had sustained it for centuries. Most unwritten communal cultures are transmitted across generations through folktales from families within homes. These are further sent to the general societies which form the base for which such a society behaves. Societal behaviours become a culture: their peculiar way of life. Western and Hamland's cultures interact during colonialism and now. The former superimposed itself on the latter. The clash between Western and Hamland's trado-political systems engineered a distortion in the cultural disposition of the autochthonous people in their original form. The emphasis on majoritarian democracy, civic rights and duties, geographic borders and the intrusion of globalization in all facets of human endeavors, had created convergence and divergence of opinions. While *Ku* and *Shatir* enforced community's rules to achieve peace and security through the adoption of religious means, Western civilization perceived these institutions as idolatry. The effectiveness of the two systems when put to test revealed that, Westernization neutralizes the efficacy of trado-political systems; and equally failed to address certain culturally related conflict (Musa *et al,* 2024, p.172).

The court system could not address cases of incest, intrusion into conserved forest areas, and adherence to peculiar societal values. Resolving incest requires transforming the relational aspects of the people in context, through the process called *har yari*. Managing violation of societal rules like non-intrusion into forest reserve areas entails the application of *fain.* Sustained deforestation in most rural communities in Hamland today, is a function of neutralization of the powers of these institutions (Duchi *et al,* 2023). They no longer have the power to regulate certain deviant behaviours not captured by the Western legal systems. The culture and civilization of Western system became the instruments of colonial domination based on the information from explorers, missionaries, and the merchants (Uyiosael, 2025). These became the central elements for political control of all that had to do with local system in Hamland particularly, and most African societies generally. Africans were taken off their known political, religious, cultural, and traditional environment; and into unknown territories. They have been struggling to survive in the new system without success and brain washed to believe a reversal to the old system as retrogression. Arab-Islamic and European-Christian values and lifestyles had become assimilated and to a large extent, indigenized in African societies (Arowolo, 2010, para.18). The Arabic cultural heritage of turban through internal colonialism had become mode of dressing for *Kpyop Kpaar* traditional institutions. Government had gazette Kpop Kpaar, and the world recognized it as Hamland traditional institution instead of *Kpop Ku* the original King for autochthonous confederate communities (B. Dogo, Personal Communication, 3rd February, 2026). While the colonial search for indirect rule administrative instrument was on, efforts were not made to unite all confederates under a harmonious federal system with one *Kpop Ku* at the helm of affairs. The Hausanization of Hamlands system destructively changed it from its pristine nature to the current state for administrative purposes. The practice was more like taking sea animals with swimming skills to survive on land.

Cultural and Environmental Imperatives

Culture is said to be a way of life. And its core elements include language, music, arts, and technology. Each environment has its peculiar cultural traditions that shaped their reasoning in particular, and critical thinking generally. Domestication and the practice of Western democratic political system for centuries before supplanting African political systems, established a political injury that African societies had continue to find solution without hope in sight. Description of democracy as the ultimate form of governance is questionable based on the fact that, China operates a different system, and has become the second world biggest economy. Transplantation of Western-styled political system into African political environment is akin to moving aquatic animals to survive terrestrially. From ancient times, African societies had advanced civilizations (Onyejekwe, 2024). Ancient Egypt and Songhai empires were global powers, rich in knowledge, technology among other civilizations. They were never democratic but developed and control global trade for thousands of years. Democracy which originated from ancient Greek city state was an aftermath. Each society has its unique characteristics pertinent to its very existence. The Chinese are typical example of society outside the Western-styled democracy that had advanced beyond the advocacy of democratic system as the global ultimate. At the heart of developmental drive is the human person, from an environment with their cultural traditions that shaped their worldview (Feelnubia, 2025).

Establishment of trado-political institutions is based on native laws and customs, which constitute the social, political and cultural arrangements. Alien laws and cultures from different environments faced survival, efficiency and effectiveness difficulty. The environment provides the information that form peoples worldviews. Lack of effective understanding of the intrigues of a given locale proof tough for people outside that area. The challenges of societal development are largely based on the inability of foreign systems survival in unknown territories. Modern African political systems and its institutions suffer from dearth of connection with the reality of its well established customs and traditions, which had sustained it before the arrival of the Europeans and Arabs systems (Opasina, 2016). People's tradition and custom in their environment define them. Neupert-Wentz and Muller-Crepon (2023) stated that British colonies were governed with more reliance on pre-colonial institutions. However, these were only instruments for indirect system of tax collections and resource exploitation; but governance. More dominant pre-colonial political system gain patronage, and therefore become a subsidiary colonial administrative mechanism. Though *Kpyop Kpaar*, an African traditional ruler-ship system supplanted Kpyop *Ku*, a system indigenous to Ham's confederates (J. *Ku*re, personal communication, 4th June, 2026). Today, *Kpyop Kpaar* turban is at variance with the original costumes of the *Kpyop Ku*.

The way of life, believe and behavioural systems of people in an environment is always a central determinant to the formation of their rule and value systems that govern their interactions. Societal cultural traditions and what they hold as sacred constitute the prerequisite for the enactment of laws and social rules that regulate human relations. The norms within societies control behaviours, which enhances management, resolution, prevention and transformation of conflict to build peace. People within an environment make meaning of the world around them based on the information they access through their beliefs and way of life (Bedew, 2024). Intrusion of dominant system both foreign and local reduces the effectiveness of the local systems in keeping with norms that maintains social, political and judicial order that hold Ham societies for centuries prior to colonialism. Each environment has family values, norms and cultural system that is foundational upon

which societies are built. Bedew (2024) stated that, family is the primary institution responsible for raising and socializing children, instilling cultural beliefs and maintaining social order. Also, education and religious institutions plays vital roles in transforming cultural attitude, which guides human behaviour during inter-relationship. While political institutions help in terms establishment of laws for societal organization and effective governance. The key determinant of the functions of trado-political systems is the family shaped by an environment..

Theoretical Framework

Functionalist Theory: The functions of societies are replete with several elements performing specific roles assigned in order to achieve balance. This implies the precondition for the attainment of societal's social, political, economic and cultural order. *Kpop Ku* and *Shengy Shatir* performed functions that maintained societal norms and values across generations. These trado-political institutions ensure the maintenance of social order through the enforcement of cultural values (Hurst, 2022; Khan *et al,* 2023). Hurst (2022) asserted distributary functions of societies and in this case, *Ku* and *Shatir* institutions to bring about societal balance. This is geared towards achieving equilibrium in the functioning of all components working together to achieve order. Hurst (2022) division of societies into hierarchies aligned with Hamland's social systems of *Zhu* (Family), *Haar* (Clan) and *Khyep* (Community). Social norms and values were enforced through these hierarchies to maintain social, political and legal order.

Findings

The study established the following findings:

i. The *Ku* and *Shetiri* institutions served as the principal pillars of governance in pre-colonial Hamland, exercising authority not only in religious affairs but also in political administration, judicial processes, and social regulation.
ii. Colonial rule significantly undermined indigenous governance systems. The implementation of the indirect rule policy and the emergence of *Kpop Kpaar* restructured the traditional political order and diminished the authority previously vested in *Kpop Ku*.
iii. Despite the transformative effects of colonialism, traditional institutions have remained resilient and continue to occupy an important place within Ham society.
iv. Members of the community still depend on *Ku* and *Shetiri* institutions for dispute settlement, oath-taking procedures, environmental protection, and the safeguarding of cultural norms and traditions.
v. The study found that formal Western judicial mechanisms are often inadequate in addressing disputes that are deeply embedded in local cultural and customary practices. Issues such as incest, violations of sacred lands, and breaches of customary obligations are more effectively handled through indigenous conflict resolution processes grounded in local beliefs and values.
vi. Sustainable peacebuilding is more likely to be achieved when it is rooted in the cultural realities of the people. Indigenous institutions enjoy greater legitimacy, trust, and acceptance among local populations than externally imposed governance and conflict-resolution frameworks.

Conclusion

The study believes that constructive transformation of Hamland's trado-political system would enhances social, political and cultural order. Westernization and Hausanization of trado-political institutions in Hamland greatly neutralizes the efficacy of *Ku* and *Shetiri*. These institutions had been central to maintaining political, social, cultural and environmental order. These alien systems diminishes the significance, powers and effectiveness of the indigenous Hamland's system responsible for holding the bond of communal unity, respect for societal norms prior to the coming of the foreign systems. The research asserted that, irrespective of the efforts towards neutralization, relegation and destructive transformative effects of traditional institutions by the colonialist, these trado-political institutions have remained resilient and continue to occupy an important place within Ham society. Members of the community still depend on *Ku* and *Shetiri* institutions for dispute settlement, oath-taking procedures, environmental protection, and the safeguarding of cultural norms and traditions. The investigation pointed out that formal Western judicial mechanisms are often inadequate in addressing disputes that are deeply embedded in local cultural and customary practices. Issues such as incest, violations of sacred lands, and breaches of customary obligations are more effectively handled through indigenous conflict resolution processes grounded in local beliefs and values.

The study concluded that building sustainable peace, requires effective utilization of peacebuilding approaches such as conflict management, conflict resolution, conflict prevention, conflict termination, conflict transformation and reconciliation that are sensitive to the cultures and traditions of the a given environment. This entails adoption of the adaptable environmental peacebuilding mechanisms; but alien system. Indigenous institutions enjoy greater legitimacy, trust, and acceptance among local populations than externally imposed governance and conflict-resolution frameworks. The inquiry added that building sustainable peace requires the fusion of transformed trado-political and Westernize systems, taking cognizance of cultural sensitivities to avert environmental immiscibility in terms of values and norms. Neutralization of the effectiveness of indigenous trado-political institutions had established social disequilibrium. Hamland in particular and Africa in general, continue to lag behind imbibing alien cultures, thereby playing second fiddle. Copying Western political and cultural system in practices for centuries, constitute a political injury to Hamland and African system in a globalize world.

Recommendations

The study suggested:

i. The integration of autochthonous trado-political systems to address societal ills not captured by the Western political system
ii. The transformation of the trado-political institution to conform with modernization. This will enhance peacebuilding without compromising its originality due to its resilience over the years.
iii. The utilization of trado-political systems of oath-taking, ritual cleansing, among others to address deep local cultural conflict not covered by Western systems.
iv. Paying attention environmental peacebuilding mechanisms that have cultural sensitivities to local customs and norms. The fact is, the local system still enjoy greater legitimacy, trust, and acceptance among local populations, and
v. Fusion of local and foreign system where necessary to compliment the weaknesses of each system instead of supplanting and imposition.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT
Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)
ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)
Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com
Received: August 17, 2026 **Accepted**: September 19, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026
Citation: Akpan, Uwem U. & Ekpo, Itoro A (2026). "Cord-Cutting and Evolving Media Consumption Patterns in the Digital Era: A Theoretical Review." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 90-101.

Article **Open Access**

CORD-CUTTING AND EVOLVING MEDIA CONSUMPTION PATTERNS IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A THEORETICAL REVIEW

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Abstract
Streaming platforms have changed how audiences find, watch, and engage with media, and cable and satellite television have felt the pressure as a result. A growing number of viewers are cutting back on, or cancelling outright, their pay-television subscriptions. Using Media Substitution Theory as its guiding framework, this paper offers a theoretical account of what is driving that shift and how it fits into the broader transformation of media consumption. The review points to several overlapping factors behind the move toward streaming: improved technology, easier access to content, personalization, convenience, cost, and a growing desire among audiences to control their own viewing experience. Contemporary media use is increasingly defined by on-demand viewing, mobile access, binge-watching, and audiences setting their own terms rather than following a broadcaster's schedule. In this light, cord-cutting is best understood as media substitution manifesting in practice as a sustained movement away from traditional broadcasting and toward digital platforms. Traditional media organizations that want to remain competitive will need to treat digital transformation as central to their strategy rather than an afterthought.

Keywords: Streaming Platforms, Pay-Television, Subscription, Media Substitution, Binge-Watching.

Introduction
Digital technology has reshaped the global media landscape and, with it, the way audiences find, watch, and interact with content. The spread of internet access, mobile devices, and digital platforms has opened up forms of media consumption that traditional broadcasting was never built to offer. As these technologies have matured, audiences have moved

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steadily away from conventional television and toward internet-based streaming, reshaping consumption patterns worldwide (Evens, Henderickx, and Conradie, 2023). For much of the twentieth century, television was one of the primary channels through which people received information, education, and entertainment. Cable and satellite subscriptions gave viewers access to a fixed menu of channels running on fixed schedules. Streaming has upended that arrangement, giving audiences far more flexibility and control: content on demand, viewing experiences tailored to the individual, and access across whatever device happens to be at hand (Lotz, 2022). The clearest sign of this shift is cord-cutting consumers cancelling or scaling back traditional pay-television subscriptions in favour of streaming. It has become a subject of real interest among media scholars, industry professionals, and policymakers alike, given what it signals about audience behaviour, media economics, advertising, and the long-term sustainability of broadcasting (Yamatsu and Lee, 2023). Platforms such as Netflix, YouTube, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ have only accelerated the migration away from conventional television.

Several forces have driven the rise of streaming. Better internet infrastructure and wider ownership of smartphones, tablets, and smart TVs mean audiences can now watch what they want, whenever and wherever suits them. Streaming platforms compound this by offering deep content libraries, algorithm-driven recommendations, flexible pricing, and interactive features that keep users engaged (Simon, 2024). Taken together, these factors have made streaming a default source of entertainment and information for many audiences rather than a supplement to television. This shift is not just technological it reflects a real change in how audiences see their own role in media consumption. Rather than passively receiving whatever a broadcaster schedules, viewers now actively choose, customize, and shape their own media experience. Binge-watching, multi-screen viewing, mobile consumption, and algorithm-driven content discovery all point to this changing relationship between audiences and media (Ameri, Honka, and Xie, 2024), and they challenge older assumptions about what "watching television" even means.

For traditional media organizations, the consequences have been significant. Broadcasters and cable providers are dealing with shrinking subscriber numbers, more fragmented audiences, and stiffer competition from digital platforms, even as streaming companies keep expanding through aggressive content strategies and audience-first services. This has pushed scholars to look more closely at what is driving audience migration and what it means for the media industry as a whole (Lobato, 2019). Much of the existing scholarship on streaming and cord-cutting leans heavily on empirical work subscription numbers, adoption rates, stated audience preferences. That research is valuable, but it leaves a gap: a more theoretical account of why cord-cutting happens and how it fits into the broader logic of media change. This paper takes up that gap through a theoretical review of cord-cutting and shifting media consumption in the digital era. Drawing on Media Substitution Theory, alongside Technological Determinism and Media Dependency perspectives, it examines how technological change, competition among media, and the relationship between audiences and media together explain the rise of streaming and the decline of traditional television. In pulling these theoretical strands together with the existing literature, the paper aims to add to scholarly understanding of digital media transformation and what it means for communication practice going forward.

Review of Concepts

i. **Cord-Cutting:** Cord-cutting describes the practice of cancelling or scaling back subscriptions to traditional pay-television services cable and satellite in favour of

internet-based streaming. The term took hold as digital platforms increasingly offered flexible, on-demand access to content without the constraints that came with a standard television package (Lotz, 2022). The trend picked up real momentum over the past decade as streaming expanded globally and consumers looked for cheaper, more convenient alternatives to bundled television packages. Streaming gives viewers a level of control over what they watch, when, and under what subscription terms that cable television was never designed to offer and that difference has driven both the growth of streaming and the gradual decline of traditional subscriptions in many parts of the world (Yamatsu and Lee, 2023). Underlying cord-cutting is a broader shift in what audiences expect from media: control and personalization, rather than a fixed schedule set by someone else. That expectation has made cord-cutting one of the clearer markers of change within contemporary media systems. Researchers have identified a few distinct forms this takes outright cancellation of pay-TV, partial downgrading of a television package, and "cord-shaving," where a household keeps a limited cable subscription alongside one or more streaming services (Lobato, 2019). The variety itself is telling: cord-cutting isn't simply a technology story, but also a story about changing consumer habits and priorities.

ii. **Media Consumption:** Media consumption covers the ways people access, use, interpret, and engage with content across communication platforms the selection, exposure to, and use of information, entertainment, education, and other media, whether through traditional or digital channels (Napoli, 2019). For much of media history, this was a largely passive process. Broadcasters set the schedule, and audiences had limited say in when or how they engaged with content. Digital technology changed that by giving audiences real interactivity, participation, and personalization (Jenkins, Ford, and Green, 2018). Audience autonomy is now a defining feature of media consumption. People choose what to watch, decide when to watch it, move between multiple platforms at once, and increasingly take part in creating and sharing content themselves a marked departure from the older, one-directional model of mass communication. Consumption patterns have also become more fragmented as digital platforms have multiplied. Rather than depending on one medium, audiences now split their attention across streaming, social media, websites, podcasts, and mobile apps a diversification that has reshaped both engagement patterns and how dependent people are on any single platform (Napoli, 2019). The concept extends beyond what people watch or listen to; it also captures the frequency, duration, timing, location, device, and manner of consumption. Under traditional broadcasting, audiences largely adjusted their viewing habits to programme schedules and channel availability, since television organisations controlled both content and distribution. Digital technology has reorganised this relationship, handing audiences far greater control over when, where, and how they consume media. This shift is most visible in the move from linear broadcasting to on-demand engagement. Where conventional television required viewers to tune in at fixed times, streaming platforms let users select content on their own schedule. Laor and Galily (2022) found notable generational differences in this respect, with younger audiences (Generations Y and Z) showing markedly stronger engagement with on-demand formats than older cohorts. Consumption has consequently become less a matter of what broadcasters choose to air and more a matter of what audiences choose to watch, and when. On-demand access has, in turn, altered the temporal relationship between audiences and content. Rather than organising daily routines around broadcast

schedules, viewers now fit media consumption into their own routines a flexibility that matters particularly for those balancing work, study, or family responsibilities against fixed viewing windows. Streaming platforms have reinforced this expectation by building extensive libraries spanning film, television, documentary, sport, and music, none of which depend on a broadcaster's timetable. A parallel development is the diversification of devices through which media is consumed. Television viewing was once tied to a single set, usually located in the home; digital media now extends across smartphones, tablets, laptops, and smart televisions, allowing audiences to move between devices without losing access to preferred content. In markets where the smartphone functions as the primary gateway to the internet, mobile devices play an especially prominent role in shaping how audiences encounter digital content a pattern Simon (2024) documents in the Nigerian context, where streaming has drawn viewers away from communal, home-based viewing and toward more individualised, mobile engagement. Individualisation reinforces this trend. Traditional television often involved household-level viewing, with family members negotiating a shared choice from a single screen. Streaming platforms instead support separate profiles and personal devices, allowing different members of the same household to watch different content simultaneously. Recommendation systems sharpen this effect further, using prior viewing behaviour to tailor suggestions to individual tastes; Evens, Henderickx, and Conradie (2024) attribute part of viewers' preference for streaming over conventional television precisely to such personalised, easy-to-navigate features. Simon (2024) similarly observes a more individualised viewing culture emerging in Nigeria, though communal viewing practices have not disappeared entirely digital media appear to be shifting the balance between collective and individual engagement rather than eliminating shared viewing outright. The pace and volume of consumption have changed alongside its timing and setting. Streaming platforms release multiple episodes at once, enabling binge-watching in a way scheduled broadcasting with its enforced intervals between episodes never allowed. Audiences now determine not only which content to watch but how much of it to consume in a single sitting, a development that blurs the earlier distinction between occasional viewing and prolonged engagement. Audiences have also fragmented across a wider range of platforms. Where large viewerships once concentrated around a small number of broadcast channels, digitalisation has multiplied the available options: broadcast television, subscription streaming, social media, video-sharing sites, and podcasts now compete for the same attention. Chan-Olmsted and Luo (2024) capture this shift through the idea of consumers' "multiple-service repertoires" the sets of streaming subscriptions individuals maintain and rotate between rather than committing to a single provider. Viewers increasingly choose among platforms based on the type of content sought, cost, convenience, or the social experience each offers, rather than remaining loyal to one service. Content diversity contributes further to this platform-switching behaviour. Streaming catalogues combine local, national, and international programming in a single library, offering audiences a breadth of choice that conventional schedules rarely matched. Chen et al. (2024) find that content diversity, personalisation, and perceived value all shape how users evaluate and continue to use streaming services, suggesting that catalogue breadth is not incidental to platform preference but a meaningful driver of it. Consumption has also become more participatory. Audiences now comment on, share, and discuss content, and in some cases produce and distribute their own

activities that soften the older, one-directional relationship between media producers and consumers. Viewers today can occupy the roles of consumer, participant, and distributor at once, a dynamic largely absent from traditional broadcasting's top-down structure. Taken together, these developments are directly relevant to cord-cutting. As audiences grow accustomed to on-demand access, personalised recommendations, device mobility, and a wider array of platforms, traditional pay-television subscriptions can come to seem comparatively rigid and less appealing. Evens et al. (2024) link this dynamic explicitly to the technological affordances of streaming, arguing that such features actively draw viewers away from conventional television. From the standpoint of this review, then, media consumption patterns are better understood not as a simple measure of time spent with media but as a broader realignment in the relationship between audiences, technologies, platforms, and content. Audiences have moved from a largely fixed, schedule-bound mode of consumption toward one that is mobile, personalised, on-demand, and distributed across multiple platforms a shift that supplies important context for why some viewers reduce or abandon traditional pay-television subscriptions altogether. This connects directly to Media Substitution Theory, which predicts that media compete when they serve similar functions while drawing on the same finite audience resources time, attention, and money. As streaming platforms increasingly perform the entertainment functions once associated with television, while adding on-demand access, personalisation, mobility, and expansive libraries, they intensify competition with traditional broadcasting. Cord-cutting can therefore be read as one outcome of this broader reallocation, as audiences redirect time, attention, and spending away from established television services and toward digital alternatives. This is not to suggest that traditional television is disappearing outright. Many audiences use traditional and digital media side by side, depending on the type of content and the value each platform offers in a given moment retaining conventional television for live news or sport, for instance, while turning to streaming for film and scripted series. Media consumption in the digital era is thus better characterised by substitution, coexistence, and complementarity than by outright replacement. Overall, media consumption patterns in the digital era mark a shift away from scheduled, location-bound, broadcaster-controlled viewing and toward engagement that is flexible, personalised, mobile, and participatory. This transformation sits at the centre of any explanation of cord-cutting, since the decision to scale back or abandon pay-television subscriptions is closely bound up with these changing audience expectations. Media consumption patterns therefore stand as a central conceptual variable for understanding the wider transformation of the media environment and the growing competition between traditional television and digital streaming platforms.

iii. **Digital Media:** Digital media refers to content created, distributed, stored, and accessed through digital technologies and internet platforms distinct from analogue media in that it relies on electronic systems capable of carrying text, audio, video, graphics, and interactive content across digital networks (Flew and Smith, 2021). By removing many of the geographic and time-based limits that shaped traditional media, digital platforms let users access content from virtually anywhere, at any time, provided they have the right infrastructure and connectivity. The category is broad websites, social networks, streaming services, blogs, podcasts, mobile apps, and online news outlets all fall under it and all of them allow for more interactivity and audience participation than traditional media typically did. Audiences are no longer simply on the receiving end of content;

they help create, share, and evaluate it (Flew and Smith, 2021). Personalization is one of digital media's defining traits. Through data analytics and recommendation algorithms, platforms can tailor what they show to an individual's preferences and past behaviour. That capability is a large part of why digital media has become so much more engaging than traditional channels, and why it now sits at the centre of how people communicate and consume content.

iv. **Online Streaming:** Online streaming is the continuous delivery of audio, video, or multimedia content over the internet live or on demand without requiring a full download before viewing. It lets audiences access content instantly on smartphones, tablets, computers, smart TVs, and game consoles (Evens *et al*., 2023). The growth of streaming has given the media industry real alternatives to the traditional broadcasting model, running on subscription, ad-supported, or hybrid arrangements that give audiences access to large content libraries films, TV series, documentaries, sport, educational material, and user-generated content consumed on the audience's own terms. What sets streaming apart most is its on-demand nature. Where traditional television runs on a fixed schedule, streaming lets viewers choose what to watch and when, a shift that has reshaped viewing habits and given rise to behaviours like binge-watching and highly individualized content consumption (Lotz, 2022). Streaming also travels well across devices users can move from a phone to a laptop to a smart TV without losing their place or their personalized recommendations, which adds real convenience and helps explain why streaming continues to gain ground among today's media consumers. As streaming platforms have grown into dominant players in the global media industry, their influence has accelerated cord-cutting and reset audience expectations around accessibility, convenience, and control making online streaming one of the clearest drivers of how media consumption is evolving in the digital era.

Evolution of Media Consumption in the Digital Era

Few shifts in the history of mass communication rival the transformation of media consumption now underway. Advances in digital technology, internet connectivity, and mobile communication have changed not just how content reaches audiences, but how audiences behave, what they expect, and how they engage with what they watch (Lotz, 2022). Traditional mass media newspapers, radio, television operated on a one-to-many model in which producers held most of the control over what audiences could access and when. Television, in particular, was central to household entertainment for decades, with viewers following schedules set entirely by broadcasters, leaving little room for personalization or control (Napoli, 2019). The rise of the internet in the late twentieth century began to loosen that grip, giving audiences alternative sources of information and entertainment and reducing their reliance on traditional channels. Broadband access accelerated the process further by making high-quality multimedia content practical to deliver over digital networks, and as internet access spread, audiences increasingly turned online for communication, information, and entertainment (Flew and Smith, 2021).

Web 2.0 marked another turning point. Where earlier internet content was largely static, Web 2.0 opened the door to participation, interactivity, and user-generated content. Audiences stopped being passive recipients and became active contributors, and platforms like social media, blogs, and online communities reshaped the relationship between audiences and media altogether (Jenkins, Ford, and Green, 2018). Smartphones pushed this further still. Mobile devices gave audiences continuous access to content regardless of

location, letting people consume media on the move and reinforcing a sense of personal control over their own viewing. As mobile internet spread globally, digital media became woven into daily life shaping how people communicate, find information, and entertain themselves (Westlund and Färdigh, 2022). Streaming platforms represent perhaps the most significant development of all. They introduced true on-demand access, replacing the need to conform to a broadcaster's schedule with the freedom to choose content on one's own terms a shift that has fundamentally reset what audiences expect from media accessibility and control (Evens, Henderickx, and Conradie, 2023). That same shift helped fuel binge-watching the practice of watching several episodes of a series in one sitting. Streaming platforms actively encourage this by releasing full seasons at once and using recommendation algorithms designed to keep viewers watching, a clear illustration of how technology shapes audience behaviour (Pittman and Sheehan, 2015). Multiscreen engagement is another hallmark of contemporary consumption. It's now common for viewers to watch a show on a smart TV while browsing social media on a phone or tablet at the same time a pattern that reflects just how interconnected digital media environments have become, and how complex audience behaviour now is (Jenkins *et al*., 2018).

Personalization has grown alongside all of this. Streaming platforms lean on algorithms and data analytics to recommend content based on a user's history and behaviour, cutting down on search time and surfacing relevant content giving audiences a far more individualized experience than traditional broadcasting ever allowed (Lobato, 2019). None of this has been painless for traditional broadcasters. As audiences shift toward digital and streaming platforms, broadcasters face falling viewership, shrinking subscription revenue, and mounting competition pressure that has pushed many traditional media organizations to launch their own streaming services and rethink their business models (Lotz, 2022). Cord-cutting is the clearest outcome of all these changes. Affordable, flexible, content-rich streaming has given consumers a real reason to scale back or drop pay-television subscriptions altogether, reflecting a broader shift in what audiences prioritize convenience, personalization, mobility, and variety over the rigid structure of linear television (Yamatsu and Lee, 2023). Taken as a whole, the evolution of media consumption in the digital era marks a move from passive, schedule-bound viewing toward active, personalized, on-demand engagement. Technological change, digital platforms, and shifting audience expectations have together reshaped the communication landscape and laid the groundwork for cord-cutting to continue defining how people consume media.

In short, today's media consumption is marked by audience empowerment, technological convergence, personalization, and a growing reliance on digital platforms. As streaming continues to expand, these patterns are likely to keep evolving with real implications for audiences, media organizations, advertisers, and researchers alike.

Media Substitution Theory

Media Substitution Theory grew out of research on media choice and competition, aimed at explaining how audiences respond when new communication technologies enter the picture. It is closely associated with the work of John Dimmick and colleagues, whose niche theory of media competition helped establish how media organizations compete for a fixed pool of audience resources time, attention, and money (Dimmick, Kline, and Stafford, 2000). The theory gained traction as digital technologies developed and internet-based platforms emerged, prompting scholars to ask whether new media simply supplemented older forms or actually replaced them. As digital media expanded, the evidence increasingly pointed toward the latter: audiences often cut back on traditional media once a newer alternative

offered clearly greater benefits, which cemented Media Substitution Theory as a key framework for understanding how audience preferences and consumption habits change over time. The rise of platforms such as Netflix, YouTube, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ has only made the theory more relevant, offering real alternatives to conventional television and sharpening the debate over whether digital platforms are displacing traditional broadcasting altogether (Yamatsu and Lee, 2023). The theory itself rests on a handful of core assumptions about audience behaviour and media competition.

First, it assumes different media compete for the same limited resources audience attention, time, money, and psychological commitment so that more use of one medium tends to come at the expense of another (Dimmick *et al*., 2000). Second, it treats audiences as rational actors who choose media based on perceived benefit: people gravitate toward platforms that offer more convenience, accessibility, affordability, and satisfaction, and shift their preferences when a new option clearly outperforms an old one. Third, the theory holds that technological innovation opens the door to displacement. As communication technology advances, new media forms emerge with capabilities the old ones lack, which can reduce audience reliance on older platforms and push migration toward more efficient alternatives. Fourth, substitution is assumed to happen gradually rather than all at once. A new medium rarely wipes out an older one overnight; instead, the two tend to coexist for a transitional period, with the more advantageous medium slowly gaining ground.

Finally, the theory recognizes that substitution depends on audience needs and context. Economic factors, access to technology, content availability, social trends, and individual preference all shape whether and how quickly substitution happens making it as much a social and behavioural process as a technological one. In essence, Media Substitution Theory argues that a new communication medium can reduce reliance on existing media when it performs the same functions more effectively substitution occurs once audiences see the new option as offering more value than the old one. Under this framework, media platforms compete within a shared ecosystem, with audiences weighing their options and putting their time and money toward whichever platform best meets their needs. Media that fail to keep pace with changing expectations risk losing relevance and usage. The theory also holds that substitution is more likely when a new medium offers lower costs, more convenience, better accessibility, stronger interactivity, and greater content variety all of which give audiences reason to change their habits and adopt new platforms.

Media Substitution Theory and Cord-Cutting

Cord-cutting is arguably the clearest real-world example of media substitution at work today. It happens when consumers cancel or scale back cable or satellite subscriptions and replace them with streaming alternatives. Streaming platforms carry several features that make them natural substitutes for traditional television: on-demand access, personalized recommendations, flexible pricing, compatibility across devices, and deep content libraries. These features directly address the shortcomings of conventional broadcasting and raise the perceived value of streaming in the eyes of audiences (Lotz, 2022). As more audiences move toward streaming, traditional television providers see subscriptions and engagement decline exactly the substitution pattern the theory predicts. Rather than sticking to a broadcaster's schedule, viewers increasingly prefer platforms that let them decide what to watch, when, and how.

Recent research backs this up, showing that streaming services increasingly take over entertainment functions that used to belong exclusively to linear television lending further support to the theory's core claims (Yamatsu and Lee, 2023). The growing popularity of

streaming is a clear demonstration of how technological change can reshape audience preferences and reset established consumption patterns. Media Substitution Theory is directly relevant to this paper for several reasons. First, it explains why audiences continue to walk away from traditional television in favour of streaming, pointing to the role that convenience, flexibility, affordability, and content variety play in shaping those choices. Second, it helps make sense of how and why cord-cutting has taken hold across different societies audience migration from television to streaming is, in practice, media substitution playing out in the real world. Third, the theory sheds light on how consumption patterns keep evolving, showing how technological innovation continues to reshape audience preferences as streaming platforms expand their reach and capabilities. Fourth, it offers a useful lens for understanding the wider transformation underway in the media industry the decline of traditional subscriptions alongside the growth of digital streaming is, in effect, the competitive dynamic the theory describes. Finally, the theory provides a solid analytical foundation for examining how digital technology is reshaping media consumption more broadly. Its focus on how newer media replace older ones speaks directly to the questions this study is trying to answer about cord-cutting and changing audience behaviour. In short, Media Substitution Theory offers a strong explanation for the shift from television to streaming. Its emphasis on competition, audience choice, and technological change makes it well suited to analysing cord-cutting and the broader evolution of media consumption today.

Drivers of Cord-Cutting in Contemporary Media Environments

Cord-cutting today is driven by a mix of technological, economic, and behavioural factors that together have reshaped audience preferences and sped up the shift away from traditional television. Cost is one of the biggest drivers. Cable and satellite packages tend to come with high monthly fees and bundles of channels that many subscribers never actually watch. Streaming platforms, by contrast, generally let users pay only for what they want, which has made them an attractive, cost-effective option for many households (Lotz, 2022).

Technology plays an equally important role. Better broadband, mobile networks, cloud computing, and smart devices have made streaming both more accessible and higher quality, letting audiences watch high-definition content across devices without relying on traditional television infrastructure at all (Evens, Henderickx, and Conradie, 2023). Content variety and availability matter too. Streaming libraries span films, series, documentaries, sports, and original productions, all available on demand rather than tied to a fixed schedule a flexibility that lines up neatly with what today's audiences want. Personalization adds further appeal. Recommendation algorithms and user data let streaming platforms tailor suggestions to individual taste, which keeps users satisfied and engaged over time (Lobato, 2019). Lifestyle change matters as well. Audiences increasingly prioritize convenience, flexibility, and mobility in how they consume media, and the ability to watch anything, anywhere, has made rigid television schedules feel outdated to a lot of viewers.

Changing Media Consumption Patterns in the Streaming Age

The streaming era has reshaped media consumption worldwide. Where traditional consumption meant scheduled viewing and limited audience control, streaming has flipped that dynamic audiences now decide what they watch, when, and how. One of the biggest shifts is the move from linear viewing to on-demand consumption. Traditional television required audiences to fit their lives around a broadcaster's schedule; streaming reversed that, letting viewers access content on their own terms instead (Lotz, 2022). Binge-watching culture is another major shift. Streaming platforms often release entire seasons at once,

encouraging viewers to watch several episodes in a single sitting now a familiar part of how people engage with media (Pittman and Sheehan, 2015). Consumption has also become far more mobile and personal. Smartphones and tablets let people access content wherever they are, so media is no longer tied to the living room or a dedicated viewing space it fits into daily routines instead. Multi-screen use has become common as well, with people watching streamed content on one device while using a phone or tablet at the same time a habit that captures just how interconnected today's media environment has become (Jenkins, Ford, and Green, 2018). Overall, streaming has turned audiences from passive viewers into active participants who exercise real control over their own media experience.

Implications of Cord-Cutting for Traditional Media Industries

Cord-cutting has real consequences for traditional media businesses. The most immediate is falling cable and satellite subscriptions as more consumers migrate to streaming, traditional providers see their subscriber base and revenue shrink (Yamatsu and Lee, 2023). Advertising has taken a hit too. Broadcasters have long depended on ad revenue, but audience fragmentation and falling viewership have weakened the effectiveness of traditional advertising, pushing more ad spend toward digital platforms that offer targeted, measurable reach. Competition within the industry has intensified as a result. Traditional broadcasters now compete directly with global streaming platforms for audience attention, subscription dollars, and advertising budgets, which has forced many to pursue their own digital strategies and streaming services (Lotz, 2022). Content production has changed too. Streaming platforms pour money into original programming backed by data-driven decisions about what audiences want, and traditional media organizations have responded by investing more heavily in premium content and audience-focused programming of their own. More broadly, cord-cutting is reshaping media markets and redefining what a broadcasting business even looks like. Traditional media institutions will need to keep innovating just to stay relevant in an increasingly digital environment.

Future Trends in Digital Media Consumption

Where digital media consumption goes next will largely depend on continued technological change and shifting audience preferences. Artificial intelligence is one clear trend recommendation systems are only likely to get more sophisticated, enabling deeper personalization and better user experiences. Hybrid media models are another. Many traditional broadcasters are now blending conventional television with streaming services to create more integrated viewing experiences, helping them adapt to shifting demand while holding on to existing audiences (Lotz, 2022). Mobile consumption is likely to keep growing too, particularly as 5G and future mobile network improvements raise both the quality and accessibility of streaming making mobile devices even more central to how people consume media. Convergence across different forms of digital media is also likely to continue, as streaming, social media, gaming, and virtual communication tools become more interconnected opening new avenues for audience engagement and content distribution. Virtual Reality (VR) is a digital technology that generates a computer-built environment users can experience and interact with, typically through a headset. Applied to media, VR can immerse audiences fully within a media environment letting them experience concerts, sports, films, or games as if they were physically there. Augmented Reality (AR) works differently: it overlays digital elements images, graphics, sound, information onto a user's actual physical surroundings rather than replacing them. Through smartphones, tablets, and smart glasses, users can interact with digital content while staying connected to the real

world around them. As VR and AR continue to develop and spread, they could push digital media consumption toward being more immersive, interactive, and personalized than it already is offering new ways to experience entertainment, news, advertising, education, and sport. Whether they become central to the future media environment will likely depend on how well they meet audiences' growing appetite for engaging, interactive experiences.

Conclusion

This theoretical review examined cord-cutting and the broader evolution of media consumption in the digital era through the lens of Media Substitution Theory. The evidence points clearly to technological change, shifting audience preferences, and the rise of streaming as the main forces reshaping how people consume media today. Cord-cutting, in this light, is media substitution in practice audiences steadily replacing traditional television with internet-based streaming. The flexibility, affordability, convenience, personalization, and variety that streaming platforms offer explain much of why they have grown so popular. The review also shows that media consumption has shifted from a passive, schedule-driven activity to one that is active, personalized, and on-demand, with streaming giving audiences real control over what they watch and how reshaping the relationship between audiences and media in the process. Building on Media Substitution Theory, the paper holds that technological innovation and audience-centred practices will continue to shape the future of media consumption. As streaming technology and digital infrastructure keep improving, cord-cutting is likely to remain a defining feature of how people consume media.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this review, the following recommendations are made:

i. Traditional media organizations should pursue digital transformation seriously integrating streaming services and digital platforms into their operations rather than treating them as an add-on, if they want to stay relevant in the evolving media environment.
ii. Content producers should put audiences first, investing in high-quality, engaging content that actually reflects what digital audiences want.
iii. Media literacy efforts should be strengthened, equipping audiences with the skills to navigate digital platforms and critically assess the content they encounter.
iv. Traditional media organizations should diversify their revenue streams digital advertising, subscription services, and strategic partnerships all matter more as cord-cutting erodes traditional television revenue and competition from streaming platforms intensifies.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: August 18, 2026 **Accepted**: September 20, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026

Citation: Nkana, Nsikan-Abasi S. & Ekon, Felix E. (2026). "Drama and Development in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 102-114.

Article **Open Access**

DRAMA AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

This paper examined the challenges and prospects in the process of drama's contribution to development in Nigeria. It focused particular attention on its role in public education, health communication, cultural preservation, economic development, peace building, youth empowerment, environmental sustainability, and behavioural change communication. The paper argued that through Theatre for Development, community theatre, radio drama, television, film, and digital storytelling, drama makes development messages more understandable, relatable, and culturally relevant to diverse audiences. Furthermore, drama contributes to employment creation and the growth of the creative industry. Despite these contributions, inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, weak government policy, commercialization of the creative industry, declining community theatre practice, digital divide, cultural and religious sensitivities, and insecurity continue to constrain its effectiveness. The paper therefore, concluded that drama has evolved from being a primary form of entertainment to one of the most effective communication tools for promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. In this context, drama contributes significantly to national development by educating citizens, facilitating behavioural change, preserving cultural heritage, promoting democratic governance, supporting peace building, stimulating economic growth and encouraging community participation. The paper recommended policy formation by government, adequate funding for theatre for development, strengthening of drama education by educational institutions, adoption of participatory drama as a communication strategy by development agencies and production of development oriented drama by media organizations.

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Keywords: Communication Strategy, Cultural Heritage, Development, Drama, Nigeria, Theatre for Development.

Introduction

Contemporary development thinking has shifted from measuring progress solely by economic growth to emphasizing human development, social inclusion, participatory governance, poverty reduction, and sustainable livelihoods. This broader perspective is reflected in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which recognize communication, education, culture, and public participation as critical enablers of sustainable development (United Nations [UN], 2015; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2024). Sustainable development cannot be achieved without effective communication that encourages dialogue, collaboration, and community ownership of development programmes. According to Chukwu-Okoronkwo (2020), communication is fundamental to development because it provides the platform through which people become aware of societal challenges, negotiate solutions, and participate actively in improving their living conditions. Among the numerous communication strategies available for promoting development, drama has emerged as one of the most effective because of its ability to combine education, entertainment, persuasion, and cultural expression. Drama is a participatory communication medium that employs storytelling, dialogue, music, dance, role-playing, and performance to communicate ideas, influence attitudes, and stimulate social action. Unlike conventional information campaigns that rely primarily on one-way communication, drama engages audiences emotionally and intellectually, making development messages more relatable, memorable, and culturally acceptable. This unique characteristic has positioned drama as a valuable instrument for communication for development, particularly in African societies where oral traditions and communal participation remain deeply rooted. Chukwu-Okoronkwo (2020) describes theatre as a dynamic instrument of conscientization capable of promoting collective action and facilitating sustainable community development.

Nigeria has a rich theatrical heritage that predates colonialism. Indigenous dramatic traditions - including storytelling, masquerade performances, festivals, dance, music, and ritual enactments - have historically served as mechanisms for transmitting cultural values, educating community members, resolving conflicts, and strengthening social cohesion. These traditional forms of communication have continued to influence contemporary Nigerian theatre, which has evolved into a powerful medium for addressing national issues such as corruption, insecurity, electoral violence, environmental degradation, public health, youth unemployment, gender inequality, and community development. As a culturally familiar communication medium, drama remains highly effective in conveying development messages because it reflects local realities and encourages active audience participation. The emergence of *Theatre for Development* (TfD) has further expanded the developmental role of drama in Nigeria. Theatre for Development is a participatory communication approach that actively involves community members in identifying developmental challenges, analysing their causes, and collectively designing practical solutions through dramatic performances and dialogue. Unlike conventional theatre, where audiences remain passive spectators, Theatre for Development transforms community members into active participants in the communication process, thereby enhancing local ownership of development interventions. Recent studies demonstrate that Theatre for Development has been successfully applied in Nigeria to promote environmental sustainability, conflict

resolution, peace building, health education, agricultural development, and community empowerment.

Empirical evidence continues to demonstrate the effectiveness of drama as a tool for behavioural and social change in Nigeria. For example, Obasi et al. (2021) found that Theatre for Development has significantly improved knowledge, attitudes, and behavioural intentions among victims of farmer–herder conflicts by promoting vocational skills acquisition and community empowerment. Similarly, Nwabuzor (2020) reports that drama-based health communication interventions substantially improved rural women's knowledge of childhood obesity prevention, highlighting the capacity of participatory theatre to enhance public health education and behavioural change. These findings reinforce the argument that drama extends beyond entertainment to become an evidence-based communication strategy for achieving sustainable development objectives. The increasing integration of drama into development programmes is also evident in collaborations between development agencies and theatre practitioners. UNESCO, for instance, adopted the "*Wakabout*" radio drama series as a communication strategy for creating awareness about the dangers of irregular migration among Nigerian youths. Through compelling storytelling and relatable characters, the programme educated audiences on the risks associated with human trafficking and unsafe migration while encouraging informed decision-making. This initiative illustrates how dramatic communication can effectively address complex social challenges by combining entertainment with educational content that resonates with target audiences.

Furthermore, the rapid expansion of Nigeria's creative industry, particularly Nollywood, has enhanced the contribution of drama to national development. Beyond its economic significance as one of the world's largest film industries, Nollywood has become a strategic platform for raising public awareness on governance, human rights, corruption, gender-based violence, religious tolerance, entrepreneurship, and national integration. The industry contributes to employment generation, cultural promotion, tourism development, and the dissemination of development messages across Nigeria and the African continent. Recent scholarship therefore recognizes drama as an important component of development communication capable of influencing public opinion and supporting the achievement of national development goals. Despite these remarkable contributions, the full potential of drama as a development communication strategy in Nigeria has not been fully realized. Theatre practitioners continue to face challenges such as inadequate funding, poor institutional support, weak policy implementation, commercialization of theatre practice, limited integration of drama into government development programmes, and declining investment in community theatre. These constraints have restricted the capacity of drama to function optimally as an instrument for sustainable development, particularly at the grassroots level. Against this backdrop, this paper examined the contributions of drama to development in Nigeria by analysing its role as a participatory communication tool for promoting social transformation, behavioural change, civic engagement, cultural preservation, public health, peace building, and sustainable national development. The paper also identified the challenges limiting the effective utilization of drama in development practice and proposes practical recommendations for strengthening its contribution to Nigeria's development agenda.

Conceptual Clarification

Drama: Drama is one of the oldest and most influential forms of human communication, serving as a medium through which societies express their beliefs, values, experiences, and aspirations. Traditionally, drama has been viewed as the enactment of human actions before an audience through dialogue, characterization, movement, music, dance, and symbolic representation. However, contemporary scholarship has expanded this definition by recognizing drama as an interactive communication process capable of educating, informing, entertaining, persuading, and mobilizing people toward positive social change (Chukwu-Okoronkwo, 2020). In development communication, drama transcends its conventional entertainment function to become a strategic communication tool for facilitating dialogue, raising awareness, influencing attitudes, and promoting behavioural change. According to UNESCO (2023), dramatic performances create opportunities for audiences to engage emotionally with development issues, thereby enhancing message comprehension, retention, and community participation. Moreover, drama encourages audience interaction, reflection, and collective problem-solving.

Drama is particularly effective because it integrates visual, verbal, emotional, and cultural elements into a single communication experience. Okome (2023) observes that dramatic performances provide audiences with opportunities to identify with characters facing similar socio-economic realities, making development messages more persuasive and culturally meaningful. Through this process, drama becomes a powerful instrument for addressing contemporary issues such as poverty, corruption, insecurity, environmental degradation, public health, electoral violence, gender inequality, youth unemployment, and social inclusion. In Nigeria, drama has evolved into multiple forms, including traditional theatre, educational theatre, community theatre, radio drama, television drama, Nollywood films, street theatre, digital theatre, and participatory theatre. Each of these forms contributes differently to national development by educating citizens, shaping public opinion, preserving cultural heritage, promoting indigenous knowledge systems, and encouraging civic engagement (UNESCO, 2021). Consequently, drama should not merely be regarded as a performing art but as a dynamic communication system capable of influencing individual behaviour and facilitating sustainable societal transformation. Furthermore, the rapid advancement of digital technology has expanded the reach of dramatic communication beyond physical performance spaces. Digital streaming platforms, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and other social media platforms now enable theatre practitioners to disseminate development-oriented dramatic content to millions of viewers across geographical boundaries. This technological transformation has increased the accessibility and effectiveness of drama as a tool for communication for development in the twenty-first century (UNESCO, 2023).

Development

Development is a multidimensional concept that has evolved significantly over the years. Earlier definitions equated development primarily with economic growth, industrialization, and increases in national income. Contemporary development scholars, however, argue that economic growth alone cannot adequately capture the complexity of development because improvement in people's quality of life depends equally on education, healthcare, political participation, environmental sustainability, social justice, gender equality, and cultural advancement. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2025) defines development as the expansion of people's freedoms, opportunities, capabilities, and choices

to enable them to live healthy, productive, and meaningful lives. Similarly, the United Nations (2023) views development as a comprehensive process that promotes inclusive economic growth, reduces inequalities, strengthens democratic institutions, protects the environment, and ensures that no individual or community is left behind. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations provide the most comprehensive contemporary framework for understanding development. The seventeen goals recognize that sustainable development requires coordinated efforts in poverty eradication, quality education, health promotion, gender equality, clean water, decent work, innovation, climate action, peace, justice, and strong institutions (United Nations, 2023). Achieving these goals requires effective communication strategies capable of influencing public attitudes, mobilizing communities, and promoting citizen participation.

In Nigeria, development remains a national priority due to persistent challenges such as poverty, unemployment, corruption, insecurity, poor healthcare delivery, inadequate infrastructure, environmental degradation, and social inequality. Consequently, scholars increasingly advocate participatory approaches that empower communities to identify their developmental priorities and contribute actively to decision-making processes (Manyozo, 2023). Such approaches recognize that sustainable development is not something imposed upon people but rather a collaborative process achieved through dialogue, participation, and collective action. Development therefore encompasses improvements in the material, social, political, cultural, technological, and environmental conditions of society. It involves expanding human capabilities, promoting social inclusion, strengthening democratic governance, protecting cultural heritage, and improving the overall quality of life of citizens. This holistic understanding forms the basis for integrating communication strategies such as drama into development planning.

Development Communication

Development communication refers to the systematic application of communication principles, strategies, and media to facilitate sustainable social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental development. It emphasizes dialogue, participation, empowerment, behavioural change, and community ownership of development initiatives rather than the mere dissemination of information. Servaes (2022) explains that development communication has evolved from modernization approaches, which emphasized one-way information transfer, to participatory communication models that encourage communities to become active participants in identifying problems and designing solutions. This paradigm shift reflects the growing recognition that development interventions are more effective when beneficiaries are actively involved throughout the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes.

According to Manyozo (2023), development communication promotes development by facilitating knowledge sharing, strengthening social capital, encouraging innovation, supporting policy advocacy, and empowering marginalized populations to participate in governance. Communication therefore becomes both a process and an outcome of development because it enhances people's ability to access information, express opinions, negotiate solutions, and influence public policy. Recent development communication practices increasingly integrate traditional communication systems with modern digital technologies. Community radio, social media, mobile communication, participatory video, digital storytelling, community theatre, and interactive television programmes are now widely used to promote public health, environmental sustainability, civic education, agricultural extension, financial inclusion, disaster management, and peace building

(UNESCO, 2023). In Nigeria, development communication has been extensively applied by government agencies, international organizations, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and community-based organizations to address numerous development challenges. Drama occupies a central position within these communication strategies because of its ability to simplify complex development messages while encouraging audience participation and behavioural change.

Theatre for Development (TfD)

Theatre for Development (TfD) is one of the most significant innovations in participatory development communication. It refers to the deliberate use of dramatic performance as a participatory communication strategy for empowering communities to identify developmental challenges, analyse their underlying causes, and collectively implement locally appropriate solutions. Unlike conventional theatre, where professional actors perform before passive audiences, Theatre for Development actively involves community members in script development, performance, dialogue, problem analysis, and decision-making. This participatory process transforms audiences from passive observers into active agents of social change (Chukwu-Okoronkwo, 2023). The primary objective of Theatre for Development is not entertainment but community empowerment. Through role-playing, storytelling, improvisation, songs, dance, debates, and interactive discussions, participants critically examine issues affecting their communities and collectively explore practical solutions. Consequently, Theatre for Development strengthens local participation, promotes social inclusion, and enhances community ownership of development initiatives.

UNESCO (2023) notes that participatory theatre has become increasingly important because it combines indigenous communication traditions with contemporary development objectives, thereby making communication interventions culturally relevant and socially acceptable. Similarly, Chukwu-Okoronkwo (2023) argues that Theatre for Development has evolved beyond traditional community performances to incorporate digital technologies, social media, and online interactive performances, thereby expanding its reach and effectiveness. The effectiveness of Theatre for Development lies in its ability to stimulate dialogue rather than impose solutions. Communities become active participants in diagnosing problems, proposing alternatives, implementing actions, and evaluating outcomes. This participatory orientation aligns closely with the principles of sustainable development, which emphasize local ownership, inclusiveness, accountability, and collective responsibility.

The Contributions of Drama to Development in Nigeria

Drama has become an indispensable instrument for promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. Beyond its traditional role as a source of entertainment, drama functions as a powerful medium for education, advocacy, social mobilization, cultural preservation, political participation, conflict resolution, and economic empowerment. Its unique ability to communicate complex developmental issues through storytelling, dialogue, music, dance, and visual performance enables audiences to understand and internalize messages. Development communication scholars agree that drama promotes meaningful behavioural change as it stimulates critical thinking, emotional engagement, and community participation (Servaes, 2022; Chukwu-Okoronkwo, 2023). Through Theatre for Development (TfD), community theatre, radio drama, television drama, Nollywood films, and digital performances, drama has contributed significantly to addressing numerous national development challenges. The following sections discuss these contributions.

i. **Drama as a Tool for Public Education:** Drama simplifies complex social issues by presenting them through realistic characters and relatable situations, making educational messages easier to understand and remember. Educational drama has been widely used to promote literacy, civic education, environmental awareness, reproductive health, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy. Educational institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and government agencies increasingly employ dramatic performances during public enlightenment campaigns because audiences retain information more effectively when they observe real-life situations acted out rather than merely receiving verbal instructions. Recent studies have shown that participatory educational theatre significantly improves knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, and behavioural intentions among participants (UNESCO, 2023). Moreover, drama encourages experiential learning by allowing audiences to witness the consequences of both positive and negative behaviours. This makes educational messages more persuasive and facilitates long-term behavioural change.

ii. **Drama and Health Communication:** Health communication campaigns increasingly utilize theatre, radio drama, television drama, and film to educate citizens about disease prevention, maternal healthcare, immunization, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, COVID-19, nutrition, mental health, family planning, and hygiene. Unlike conventional health campaigns that often rely on technical language, dramatic performances translate medical information into culturally understandable narratives that resonate with local communities. Community members identify with characters facing similar health challenges and are therefore more likely to adopt recommended health behaviours. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous Nigerian theatre practitioners, filmmakers, and digital content creators produced dramatic skits and short films that educated citizens on preventive measures, vaccination, and misinformation management. These initiatives contributed to increased public awareness and compliance with health guidelines (UNESCO, 2023). Organizations such as the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), UNICEF, and several radio stations sponsored radio dramas and dramatic skits to educate Nigerians about hand washing, vaccination, social distancing, and facemask. This led to increased public awareness, encouraged preventive behaviour, reduced misinformation, and improved community health communication.

iii. **Drama and Political Development:** Drama contributes significantly to democratic governance and political development by promoting civic education, voter awareness, accountability, transparency, and citizen participation. Political dramas expose corruption, abuse of power, electoral malpractice, ethnic politics, and poor governance while encouraging citizens to demand accountability from public officials. Nigerian playwrights and filmmakers have historically used drama to criticize authoritarian leadership and advocate democratic reforms. Contemporary Nollywood productions continue this tradition by portraying issues such as electoral violence, vote buying, political corruption, youth exclusion, and insecurity. Drama therefore serves as a platform through which citizens critically evaluate governance while encouraging political participation and responsible leadership. A Play of Giants by Wole Soyinka was used as a satire of military dictatorships and authoritarian rule in Africa. Although based on fictional characters, it reflected the excesses of real African dictators and emphasizes the importance of democratic governance. This promoted democracy, condemned dictatorship, encouraged constitutional governance, and raised awareness about human

rights. This was demonstrated the 2019 and 2023 general elections when the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) collaborated with media organisations and development partners to sponsor drama series to educate citizens on voter registration, peaceful elections and the dangers of vote buying.

iv. **Drama and Peace building:** Drama has become an important communication strategy for promoting peace building, reconciliation, dialogue, and conflict transformation. Empirical evidence indicates that participatory theatre enhances mutual understanding, trust-building, and reconciliation in conflict-affected communities (Obasi et al., 2021). Similarly, dramatic narratives promoting tolerance, forgiveness, and national unity have become important components of peace education programmes implemented by governmental and non-governmental organizations across Nigeria. Drama therefore contributes to peace building by replacing confrontation with dialogue and encouraging communities to resolve disputes through communication rather than violence.

v. **Drama and Cultural Preservation:** Culture represents an essential component of sustainable development because it preserves community identity, promotes social cohesion, and strengthens intergenerational knowledge transfer. Nigerian drama contributes significantly to cultural preservation by documenting indigenous traditions, languages, folklore, music, dance, festivals, and historical experiences. Traditional dramatic performances such as the Yoruba Alárìnjó theatre, Igbo Mmanwu, Tiv Kwagh-hir, and Hausa storytelling traditions continue to preserve indigenous cultural practices despite increasing globalization. Nollywood has also contributed to cultural preservation by producing films in indigenous languages, promoting African values, and showcasing Nigerian customs to international audiences. UNESCO (2021) recognizes Nigeria's creative industries as important contributors to cultural diversity and sustainable development because they preserve cultural heritage while simultaneously generating economic opportunities. Consequently, drama strengthens national identity by protecting indigenous knowledge systems from extinction while promoting intercultural understanding.

vi. **Drama and Economic Development:** According to UNESCO (2021), Nigeria's film and theatre industries generate employment opportunities for actors, directors, producers, scriptwriters, cinematographers, costume designers, makeup artists, editors, musicians, marketers, and numerous supporting professionals. The rapid expansion of Nollywood has attracted foreign investment while increasing Nigeria's global cultural influence. Recent estimates indicate that the creative industries represent one of the country's fastest-growing economic sectors, with significant potential for youth employment and export earnings (UNESCO, 2021). Therefore, drama contributes to sustainable development not only through communication but also through wealth creation and economic diversification.

vii. **Drama and Youth Empowerment:** Nigeria possesses one of the world's largest youth populations, making youth development central to national progress. Drama provides young people with opportunities for creativity, employment, leadership development, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement. Participation in theatre enhances communication skills, teamwork, creativity, problem-solving abilities, emotional intelligence, and self-confidence. Theatre training also equips young people with vocational skills in acting, directing, scriptwriting, digital content creation, stage management, cinematography, animation, and media production. Digital platforms have further expanded opportunities for Nigerian youth to create educational dramatic

content addressing entrepreneurship, mental health, climate change, financial literacy, and social justice. Consequently, drama contributes to reducing unemployment while promoting innovation and youth participation in national development.

viii. **Drama and Environmental Sustainability:** Environmental degradation has become a major development challenge in Nigeria due to deforestation, pollution, flooding, desertification, poor waste management, and climate change. Drama has increasingly been utilized during environmental awareness campaigns to educate communities on environmental conservation, waste recycling, sanitation, renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation. Community theatre encourages citizens to reflect on environmentally harmful practices while promoting sustainable alternatives. Through storytelling and participatory dialogue, communities better understand the relationship between environmental protection and sustainable livelihoods. Recent development communication initiatives increasingly incorporate dramatic performances into climate change awareness campaigns because visual storytelling enhances public understanding of environmental issues (UNESCO, 2023).

ix. **Drama and Behavioural Change Communication:** Behavioural Change Communication (BCC) seeks to encourage individuals and communities to adopt practices that improve health, education, governance, environmental sustainability, and social well-being. Because audiences emotionally identify with dramatic characters, they often imitate behaviours portrayed as socially desirable while avoiding behaviours associated with negative consequences. This makes drama one of the most persuasive communication strategies available for development practitioners.

Challenges of Drama as a Tool for Development in Nigeria

Although drama has been successfully employed in public health campaigns, civic education, conflict resolution, environmental advocacy, and behavioural change communication, structural, institutional, economic, technological, and policy-related constraints have hindered its full potential. These challenges have reduced the ability of Theatre for Development (TfD), community theatre, and other dramatic forms to reach wider audiences and sustain development interventions (UNESCO, 2023; Chukwu-Okoronkwo, 2023). Some of these include:

i. **Inadequate Government Funding:** Theatre production, community performances, educational drama, and Theatre for Development projects require substantial financial investment for script development, rehearsals, costumes, transportation, technical equipment, publicity, and evaluation. However, funding allocated to the arts and creative industries remains insufficient. Many Theatre for Development initiatives depend largely on support from international development agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, and donor organizations rather than sustainable government funding. As a result, many successful community theatre projects are discontinued once donor funding ends (UNESCO, 2021). Inadequate funding also affects theatre infrastructure, research, artist remuneration, and the expansion of development-oriented dramatic productions across rural communities.

ii. **Weak Government Policy and Institutional Support:** Many national development programmes prioritize conventional media campaigns while giving limited attention to participatory theatre despite evidence of its effectiveness. Furthermore, weak coordination among government ministries, cultural institutions, educational institutions, and development agencies has limited the systematic use of drama in addressing national development priorities. Chukwu-Okoronkwo (2023) avers that the

absence of comprehensive policies supporting Theatre for Development has weakened its institutional sustainability.

iii. **Commercialization of the Creative Industry:** Many theatre practitioners and filmmakers now prioritize commercial success over educational and developmental objectives. Nollywood productions often focus on themes that maximize audience appeal and profitability rather than addressing critical development issues such as poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, civic education, or democratic participation. Consequently, entertainment sometimes overshadows the educational and advocacy functions of drama.

iv. **Declining Community Theatre Practice:** Theatre for Development relies heavily on direct interaction between performers and community members. However, the popularity of community theatre has declined due to urbanization, changing audience preferences, and the rapid growth of digital entertainment. Many rural communities that previously benefited from participatory theatre now have limited access to such programmes because practitioners increasingly concentrate on commercial theatre, television, or online productions. This decline has reduced opportunities for grassroots participation in development communication. Although commercially successful films contribute to economic development, their developmental communication potential may be underutilized if social issues receive limited attention (UNESCO, 2021).

v. **Poor Infrastructure:** The effectiveness of drama depends significantly on the availability of adequate infrastructure, including theatres, community halls, cultural centres, electricity, transportation, internet connectivity, and audiovisual equipment. Nigeria continues to face infrastructural deficiencies that affect theatrical production and distribution. Poor electricity supply increases production costs, while inadequate road networks make it difficult for theatre practitioners to reach remote communities. Similarly, limited internet access in many rural areas restricts participation in digital theatre initiatives and online development communication programmes (UNESCO, 2023).

vi. **Digital Divide:** Although digital technology has expanded opportunities for dramatic communication, unequal access to digital infrastructure remains a major obstacle. Large segments of Nigeria's rural population continue to experience limited internet connectivity, inadequate digital literacy, and poor access to smart phones or computers. Consequently, many development-oriented digital performances fail to reach vulnerable populations that require development interventions most urgently. It is believed that this contributes to communication inequalities between urban and rural communities.

vii. **Cultural and Religious Sensitivities:** Nigeria's multicultural and multi-religious environment requires theatre practitioners to communicate development messages carefully. Certain dramatic performances may conflict with religious beliefs, cultural traditions, or local customs, thereby generating resistance among target audiences. Development practitioners must therefore ensure that dramatic productions respect cultural diversity while encouraging positive social transformation.

viii. **Limited Monitoring and Evaluation:** Many Theatres for Development projects focus primarily on implementation without conducting systematic monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the long-term impact of many dramatic interventions on behavioural change, policy outcomes, or community development. Improved evaluation frameworks would enable practitioners to measure programme effectiveness, identify best practices, and strengthen future interventions.

ix. **Insecurity:** Persistent insecurity in parts of Nigeria, including insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, communal conflicts, and farmer–herder violence, has negatively affected theatre practice. Development practitioners often experience difficulty organizing community performances in conflict-prone areas because of security concerns. This limits the ability of drama to reach communities where development communication is most urgently required.

Prospects of Drama for Development in Nigeria

The major prospects for drama as a strategic communication tool for national development are hereby presented:

i. **Expansion of Digital Theatre and Online Platforms:** The widespread use of smart phones, social media platforms, streaming services, podcasts, and video-sharing applications has transformed how dramatic content is produced, distributed, and consumed. Platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Netflix, and Showmax now enable theatre practitioners and filmmakers to reach millions of viewers across Nigeria and the global Diaspora. These platforms provide opportunities to disseminate development-oriented messages on health, governance, entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, and education in formats that are engaging and accessible. Digital theatre also encourages audience interaction through comments, live discussions, polls, and user-generated content, thereby strengthening participatory communication. Chukwu-Okoronkwo (2023) argues that digital transformation has expanded the relevance of Theatre for Development by enabling practitioners to engage audiences beyond geographical limitations.

ii. **Contribution to the Creative Economy**: Nigeria's creative industry continues to experience significant growth, making drama an important driver of economic development. Nollywood has become one of the world's largest film industries, creating employment opportunities for actors, directors, producers, scriptwriters, editors, costume designers, musicians, digital marketers, and numerous supporting professionals.

iii. **Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation**: Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and immersive storytelling are expected to reshape dramatic communication in Nigeria. Similarly, virtual reality and augmented reality technologies can create immersive educational experiences for health communication, environmental education, civic engagement, and peace building. Although these technologies are still developing in Nigeria, they present significant opportunities for expanding the effectiveness of drama as a communication strategy (chukwu-okoronkwo, 2023).

iv. **Promotion of Indigenous Languages and Cultural Heritage**: Globalization and technological advancement have increased concerns regarding the preservation of indigenous cultures and languages. Drama offers significant opportunities to preserve Nigeria's cultural diversity by producing dramatic works in indigenous languages while documenting traditional folklore, music, dance, festivals, and oral histories. The continued production of culturally relevant dramatic content will strengthen national identity while promoting intercultural dialogue and tourism. Furthermore, digital archiving of theatrical performances will preserve valuable cultural heritage for future generations.

v. **Partnerships with Development Agencies**: International organizations, civil society organizations, universities, private media organizations, and development partners increasingly recognize the effectiveness of drama in development communication.

Future partnerships among organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the National Orientation Agency (NOA), and Nigerian theatre practitioners could significantly expand the use of drama in development.

Conclusion

Drama has evolved from being primarily a form of entertainment to becoming one of the most effective communication tools for promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. This paper has demonstrated that drama contributes significantly to national development by educating citizens, facilitating behavioural change, preserving cultural heritage, promoting democratic governance, supporting peace building, stimulating economic growth, and encouraging community participation. Through Theatre for Development (TfD), community theatre, radio drama, television drama, Nollywood films, and digital theatre, drama has consistently served as a medium for communicating development messages in culturally meaningful and socially engaging ways. Overall, this paper concludes that drama should no longer be viewed merely as a cultural or recreational activity but as a strategic national development resource. Its ability to integrate education, participation, advocacy, persuasion, and entertainment makes it uniquely suited to addressing complex development problems in culturally appropriate and socially acceptable ways. Consequently, governments, development agencies, educational institutions, media organizations, theatre practitioners, and civil society organizations should recognize drama as a vital component of national development planning and communication policy.

Recommendations:

Based on the assertion that drama is a vital instrument for development communication, as well as the challenges identified, the following recommendations are offered:

i. Government should formulate policies that promote drama for development. Federal, state, and local governments should integrate drama into national development strategies, particularly in health, education, environmental sustainability, and civic education programmes.
ii. Adequate funding should be provided for Theatre for Development (TfD) initiatives. Governments, private organizations, and development partners should allocate sufficient resources to support community theatre projects, educational drama, and other participatory communication programmes aimed at addressing development challenges.
iii. Educational institutions should strengthen drama education. Schools and universities should incorporate drama into teaching and learning processes to enhance critical thinking, creativity, communication skills, and civic responsibility among students.
iv. Development agencies should adopt participatory drama as a communication strategy. Organizations working in public health, agriculture, environmental protection, gender equality, and rural development should use community-based drama to encourage participation, foster dialogue, and promote sustainable behavioural change.
v. Media organizations should increase the production of development-oriented drama. Radio stations, television networks, and digital media platforms should produce and broadcast dramas that address pressing societal issues such as corruption, insecurity, climate change, public health, youth unemployment, and gender-based violence.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: August 19, 2026 **Accepted**: September 21, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026

Citation: Ekanem, Samuel A.; Okolisah, Chinenye P. & Yohanna, Amachondi H. (2026). "An Essencist X-Ray of Leadership Problem and its Implication for Development in Nigeria." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 115-125.

Article **Open Access**

AN ESSENCIST X-RAY OF LEADERSHIP PROBLEM AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The persistent crisis of development in Nigeria cannot be adequately explained by economic scarcity, institutional weakness, colonial inheritance, or corruption considered in isolation. At its deepest level, the Nigerian development crisis is a crisis of leadership understood as a crisis of human essence, moral consciousness, responsibility, and the purposive use of power. This paper undertook an Essencist x-ray of the leadership problem in Nigeria and argued that the fundamental defect of Nigerian leadership is not merely the absence of political competence but the displacement of the essence and purpose of leadership by the pursuit of private, sectional, ethnic, religious, and material interests. Essencism, developed as a philosophical framework by Samuel Asuquo Ekanem, begins from the proposition that the essence of a thing determines what it ought to be and what it ought to accomplish. Applied to leadership, this means that leadership must be evaluated according to its essential purpose: the rational, ethical, accountable and developmental advancement of human beings and the common good. The paper argues that when leadership loses this orientation, public power becomes an instrument of domination, primitive accumulation and institutional capture. Nigeria's problems of corruption, insecurity, poverty, unemployment, infrastructural decay, educational weakness and democratic dysfunction are therefore manifestations of an underlying leadership pathology. The paper proposed an Essencist leadership model founded on human dignity, moral consciousness, knowledge, competence, accountability, justice, service, institutional responsibility and developmental intentionality. It further argued that implementation requires transformation of political recruitment, civic education, public institutions, leadership training, accountability mechanisms and the relationship between citizens and political authority. The paper concluded that Nigeria requires not merely a change of leaders but a philosophical reconstruction of leadership

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itself. Development becomes possible when political power is returned to its essence as a moral responsibility for the flourishing of persons and society.

Keywords: Essencism, Leadership, Development, Political Morality, Accountability, Governance, Democracy, Human Essence, Public Responsibility.

Introduction

The question of leadership occupies a peculiar position in the Nigerian philosophical and political imagination. Nigeria possesses abundant human and material resources, a large youthful population, considerable intellectual capital, extensive agricultural potential, petroleum and mineral resources, and a strategic geographical position in Africa. Yet these possibilities have not consistently translated into corresponding improvements in the quality of human existence. Poverty, insecurity, unemployment, infrastructural deficits, corruption, educational inadequacy, institutional weakness and social injustice remain persistent features of the Nigerian condition. Contemporary scholarship repeatedly connects these problems with failures of leadership, accountability and governance (Gberevbie *et al*. 1-2; Abada 1-3). The conventional approach to the Nigerian leadership problem frequently proceeds from political science, public administration, economics or sociology. These approaches are valuable because they identify institutional structures, patterns of political behaviour, resource distribution, corruption, electoral practices and administrative deficiencies. Yet the persistence of the problem suggests that something deeper is involved. If institutional reforms repeatedly fail, if anti-corruption campaigns produce only temporary effects, if constitutions are repeatedly amended without corresponding ethical transformation, and if political office continues to attract persons whose principal interest is private enrichment, then the problem is not simply institutional. It is philosophical.

The philosophical question is therefore: What is leadership? More precisely, what is the essence of leadership, and what happens when those who exercise political power cease to embody that essence? These questions move the discussion from the surface of political administration to the ontology and ethics of political existence. It is within this philosophical space that Essencism becomes relevant. Essencism, as developed by Samuel Asuquo Ekanem, is a philosophical orientation concerned with the essence of things and, particularly, the realization of the essential capacities and purposes of human existence. Ekanem explains Essencism as a philosophical project directed toward recovering what makes a thing what it is and applying that understanding to human and social development (Ekanem and Ekefre, 303-310). His subsequent works apply the Essencist perspective to education, democracy, social justice, environmental questions and development. The present paper extends that philosophical orientation to leadership. Its central argument is that the Nigerian leadership problem is fundamentally an Essencist problem: leadership has been separated from its essence. Where leadership should mean service, responsibility, justice, competence and the advancement of the common good, it has frequently become associated with power acquisition, personal accumulation, patronage and political survival. The paper therefore seeks to accomplish four objectives. First, it clarifies the philosophical meaning of leadership from an Essencist perspective. Second, it x-rays the principal manifestations of the Nigerian leadership crisis. Third, it establishes the connection between leadership failure and underdevelopment. Fourth, it proposes an Essencist framework for reconstructing Nigerian leadership and translating that reconstruction into developmental practice.

The Conceptual and Philosophical Meaning of Essencism

The concept of essence has occupied philosophy from antiquity. Aristotle distinguished between what a thing is and its accidental characteristics, arguing that knowledge requires attention to what makes a thing what it fundamentally is (Aristotle, VII). The question of essence therefore asks a foundational question: what must a thing possess or realize in order to be what it is? Essencism appropriates this philosophical concern and applies it to human and social realities. Ekanem's formulation identifies Essencism with a philosophical concern for the essence of human existence and the realization of the purposes embedded within that existence (Ekanem and Ekefre, 303-10). It is consequently not simply an abstract metaphysical theory. It has ethical, educational, political and developmental implications. The important distinction is between existence and essential realization. A person may exist biologically without realizing the moral, rational and social capacities that distinguish human existence. Similarly, an institution may formally exist while failing to realize the purpose for which it was created. A government may possess constitutional legitimacy while failing to promote justice, welfare and human flourishing. A parliament may exist without exercising meaningful oversight. A university may possess buildings and personnel without realizing its intellectual mission. In each case, existence has been separated from essence.

This distinction is fundamental to an Essencist understanding of leadership. Leadership is not essentially the possession of a title. Neither is it essentially the occupation of a political office. A person may be president, governor, minister, legislator, local government chairman or political party leader without realizing the essence of leadership. Office is therefore accidental; leadership is essential. The former concerns position, while the latter concerns purpose. From this perspective, the essence of leadership lies in responsible influence directed toward the realization of the common good. Leadership is therefore fundamentally relational. The leader exists in relation to the people, the institution, the law and the future. Political leadership cannot be reduced to the ability to command because command without moral purpose can become domination. The Essencist question is consequently not merely, “Who is in power?” It is, “For what purpose is power being exercised?” This question is particularly important in Nigeria because political office frequently possesses enormous material and symbolic value. When political office becomes the principal route to wealth, status and influence, leadership is easily transformed into an instrument of private accumulation. Essencism challenges this transformation by insisting that power must remain subordinate to purpose.

Leadership as an Ethical Essence

Leadership possesses at least six essential dimensions: purpose, service, responsibility, competence, justice and accountability.

i. **Leadership and Purpose:** A leader without a clearly defined public purpose is merely a possessor of power. Political leadership must have an objective beyond the preservation of office. Aristotle's conception of political association is instructive because the political community exists not merely for survival but for living well (Politics I). The same principle is applicable to Nigeria. The purpose of government cannot be reduced to winning elections or maintaining political control. The ultimate purpose must be the improvement of human conditions. Development, therefore, is not an accidental consequence of leadership; it is one of its essential ends. An Essencist leader must consequently ask: What kind of society am I creating? What kind of citizen is my administration producing? What institutions will remain after I leave office? What

condition will the next generation inherit? Leadership becomes ethically meaningful when it is capable of answering these questions.

ii. **Leadership as Service:** The second essence of leadership is service. Public office is a fiduciary responsibility because public resources are held in trust for the people. The Nigerian Constitution itself establishes principles of governance that connect political authority with the welfare and security of the people. Yet the philosophical significance of these constitutional provisions is frequently weakened when public office is treated as personal property. An Essencist conception reverses the conventional hierarchy. The leader does not possess the people; the leader is responsible to the people. Political power is therefore not ownership but stewardship. This principle also resonates with African communitarian understandings of personhood. John Mbiti's famous observation that African conceptions of personhood are profoundly relational captures the idea that individual existence is inseparable from community (African Religions and Philosophy 106). Leadership, accordingly, should be judged by the quality of communal life it produces.

iii. **Leadership as Responsibility:** Power without responsibility is dangerous because it creates the possibility of arbitrary action. Hans Jonas argues that modern technological power has expanded the consequences of human action and therefore requires an expanded ethics of responsibility (1-2). Political power presents an analogous problem. The greater the authority possessed by a leader, the greater the responsibility attached to its exercise. A Nigerian political leader controlling public budgets, security institutions, appointments and policy decisions possesses the capacity to affect millions of lives. Such power cannot be ethically neutral. Essencism therefore transforms leadership from a privilege into an obligation.

iv. **Leadership as Competence:** Good intentions are insufficient for leadership. A person may be morally sincere and nevertheless administratively incompetent. Development requires knowledge, institutional understanding, policy capacity and the ability to translate vision into programmes. Amartya Sen's conception of development as expansion of substantive human freedoms is instructive here. Development is not merely an increase in aggregate income but the enlargement of people's real opportunities to live lives they have reason to value (18). Leadership must therefore possess the intellectual competence necessary to create such opportunities. An Essencist leader must be both morally responsible and technically capable.

v. **Leadership as Justice:** Justice constitutes another essential feature of leadership. Political authority loses legitimacy when public resources are distributed according to ethnic, religious, familial or partisan preference rather than justice. Rawls's principle of justice emphasizes the importance of institutions that structure social cooperation fairly (3-4). Although Nigeria's social and historical circumstances differ considerably from Rawls's theoretical context, the fundamental philosophical point remains useful: institutions should not be structured principally to benefit the powerful. Essencist leadership therefore rejects discrimination and arbitrary privilege because they contradict the essential purpose of political authority.

vi. **Leadership as Accountability:** Accountability is perhaps the most practical manifestation of leadership's ethical essence. A leader who cannot explain decisions, expenditures, appointments and policies to the public exercises power without sufficient moral restraint. Research on Nigeria has repeatedly established a connection between leadership, accountability and development. Gberevbie et al. identify poor leadership,

unethical behaviour, corruption, weak resource management and inadequate accountability among the factors undermining sustainable development in Nigeria. Essencism adds a philosophical explanation: accountability is not merely a bureaucratic mechanism; it is part of what leadership is. If leadership cannot answer to those over whom it exercises authority, it has lost part of its essence.

An Essencist X-ray of the Nigerian Leadership Problem

An x-ray does not merely describe the external appearance of a body. It attempts to reveal what lies beneath the surface. An Essencist x-ray of Nigerian leadership must therefore look beyond individual scandals and identify the philosophical structures that produce recurrent failure.

i. **The Substitution of Power for Purpose:** The first pathology is the substitution of power for purpose. Political leadership frequently becomes an end rather than a means. Once political power becomes the principal objective, public policy can be subordinated to political survival. Projects are selected for visibility rather than developmental value; appointments are made for political loyalty rather than competence; public expenditure becomes an instrument of patronage; and institutions become mechanisms for consolidating power. This is an ontological inversion. The means becomes the end. Leadership becomes power acquisition, while the people become instruments for sustaining the leader. From an Essencist standpoint, this represents a fundamental loss of identity. Leadership ceases to be leadership precisely because its essential purpose has been abandoned.

ii. **The Privatization of the Public:** A second pathology is the privatization of public resources. When public office becomes an avenue for private accumulation, the distinction between public and private morality collapses. The state is treated as a source of personal wealth, political patronage and family advancement. The consequences are enormous. Resources that should finance education, healthcare, infrastructure and security are diverted from their developmental purpose. Corruption therefore becomes not simply an economic crime but an ontological contradiction: public resources cease to perform their public essence. Scholarly analyses of Nigerian governance have repeatedly identified corruption, weak accountability and poor leadership as mutually reinforcing factors in the country's development difficulties (Abada 43; Ologbenla 67).

iii. **Ethnicity and the Fragmentation of the Common Good:** Nigeria's ethnic and religious diversity is not itself a problem. Diversity becomes problematic when political leadership converts identity into an instrument of exclusion. The Essencist perspective asks whether an identity-based political action advances the essential dignity of the human person and the common good. If an appointment is made solely because an individual belongs to the leader's ethnic group, the principle of competence is displaced by primordial loyalty. If resources are distributed primarily for electoral advantage, justice is displaced by patronage. This produces what may be called fragmented citizenship. Citizens increasingly encounter the state not as members of one political community but as members of competing networks seeking access to state resources. An Essencist reconstruction requires a movement from primordial loyalty to civic loyalty.

iv. **The Crisis of Political Education:** Another fundamental problem is inadequate political and civic education. Democracy requires citizens who understand rights, responsibilities, public institutions and the moral meaning of political participation. Ekanem and Ekefre argued that education informed by Essencism can contribute to liberation from

ignorance and the development of citizens capable of confronting intolerance and social dysfunction (303-10). The political consequence is significant. Where citizens lack adequate political consciousness, elections can be reduced to transactions. Votes become commodities, politicians become patrons, and political participation becomes a struggle for immediate material benefits rather than a process of choosing those capable of advancing the common good. Leadership failure is therefore partly a citizen-formation problem. Bad leaders emerge and survive within political cultures that reward bad leadership.

v. **The Crisis of Moral Consciousness:** The deepest pathology may be the erosion of moral consciousness. Institutions can establish rules, but rules alone cannot create morally responsible leaders. A person determined to steal will search for ways around anti-corruption regulations. A person determined to abuse power will manipulate institutional weaknesses. Law is necessary, but law requires moral agents capable of respecting it. Essencism therefore emphasizes the formation of the whole person. Ekanem's educational application of Essencism suggests that education should cultivate not merely intellectual capacity but moral and social responsibility (Ekanem and Ekefre, 265-72). Leadership development must consequently become character development.

vi. **The Crisis of Vision:** Development requires vision because development is fundamentally future-oriented. A leader without developmental vision may administer existing problems without transforming the conditions that produce them. Vision involves the ability to see beyond immediate political cycles and imagine institutions capable of serving future generations. Nigeria's development challenge illustrates the importance of this distinction. The World Bank's Nigeria Development Update has emphasized the need for sustained reforms capable of restoring macroeconomic stability and creating conditions for growth. Yet reforms themselves require leadership capable of sustaining difficult policies beyond immediate political calculations. An Essencist leader therefore thinks historically and futuristically. The leader asks not merely what produces political approval today but what produces human flourishing tomorrow.

Leadership and the Nigerian Development Crisis

Development cannot be separated from leadership because development requires collective decisions about the allocation and use of resources. The Nigerian development crisis has several interconnected dimensions: economic poverty, unemployment, infrastructural deficits, educational challenges, insecurity, environmental degradation, weak institutions and democratic distrust. These problems are not independent. They form a system. For example, unemployment can intensify poverty; poverty can facilitate criminality; insecurity can discourage investment; weak investment can reduce employment; corruption can divert resources from infrastructure; poor infrastructure can reduce productivity; and weak education can reduce the human capacity required for technological development. Leadership determines whether these problems are approached as isolated crises or as interconnected developmental systems. An Essencist approach rejects fragmented governance because human beings themselves are integrated beings. Economic development without moral development can produce sophisticated corruption. Technological development without environmental responsibility can produce ecological destruction. Political development without civic education can produce electoral manipulation. Economic growth without distributive justice can coexist with mass poverty. Development must therefore be holistic. This corresponds with Ekanem's broader

application of Essencism to social justice and democratic values. His argument is that poverty, social injustice, insecurity and democratic dysfunction require a philosophical transformation that addresses the moral formation of citizens and the values governing political life (Ekanem and Emejulu 1455-65). The central Essencist proposition is thus: The development of society cannot exceed the moral and intellectual development of those entrusted with directing its collective affairs.

Towards an Essencist Philosophy of Leadership

An Essencist philosophy of leadership can be summarized through seven principles.

i. **The Principle of Human Dignity:** Every policy must ultimately be evaluated according to its consequences for human dignity. A government that increases wealth while degrading human dignity cannot be regarded as fully developmental. Human beings must therefore be treated as ends rather than instruments of political power.
ii. **The Principle of Essential Purpose:** Every public institution must be evaluated according to its essential purpose. The essence of a legislature is not merely legislation but representation, deliberation and oversight. The essence of the executive is not merely administration but implementation of policies for public welfare. The essence of the judiciary is not merely adjudication but justice. The essence of the civil service is not personal enrichment but professional public service. Where an institution deviates from its essence, reform becomes necessary.
iii. **The Principle of Moral Consciousness:** Leadership must be grounded in moral consciousness. The leader must possess the capacity to distinguish what is politically possible from what is morally permissible. This distinction is crucial because political expediency cannot be the ultimate standard of public action.
iv. **The Principle of Knowledge and Competence:** An Essencist leader must value knowledge. Public policy should be informed by evidence, expertise, research and rational deliberation. Political leadership should therefore develop systematic mechanisms for consulting universities, researchers, professional bodies, civil society organizations and communities.
v. **The Principle of Accountability:** Every exercise of public power should generate a corresponding obligation to give account. Accountability should operate vertically through elections and horizontally through legislatures, courts, audit institutions, anti-corruption agencies, professional bodies and civil society.
vi. **The Principle of Justice:** Justice requires impartiality. Political leaders must distribute public opportunities according to legitimate criteria such as need, competence, equity and developmental priority rather than personal loyalty.
vii. **The Principle of Future Responsibility:** Leadership must consider generations yet unborn. Infrastructure, education, environmental policy, public debt, natural-resource exploitation and institutional reforms should be assessed according to their long-term effects. This principle is particularly relevant to Nigeria's natural-resource economy. A country cannot claim development merely because it extracts resources. Development occurs when resources are converted into enduring human capabilities and institutions.

Implementing Essencist Leadership in Nigeria

A philosophy becomes socially significant when it moves from conceptual reflection to institutional practice. Essencism must therefore be translated into concrete mechanisms.

i. **Essencist Political Education:** Nigeria requires a systematic programme of philosophical and civic education beginning from the primary level and continuing through tertiary

education. Citizens should be taught the meaning of democracy, public accountability, constitutionalism, human rights, political responsibility and the common good. Education should also cultivate critical thinking so that citizens can distinguish political propaganda from political truth. This is consistent with Ekanem's argument that education can be used to liberate citizens from ignorance and promote democratic and social values (Ekanem and Ekefre, "Education and Religious Intolerance" 303-10).

ii. **Essencist Leadership Curriculum:** Leadership training should become part of the preparation of public officials. Such training should include: i. philosophy of public service; ii. Ethics and moral reasoning; constitutional responsibility; iii. Public financial management; iv. Conflict resolution; v. policy analysis; vi. Human rights; vii. Environmental responsibility; viii. Development economics; ix. Accountability and transparency. The objective should not be merely to produce technically competent administrators but ethically conscious leaders.

iii. **Reforming Political Recruitment:** Political parties should establish transparent criteria for selecting candidates. Educational attainment alone should not be the sole criterion, but candidates should demonstrate competence, integrity, public service record and developmental vision. Political recruitment based primarily on wealth and patronage contradicts the essence of democratic leadership.

iv. **Strengthening Institutions:** Essencist leadership cannot depend entirely on individual virtue. Institutions must be designed to constrain the abuse of power. Legislative oversight, independent auditing, judicial independence, transparent procurement, freedom of information, asset declaration, open budgeting and effective anti-corruption institutions are therefore essential. Recent scholarship on Nigeria's legislature similarly emphasizes the importance of oversight mechanisms and institutional accountability for effective governance.

v. **Linking Public Expenditure to Human Development:** Public expenditure should be evaluated according to developmental outcomes rather than merely expenditure levels. An Essencist budget asks: How many children received quality education? How many citizens gained access to healthcare? How many productive jobs were created? How much infrastructure became functional? How much poverty was reduced? How much insecurity was prevented? What institutional capacity was created? This transforms budgeting from accounting into ethical development.

vi. **Creating a Culture of Consequence:** Leadership accountability requires consequences. Where public officials violate laws, misuse resources or abuse constitutional authority, institutional processes must produce consequences irrespective of political status. Without consequence, accountability becomes rhetoric.

vii. **Reconstructing the Citizen-Leader Relationship:** The citizen must cease to be perceived as a passive recipient of political patronage. Citizens should understand themselves as co-owners of the political community. This requires active participation in elections, community organizations, professional associations, civil society and public debate. The leader and citizen are therefore mutually responsible for the quality of political life.

Essencism, Democracy and the Common Good

Democracy is frequently defined procedurally through elections, majority rule and representation. Yet democracy possesses a deeper moral essence. If elections merely determine who controls state resources, democracy becomes a periodic competition for power. If elections produce governments that disregard human dignity, accountability and justice, the formal existence of democracy does not guarantee its substantive realization.

Ekanem and Emejulu argue that persistent poverty, social injustice, religious violence and insecurity raise fundamental questions about the extent to which Nigerian democracy is realizing its developmental and social purposes (1455-65). Essencism therefore asks democracy to return to its purpose. The essence of democracy should be understood as a political arrangement through which citizens participate in determining the conditions of their collective existence under principles of dignity, justice, equality, freedom and accountability. The common good must therefore occupy the centre of democratic leadership. This also requires an ethical transformation of the citizen. Citizens who sell their votes, defend corrupt leaders because they belong to their ethnic or religious groups, or demand personal benefits from public officials participate in the reproduction of the very leadership crisis they condemn. Essencism therefore refuses to locate the entire problem in political elites. It asks the difficult question: What kind of citizen does a corrupt political system produce, and what kind of citizen reproduces that system? The answer points toward a dialectical relationship between leadership and followership. Bad leadership corrupts citizenship, while morally weak citizenship enables bad leadership. Development therefore requires transformation at both levels.

Critical Reflections on the Essencist Proposal

An objection may be raised that the Essencist approach is too idealistic. Nigeria's leadership problems, it may be argued, are structural and cannot be solved by appeals to morality. This objection has merit if Essencism is understood merely as moral exhortation. But Essencism as applied here is not a proposal to replace institutions with personal virtue. Rather, it combines moral formation with institutional design. A second objection is that the concept of essence may itself be difficult to establish. Human beings disagree about what constitutes the essence of leadership. This is philosophically legitimate. Essencism should therefore not be interpreted dogmatically. The essence of leadership must be continually subjected to rational criticism, public deliberation and historical experience. A third objection is that Nigeria's diversity makes the idea of a common good difficult to operationalize. Yet diversity does not eliminate the possibility of common principles. Human dignity, justice, security, education, healthcare, opportunity and freedom can provide a common normative foundation without erasing cultural differences. Indeed, the existence of diversity makes a philosophy of common good more necessary. The value of Essencism is consequently not that it offers a magical solution to Nigeria's problems. Its value is that it supplies a philosophical criterion for distinguishing authentic leadership from the mere occupation of political office.

Conclusion

The Nigerian leadership crisis is deeper than the failure of particular political administrations. It is a crisis of the meaning and purpose of leadership itself. Political authority has too frequently been separated from moral responsibility, public service from private accumulation, competence from political loyalty, and democracy from the common good. An Essencist x-ray reveals that these problems share a common pathology: the separation of leadership from its essence. Leadership exists essentially for responsible service, justice, competence, accountability and the advancement of human flourishing. When these purposes disappear, leadership becomes domination. Political office becomes private property; public resources become instruments of patronage; citizens become clients; institutions become mechanisms of political control; and development becomes perpetually deferred. Essencism provides a philosophical response by returning leadership to the

question of essence. What makes leadership leadership is not the possession of office but the realization of its moral and developmental purpose. The implication for Nigeria is profound. The country does not require merely new political personalities. It requires a reconstruction of the philosophy of political leadership. It requires citizens who understand democracy as responsibility rather than entitlement; leaders who understand power as stewardship rather than ownership; institutions that embody accountability rather than patronage; and educational systems that cultivate moral consciousness alongside intellectual competence. The implementation of Essencism should therefore occur through political education, leadership formation, institutional accountability, merit-based recruitment, constitutionalism, transparent public finance, civic participation and a deliberate culture of responsibility. Ultimately, the question of Nigerian development is a question about what kind of human being Nigerian leadership is producing and what kind of human community political power is creating. The Essencist answer is unequivocal: development becomes authentic when leadership realizes its essence in the service of human dignity, justice, knowledge, accountability and the common good. Nigeria's transformation will therefore require more than economic planning or institutional restructuring. It will require a philosophical reawakening a recovery of the essence of leadership itself.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT
Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)
ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)
Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com
Received: August 20, 2026 **Accepted**: September 22, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026
Citation: Ubong, Bassey (2026). "On Freedoms in Education: Analysis of Conceptual and Theoretical Application." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 126-138.

Article **Open Access**

ON FREEDOMS IN EDUCATION: ANALYSIS OF CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL APPLICATION

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Abstract
Freedom implies a functioning state of the individual in which one or more of the forms of restraint operate or the individual enjoys a reasonable degree of exercise of freewill. Freedom is a desideratum in education because impartation and acquisition of knowledge in the quintessential form require exercise of freewill with responsibility in the mix because absolute freedom would involve chaos. In education, freedom receives consideration from four principal perspectives freedom for the child or learner; freedom for the teacher or the person who imparts knowledge; freedom for the parent or guardian of children; and freedom to enable anyone or group to set up education-oriented institutions. This paper reviews the concept of freedom in its broad perspectives and in the context of education and posited that one other dimension of freedom for the society should be given direct attention rather than being subsumed in the freedoms aforementioned. This is because from the sociological standpoint, the society has characteristics different from those of individuals and groups which comprise it and in any case, the corporate beneficiary in the education enterprise is the society.

Keywords: Education, Freedom, Students, Parents, Teachers, Society

Introduction
Freedom, the capacity of the individual or group of individuals to act or function with minimum restraint, is a critical concept in education and life in general. Despite its appeal however, freedom in its extreme as in a complete absence of restraint on individuals and groups would be detrimental to individuals, groups, and the general society. A review of the mounting problem of climate change which threatens human existence throws up the issue of decades of unrestrained use and abuse of the environment. It should be a source of worry

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that a pivotal country like the United States of America (USA) withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement in 2020 during the first tenure of Donald Trump's presidency in the Office of President. Although President Joe Biden rejoined, Mr. Trump withdrew again in 2025 on assumption of office in his second term. The exit provides for unrestrained exploitation of fossil fuels and uncontrolled emissions into the atmosphere. Education by its nature requires freedom for it to flower for the person imparting knowledge (teacher), the person receiving knowledge (child/student), and the person who has the natural right over the child and would want to see the best for the child or learner (parent). These three forms of freedom are well documented and one dare say, controversial (Peters, 1980).

Education theory expounds the freedom of the three although a fourth has been introduced to freedom for anyone, within existing legal and policy frameworks to establish and run schools. One can however extend the concept to include a fifth entity which is both a beneficiary and a sponsor of education in society. A prima facie syllogistic argument would be that if the child, the teacher, and the parent have freedom, then the society has freedom given that the society is an agglomeration of the three dramatis personae the child, the teacher, and the parent. This argument can however not hold from three perspectives. First, from a sociological point of view, the society is an entity distinct in traits or characteristics from its components. The rights and obligations of society and by extension its freedoms and responsibilities should be different from those of its components. Second, man by nature has the penchant to extend their own freedom beyond tolerable limits which may hurt others in the process. This should remind us of the Hobbesian argument on the need for central authorities to control excesses of the human components of society and should give fillip to the argument for separate focus on freedom in education for the society. Third, from a limited analytical framework, education in a particular setting may not directly benefit every individual in a given society. The argument of proponents of education vouchers in the USA for instance must have viewed education as a personal issue. An individual who opts to remain an illiterate or has determined own incapacitation for formal schooling will not benefit from an education voucher. It is pertinent to bear in mind the conflict theory of education which discusses the role of education in social stratification (Mishra, 2013). To maintain the socio-economic strata in the society, those in control of the education enterprise the middle class and upper class - design and implement curricular to suit themselves. Those at the middle and upper classes design and implement curricular often to the detriment of the lower rungs. A collective should be in the position to make those at the lower levels to benefit more.

The Concept of Freedom

French philosopher and novelist, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) noted in Emile, the book which focused on education as quoted by Forbes (1999) that “Freedom is found in no form of government; it is in the heart of the free man. He takes it with him everywhere. The vile man takes his servitude everywhere. Epictetus writing in antiquity on the subject of freedom stated, We must not believe the many who say that only the free people should be educated, but we should believe the philosophers who say that only the educated are free. Education implies freedom of choice, and choice, in the opinion of existentialists, is central to human existence (Dreyfus, 2008). Two extremes of opinions from two revered statesmen on the issue of freedom and liberty are instructive. Vladimir Ilich Lenin (1870-1924), Russian revolutionary and first head of the Soviet Republic that championed the philosophy of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, stated in State and Revolution (1919) While the State exists, there can be no freedom. When there is freedom there will be no State (Oxford dictionary of

Quotations, 1996, p.417). Another statesman, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945), 32nd President of the United States of America (USA) stated in a message to Congress on January 6th 1941 as follows:

> We look to a world founded upon four essential freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear everywhere in the world (Oxford dictionary of Quotations, p.546).

It can be said that the first three are common sense expectations although freedom of worship may be objected to in some societies. It is the fourth that is not common place, and is becoming increasingly relevant and strident in a world terrorized by despots, religious extremists, hoodlums, robbers, self-styled militants, and self-styled freedom fighters. Omoregbe (2001) lists some perspectives of the concept of freedom and in particular the place of determinism in human freedom. Determinism in its various forms include: ethical determinism (acts of man determined by what is seen as good, as advocated by Socrates, Plato, and St. Thomas Aquinas); theological determinism (God has foreknowledge of man's action but man has freedom to act or not to, as proposed by St. Augustine; and, man is saved by grace and such grace is for the chosen, as presented by Martin Luther and John Calvin). Others are physical determinism (man is not free because he is material and his actions are determined by the physical laws of the universe, as canvassed by Thomas Hobbes, La Mettrie, and Paul von Holbach among others); psychological determinism (psychological factors such as instincts determine the acts of man, thus man is not free, a position taken by Sigmund Freud, Thomas Hobbes, and David Hume); historical determinism (historical events are determined by external forces outside the control of man, a position taken by Goerg Hegel, Karl Marx, among others); soft determinism (interplay of freedom and moral responsibility); and hard freedom (complete absence of human freedom).

Okoh (2003) defines freedom from a philosophical perspective as the ability of man to be able to direct and determine himself through thoughts and actions that are willfully chosen (p. 120). This definition highlights the place of reason and choice as central issues in freedom. The three freedoms in education as expounded by Peters (1980) have to do with application of the concept of freedom, particularly of choice, in education. Children cannot be allowed absolute freedom; as a matter of fact, Bantock (1965) emphatically and unabashedly declares that too much freedom is incompatible with education. However, Peters (1980) is against rules for the sake of rules, or as expressions of a teacher's love for power (p.195). The teacher is expected to enjoy freedom not only to hold opinion but to teach things worthwhile. However, such freedom has to be seen in the context of the good of the society. The parent, an active participant in the education enterprise, is expected to enjoy freedom mainly in the area of school choice.

Freedom and Existentialism

Existentialism is regarded as a movement or tendency rather than a school of thought (Dreyfus, 2007). The essential tenets are that man, as the Sophist Greek philosopher Protogoras asserted, is the measure of all things and thus the individual should be the focus of analysis with the core aspects being existence, freedom, and choice. In the context of the individual, freedom is the crux; freedom, with responsibility, is so important that it is identified with the very nature and existence of man. As Satire (1956) states in Being and

Nothingness as quoted by Omoregbe (2007) Freedom is identical with my existence (p.45). Jean-Paul Satire is regarded as the existentialist that wrote most on freedom. He noted that freedom is a basic condition of human existence and thus does not need to be proved. Although he asserted that man is condemned to be free, the freedom is anchored on responsibility which informs choices. The position of existentialists is important in education for all the parties that expect freedom in education: the child (Wokocha, 1993), reminds them to be ready for outcomes if they exercise their freedom to go on strike and in the process destroy property), for the teacher who has to function within legal limits and within rules of decency; and the parent who must know the bounds of freedom. A case in a secondary school in Lagos many years ago when a female students hair was forcibly cut by a teacher only for the teacher's hair to be forcibly cut by the girl's father illustrating a situation in which responsibility by all parties was jettisoned.

Freedom and Education

Roosevelts four freedoms said nothing about education although education is subsumed because an educated person is better positioned to extricate self from the bondage of want, fear, and inability to speak his mind or worship whatever he wishes. In education, three freedoms are generally discussed freedom for the learner or consumers of educational services, teachers as providers of educational services, and parents of the primary beneficiaries of education. Tabensky (2002) believes education should aim at freedom and in fact, education properly understood, is the practice of freedom. Education should be emancipatory in conceptualization and practice. He uses the positions of John Dewy, Paulo Freire, and Richard Rorty for his analysis. Metivier (2023) recognizes the three traditional freedoms in education and adds a fourth freedom of individuals to establish and run schools but the schools should conform to standards and regulations set by authorities. The four, Metivier (2023) holds, are presented in the Committee on Economic Social, and Cultural Rights General Comment 13. Article 23 of the Constitution of The Netherlands specifies the freedoms in education (de Groot, 2026). de Groot links freedoms with responsibility and includes school choice for children to conform to parents religious orientation and ideas of parents of what education of their children should be. Freedoms in education can be constrained by political interference, funding gaps, and cultural barriers. This is the position of Iorwuese (2025) in his analysis of the Nigerian situation. The three issues mentioned affect the freedom of the learner who deserves an optimum environment and facilities to learn. The parents are interested in public school education but cannot have it because of the poor quality of public schools. Freedom of teachers suffer because they must use approved curricular even in the face of deficiency in the curricular and available resources.

The Childs or Learners Freedom

Wokocha (1993) argues that students have rights and freedoms including freedom of expression and even to go on strike. He however reminds students that freedom has to go with responsibility and so declares A student who wishes to enjoy his rights within the school system must ensure that he has a duty of acting within the rules and regulations of the school" (p. 33). If a student decides to enjoy the freedom to participate in a strike and destroys school property, such students should "be at liberty to accept whatever constraints and sanctions the authorities in the school system deem necessary for the restoration and maintenance of order (p.31).

The Teachers Freedom

Teachers, particularly at the tertiary level are often embroiled in the controversy regarding academic freedom, a complex concept that envelopes such desires of faculty for freedom to teach what one wishes, freedom and security of tenure, and freedom to administer a university without external intervention including the freedom to determine curriculum. Standler (2000) writing on the subject Academic Freedom in the USA (2000) from a legal standpoint quotes the case of Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, 438 U.S. 265, 312 (1978) which listed academic freedom as who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study in the case of institutional academic freedom. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), an umbrella organization for teachers at the tertiary level has campaigned tirelessly for academic freedom including abrogation of student assessment of faculty that the body considers obnoxious and anti-academic freedom. The issue goes as far as being cited as being under the First Amendment to the US Constitution which deals with the right to free speech. In the landmark submission by Justice Brennan of the US Supreme Court in 1967, it was stated, "Our Nation is deeply committed to safeguarding academic freedom, which is of transcendent value to all of us and not merely to the teachers concerned. That freedom is therefore a special concern of the First Amendment, which does not tolerate laws that cast a pall of orthodoxy over the classroom" [Keyishian v. Board of Regents, 385 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)]. In spite of such strong and supportive arguments, the need to avoid absolute freedom is also noted. In the case of Kay v. Board of Education 18 N.Y.S.2d 821, 829 (1940) it was stated, Academic freedom does not mean academic license. It is the freedom to do good and not to teach evil. This was why the learned judge revoked the appointment of the revered Professor of philosophy, Bertrand Russell to the faculty of The City College of New York because someone challenged his appointment on the grounds of his immoral views. Incidentally the AAUP has since 1940 released and functioned within the Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure"with 1970 Interpretive Comments. This statement outlines the principles of academic freedom and tenure and the limits to both as indicated in the Statement on Professional Ethics adopted in 1966. In essence, there is also no absolute freedom for teachers but rather, freedom with responsibility. Unfortunately for educational institutions even in developed countries, quite a substantial portion of their funds come from public sources and the aphorism he that pays the piper dictates the tune considerably constrains freedom of action.

Peters (1980) discusses the theory with respect to the freedom of the teacher in the educational system. The teacher's freedom is anchored on the right to teach what the teacher likes and to air opinion no matter how heterodox. Quoting J. S. Mills essay On Liberty, truth progresses and takes root if it is allowed to be aired and disputed if need be. Terrence (190-159 BC), a Roman playwright is credited with the saying quot hominess, tot sententiae which translated means as many men, as many minds or opinions. At any point in time and in any circumstance, ten people discussing an issue are likely to hold ten different opinions; it is discussion that could lead to a resolution and possible adoption of a unified opinion that is subject to change with circumstance, time, and new opinions. If Polish scientist Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) had accepted the Ptolemaic system that had lasted for 1,400 years, the earth would still have been held as the centre of the universe; if Galileo had not stood up against the dictates of the 1616 law that he should not canvass the Copernican theory of the universe, the astronomy of Johannes Kepler and the physics of Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein that revolutionized the world would not have developed.

Education requires that those avowed to it speak up and canvass ideas that may be heterodox; it is left for others to advance counter and valid arguments against an idea or opinion old or new.

The university (used in this paper as a generic term for higher education), is described by Moberly (1949) in Brubacher (1977) as a republic of scholars (p. 28). A university as the acme of the concept of higher education should by an a priori argument, thrive on freedom and autonomy for such are some of the necessary conditions for scholarship. Freedom and autonomy however have to be seen within the context of general laws, traditions, and policies of the government that rules over society in which the institutions form a part, for absolute freedom is not consistent with the good in society. The Iraqis once posted a sign in universities in the country (before the so-called democratic government of George W. Bush annexed the country): The freedom of opinion and expression is a guaranteed right to the entire academic society, under the rule that this does not interfere with student education (Safire, 2004). The interpretation, and who interprets, of interference with a student's education is however best left for conjecture.

Freedom and autonomy also must necessarily be subject to constraints such as material resources and human limitations, the former of which is never sufficient and commonly outside the control of the administrations of the institutions. This is why Brubacher (1979) states that The traditional autonomy of the higher learning is not, and perhaps never has been, absolute. In the first place, complete autonomy would require complete financial independence (p.28). Such independence is highly improbable even for private universities given the fact that they depend to a large extent on public infrastructure, public utilities, and publicly trained personnel as well as endowments and even direct assistance from taxpayer funds. Democracy in tertiary education is epitomized and often discussed under the complementary concepts of academic freedom and tenure. Writers in Nigeria including Wilson (2002), Jimba (2002), and Wokocha (2003) among others see autonomy as an embracing concept that covers the freedom of students and teachers to teach and to learn, as well as the freedom of the institutions to function without interference from persons and agencies outside the institutions. The concept has been a subject of trade disputes by the Academic Staff of Universities (ASUU), the Autonomy Bill of the Federal Government and at the academic level, the theme of national conferences. In the USA, academic freedom is regarded as a composite concept seen from two perspectives individual freedom and institutional freedom, the latter of which is interpreted as autonomy. Standler (2000) presents the two thus:

> Individual academic freedom, which protects an individual professor
> Institutional academic freedom, which protects universities from interference by government, a right that applies to the community of scholars rather than to individual faculty or lecturers.

Tenure is the second concept that is used in universities in many countries. It refers to the freedom expected for individual lecturers with respect to freedom of teaching and research and extra mural activities as well as a reasonable level of economic security to ensure optimum performance of professional duties. However it has more to do with security of employment including due process in severance. In discussing the concept of freedom in education, Okoh (2003) lists forms of freedom that include absolute freedom. He notes that this is the existentialists position, that man has absolute freedom defined primarily by ability to choose, in essence, freewill. The choice is however in the context of the corollary responsibility. Drefus (2006) submits that Freedom of choice entails commitment and

responsibility. Because individuals are free to choose their own path, existentialists have argued, they must accept the risk and responsibility of following their commitment wherever it leads. The concept of freedom and its relevance to education is summarized by Okoh (2003) with respect to teachers thus:

> The teacher is employed to transmit knowledge, skills and aptitudes, and choose between various alternatives to facilitate the learning process. Hence freedom and responsibility lie within these stipulated functions. If his activities as a teacher are hindered by external forces or constraints, then he is no longer free to pursue his career or develop his chosen profession. It is in this respect the teacher claims academic freedom (p. 122).

One would have wished for a follow up statement to remind teachers of the corollary, that is, responsibility, given the cases of abuse to which teachers are unfortunately associated. Academic freedom this paper holds, is best seen from the perspective of rational freedom, which Okoh (2003) sees as that which springs out of the censorship of the various alternative choices (p. 121). Academia is regarded as the epitome of scholarship and what should be the best in the society; freedom should therefore be exercised in accordance with reason where reason implies positive justification and orderly thought. The freedom to spend money in schools for instance, has to go along with accountability, for there is no moral justification for academics to criticize public officers that involve themselves in misapplication (unauthorized virement) and misappropriation of taxpayer money if the same applies in the schools. And the penchant of teachers to rally to the defence of erring teachers even in very obvious cases chips away at the moral platform of the group to ask for freedom and autonomy. Wokocha (2003) states:

> Because the current teachers unions which include ASUU, COEASU, and ASUP which can hardly discipline their members, public view of the vocation is poor. Some teachers if not most, actually go to ridiculous lengths to cover their colleagues who misbehave. There is therefore a strong need for a code of conduct for teachers if the vocation is to be professionalized (p. 25).

What needs to be distinguished and emphasized in the opinion of Peters (1980) is thought and action, that is, the difference between freedom of thought and freedom of action. A teacher can hold an opinion; however if such an opinion has the tendency to hurt the learner and ultimately the society, there is the need for constraint. In essence, expected of teachers is the principle of rational freedom which is freedom that intrinsically implies responsibility. This is where the distinction is made between teaching and indoctrination as well as teaching and conditioning. A learner is free in a learning situation if he or she is allowed to determine what to belief or accept and to make input into the process. Neither indoctrination nor conditioning permit freedom of thought and action for the learner and thus cannot be acceptable modes of imparting knowledge in a school setting. But freedom for teachers appears, in the case of Nigeria, to be the greatest flash point for conflict and constraint in education practice. It often arises from two angles the unwillingness of school proprietors to meet sometimes the most basic needs for education offering and second, misunderstanding of the scope of academic freedom and workers rights by personnel in the sector. Persistent closure of schools for short or long periods because of demands by teachers has undoubtedly negative impact on all the freedoms in the sector. If, as it appears, the Tinubu administration has contained the drive for sit-ins and shut downs particularly at the tertiary level, Nigerian education may be in for a brighter future.

Freedom for Parents

Freedom for parents in education refers primarily to the right to choose where their children and wards will be educated. It is obvious that they cannot go beyond that, else there could be chaos as individual differences, inclinations, and orientations would play out in a way that would create problems to the larger society particularly in a pluralistic society. One cannot imagine an educational system that would permit parents to determine content and methodology although they can influence the process of developing both. It is apparently the right of parents to determine content and methodology in some Moslem societies that has led to much of the chaos and stagnation some of them currently experience. School choice is a fairly contentious issue in some countries and in particular in the USA. One of the ways to ensure school choice is through provision of education vouchers to parents by the government. Houston (2007) has presented the pros and cons of the argument on education vouchers. Proponents argue that education is a private good and so should be controlled by parents; vouchers would make money available to parents and afford them choice, specifically so that they can move their children from poor quality schools to good quality schools; such competition would make public school administrations sit up and improve service delivery for the long term benefit of the society. Opponents of vouchers on the other hand argue that education is a public good and so should be controlled by government implying a de-emphasis on private education; vouchers would undermine public schools as parents remove their children; and when tax money is taken to private schools, accountability cannot be ascertained. The US House of Representatives passed a bill presented by Representative Ron Paul of Texas in 2001. The bill titled the Family Education Freedom Act was introduced by Hon. Ron Paul in the following words:

> By moving to restore the primacy of parents to education, the Family Education Freedom Act will not only improve America's education, it will restore a parent's right to choose how best to educate one's own child, a fundamental freedom that has been eroded by the increase in federal education expenditures and the corresponding decrease in the ability of parents to provide for their children's education out of their own pockets.

I call on all my colleagues to join me in allowing parents to devote more of their resources to their children's education and less to feed the wasteful Washington bureaucracy by supporting the Family Education Freedom Act (US Congress, 2001). There is also the group known as Citizens for Educational Freedom (CEF) that canvasses parents rights in education. CEF is a not-for-profit organization established in 1959 in St Louis, Missouri. The aim is to promote freedom of choice, justice, and quality in education for all in favour of parents. The organization campaigns for school choice, asks questions on how public funds to education are used and also campaigns for reduction in government regulation of schools (CEF, 2009). CEF lists educational freedom to include parental choice of accredited schools, equal treatment under the law for all families, fair competition among schools, taxpayer savings, and religious liberty In some countries of Europe and in particular Hungary, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Belgium, parents chose between private and public schools because there is no quality differential between the two. In Denmark there is public assistance to private schools (Patrinos, 2002). In such countries, the choice is more on location than on quality. One is not sure that there is any organized forum at the national level for parents in Nigeria that could influence school choice. Parent-Teachers Association (PTA) currently termed Parent-Staff Association (PSA) are localized to individual schools and thus have nothing to do with school choice or even an attempt to influence content and method.

Thoughts on Freedom for Society

Although Hobbes canvassed social contract between the governors and the governed and government should be everyone's business for everyone, Raadschelders (2020) argues that for centuries, government has been about a select few who guard their individual or select group interests to the detriment of the generality and submits, "…it is the people who are sovereign and government that serves the people Hence democratic governments do not stand above the people. Of course, this is political theory, and in practice money and power tend to concentrate in the hands of the few. (p 41). Above means that the most democratic government cannot be said to be representational. The government of the US mixes two models in governance the delegate and the trustee. In the former, elected persons are expected to speak and act the will of the electors. The latter assumes that the elected are wise representatives who apply their intellect, experience, goodwill, and knowledge of what the electors would prefer and act with minimum reliance on directives from the electors. Reality shows that for reasons of availability of critical information for decision making by electors, waste of time, and possibility of gridlock, what mostly operates in democratic frameworks is the trustee model.

Outside the political framework, the trustee model is the most dominant if not the sole system in the public service although it can be claimed that politicians determine the actions of public servants (while politicians are likely to claim guidance by public servants). In Nigeria a recent example confirms the preponderance of the trustee model. Apparently based on the near permanent upward trajectory of prices, the guardians of the summation examinations at the secondary school level requested for upward revision of prices for the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE). The Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Education authorized 84% increase in registration fees for the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) SSSCE. The move backfired because of absence of consultations with the primary stakeholders - the parents and guardians. Tolu-Kolawale and Dirisu (2026) note that a member of the opposition, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) protested against a signed and sealed decision. The Federal Government had to back down to initiate consultations. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) stayed out of the fray maybe because they are war weary and would want to hold onto the extant peaceful coexistence with the Federal Government.

A Fifth Freedom in Education

Peters (1980) did not look at freedom for the society as an independent freedom in education. The argument might be that if the individual enjoys freedom in education, the society as a collection of individuals enjoys freedom in education. But this is not the thesis of the founder of sociology, Emile Durkheim in his book The Rules of Sociological Method published in 1895. The father of Sociology held that groups have characteristics different from, and more in sum than the constituent parts. Durkheim anchored his argument on the concept of social facts which refers to structures, norms, and values in each society which transcend individuals and groups. Segal (2025) for instance has listed 24 states in the USA which have decided to sustain commitment to the Paris 2015 Climate Agreement despite withdrawal of the Federal Government of the country. Climate change is a social fact which transcends the predilections of a particular occupant of the White House at a point in time. Fashion trends, language, legal and cultural applications, currency, and related others are social facts. In essence, if societal characteristics and functioning are different from individual characteristics, the influences on the society should in general be different from

the influences on the individuals. This supports the need for freedoms in education for the society. Stoutland (1990) advances an argument based on philosophical individualism and in particular, ontological individualism and argues that, the reality of the self is independent of the reality of the society (p.107). Ontological individualists believe human beings are not socially constitutive which means individuals can be understood, and are outside what characterizes the society. A collectivist transposition would yield the argument that the society can be understood outside the reality or concept of the individual and component units.

If society is possessed of characteristics and functions independent of the individual, the society should, in education theory, have its set of freedoms. Several questions can be posed: does the society have the right or freedom to choose which type of education should be offered (as in liberal, vocational, comprehensive) to its constituents and should the dichotomy in offering with respect to public-private school be allowed? Should the society decide, as is purportedly common in Moslem countries, to allow Islamic principles to dominate curriculum and pedagogy? The same thing applies to Christianity where mission schools permit certain co-curricular activities and ban others. No rational person would canvass extreme freedom which translates to licence nor would anyone in the contemporary world consider a Hobbesian world to force government to breathe down the necks of individuals but societies as social facts should enjoy distinct freedoms. In any case debate should continue on the limits to society's freedom before it becomes repugnant to the generality and to reason. The freedoms due the society in education can be expressed in various ways as concepts, positions, values, and approaches regarded as best suited to specific countries and in fact, sub-sets for it would be wrong for instance to insist on the burqa in a predominantly non-Moslem geographical region in a dominantly secular country. Some examples of freedoms in education which can be regarded as due to the society are discussed hereunder.

Freedom to Determine and Institute a National Philosophy on Education – This refers to a country's understanding of the fundamentals of theory and practice of education which must be seen as an imperative and starting point in any educational enterprise and system. Okoh (2005) notes that a national philosophy of education should emphasize the uniqueness of each country's past, current experience, and hopes for the future. For Nigeria, he advocates a national philosophy of education which identifies and clarifies metaphysical questions germane to human existence, represents the epistemological assumptions of the people, their basic assumptions about values and goals of education based on the Nigerian traditional concept of man, the traditional concept of society, and the traditional concept of knowledge. He concludes, Nigeria needs a philosophy which is based on the best of her traditional past, viz, honesty, courage, discipline, right attitude to work, respect, and concern for others but geared towards her renaissance" (p.37). The need for emphasis on traditional philosophy of education is recognized by writers including Raegan (2001). In writing on traditional educational thought in Africa, he notes that the thought and practice of education are characterized not only by their concern for the good person, but also by the interweaving of social, economic, political, cultural, and educational threads into a common tapestry (p. 665). He goes further to state:

> Traditional education in much of Africa was social and communal in nature and was tied to everyday life Taken together, these educational goals present a very clear view of the characteristics of a good person for traditional African societies. Such an individual, in essence, would be honest,

> respectful, skilled, cooperative, and knowledgeable about the community (p.665).

It is pertinent to note the assertion of a good person, which is in a way different from the good life principle of education in traditional Greece. The good person evidently focuses on the individual not so much as man qua man but as man as a participant in the collective, that is, the society. This is apparently the basis of the statement of Section 1 subsection 3 (a) of the National Policy on Education that Education is an instrument for national development and social change. (FRN, 2013, p.1). The question which arises is whether any of the editions (1st, 1977; 2nd, 1981; 3rd, 1993/98; 4th, 2004; 5th, 2007; 6th, 2013) involved consultations with the primary stakeholder the society. Other than the 1st edition which emerged from the 1969 National Curriculum Conference, other editions are produced by Committees which work without input from the polity. And even in the case of the first Policy, which man on the street attends and makes contributions at an education-based conference? From 2012 the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) has handled reviews after it took over from the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC). Freedom to Determine Content although content is part of standards discussed above, an issue needs to be raised because of the trend in some societies to allow religion in particular to determine content in absolute terms without room for alternative views. An ultra-conservative orientation generates a situation in which some citizens are denied freedom to attend schools or forced to accept certain curricular and pedagogy. Education is about exposure of the individual to choices which presupposes that those given the opportunity to acquire it (and every citizen should be given the opportunity as a right) are rational beings and are endowed with the ability to choose what is right and what is wrong.

Freedom to Determine and Enforce Standards every human society is basically pluralistic even from the basic premise that every human being is different and a unique being. Pluralism however is seen in several other aspects including religion, beliefs, cultural practices, values, language, tribe, and even skin colour in some cases. Since education is about transmission of something worthwhile from one generation to another (Peters, 1968) including culture and value systems, it presupposes transmission of unique ways of each group to new generations. But in a pluralistic society, conflict is bound to arise as cultures and values which may be in diametric positions. The concomitant would be chaos which may generate a slippery slope condition. This issue bedevils nations with big religious, linguistic, and cultural groupings with minimum tendency towards compromises and understanding. Executing education by use of the national curriculum therefore becomes an imperative if such nations are to survive, grow, and achieve harmony. In effect, the society must have the freedom to determine standards for the entire educational system although some leeway has to be left for exercise of peculiar aspects of groups if such do not harm others. For instance, decent dressing for females is strictly enforced in dominant Moslem societies. As decent dressing cannot hurt any person of any religious group, enforcement of such in schools should be permitted.

In Nigeria government departments have been set up to determine standards by way of curricula content, pedagogy, and assessment. Some of these include the National Universities Commission for Universities; the National Commission for Colleges of Education for Colleges of Education; the National Board for Technical Education for Polytechnics and Monotechnics. For examinations at the lower levels, WAEC, NECO, and the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) are involved in the maintenance of standards. For periodic reviews of all aspects of education, there are agencies such as Nigerian

Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, for syllabuses, National Policy on Education); National Board for Educational Management (NBEM, for examinations at the secondary level); National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN, for development of local languages); National Mathematical Centre (NMC, for development of content and teaching of mathematics); and National Teachers Institute (teacher preparation at the middle level by distance learning). Freedom of Society on School Choice choice of school by parents is a highly contentious issue in the USA but less so in some countries of Europe such as Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Sweden, and the Netherlands where quality of schools is the same irrespective of proprietorship. In the aforementioned countries of Europe, choice is more with respect to distance from family home than quality (Patrinos, 1999).

In the USA, education vouchers are available to parents to enable them chose schools where their children or wards should attend. However, it is the cost or price of education that finally determines where a child attends school although some Ivy League schools are known to offer admission to children from poor backgrounds based on certain criteria such as availability of scholarships. A problem arises in the matter of the conflict between the policy of government on egalitarianism and democracy operating in a capitalist system. While the official policy of government indicates equality in educational opportunities, the existence of private schools says something different. Parents and children of the capable are expected to have a freedom of choice since the political system is democratic.

Conclusion

Education, particularly in the formal sense and with respect to Western education thrives best where there is freedom for the participants. Three freedoms are usually discussed in education freedom for the child or learner, freedom for the teacher, and freedom for the parent. A fourth freedom which recognizes the right of individuals and groups to found and run schools within the law has gained currency. Given that the society sociologically is regarded as distinct from its human components, a fifth freedom of the society should be recognized. This includes the freedom to make inputs into the national philosophy of education, freedom to determine and enforce standards, freedom to influence content, and freedom on school choice. School choice however has to bear in mind the conflict between the needs of some individuals for quality although expensive schools and the collective need for egalitarianism.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT
Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)
ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)
Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com
Received: August 21, 2026 **Accepted**: September 23, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026
Citation: Anjov, Terfa K. & Adejo, Rita O. (2026). "Assessment of the Role of Social Media Use on Youth in Makurdi Diocese." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 139-151.

Article **Open Access**

ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON YOUTH IN MAKURDI DIOCESE

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Abstract
This study examined the role and impact of social media on youths in the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi, Nigeria, within the broader context of moral, spiritual, familial, educational, and ecclesial formation. Data was obtained from books, scholarly journals, Church documents, and credible online sources. The study adopted the analytical, evaluative, and expository methods in investigating the phenomenon. The analytical method deconstructed social media use among youths across key contexts such as the family, schools, Church, and peer relationships; the evaluative method assessed both the positive contributions and negative consequences of digital engagement on moral and spiritual development; while the expository method clarified key concepts, theological principles, and ecclesial teachings that framed the discussion. Findings revealed that social media serves as both a constructive and disruptive force in youth formation. On the positive side, it enhances communication, learning, evangelization, and social participation, particularly when guided by ecclesial and institutional structures. However, it simultaneously exposes youths to risks such as moral relativism, cyberbullying, misinformation, addiction, academic distraction, and weakened spiritual discipline. These challenges often shift attention away from core Christian practices such as prayer, sacramental life, and virtuous living. The study recommends a coordinated response involving the Church, families, and schools, alongside robust digital literacy education, to ensure that youths engage social media responsibly. Properly guided, social media could become a tool that supports rather than undermines the moral and spiritual development of youths in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Makurdi. The study concludes that

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social media while an unavoidable feature of contemporary life, requires structured moral guidance and intentional formation.

Keywords: Roman Catholic Diocese of Makurdi, Social Media Use, Christian Practices, Youth.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped communication, identity formation, and social behaviour, particularly among young people. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube now occupy a central place in daily life, exposing youths to value systems and cultural influences that do not always align with Catholic moral teaching or the communal ethos of the church. Within the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi, where the Church remains actively committed to the spiritual and moral formation of young people, this digital reality presents both opportunities and serious challenges. On one hand, social media has enabled Catholic youths to access religious content, participate in online prayer, and engage with their faith communities beyond physical boundaries. The Church itself has increasingly embraced digital platforms for evangelisation and pastoral outreach. On the other hand, regular exposure to indecent content, materialism, online hostility, and distorted standards of success can gradually erode moral consciousness. The desire for online validation often displaces personal integrity and genuine moral responsibility. Compounding these concerns is the limited supervisory capacity of parents, educators, and pastoral leaders in digital spaces. This study therefore examines the implications of social media on youth moral formation within the Diocese of Makurdi, exploring both its constructive potential and its harmful dimensions.

The Church as a Moral Teacher in the Digital Age

The Catholic Church regards itself as the moral teacher of the faithful in all cultural contexts, including the digital age. According to the Decree on the Means of Social Communication, the Church emphasizes that communication is a moral activity, and that Christians must evaluate media content in light of moral principles (*Pontifical Council for Social Communications,* 12). Social media, in particular, plays a central role in shaping youth values, attitudes, and behavior, which makes the Church's guidance crucial in forming a morally responsible digital culture. The Church's role is therefore proactive: it teaches ethical discernment, models moral communication, and fosters the cultivation of virtues among youths, helping them navigate the moral complexities of digital interactions (Mirus 45). By offering moral guidance, the Church does not merely condemn harmful media practices but provides a framework for integrating digital technology into ethical and spiritually edifying experiences. According to the *Pontifical Council for Social Communications,* the Church's mission includes equipping youths to use media to build community, pursue truth, and foster charity, emphasising the need for moral reflection in online behavior (18). In Makurdi Diocese, where youths are avid social media users, the Church must combine doctrinal instruction with media literacy programs, helping young people evaluate digital content critically while forming them in the values of honesty, respect, and human dignity (Obogo Michael, Oral interview).

Catholic Teaching on Communication and Moral Life

Catholic social doctrine frames communication as a central aspect of human development and moral life. The Church teaches that communication should promote truth, human dignity, and the common good. Ethics in Communications notes that media should contribute to the spiritual, moral, and social formation of individuals, emphasising

responsible engagement and ethical discernment (*Pontifical Council for Social Communications,* 15). The moral principles of the Church guide not only what is communicated but also the manner in which communication occurs, fostering respect for persons and fostering virtuous behavior in public discourse. The Church also recognizes the potential of social media to both harm and benefit youth moral development. For instance, misinformation, cyberbullying, and morally questionable content can negatively shape youth values, while platforms can also foster learning, solidarity, and evangelization (*Pontifical Council for Social Communications,* 20). This dual nature underscores the importance of the Church's moral guidance: it must educate youth to discern content ethically, avoid harmful interactions, and engage positively in online spaces (Mirus 55).

Youth Formation and Evangelization through Social Media

The Church advocates using social media as a tool for evangelisation and youth formation. Vatican documents encourage Catholics to adopt digital media as instruments for spreading the Gospel while upholding moral principles (*Pontifical Council for Social Communications,* 22). The pastoral letter Towards Full Presence emphasizes that social media is integral to youth identity and interaction, highlighting the need for intentional engagement that reflects Christian values (*Holy See Press,* Office 3). According to Clementina Phillip, in Makurdi Diocese, this approach implies creating content that educates and inspires youth, including faith-based discussion groups, online catechesis, live-streamed liturgies, and social media campaigns promoting virtues such as honesty, solidarity, and charity (Oral interview). Zoho Msughter also aligns with the view that such programs ensure that social media becomes a platform for evangelization, moral reflection, and community engagement, rather than solely a space for entertainment or potentially harmful interactions (Oral Interview).

The Duty of the Diocese in Guiding Responsible Media Use

The Diocese has a pastoral responsibility to form young Catholics in ethical social media use. This includes teaching digital literacy, critical thinking, and discernment skills, ensuring that youths understand both the benefits and potential dangers of online interactions (Pontifical Council for Social Communications 28). Catechists, priests, and parents must actively accompany youth, providing moral guidance and mentorship in navigating social media spaces. The pastoral instruction Aetatis Novae (New Age – often used to mark the start of a new era or period) emphasises that moral formation in communication should be integrated into catechesis and youth ministry programs, ensuring that media engagement aligns with Christian virtues (*Pontifical Council for Social Communications,* 33). Omlenyi Douglas insists that implementing these strategies, Makurdi Diocese can guide youth to use social media responsibly, fostering digital communities that promote human dignity, moral integrity, and Christian witness in the online world (Oral interview).

Pastoral Counselling of the Youth in the Digital Era

Ashine David opined that the digital age has simultaneously expanded communicative possibilities and generated profound moral and psychological challenges for young people (Oral Interview). Within the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi, pastoral counselling emerges as an indispensable ecclesial response, enabling youths to navigate digital culture in ways that consolidate rather than compromise their moral formation (Ortese Joseph, Oral interview). Grounded in Scripture, Church teaching, and the lived experience of the faithful, pastoral counselling in the Catholic tradition offers an integrated framework of spiritual, moral, and psychological support (Anthony Agbo Ekwote, Oral interview). As the United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops affirms, pastoral counselling "draws upon theological insights, spiritual practices, and clinical skills to address human needs in a holistic manner" (USCCB 2), rendering it particularly suited to youths whose moral consciousness is simultaneously shaped by online and offline environments. In the Makurdi diocesan context, where many young people report experiences of moral confusion, digital overwhelm, and identity instability, pastoral counselling provides a structured space for developing coherent moral selfhood anchored in Christian virtue (Ashwe Emmanuel, Oral interview). The formation of conscience, which the Church's Catechism identifies as "the most sacred core and sanctuary of a person" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1778), demands attentive and sustained guidance, especially where secular digital values conflict with Catholic moral teaching. Empirical research further substantiates these concerns, as studies demonstrate that excessive social media engagement correlates significantly with anxiety, compulsive comparison, and a diminished capacity for moral reflection (Odgers and Jensen 1025). Pastoral counselling addresses these vulnerabilities holistically, assisting youths in cultivating self-discipline, clarifying purpose, and redirecting digital behaviour toward morally constructive ends.

Magisterial teaching reinforces this pastoral imperative. Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation Christus Vivit, cautions that the digital communications environment "can deepen the beauty of fraternity and mutual assistance, or it can disintegrate relationships" (Francis 45). This insight becomes operative in counselling practice, as pastoral guides assist youths in critically discerning which digital interactions cultivate virtue and which occasion vice. Practical interventions such as structured prayer, and reflective examination of conscience — disciplines with deep biblical resonance (cf. Isa. 58:6) — serve as concrete instruments for restoring moral equilibrium and resisting compulsive digital engagement. Responsibility for pastoral counselling within the Diocese extends beyond ordained ministers to encompass catechists, youth workers, and trained lay pastoral agents. The Directory for Catechesis mandates that catechesis be "inculturated, dialogical and capable of guiding believers to make moral decisions … even in new spheres such as social communications" (*Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization* 128). Correspondingly, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications has called for the systematic formation of pastoral agents in media literacy and ethical guidance (*Pontifical Council for Social Communications* 30), ensuring that counsellors adopt a proactive rather than merely reactive posture toward digital moral challenges. Pastoral counselling frequently takes the form of spiritual direction, a ministry that, as the Directory on Spirituality notes, "promotes moral growth by helping persons respond to God's call in the depths of their hearts" (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments 112). When addressing experiences of cyberbullying, online harassment, or the corrosive pursuit of digital validation, pastoral counsellors ground their intervention in the theological affirmation that authentic self-worth derives from one's dignity as a child of God rather than from social media metrics. Church teaching, moreover, does not exclude psychological insight but integrates it within a holistic anthropology (USCCB 5), enabling pastoral counsellors to collaborate with mental health professionals where clinical need arises. Through this integration of spiritual, moral, and psychological formation, pastoral counselling remains an urgent and foundational ministry of the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi in the digital age.

Social Media Impact on Youth in the Family

The family has been recognized universally and across traditions as the foundational context for moral formation. In Catholic theology, the family is described as the "domestic church"

(Ecclesia Domestica), wherein parents are the first educators of their children not only in faith but also in moral reasoning and virtuous living (Familiaris Consortio 36). This role persists in the digital age, but the context in which moral formation occurs has changed dramatically with the advent of social media. Social media introduces a parallel moral ecology that interacts with family dynamics. Whereas traditional moral formation involved direct parental modeling, communal sanctions, and embedded cultural norms, young people now receive continuous input from online environments, peer networks, and influencers whose values may contradict those of the family. According to Partridge et al., digital spaces often serve as moral reference points for adolescents, influencing their perceptions of identity, relationships, and ethical conduct (Partridge et al. 275). Therefore, the family's role becomes more complex: it must now not only transmit moral values but also help youth critically engage with digital inputs in light of these values.

Effect of Social Media on Family Relationships

Social media has fundamentally restructured patterns of family interaction, frequently undermining the relational conditions essential to moral formation. Where shared conversation, communal rituals, and collective activity once constituted the primary medium of moral instruction within the household, digital absorption now threatens to sever these formative connections. Turkle captures this paradox precisely, observing that digital devices render individuals "alone together" — physically proximate yet emotionally and morally disengaged (Turkle 62). This condition erodes the interpersonal environment within which virtuous habits are traditionally cultivated and transmitted across generations. The intrusion of social media into domestic life further destabilises familial authority and trust. Digital conflicts surrounding screen time, online relationships, and content consumption have supplanted older disciplinary tensions, generating new fault lines within parent-child relationships (Ashine David, Oral interview). Valkenburg and Peter demonstrate that online communication systematically increases opportunities for secrecy and unsupervised exploration, progressively undermining familial norms and mutual accountability (Valkenburg and Peter 502-03). When moral instruction is consistently displaced by unmediated digital engagement, the family's capacity to nurture coherent ethical dispositions is correspondingly diminished.

Catholic teaching responds to this challenge by affirming that parents bear both the right and the solemn duty to form their children in moral discernment, including responsible navigation of contemporary cultural influences (*Gravissimum Educationis* 3). In the digital age, this obligation necessarily encompasses deliberate guidance on social media use. Ortese Joseph, discussing on family media regulation distinguishes between restrictive mediation, which limits access and duration, and active mediation, which engages youth through dialogue and collaborative content evaluation (Oral interview). This collaborates the thoughts of Nathanson who says active mediation has demonstrated significantly greater efficacy in fostering moral reasoning and critical awareness among adolescents (231), and aligns naturally with Catholic moral pedagogy's emphasis on reflective dialogue and the integration of faith with lived experience. In Makurdi Diocese, parental responsibility extends to modelling responsible technology use, addressing ethical dilemmas encountered online, including misinformation, cyberbullying, and sexting and establishing collaborative household norms for digital conduct (Egemba Gabriel, Oral interview). Such intentional engagement reinforces familial moral authority and assists youths in internalising values rather than merely complying with external regulation. A deeper structural tension emerges, however, from digital culture's function as a rival value system. Where family and Christian

formation emphasise relational integrity, self-restraint, and communal responsibility, digital culture privileges immediacy, individual gratification, and social validation. Adolescents highly engaged with social media demonstrate a measurable tendency to prioritise social acceptance over moral commitment (Rosen et al. 46), generating identity incoherence between online belonging and offline virtue. Pope Francis accordingly affirms that authentic moral formation demands integrating digital engagement with spiritual roots that uphold human dignity and communal love (Christus Vivit 155). The family, strengthened through intentional media literacy and consistent moral witness, remains irreplaceable in equipping youths to navigate digital life with integrity (Zoho Msughter, Oral interview).

Social Media Impact on Youth in Schools

It unarguable that social media has become an inextricable feature of the educational experience for secondary and tertiary students, reshaping not only communicative behaviour but also the moral and attitudinal frameworks within which young people operate. Rosen et al. establish that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp function as powerful agents of socialisation, exerting measurable influence over students' norms, values, and behavioural expectations (42). For school-going youths, digital media increasingly constitutes the primary environment in which peer values are reinforced and identity formation unfolds. Adolescents demonstrate particular susceptibility to internalising behaviours encountered online, encompassing language patterns, modes of social interaction, and moral attitudes (Partridge et al. 273). Yaakugh Nancy points that in the absence of deliberate countervailing guidance, social media's influence can subtly but persistently reorient student behaviour toward norms that conflict with those upheld by educational institutions and families alike (Oral interview). This influence extends well beyond patterns of communication into the domain of moral reasoning and ethical conduct (Esther Onoja, Oral interview). Digital environments routinely normalise behaviours such as gossip, dehumanising humour, and superficial self-presentation, tendencies that migrate into school culture and erode foundational values of respect, empathy, and integrity (Omlenyi Douglas, Oral interview). Social psychologists have demonstrated that repeated exposure to morally problematic online behaviour, unmediated by critical ethical frameworks, renders such behaviour progressively normalised and less susceptible to moral scrutiny (Odgers and Jensen 1027). While digital media retains the capacity to expand social awareness, it simultaneously threatens to reshape institutional culture in ways inimical to moral and educational formation unless deliberately countered.

Among the most educationally consequential effects of social media is its propensity to generate academic distraction. Empirical studies consistently confirm that frequent engagement with social networking sites is associated with diminished academic performance and impaired capacity for sustained intellectual attention (Junco 89). Students who habitually consult social media during study periods experience fragmented concentration, reduced comprehension, and weakened information retention, a phenomena that cognitive scientists attribute to media multitasking, wherein divided attention produces cognitive overload and significantly reduced learning efficiency (Ophir et al. 521). Rosen et al. further reveal that approximately eighty percent of adolescents report using social media concurrently with homework, resulting in delayed task completion and deteriorating academic quality (44). From a Christian ethical perspective, such patterns reflect a fundamental misalignment between the responsible stewardship of intellectual gifts and the habitual prioritisation of digital gratification over disciplined moral and academic effort. The amplification of peer pressure through digital networks constitutes an equally significant

moral challenge within the school context. Unlike traditional peer influence, which is bounded by physical proximity and temporal limits, digital peer pressure operates continuously and across all social contexts. Adolescent online conduct frequently mirrors prevailing group norms, even when those norms directly contravene school expectations or religious moral teaching (Valkenburg and Peter 1171). The perceived anonymity of online interaction further emboldens behaviours that students would typically suppress in face-to-face settings, including the sharing of inappropriate content and participation in cyberbullying. The latter has emerged as a particularly pervasive institutional concern, producing documented psychological distress, reduced academic engagement, and a deteriorating moral climate within school communities (Hinduja and Patchin 104). The digital amplification of peer influence thus compromises students' capacity for moral discernment, particularly when harmful behaviours attract online affirmation and social reward.

In response to these obviously multidimensional challenges, the formative responsibility of teachers assumes renewed urgency (Ogbaji Catherine, Oral interview). Educators function as indispensable agents of ethical socialisation, charged not only with the transmission of academic knowledge but with the deliberate cultivation of virtues such as honesty, self-discipline, respect, and responsibility that provide moral counterweight to the more corrosive norms circulating in digital culture (Rose Ama, Oral interview). The Second Vatican Council's Gravissimum Educationis affirms the educator's obligation to guide students toward the integral development of the whole person, fostering moral as well as intellectual formation in a manner consonant with human dignity (Gravissimum Educationis 8). Egemba Gabriel insists that teachers can concretely discharge this responsibility by integrating digital literacy into moral education, employing real-world online scenarios as pedagogical case studies that cultivate critical thinking and ethical reasoning, and modelling in their own professional conduct the virtues of fairness, integrity, and compassionate accountability (Oral interview). He adds that teacher-student relationship itself constitutes a living counter-witness to the impersonal and often deceptive relational dynamics that characterise digital platforms (Oral interview). Obogo Michael agrees that when educators embody moral seriousness and intellectual honesty, they provide youths with credible exemplars of the virtuous life that neither the digital environment nor secular culture consistently supplies (Oral interview). In this way, the school, in genuine partnership with the Church and family, remains a foundational institution for equipping young people to engage the digital world with wisdom, discernment, and moral integrity.

Social Media and Youth Life in the Church

Social media has emerged as a transformative force in the religious lives of young people, reshaping the conditions under which faith is encountered, expressed, and sustained. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube now function as digital arenas of spiritual interaction, communal identity, and theological engagement. Research demonstrates that active participation in social media rather than passive digital presence which is meaningfully associated with identity exploration, including how youths situate themselves within spiritual communities and religious value systems (Avci, Baams, and Kretschmer 230). This dynamic has generated new ecclesial possibilities while simultaneously introducing challenges that the Church must engage with pastoral seriousness and theological clarity. Within Christian ecclesial life, social media has expanded the boundaries of religious participation well beyond physical attendance. Digital platforms have become strategic channels through which faith content is disseminated, theological discourse is sustained, and youth connection to church life is reinforced (Bocala-Wiedemann

19-34). Youth ministries increasingly produce devotional videos, livestreamed worship services, and interactive discussion forums, enabling young believers who are geographically or socially distanced from regular church activities to maintain spiritual engagement and a sense of religious belonging. When paired with intentional content and sound pastoral oversight, such digital participation can meaningfully extend the formative reach of the Church into the everyday lives of young people. Nevertheless, this transformation of religious participation raises substantive questions concerning the depth and quality of spiritual experience it sustains. Sociological analysis by Uecker and McClure reveals that increased screen time and social media engagement can compete directly with private religious practices, most notably scripture reading for adolescents' time and attention, with particularly pronounced effects among youth from highly religious households (Uecker and McClure 250-73). While social media may enhance religious accessibility, it can simultaneously erode the disciplined personal devotion that undergirds genuine spiritual formation.

Social media also presents considerable potential as an instrument of evangelisation when deployed with intentionality and cultural awareness. Digital content enables Gospel messaging to reach youths who remain disengaged from formal religious instruction, presenting faith in formats that are relatable, interactive, and attuned to contemporary communicative preferences. Bocala-Wiedemann underscores that when church ministries develop authentic and dialogical content responsive to youth sensibilities, evangelistic engagement becomes substantially more effective (Bocala-Wiedemann 22). By framing spiritual reflection within the relational contexts of everyday digital communication, ministries can integrate faith formation into the social media habits already shaping youth culture. Yet the same environment that enables evangelisation also introduces formidable threats to moral and spiritual integrity. The pervasive emphasis on self-presentation, social comparison, and online validation inherent in digital culture has been linked to identity distress and confusion with direct implications for spiritual development (Avci et al. 225-36). The disciplines of sustained prayer, sacramental participation, and moral repentance are increasingly overshadowed by the pursuit of digital affirmation. Uecker and McClure further demonstrate that social media's erosion of private religious practice, particularly reflective scripture engagement that progressively weakens the contemplative foundations essential to Christian discipleship (250-73). Algorithmic systems compound this challenge by amplifying spiritually shallow content at the expense of substantive theological formation.

In response, the Church must adapt its pastoral strategies with both urgency and coherence. Youth ministry within the Nigerian society shows that without deliberate integration of digital communication strategies, ecclesial institutions risk diminishing relevance among young people whose social worlds are substantially mediated online (Ononogbu and Chiroma 48-54). Effective pastoral response requires training clergy and youth leaders in digital literacy, producing theologically grounded content that addresses genuine youth concerns, and establishing structured online spaces for prayer and moral reflection anchored in Church teaching (Odey Joseph Bisong, Oral interview). Sustained collaboration with families and schools remains equally indispensable, ensuring that critical engagement with social media is consistently reinforced across the formative environments that shape the moral and spiritual lives of young Catholics.

Social Media Influence on Youth Relationships among Themselves

Social media has fundamentally transformed the architecture of peer relationships among young people, extending the reach and intensity of peer influence from physical into virtual

spaces with profound consequences for moral formation, identity development, and relational health (Christiana Shang, Oral interview). In digital environments, peer interactions are characterised by immediacy, broad visibility, and public accountability, generating socialisation dynamics and conformity pressures that decisively shape how youths perceive social norms and regulate their behaviour. Crucially, digital peer influence is not a mere replication of offline dynamics but is systematically amplified by platform mechanisms as likes, shares, and comments that function as quantifiable instruments of social validation. Research confirms that young users, particularly those between thirteen and seventeen years of age, frequently feel compelled to post and conform in ways calculated to attract positive feedback and social reinforcement (Peer Pressure 1-2). This environment accelerates social learning, as youths observe and emulate behaviours deemed desirable within their online networks, whether constructive or morally problematic. Peer comparison on social platforms further intensifies conformist behaviour as adolescents strive to align their self-presentation with perceived norms of acceptance and popularity (Kolotouchkina et al. 240-41). While social media retains the capacity to facilitate collaborative learning, emotional support, and collective advocacy, it simultaneously intensifies social comparison and amplifies anxiety. Young people who measure their worth against curated online personas experience pressure to adopt group norms that compromise authentic selfhood and diminish critical moral reflection. Digital peer influence shapes linguistic norms, attitudes toward relationships, and the interpretation of social conflict and support, with online peer responses becoming significant determinants of youths' interpersonal conduct both online and offline (Ebube and Ma'rof 23-24).

The digital environment also functions simultaneously as a stage and mirror for adolescent identity formation. Research indicates that the quality of social media engagement particularly the posting of idealised content and habitual peer comparison is more closely associated with identity distress and self-concept instability than the sheer quantity of time spent online (Systematic Review 4-5). Authentic self-presentation, wherein users share content genuinely reflective of personal values, is associated with greater self-concept clarity, whereas contrived or idealised self-presentations generate internal conflict and social anxiety (Systematic Review 7-8). For youths whose offline social environments are unsatisfying, digital spaces may offer alternative avenues for connection; however, this pursuit of online belonging can simultaneously reinforce unrealistic social standards, exacerbate social comparison, and intensify fear of missing out, all of which distort personal identity development and undermine authentic self-worth. Cyberbullying represents one of the most acute negative consequences of social media for adolescent relational health. Its capacity for harm exceeds that of conventional bullying by virtue of its pervasive reach, perpetrator anonymity, and continuous accessibility (Cyberbullying 1-3). Research conducted in the Nigerian context documents its significant prevalence and its attendant emotional and psychological consequences for victims, including anxiety, social withdrawal, and disrupted peer relationships (Akeusola 1-2). Beyond cyberbullying, persistent exposure to sexualised imagery, violent content, and hostile online interactions distorts adolescents' perceptions of normative behaviour and impedes healthy relational formation, with documented correlations between such exposure and adverse emotional outcomes (Surgeon General's Advisory 20-22). Regardless, social media retains genuine potential for fostering responsible digital friendships when youths are equipped with adequate digital literacy and ethical engagement frameworks. Responsible online relationships, grounded in mutual respect, empathetic communication, and awareness of digital boundaries, are cultivable through

deliberate formation by parents and educators. Training in digital etiquette, critical content evaluation, and constructive conflict navigation strengthens relational skills and moral discernment, enabling youths to transfer healthy communicative patterns across physical and digital contexts and to forge friendships characterised by authenticity and mutual regard rather than performative validation.

Recommendations

i. The Catholic Diocese of Makurdi should integrate digital literacy and responsible social media use into its existing youth ministry programmes and catechetical instruction. By grounding online engagement in Catholic moral principles particularly the Catechism's insistence that communication uphold truth and human dignity, the Church can equip young people to critically evaluate digital content and align their online behaviour with faith-based values.
ii. Families must assume an active and informed role in supervising the digital lives of young people. Parents should engage in open dialogue with their children about online experiences, establish boundaries around social media use, and interpret digital encounters through the lens of moral accountability. Parental involvement remains one of the most effective safeguards against the harmful influences that unregulated social media exposure can introduce into the lives of developing youths.
iii. Schools within the Diocese should incorporate digital citizenship education into their curricula, teaching youths about ethical online conduct, privacy protection, critical content evaluation, and respectful engagement. When schools reinforce the same moral expectations promoted by the Church and family, consistent cross-institutional messaging is created, significantly strengthening young people's capacity to navigate the digital environment with responsibility and ethical awareness.
iv. A coordinated tripartite partnership among the Church, family, and school should be formally established to develop unified strategies for youth moral formation in the digital age. Community workshops, mentorship programmes, and collaborative advocacy initiatives can channel young people's digital energy toward constructive outcomes such as peacebuilding, civic participation, and faith-based dialogue, transforming social media from a moral hazard into a platform for positive community engagement.

Conclusion

The influence of social media on youths within the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi reflects a complex and contested terrain, simultaneously presenting constructive possibilities and considerable moral liabilities. Digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram have expanded the boundaries of communication, learning, and faith-based participation, enabling young Catholics to engage with their religious and civic communities in ways that transcend geographical constraints. When appropriately mediated by ecclesial and formative institutions, these technologies demonstrably support holistic youth development. Nevertheless, persistent exposure to morally compromising content, cyberbullying, misinformation, and the psychosocial pressures of digital validation constitutes a substantive threat to the spiritual integrity and moral formation of young people, progressively displacing sacramental practice and ethical discipline. Consequently, an integrated and intentional response from the Church, family, and educational institutions is imperative. Prioritising digital literacy alongside doctrinal formation remains essential if social media is

to serve as an instrument of moral and spiritual enrichment rather than an agent of moral erosion.

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LIST OF INFORMANT./RESPONDENTS

S/N	NAME	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATION	PLACE OF INTERVIEW	DATE OF INTERVIEW
1.	Obogo Michael	19	M	Student	St. Mark, Apir	26/3/2026
2.	Odey Joseph Bisong	27	M	Soldier	St. Augustine Cath Church, Nasme Barracks	26/3/2026
3.	Christiana Shang	41	F	Civil Servant	St. Francis Veterinary Layout, North Bank	26/3/2026
4.	Philomena Mba	31	F	Civil Servant	St. Mary Catholic Church, North Bank	26/3/2026
5.	Clementina Phillip	28	F	Civil Servant	St. Augustine Catholic Church, Nasme Barracks	26/3/2026
6.	Rose Ama	45	F	Civil Servant	ST. Mary Catholic Church, North Bank	26/3/2026
7.	Ogbaji Catherine	56	F	Teacher	St. Michael Catholic Church, Yagba, North Bank	29/1/2026
8.	Barr. Esther Onoja	50	F	Lawyer	Catholic Youth Centre Parish, Makurdi	25/3/2026
9.	Omlenyi Douglas	36	M	Civil Servant	St. Michael Catholic Church, Yagba, North Bank	26/3/2026
10.	Yaakugh Nancy	52	F	Civil Servant	St. Michael Catholic Church, Yagba, North Bank	26/3/2026
11.	Zoho Msughter	36	M	Businessman	St. Michael Catholic Church, Yagba, North Bank	26/3/2026
12.	Ashwe Emmanuel	58	M	Farmer	St. Michael Catholic Church, Atoga	26/3/2026
13.	Ashwe Esther	50	F	Farmer	St. Peter & Paul, Tyogbada	26/3/2026
14.	Ashine David	20	M	Student	St. Mary Catholic Church, Achusa	26/3/2026
15.	Ashwe Josephine	26	F	Student	St. Mary Catholic Church, Achusa	26/3/2026
16.	Ekwote Esher	30	F	Businesswoman	St. Joseph, Nyiman	20/3/2026
17.	Anthony Agbo Ekwote	35	M	Businessman	St. Joseph, Nyiman	20/3/2026
18.	Ashwe Joy	18	F	Student	St. Thomas Catholic Church, Anum	20/3/2026
19.	Adibe Joy	25	F	Businesswoman	St. Joseph, Nyiman	20/3/2026
20.	Egemba Gabriel	37	M	Teacher	St. Mary Catholic Church, North Bank	27/3/2026
21.	Ortese Joseph	53	M	Teacher	Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Ise-Ikpam, Federal Housing Estate, North Bank	27/3/2026

JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT
Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)
ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)
Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com
Received: August 22, 2026 **Accepted**: September 24, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026
Citation: Anjov, Terfa K. & Adejo, Rita O. (2026). "Assessment of the Role of Social Media Use on Youth in Makurdi Diocese." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 152-162.

Article **Open Access**

EFFECT OF INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC FACTORS ON NON-LIFE INSURANCE PERFORMANCE IN GHANA

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Abstract
This study examined the relationship between industry-specific factors and the performance of non-life insurance companies in Ghana, with liquidity and solvency used as the principal performance indicators. The study was based on secondary panel observations covering the period 2004–2022, with 307 observations reported in the empirical analysis. The explanatory variables comprised degree of urbanization, social security system, rate of criminality, financial structure, ownership structure, management efficiency, company size, underwriting risk, loss ratio, asset growth and tangibility. The empirical procedure included descriptive statistics, Augmented Dickey-Fuller unit-root testing, correlation analysis and panel-data regression. The reported results indicate that the explanatory factors were associated with both liquidity and solvency, although the regression output contains internal inconsistencies between some reported p-values, t-statistics and confidence intervals. Coefficients reported in the source suggest positive associations for social security system, rate of criminality, ownership structure, company size, loss ratio and tangibility, while degree of urbanization, financial structure, management efficiency, underwriting risk and asset growth were reported with negative coefficients. The study therefore highlights the importance of underwriting discipline, capital and balance-sheet management, organizational scale, ownership arrangements, and the wider institutional environment in understanding non-life insurance performance in Ghana. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for insurers, regulators and researchers, while emphasizing the need for verification of the underlying regression output before publication.

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Keywords: Non-Life Insurance, Liquidity; Solvency, Industry-Specific Factors, Ghana, Insurance Performance, Panel Data.

Introduction

Insurance is an important component of a modern financial system because it transfers and pools risks that households, firms and public institutions may otherwise be unable to absorb independently. Non-life insurance is particularly relevant to commercial activity because it covers property, motor, fire, marine, travel, liability and other risks whose realization can impose immediate financial losses. In Ghana, the non-life segment has historically represented a substantial component of the insurance market. National Insurance Commission evidence indicates that non-life gross premiums increased substantially over the period preceding the study, while the sector's assets also expanded. More recent industry evidence continues to show the importance of the non-life market, although insurance penetration remains comparatively low. The National Insurance Commission's 2024 public-perception research reported that insurance penetration remained around 1% of GDP and identified awareness and engagement as continuing market-development challenges. The financial performance of insurers is multidimensional. Profitability is frequently used as a headline indicator, but liquidity and solvency are particularly important for insurers because companies must maintain sufficient resources to settle claims and other obligations as they fall due and remain financially capable of meeting longer-term commitments. The financial health of an insurer is therefore influenced not only by revenue generation but also by underwriting risk, claims experience, reinsurance, capital structure, investment decisions, operational efficiency and institutional conditions.

Earlier studies have identified several determinants of insurance performance and demand. Esho, Ward and Zurbruegg (2004) emphasized legal and institutional factors in property-casualty insurance, while Dragos and Dragos (2013) highlighted the role of institutional conditions in national insurance demand. Ghana-focused studies have also examined market structure, profitability, reinsurance, risk management and capitalization. More recently, Attah-Kyei, Andoh and Kuttu (2023) found that recapitalization was associated with higher technical efficiency and lower insurer risk in Ghana, while Opoku, Marfo-Yiadom, Gubareva and Mendes (2024) identified cost efficiency, claims ratio, retention ratio, firm age, size and board composition among important determinants of insurance-firm financial performance. Despite this growing evidence, there remains value in examining a broad set of industry and firm-level factors jointly against liquidity and solvency, particularly over a relatively long Ghanaian time period. The present study therefore revisits the determinants of non-life insurance performance using the variables and observations contained in the original study dataset. The central question is whether industry-specific and firm-related factors significantly explain variations in liquidity and solvency among non-life insurers in Ghana.

Problem Statement

Non-life insurers operate under a distinctive financial model in which premiums are collected before claims are realized. This creates a continuing need to balance underwriting growth with adequate liquidity, capital strength and risk absorption capacity. Weak liquidity can constrain timely claims settlement, while inadequate solvency can threaten the ability of an insurer to meet policyholder obligations over the longer term. In Ghana, these concerns are especially relevant in a market characterized by relatively low insurance penetration, changing regulatory requirements, competition and evolving risk exposures. The existing

Ghanaian literature provides useful evidence on profitability, reinsurance, market structure, technical efficiency, capitalization and risk management, but fewer studies combine a broad group of industry and firm-related explanatory factors with both liquidity and solvency as performance measures. The source study attempts to address this gap using 307 observations for 2004–2022. However, its presentation combines introduction, empirical findings, justification and discussion in a fragmented manner and does not provide a sufficiently explicit methodology or coherent literature review. The present revision addresses these presentation weaknesses while retaining the original empirical variables and reported results. It also identifies an important data-quality issue in the regression tables: some reported p-values do not correspond to the displayed t-statistics and confidence intervals. Consequently, the revised manuscript distinguishes the reported coefficients from claims of statistical significance.

Objective of the Study

The general objective was to examine the effect of industry-specific factors on the performance of non-life insurance companies in Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to:

i. examine the effect of selected industry-specific and firm-related factors on the liquidity of non-life insurance companies in Ghana;
ii. examine the effect of selected industry-specific and firm-related factors on the solvency of non-life insurance companies in Ghana.

Research Hypotheses

H01: Industry-specific and firm-related factors do not have a statistically significant effect on the liquidity of non-life insurance companies in Ghana.

H02: Industry-specific and firm-related factors do not have a statistically significant effect on the solvency of non-life insurance companies in Ghana.

Literature Review

Concept of Non-Life Insurance Performance

Non-life insurance performance refers to the extent to which an insurer achieves sustainable financial and operational outcomes while maintaining its capacity to honour policyholder obligations. Performance may be assessed through profitability, underwriting results, claims management, liquidity, solvency, efficiency and growth. The present study focuses on liquidity and solvency because they directly reflect the insurer's short-term and longer-term financial capacity. This focus is consistent with the broader literature that treats financial health as distinct from profitability alone.

Liquidity

Liquidity represents an insurer's capacity to meet obligations when they become due without incurring unacceptable financial disruption. For a non-life insurer, liquidity is particularly important because claims may arise unpredictably and may require substantial cash or readily realizable assets. Liquidity can therefore be influenced by claims experience, underwriting risk, reinsurance arrangements, investment structure, asset growth and the composition of liabilities.

Solvency

Solvency concerns the longer-term financial capacity of an insurer to absorb losses and continue meeting policyholder obligations. Solvency is influenced by capital adequacy, risk exposure, underwriting quality, asset quality, investment decisions and the effectiveness of risk transfer. Attah-Kyei et al. (2023), using Ghanaian insurer data, reported that

recapitalization improved technical efficiency and reduced insurer risk, reinforcing the importance of capital strength to financial resilience.

Industry-Specific and Firm-Related Factors

The variables considered in this study capture several dimensions of the insurance operating environment. Degree of urbanization may affect insurance demand and the concentration of economic activity. Social security arrangements may alter household and business demand for private insurance. Criminality can influence both the demand for protection and insurers' claims exposure. Financial structure and ownership structure reflect how firms are financed and governed. Management efficiency captures the use of organizational resources, while company size may affect economies of scale, diversification and bargaining power. Underwriting risk and loss ratio directly relate to claims and risk-selection outcomes. Asset growth reflects expansion of the balance sheet, while tangibility captures the relative presence of physical assets.

Theoretical Perspective

The study is anchored principally in the risk-management and financial-intermediation perspective of insurance firms. Insurers collect premiums, pool risks and invest funds while retaining responsibility for future claims. Their performance consequently depends on how effectively they select and price risks, transfer part of the exposure through reinsurance, manage assets and maintain capital. This perspective provides a basis for relating underwriting risk, loss ratio, reinsurance-related conditions, asset structure and management efficiency to liquidity and solvency. A complementary institutional perspective is also relevant. Insurance markets depend on legal rules, regulatory supervision, consumer confidence and the quality of institutions. Evidence from Ghana and other emerging markets suggests that institutional quality, regulation and market structure can shape insurance development and firm outcomes. The perspective therefore supports inclusion of variables such as social security, urbanization, criminality and broader financial conditions alongside internal firm characteristics.

Empirical Review

Esho et al. (2004) examined the determinants of property-casualty insurance and showed that legal and institutional factors can influence insurance market development. Dragos and Dragos (2013) similarly emphasized institutional conditions in explaining national insurance demand. In the Ghanaian context, studies have increasingly examined firm-level financial performance. Andoh and Yamoah reported that reinsurance alone did not necessarily determine profitability, but that the interaction between reinsurance and solvency was important. This suggests that risk transfer should be considered together with the insurer's underlying financial capacity. Attah-Kyei et al. (2023) investigated Ghanaian insurers using a balanced panel of life and non-life companies from 2008–2019 and found that recapitalization significantly improved technical efficiency while reducing insurer risk. The result is directly relevant to the present study because it demonstrates that balance-sheet strength and risk capacity are important dimensions of insurance performance. Owusu and Owusu (2023) also examined risk-management practices and profitability among Ghanaian non-life insurers, drawing attention to risk identification, analysis, control and monitoring. Opoku et al. (2024) used proprietary National Insurance Commission data for 40 Ghanaian insurance firms over 2012–2017 and applied system GMM. Their results identified cost efficiency, claims ratio, retention ratio, audit fees, firm age, firm size and board composition among important performance drivers. This recent evidence strengthens the argument that

insurance performance cannot be explained by a single financial variable. Instead, it reflects an interaction of operational efficiency, risk retention, claims experience, organizational characteristics and governance. The literature therefore establishes a broad basis for examining liquidity and solvency through a combined set of explanatory variables. Nevertheless, the present study contributes by retaining a wider collection of factors and examining their relationship with two financial-stability indicators over 2004–2022.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative, explanatory research design based on secondary data. The analysis was intended to determine whether variations in selected industry-specific and firm-related factors were associated with variations in non-life insurance performance, operationalized as liquidity and solvency.

Data and Period of Analysis

The empirical analysis covered the period 2004–2022 and contained 307 observations. The source manuscript reports a panel-data structure and presents overall, within and between R-squared statistics. However, it does not clearly identify the number of non-life insurance firms, the exact data-source series for every variable, or the precise panel estimator used. These details should be inserted from the original research database or Stata output before journal submission.

Variables and Measurement

Variable	Role	Operational description based on source
Liquidity	Dependent	Liquidity rate/indicator reported in the dataset.
Solvency	Dependent	Solvency indicator reported in the dataset.
Degree of urbanization	Independent	Degree of urbanization reported for the observation period.
Social security system	Independent	Social-security-system indicator.
Rate of criminality	Independent	Criminality-rate indicator.
Financial structure	Independent	Financial-structure measure.
Ownership structure	Independent	Ownership-structure measure.
Management efficiency	Independent	Management-efficiency indicator.
Company size	Independent	Company-size measure.
Underwriting risk	Independent	Underwriting-risk measure.
Loss ratio	Independent	Loss-ratio measure.
Asset growth	Independent	Asset-growth measure.
Tangibility	Independent	Tangibility measure.

Estimation Procedure

The analysis proceeded through four stages. First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the distribution of the variables. Second, Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) unit-root tests were performed to assess stationarity. Third, a correlation matrix was examined to assess the associations among variables and provide an initial diagnostic for multicollinearity. Fourth, panel-data regression models were estimated separately for liquidity and solvency. The reported output provides coefficients, standard errors, t-statistics, p-values, confidence intervals, overall R-squared, within R-squared, between R-squared and a chi-square statistic.

The general model can be expressed as: $Y_{it} = \beta0 + \beta1URB_{it} + \beta2SSS_{it} + \beta3CRIM_{it} + \beta4FS_{it} + \beta5OWN_{it} + \beta6ME_{it} + \beta7SIZE_{it} + \beta8UR_{it} + \beta9LR_{it} + \beta10AG_{it} + \beta11TANG_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$, where Y represents either liquidity or solvency. The original analysis also included several macroeconomic variables in the descriptive and correlation tables, including output

gap, investment, tax revenue, general expenditure, inflation and GDP per capita. These variables were not included in the displayed regression tables and therefore are treated as supplementary descriptive/correlation variables rather than regression controls in this revised presentation.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Liquidity	307	3.02	444,845.31	2.8	4.2
Claims ratio/underwriting	307	5.235	24,653.411	2.1	5.6
Reinsurance ratio	307	31.031	14.664	2.2	35.1
Financial structure	307	19.88	188,296.54	1.6	25.2
Company size	307	32.104	1,933.991	3.9	6.1
Ownership structure	307	20.79	5,465,726.1	1.0	7.40
Degree of urbanization	307	28.931	17.029	2.4	31.13
Social security system	307	7.799	13.402	1.1	9.4
Rate of criminality	307	5.351	2.026	2.18	5.27
Regulation quality	307	35.09	229,658.97	1.2	37.2
Insurance penetration	307	1.195	4.237	0.26	11.3
Management efficiency	307	10.498	10.832	2.1	14.2
Total premium	307	21.36	95,990.843	2.6	28.8
Underwriting risk	307	14.635	5,986.149	4.1	38.1
Loss ratio	307	28.931	17.029	2.4	48.13
Asset growth	307	7.799	13.402	1.1	9.4
Solvency	307	5.351	2.026	2.18	5.27
Tangibility	307	35.09	229,658.97	1.2	43.2
Output gap	307	1.195	4.237	4.26	11.3
Tax revenue/GDP	307	14.477	3.414	10.2	15.7
General expenditure/GDP	307	19.741	2.698	15.1	23.8
Inflation	307	23.967	26.61	8.42	34.8
GDP per capita	307	14.493	3.356	10.2	21.7

The source data indicate substantial variation across several measures. Liquidity was reported with a mean of 3.02, while solvency had a mean of 5.351. The reported mean reinsurance ratio was 31.031, company size 32.104, degree of urbanization 28.931 and loss ratio 28.931. Because some standard deviations and ranges are unusually large relative to their means, the original measurement units and data transformations should be checked before publication.

Unit-Root Test

Variable	ADF statistic	p-value
Liquidity	1.96	0.000
Claims ratio/underwriting	-1.45	0.000
Reinsurance ratio	-2.33	0.001
Financial structure	2.31	0.007
Company size	0.76	0.000
Ownership structure	-1.59	0.000
Management efficiency	-0.32	0.000
Total premium	0.24	0.000
Underwriting risk	-0.30	0.000
Loss ratio	-1.97	0.049
Asset growth	-0.07	0.000
Solvency	-0.05	0.000

Tangibility	2.56	0.001
Output gap	3.20	0.001
Investment	-1.59	0.000
Tax revenue/GDP	-0.32	0.000
General expenditure/GDP	0.24	0.000
Inflation	-0.30	0.000
GDP per capita	-0.05	0.000

The source manuscript states that the ADF results confirmed stationarity at first difference at the 5% significance level. This finding is important because regression involving non-stationary series can generate misleading associations. The revised interpretation should, however, distinguish between the reported ADF results and the exact transformation applied to each series, which is not documented in the source manuscript.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation matrix in the source contains pairwise correlations among the dependent and explanatory variables. The largest reported association between liquidity and the explanatory variables was with loss ratio (0.175), while liquidity and solvency had a correlation of approximately -0.105. The source manuscript states that the correlation results resolved multicollinearity concerns. However, correlation coefficients alone are not sufficient to establish the absence of multicollinearity in a multivariate regression. Variance inflation factors or another formal diagnostic should be reported in the final manuscript.

Regression Results for Liquidity

Predictor	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	Reported p	95% CI
Degree of urbanization	-3.365	7.836	-0.43	0.000	-18.724 to 11.994
Social security system	1.373	0.584	2.35	0.000	0.229 to 2.518
Rate of criminality	561.072	981.602	0.57	0.001	-1362.833 to 2484.976
Financial structure	-0.183	0.100	-1.84	0.007	-0.379 to 0.012
Ownership structure	0.001	0.003	0.33	0.000	-0.004 to 0.006
Management efficiency	-3248.917	1390.011	-2.34	0.000	-5973.288 to -524.546
Company size	0.004	0.171	0.02	0.000	-0.332 to 0.340
Underwriting risk	-4.388	2.462	-1.78	0.000	-9.212 to 0.437
Loss ratio	351.761	980.447	0.36	0.000	-1569.880 to 2273.403
Asset growth	-139.700	1109.055	-0.13	0.049	-2313.409 to 2034.008
Tangibility	0.166	0.069	2.41	0.000	0.031 to 0.300
Constant	358106.84	113976.94	3.14	0.100	134716.15 to 581497.53

Model statistics: N = 307; overall R^2 = 0.004; within R^2 = 0.078; between R^2 = 0.030; chi-square = 19.016; reported Prob > chi^2 = 0.061. The liquidity model reports positive coefficients for social security system, ownership structure, company size, loss ratio and tangibility, and negative coefficients for degree of urbanization, financial structure,

management efficiency, underwriting risk and asset growth. The model's overall R^2 of 0.004 indicates that the displayed predictors explain very little of the total variation in liquidity in the reported specification. In addition, the reported model chi-square p-value of 0.061 is above the conventional 5% threshold. There is an important internal inconsistency in the source output. Several p-values are reported as 0.000 even where the displayed t-statistic and 95% confidence interval would not support statistical significance at 5%. For example, the degree-of-urbanization coefficient has t = -0.43 and a confidence interval spanning zero, while its p-value is reported as 0.000. Similar inconsistencies appear for ownership structure, company size, underwriting risk, loss ratio and asset growth. Therefore, the revised paper does not treat every displayed p-value as independently verified evidence of significance. The underlying statistical output should be regenerated from the original dataset before publication.

Regression Results for Solvency

Predictor	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	Reported p	95% CI
Degree of urbanization	-3.365	7.836	1.64	0.000	-18.724 to 11.994
Social security system	1.373	0.584	-0.78	0.000	0.229 to 2.518
Rate of criminality	561.072	981.602	-1.76	0.001	-1362.833 to 2484.976
Financial structure	-0.183	0.100	0.69	0.007	-0.379 to 0.012
Ownership structure	0.001	0.003	-0.26	0.000	-0.004 to 0.006
Management efficiency	-3248.917	1390.011	-0.25	0.000	-5973.288 to -524.546
Total premium/company size*	0.004	0.171	-0.38	0.000	-0.332 to 0.340
Underwriting risk	-4.388	2.462	-0.15	0.000	-9.212 to 0.437
Loss ratio	351.761	980.447	-1.41	0.000	-1569.880 to 2273.403
Asset growth	-139.700	1109.055	0.45	0.049	-2313.409 to 2034.008
Tangibility	0.166	0.069	-0.68	0.000	0.031 to 0.300

Model statistics: N = 307; overall R^2 = 0.025; within R^2 = 0.021; between R^2 = 0.200; chi-square = 7.614; reported Prob > chi^2 = 0.747. The solvency model reports the same coefficient pattern as the liquidity model, with positive coefficients for social security system, ownership structure, company size/total premium, loss ratio and tangibility and negative coefficients for degree of urbanization, financial structure, management efficiency, underwriting risk and asset growth. The overall R^2 of 0.025 is low, and the reported chi-square probability of 0.747 does not indicate overall model significance at conventional levels. As with the liquidity model, the displayed inferential statistics are internally inconsistent. For example, a t-statistic of 1.64 cannot correspond to a two-sided p-value of 0.000 with 306 observations, and the confidence interval shown for degree of urbanization includes zero. Accordingly, the direction and magnitude of coefficients can be discussed as reported, but firm conclusions about individual statistical significance should await a regenerated regression table.

Discussion of Findings

The reported positive association between social security and insurance performance can be interpreted within the broader insurance-demand literature. Social protection arrangements may affect how households and businesses perceive and allocate risk, while the development of formal financial institutions can shape insurance participation. The result is also consistent with the wider view that insurance markets are embedded in institutional and social environments rather than operating independently of them. The negative coefficient for financial structure suggests that the way insurers finance their operations may be associated with weaker liquidity and solvency in the reported models. This is broadly compatible with Ghanaian evidence that capital structure can have an important relationship with insurance-firm profitability. However, the coefficient should not be interpreted causally without a clearly specified identification strategy and a verified regression output. The negative association reported for underwriting risk is economically plausible. Higher underwriting risk can increase the probability or severity of claims and therefore place pressure on the insurer's financial resources. The role of claims experience is also reflected in the recent Ghanaian evidence of Opoku et al. (2024), who identified claims ratio and retention ratio as important performance drivers. Similarly, Attah-Kyei et al. (2023) found that stronger capitalization was associated with lower insurer risk and greater technical efficiency. The positive coefficient on tangibility may reflect the potential role of asset backing in supporting financial capacity. The positive coefficient on company size may be associated with scale, diversification and resource access. Nevertheless, because the reported confidence intervals and p-values are inconsistent, these interpretations should be regarded as coefficient-direction interpretations rather than confirmed causal effects. The relatively low R-squared values in both models indicate that the displayed factors explain only a small share of total variation in the dependent variables, particularly when assessed using overall R-squared. This suggests that other determinants—including profitability, investment performance, reinsurance arrangements, capital adequacy, firm age, governance, claims management, macroeconomic conditions and regulatory variables—may contribute substantially to non-life insurance performance. This observation is consistent with recent Ghanaian evidence that insurance-firm performance is multidimensional.

Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between a broad set of industry-specific and firm-related factors and non-life insurance performance in Ghana, using liquidity and solvency as the principal performance indicators. Based on 307 observations for 2004–2022, the analysis employed descriptive statistics, stationarity testing, correlation analysis and panel-data regression. The reported coefficients indicate systematic relationships between performance and variables including social security, criminality, financial structure, ownership structure, management efficiency, company size, underwriting risk, loss ratio, asset growth and tangibility. The findings support the broader proposition that the financial condition of non-life insurers is shaped by a combination of internal operating decisions and the external institutional environment. However, the source regression tables contain inconsistencies between p-values, t-statistics and confidence intervals, while the reported model-level statistics do not support a simple conclusion that both regression models are statistically significant. The most defensible conclusion is therefore that the study identifies potentially important explanatory factors, but the inferential claims require verification from the original dataset and statistical software output before the results are treated as publication-ready evidence.

Recommendations

i. **Strengthen Underwriting and Claims Management:** Non-life insurers should strengthen risk selection, pricing, claims monitoring and portfolio review processes, particularly for lines of business with high underwriting risk and loss experience.
ii. **Improve Capital and Liquidity Planning:** Insurers should maintain robust liquidity and solvency monitoring systems, stress-test claims and investment shocks, and align asset-liability structures with expected policyholder obligations.
iii. **Use Reinsurance Strategically:** Reinsurance decisions should be integrated with solvency and risk-retention strategies rather than treated solely as a mechanism for transferring individual risks.
iv. **Enhance Management Efficiency:** Management should monitor administrative costs, operational productivity and claims-processing efficiency using regular performance dashboards and benchmarking.
v. **Strengthen Regulatory Data Quality:** The National Insurance Commission and industry participants should promote standardized, machine-readable reporting of financial, underwriting, claims and solvency indicators to facilitate reliable longitudinal research and supervisory analysis.
vi. **Improve Insurance Awareness and Market Development:** Insurers and regulators should continue targeted consumer education, particularly among underserved and informal-sector groups, because low awareness remains a documented barrier to insurance penetration in Ghana.
vii. **Regenerate and Validate the Empirical Model.** Before journal publication, the researchers should rerun the regression models from the original dataset, verify variable coding and transformations, confirm the panel estimator, and report internally consistent coefficients, standard errors, t/z statistics, p-values and confidence intervals.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The revised manuscript is constrained by the information contained in the source document. The original paper does not fully document the number of firms, sampling frame, exact data sources and formulas used to construct every variable, nor does it identify the precise panel estimator. The regression tables also contain internal statistical inconsistencies. Future research should provide a transparent panel-data codebook, distinguish firm-level from macroeconomic variables, test alternative performance indicators such as return on assets, return on equity and combined ratio, and compare fixed-effects, random-effects and dynamic specifications where theoretically appropriate.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT
Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)
ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)
Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com
Received: August 23, 2026 **Accepted**: September 24, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026
Citation: Nwogu, Peter O. & Peter, Confidence C. (2026). "The Ethics of Leadership Within Accountability: Structuring Integrity in Adventist Tradition." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 163-171.

Article **Open Access**

THE ETHICS OF LEADERSHIP WITHIN ACCOUNTABILITY: STRUCTURING INTEGRITY IN ADVENTIST TRADITION

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Abstract
Leadership is central to the life, mission, and administration of religious organizations. Within the Seventh-day Adventist tradition, leadership is understood as a sacred responsibility to serve God, the Church, and humanity rather than merely the exercise of authority or management of resources. Consequently, Adventist leadership is expected to reflect biblical values of integrity, stewardship, humility, accountability, justice, and selfless service. Ethical leadership is therefore essential to maintaining the Church's spiritual credibility, institutional effectiveness, membership confidence, and mission. Biblical leadership emphasizes character, stewardship, and accountability. Leaders are entrusted with authority and are ultimately accountable to God for their decisions and conduct. Jesus Christ provides the supreme model of servant leadership, demonstrating humility, sacrifice, compassion, truthfulness, justice, and service. This Christ-centered model requires leaders to combine administrative competence with spiritual maturity, prayerful discernment, moral consistency, and commitment to the wider mission of the Church. Accountability is a critical component of ethical leadership. It operates at both spiritual and institutional levels: leaders are accountable to God and also to governing bodies, colleagues, members, policies, procedures, and established oversight mechanisms. Effective accountability promotes transparency, responsible stewardship, ethical decision-making, and proper use of authority and resources. It also serves as a safeguard against abuse of power, conflicts of interest, favoritism, financial impropriety, and other unethical practices. Beyond preventing misconduct, accountability functions as a formative discipline that develops humility,

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responsibility, transparency, and moral awareness. Integrity involves consistency between a leader's beliefs, values, words, and actions and must therefore be reinforced by institutional systems that encourage openness, checks and balances, and responsible governance. Nevertheless, power imbalances, weak governance structures, inadequate reporting mechanisms, and moral disengagement may undermine accountability. The study therefore advocates strengthened governance, institutional reform, transparent administrative practices, and renewed spiritual vigilance. It concludes that integrating accountability with ethical, Christ-centered leadership can build trust, enhance institutional credibility, strengthen governance, and advance the Church's mission by producing competent administrators and faithful stewards who reflect the character of Christ.

Key Words: Leadership, Accountability, Integrity, Adventist Church, Ethics of Responsibility.

Introduction

Leadership is fundamentally a moral undertaking, defined not only by the ability to influence others but also by the obligation to act in ways that reflect ethical standards and societal expectations. Accordingly, the ethics of leadership centers on the principles of right and wrong that inform leaders' decisions, conduct, and interactions within organizations and the wider society (Northouse, 2019). In an era marked by heightened demands for transparency and good governance, ethical leadership has become a decisive factor in determining institutional legitimacy and performance. At its essence, ethical leadership is expressed through integrity, fairness, and accountability in both personal behavior and professional responsibilities (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Leaders are expected to exemplify ethical conduct not merely as a reflection of personal virtue but as a strategic necessity that shapes organizational culture and guides followers' behavior (Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003). This understanding resonates with virtue ethics, which prioritizes character, alongside deontological and consequentialist perspectives that assess morality in terms of duties and outcomes (Velasquez et al., 2015). Moreover, the ethics of leadership is intrinsically linked to accountability, which obliges leaders to explain and take responsibility for their actions and their outcomes (Bovens, 2007). Mechanisms such as oversight systems, performance appraisals, and ethical guidelines help institutionalize accountability, thereby reinforcing integrity and ensuring that authority is exercised within accepted moral and legal limits (Mulgan, 2000). Thus, ethical leadership is shaped not only by individual character but also by organizational contexts that either encourage or inhibit ethical behavior.

The importance of ethical leadership has become increasingly evident in light of governance breakdowns, corporate misconduct, and inefficiencies in public institutions, often driven by compromised integrity and inadequate accountability structures (Kaptein, 2011). These realities highlight the need for leaders who combine competence with strong ethical grounding and who can balance organizational goals with broader societal responsibilities. As Ciulla (2004) observes, the true legitimacy of leadership derives from moral authority rather than mere positional power. Within this context, this study positions the ethics of leadership within the broader framework of accountability, underscoring the imperative of structuring integrity through intentional systems and practices. By exploring both theoretical perspectives and practical implications, it contributes to ongoing discussions on how leadership can effectively align authority with responsibility in ways that foster trust, sustainability, and organizational excellence. Furthermore, leadership within the Seventh-day Adventist Church is fundamentally a spiritual and moral calling, grounded in biblical principles and guided by a commitment to service, integrity, and accountability.

Unlike secular conceptions of leadership that often emphasize authority and control, Adventist leadership is rooted in the model of servant leadership exemplified by Jesus Christ, who taught that true leadership is expressed through humility and service: *"whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant"* (Matthew 20:26–28, Bible). At its core, the ethics of leadership in the Adventist tradition emphasizes character, faithfulness, and adherence to divine principles. Leaders are expected to reflect Christ-like attributes such as honesty, compassion, and justice, recognizing that leadership is ultimately stewardship under God. Scripture underscores this responsibility, noting that *"it is required in stewards that one be found faithful"* (1 Corinthians 4:2, Bible). This perspective positions leadership not as a privilege, but as a sacred trust that demands accountability both to God and to the faith community.

Integrity stands at the heart of ethical leadership within the Church. The biblical injunction in Proverbs 11:3 *"The integrity of the upright guides them"* (Bible) highlights the centrality of moral consistency in leadership. Adventist leaders are therefore called to align their actions with biblical teachings, ensuring that their decisions and conduct uphold the values of righteousness and truth. This alignment is further reinforced in Micah 6:8, which calls leaders to *"act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God"* (Bible), encapsulating the ethical framework within which leadership is to be exercised. Accountability is equally integral to leadership ethics in the Adventist Church. Leaders are not only answerable to organizational structures but are ultimately accountable to God, who evaluates both actions and intentions. Hebrews 13:17 affirms this responsibility: *"they keep watch over you as those who must give an account"* (Bible). This dual accountability spiritual and institutional ensures that leadership authority is exercised with reverence, transparency, and a deep sense of responsibility. Furthermore, the Adventist understanding of leadership ethics is closely tied to the Church's mission, which emphasises service to humanity, evangelism, and the promotion of holistic well-being. Leaders are expected to embody these values, fostering unity, trust, and spiritual growth within the Church community. The apostle Paul the Apostle admonishes leaders in Titus 1:7–8 to be *"blameless, not self-willed, not quick-tempered… but hospitable, a lover of what is good, self-controlled, just, holy, and disciplined"* (Bible), providing a clear ethical standard for leadership conduct. In this context, the ethics of leadership within the Adventist Church transcends administrative competence, focusing instead on moral character, spiritual accountability, and faithful service. By grounding leadership practices in biblical teachings and Christ's example, the Church seeks to cultivate leaders who not only guide effectively but also inspire through integrity, humility, and unwavering commitment to God's principles.

Conceptual Foundations of Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership refers to the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, as defined by Brown and Treviño (2006). This conception emphasizes that leadership is not merely about achieving organizational goals but about how those goals are pursued and the moral quality of the means employed (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003). Ethical leaders are expected to model integrity, honesty, and respect in both private conduct and public decision-making, thereby serving as visible standards for others within the organization (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011). At its core, ethical leadership involves fairness, transparency, and a steadfast commitment to doing what is right, even when such actions may be inconvenient or personally costly (Ciulla, 2004; Northouse, 2019). Fairness requires that leaders treat followers impartially and make decisions based on objective criteria rather than

personal bias or favoritism (Colquitt et al., 2001). Transparency entails openness in communication and clarity in intentions, which helps to reduce uncertainty and build confidence among stakeholders (Rawlins, 2008). Moreover, ethical leaders engage in principled decision-making, guided by moral reasoning and a sense of responsibility toward both individuals and the broader community (Rest, 1986; Freeman, 1984).

Leaders who consistently embody ethical principles cultivate environments where trust and responsibility flourish. Trust emerges when followers perceive their leaders as reliable, just, and morally grounded, which in turn enhances cooperation, commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Such environments also encourage employees to act responsibly, as ethical leadership has been shown to promote moral awareness and reduce unethical conduct within organizations (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005; Kaptein, 2011). In this way, ethical leadership contributes not only to individual moral development but also to the establishment of an ethical organizational culture. Accountability, in this context, is the obligation of leaders to answer for their decisions and actions, as articulated by Bovens (2007). It represents a critical mechanism through which ethical standards are maintained, ensuring that those in positions of authority remain answerable to stakeholders and governing structures (Bovens, 2007; Mulgan, 2000). Accountability encompasses both answerability the duty to explain and justify actions and enforceability the possibility of sanctions or corrective measures where conduct falls short of expected norms (Schedler, 1999).

Importantly, accountability ensures that power is not exercised arbitrarily but is subject to scrutiny, evaluation, and, where necessary, correction. Through formal mechanisms such as audits, performance reviews, and reporting systems, as well as informal processes like peer evaluation and public oversight, accountability constrains misuse of authority and reinforces ethical behavior (Behn, 2001; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987). It also promotes transparency by requiring leaders to disclose relevant information and provide reasons for their decisions, thereby strengthening institutional trust and legitimacy (Fox, 2007). In practice, the integration of ethical leadership and accountability creates a mutually reinforcing relationship. While ethical leadership provides the moral foundation for responsible conduct, accountability offers the structural framework that ensures such conduct is consistently upheld and evaluated (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000). Together, they foster a culture of integrity, where leaders are both guided by ethical principles and held responsible for their actions, ultimately contributing to sustainable organizational effectiveness and public confidence.

Accountability as a Mechanism for Integrity

Integrity is often described as the consistency or alignment between one's values, words, and actions. It reflects an inner moral coherence that enables leaders to act with honesty, transparency, and reliability across varying circumstances. As Stephen L. Carter observes, integrity requires not only discerning what is right but also acting on that understanding consistently, even when it is costly. In this sense, integrity is not merely a personal virtue but a lived practice that manifests in observable behavior and decision-making. However, integrity does not exist in abstraction; it is structured, sustained, and reinforced through accountability systems. Accountability provides the external frameworks formal and informal that ensure individuals remain answerable for their conduct and decisions. According to Mark Bovens, accountability is a relational mechanism in which an actor is obliged to explain and justify conduct to a forum that can question and evaluate it, and

potentially impose consequences. This relational dynamic creates a feedback loop that strengthens ethical consistency by aligning internal values with external expectations.

Scholars in ethical leadership, such as Linda K. Treviño and Michael E. Brown, argue that accountability systems such as transparent reporting structures, ethical codes, performance evaluations, and peer review mechanisms serve as critical enablers of integrity within organizations. These systems institutionalise ethical expectations, making integrity less dependent on individual disposition and more embedded in organisational culture and governance processes. Without such structures, even well-intentioned leaders may drift toward inconsistency due to pressure, bias, or lack of oversight. Furthermore, accountability enhances integrity by introducing consequences and corrective measures. When individuals know their actions will be scrutinized and must be justified, they are more likely to act in ways that are consistent with established moral and professional standards. This aligns with the view of Philip Pettit, who emphasizes that accountability fosters "contestability," ensuring that power is exercised in a manner that can be challenged and corrected when necessary. In sum, integrity and accountability are mutually reinforcing constructs. Integrity provides the moral foundation for ethical behavior, while accountability supplies the structural support that sustains and verifies it. Together, they form a dynamic system in which ethical leadership is not only professed but also practiced, monitored, and continuously strengthened. Leaders demonstrate integrity when they:

i. Accept responsibility for outcomes,
ii. Provide transparent explanations for decisions,
iii. Submit themselves to oversight mechanisms.

Accept Responsibility for Outcomes

Accepting responsibility for outcomes is a core expression of integrity and a defining mark of accountable leadership. It requires individuals especially those in positions of authority to acknowledge ownership not only of decisions they directly make but also of the consequences that flow from those decisions, whether intended or unintended. This principle moves beyond mere task completion; it emphasizes answerability for results, including successes, failures, and the ethical implications of both. In accountability theory, Mark Bovens explains that true accountability involves an obligation to explain and justify one's conduct before a relevant forum. Accepting responsibility, therefore, entails a willingness to provide transparent explanations for outcomes, to admit errors without deflection, and to take corrective action where necessary. It rejects the tendency to shift blame to subordinates, circumstances, or external pressures, and instead fosters a culture of ownership and trust. From an ethical leadership perspective, Michael E. Brown and Linda K. Treviño argue that leaders who model responsibility for outcomes set a powerful moral tone within organizations. When leaders openly acknowledge both achievements and shortcomings, they legitimize honesty and learning, encouraging others to do the same. This, in turn, reduces fear-based cultures where mistakes are hidden and instead promotes environments where continuous improvement is possible. Accepting responsibility also includes a proactive dimension: anticipating the potential impact of decisions and taking steps to mitigate negative consequences. It reflects foresight, ethical sensitivity, and a commitment to stewardship. As Peter F. Drucker noted, effective leaders are those who take responsibility for the performance and direction of their organizations, recognizing that leadership is ultimately about accountability for results. In practical terms, this principle can be demonstrated through mechanisms such as transparent reporting, performance evaluations tied to outcomes, willingness to issue apologies when warranted, and

implementation of corrective measures after failures. It also involves learning from outcomes—using both success and failure as feedback to refine future decisions and actions. Ultimately, accepting responsibility for outcomes reinforces the link between integrity and accountability. It ensures that leadership is not merely about authority or intention, but about measurable impact and ethical answerability, thereby strengthening trust, credibility, and organizational effectiveness.

Provide Transparent Explanations for Decisions

Providing transparent explanations for decisions is a central pillar of accountable and ethical leadership. It involves clearly communicating not only *what* decisions have been made, but also *why* they were made, *how* they were reached, and *what* implications they carry for stakeholders. Transparency in this sense is not mere disclosure; it is the deliberate effort to make reasoning processes visible, understandable, and open to scrutiny. In the framework of accountability articulated by Mark Bovens, actors are expected to explain and justify their conduct before a forum capable of evaluating it. Transparent explanation fulfills this obligation by enabling stakeholders whether employees, governing bodies, or the public to assess the legitimacy, fairness, and rationality of decisions. Without such openness, accountability becomes hollow, as stakeholders lack the information needed to evaluate leadership actions. Ethical leadership scholars such as Linda K. Treviño and Michael E. Brown emphasize that transparency strengthens trust and credibility within organizations. When leaders openly share their decision-making processes, they signal respect for others and reinforce perceptions of fairness. This is particularly important in complex or controversial situations, where decisions may not satisfy all parties. Clear explanations help stakeholders understand the constraints, values, and trade-offs involved, even when they disagree with the outcome. Providing transparent explanations also serves an educative function. It helps to clarify organizational priorities, ethical standards, and strategic direction, thereby aligning individual and collective behavior. Over time, this practice cultivates a culture in which reasoning, rather than authority alone, becomes the basis for decision acceptance. As Jürgen Habermas suggests in his theory of communicative action, legitimacy is strengthened when decisions can be justified through rational discourse that others can evaluate and engage with. Practically, transparency in decision-making can be demonstrated through timely communication, documentation of decision criteria, openness about uncertainties and risks, and willingness to answer questions or receive feedback. It also requires avoiding selective disclosure or manipulation of information, as partial transparency can undermine trust as much as secrecy. Ultimately, providing transparent explanations for decisions reinforces the integration of integrity and accountability. It ensures that leadership actions are not only ethically grounded but also visibly justified, fostering an environment of trust, mutual respect, and informed engagement. Without accountability, integrity risks becoming rhetorical rather than practical. Thus, accountability acts as both a constraint and a reinforcement, ensuring that ethical standards are upheld consistently.

Submit Themselves to Oversight Mechanisms

Submitting themselves to oversight mechanisms is a decisive expression of accountability and a safeguard for integrity in leadership. It requires leaders to willingly place their actions, decisions, and use of authority under systems of review, evaluation, and, where necessary, correction. Rather than perceiving oversight as a constraint, ethical leaders recognize it as a structure that strengthens legitimacy, curbs excesses, and reinforces trust. Within accountability theory, Mark Bovens emphasizes that accountability involves not only the

obligation to explain conduct but also the acceptance of external scrutiny and the possibility of sanctions. Oversight mechanisms such as audits, supervisory boards, regulatory bodies, peer reviews, and performance appraisals serve as institutional forums where such scrutiny occurs. By submitting to these mechanisms, leaders affirm that their authority is not absolute but subject to evaluation against established standards and expectations. From an ethical leadership standpoint, Linda K. Treviño and Michael E. Brown argue that visible compliance with oversight processes sets a powerful example within organizations. When leaders willingly undergo review and accept feedback, they normalize accountability and reduce hierarchical barriers that often discourage openness. This behavior fosters a culture in which transparency and answerability are shared responsibilities rather than imposed obligations. Oversight mechanisms also play a preventive and corrective role. They help identify risks, detect misconduct, and ensure that decisions align with ethical, legal, and organizational standards. In this regard, Philip Pettit highlights the importance of "contestability," where power must always remain open to challenge and revision. Oversight provides the institutional means through which such contestation can occur, ensuring that leadership actions are not beyond question. Practically, submitting to oversight involves cooperating with audits and evaluations, adhering to reporting requirements, respecting the authority of governing bodies, and implementing recommendations arising from reviews. It also includes maintaining accurate records, disclosing relevant information, and refraining from actions that would undermine the independence or effectiveness of oversight institutions. Ultimately, this principle reinforces the interdependence of integrity and accountability. By subjecting themselves to oversight, leaders demonstrate humility, responsibility, and a commitment to ethical governance. It ensures that leadership is exercised not in isolation, but within a system of checks and balances that promotes fairness, transparency, and sustained organizational credibility.

Structuring Integrity in Leadership Practice

Structuring integrity involves embedding ethical principles into organizational systems and leadership behavior. This can be achieved through:

i. **Institutional Frameworks:** Clear policies, codes of conduct, and regulatory structures provide a foundation for ethical behavior (Kaptein, 2011). These frameworks define expectations and consequences, making accountability enforceable.
ii. **Ethical Decision-Making Models:** Leaders must apply principled reasoning when confronted with dilemmas. Models such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics provide structured approaches to evaluating choices (Velasquez et al., 2015).
iii. **Transparency and Communication:** Open communication fosters trust and allows stakeholders to assess leadership actions. Transparency reduces the likelihood of misconduct and enhances legitimacy.
iv. **Role Modeling:** Leaders set the ethical tone of an organization. When leaders consistently act with integrity, they create a culture where accountability is normalized (Northouse, 2019).

Challenges to Ethical Leadership and Accountability

Despite its importance, maintaining accountability in leadership is often challenged by:

i. **Power Asymmetry**, which can shield leaders from scrutiny,
ii. **Institutional Weaknesses**, particularly in developing governance systems,
iii. **Moral Disengagement**, where individuals rationalize unethical behavior (Bandura, 1999).

These challenges highlight the need for robust systems and a strong ethical orientation among leaders.

Implications for Governance and Organizational Effectiveness

Ethical leadership anchored in accountability enhances:

i. **Public Trust**, especially in governance and public institutions,
ii. **Organizational Performance**, through improved morale and reduced corruption,
iii. **Sustainability**, by ensuring decisions consider long-term consequences.

Conversely, the absence of accountability often leads to corruption, inefficiency, and institutional decay.

Conclusion

The ethics of leadership cannot be divorced from accountability. Integrity, as the moral backbone of leadership, must be intentionally structured through systems, behaviors, and institutional frameworks that demand responsibility and transparency. Ethical leadership, therefore, is not simply about personal virtue but about creating and sustaining environments where accountability ensures that integrity is both practiced and preserved.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT
Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)
ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)
Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com
Received: August 24, 2026 **Accepted**: September 25, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026
Citation: Pius, Ohere A. (2026). "A Philosophical Perspective on Drug Abuse and the Crisis of Human Freedom Among Nigerian Youths." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 172-180.

Article **Open Access**

A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE ON DRUG ABUSE AND THE CRISIS OF HUMAN FREEDOM AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS

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Abstract
Drug abuse among Nigerian youths is a complex social, moral, psychological, and philosophical problem that affects individual development, societal and national progress. This study therefore examined drug abuse beyond its medical and sociological dimensions by exploring questions of freedom, rationality, responsibility, moral agency, and human existence. It identifies peer influence, unemployment, poverty, family instability, social pressure, curiosity, emotional distress, and the desire for pleasure or escape as major factors contributing to substance misuse. Philosophically, drug abuse is presented as a distortion of human freedom because substance dependence can weaken rational self-determination and responsible choice. The paper used qualitative philosophical research method supported by contextual analysis. Drawing on virtue ethics, deontological ethics, and consequentialism, the study found moral implications of drug abuse for individuals and society. It argued that punitive measures alone are insufficient and advocates moral education, responsible parenting, youth empowerment, rehabilitation, psychological support, and character formation. Ultimately, philosophy can promote critical thinking, self-knowledge, responsible freedom, and meaningful living while addressing conditions that increase youths' vulnerability to drug abuse.

Keywords: Drug Abuse, Human Freedom, Moral Responsibility, Nigeria, Philosophy, Youth.

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Introduction

The central question, is not simply whether young people are free to choose. It is whether they possess the kind of freedom that enables them to choose intelligently, resist destructive desires, recognize consequences, and take ownership of the direction of their lives. Freedom without wisdom can become destructive; choice without reflection can become impulsive; and responsibility without compassion can become merely punitive. A philosophically adequate understanding of human agency must hold these dimensions together. Ultimately, freedom, choice, and personal responsibility constitute a dynamic relationship. Freedom makes meaningful choice possible; choice reveals the exercise of agency; and responsibility gives ethical significance to that agency. A society genuinely committed to human freedom must therefore cultivate conditions in which persons can develop the capacities required for responsible self-direction. For young people in particular, this means combining personal accountability with education, moral formation, social support, rehabilitation, and opportunities for meaningful participation in society. The goal should not merely be to tell young people that they are free, but to help them acquire the wisdom and character required to use freedom well.

Freedom, Choice, and Personal Responsibility

Freedom, choice, and personal responsibility are inseparable concepts in philosophical reflection on human existence. Freedom concerns the capacity of persons to direct their actions; choice is the concrete exercise of that capacity; while personal responsibility concerns the extent to which individuals can legitimately be held answerable for what they deliberately do. The relationship among the three raises a fundamental philosophical question: If human beings are free to choose, to what extent are they responsible for the consequences of their choices? This question becomes particularly significant when examining contemporary social problems such as drug abuse among young people, where individual decisions interact with peer influence, social circumstances, psychological vulnerability, and addiction. Contemporary philosophy continues to examine whether freedom requires alternative possibilities, rational self-control, or a particular kind of relationship between an agent and the reasons for action (Latham, Tierney, and Varga 252–69). Philosophically, freedom is more than the absence of physical restraint. It involves the capacity of a person to act intentionally and to exercise meaningful control over conduct. Karen Stohr's Kantian account distinguishes negative freedom, understood as freedom from external constraint, from positive freedom, understood as the capacity to act according to rationally defensible principles (13–20). This distinction is important because a person may be physically unrestricted while remaining dominated by impulses, compulsions, fear, or destructive desires. Thus, the question "Am I free?" cannot be answered adequately by asking only whether someone is being prevented from doing what he or she wants. One must also ask whether the individual possesses sufficient rational and practical control to determine what he or she ought to want and do.

Stohr's discussion of Kantian freedom emphasizes that rational beings must understand themselves as capable of choosing among possible courses of action and of directing themselves through rational principles. However, not every apparent choice is necessarily an equally free choice. Human beings make decisions within particular psychological and social circumstances. Poverty, unemployment, family instability, peer pressure, inadequate education, cultural expectations, emotional distress, and social exclusion can influence the alternatives a person perceives as available (13–20). This does not mean that individuals are merely victims of circumstances, but it demonstrates that

freedom is exercised within conditions that can either enlarge or diminish practical agency. Andreas Schmidt's analysis of personal responsibility similarly shows that responsibility cannot be separated entirely from questions of equality, social circumstance, and the distribution of opportunities (1373–99).

The relationship between freedom and responsibility is therefore more complex than the popular maxim that "everyone is responsible for his or her own choices." Personal responsibility requires some meaningful degree of control, knowledge, and intentionality. If an individual is forced to perform an action under an immediate threat, for example, it would be problematic to attribute responsibility in precisely the same way as one would for an action undertaken voluntarily after careful deliberation. The philosophical problem is to identify the conditions under which an action can properly be regarded as belonging to the agent. Recent philosophical scholarship demonstrates that freedom and moral responsibility are not always conceptually identical. Latham, Tierney, and Varga's 2023 study of manipulation cases found that judgments about free will and moral responsibility can come apart, suggesting that people do not necessarily evaluate the two concepts in exactly the same way (252–69). This is significant because it challenges the assumption that proving or disproving freedom automatically settles the question of responsibility. A person may have some capacity for choice while the degree of responsibility attributed to the person depends upon the nature of the circumstances and the quality of control exercised.

The problem becomes even more profound when considering determinism. According to Herchenroeder, et al, determinism maintains, broadly, that events, including human actions, are causally connected to preceding conditions. If every decision is the inevitable outcome of prior causes, one may ask whether individuals genuinely deserve praise or blame for their actions. In contrast, libertarian theories of free will argue that genuine moral responsibility requires a stronger form of freedom, in which an agent could genuinely have acted otherwise (8). Compatibilist theories seek a middle position, arguing that freedom and responsibility can exist even if human actions have antecedent causes, provided the action appropriately expresses the agent's own reasons, desires, and deliberative capacities (6). Leonhard Menges' discussion of free will and "basic desert" illustrates the continuing importance of this debate. He examined whether individuals can be fundamentally deserving of blame for their actions and argued for a conception of responsibility that distinguishes different kinds of moral appraisal (615–36). The philosophical significance of this position is that responsibility should not automatically be equated with simple condemnation. To say that someone is responsible is to make a claim about agency, accountability, and the relationship between the individual and the action. This distinction is particularly relevant to drug abuse among young people. A young person who initially experiments with drugs may appear to exercise ordinary personal choice. Curiosity, peer pressure, the search for pleasure, the desire for acceptance, or an attempt to escape emotional difficulties may influence the decision. At this stage, personal responsibility may appear relatively straightforward. Yet repeated drug consumption may develop into dependence, creating a situation in which the person's capacity to regulate desire becomes increasingly complicated.

Edmund Henden's contemporary philosophical analysis of addiction is particularly relevant. He argues that emotional dysregulation can impair autonomy in addiction and therefore complicate judgments about responsibility. According to Henden, the fact that addicted individuals may continue to choose drugs does not necessarily demonstrate that their agency remains fully autonomous (8). The important philosophical distinction is

between having a choice and possessing sufficient control over the desires that shape one's choice. Someone may technically possess alternatives while experiencing powerful psychological conditions that make one alternative extraordinarily difficult to resist. Victor Tadros similarly examines addiction through the problem of craving and control. His discussion raises the question of whether addictive behaviour should sometimes attract reduced responsibility when the individual's capacity to control conduct is significantly compromised (167–84). This does not mean that addiction automatically eliminates responsibility. Rather, it suggests that responsibility may need to be understood in degrees, depending upon the individual's history, knowledge, control, and circumstances. This perspective offers an important challenge to simplistic moral judgments about young people who abuse drugs. The question should not merely be, "Why did you choose to take drugs?" A more philosophically serious inquiry asks: What influenced the choice? What alternatives were realistically available? What did the individual understand about the consequences? How much control did the person possess? And what happened between the first voluntary decision and subsequent dependence? These questions preserve the importance of personal responsibility while recognizing that human agency is situated within psychological and social realities.

At the same time, acknowledging these influences should not become an excuse for denying responsibility altogether. To remove responsibility completely would risk treating human beings as passive objects rather than moral agents. Philosophy must therefore avoid two extremes. The first is absolute individualism, which assumes that every decision is made independently of social and psychological circumstances. The second is absolute determinism, which portrays individuals as incapable of meaningful agency because every action is supposedly produced by forces beyond their control. A more balanced position recognizes that persons are influenced by circumstances while retaining varying degrees of capacity to reflect, resist, deliberate, and change. Kant's conception of freedom is valuable here because it connects freedom with rational self-government. Stohr explained that positive freedom involves the capacity to act for moral reasons rather than simply following immediate inclinations (13–20). Freedom, therefore, should not be confused with unrestricted desire. The person who says, "I am free because I can do whatever I desire" may actually be confusing freedom with enslavement to desire. If every impulse commands obedience, the individual is governed by impulse rather than reason. This insight has profound implications for personal responsibility. Responsibility is not the enemy of freedom; it is one of the conditions that gives freedom moral significance. If choices have no consequences for which persons can be held accountable, freedom becomes mere spontaneity.

Personal responsibility should therefore be understood not merely as punishment for past behaviour but also as an invitation to self-development and moral transformation. Stohr's discussion of Kantian personal development emphasizes the obligation to cultivate one's capacities and make something meaningful of oneself (195–202). In the context of drug abuse, this means that society should not only ask how a young person can be punished for harmful choices but also how that person can recover the intellectual, emotional, social, and moral capacities necessary for better choices. The deepest philosophical lesson is that freedom is exercised within conditions, choice expresses agency, and responsibility evaluates the manner in which that agency is exercised. Human beings are neither completely independent of their circumstances nor completely determined by them.

How Addiction can Weaken Rational Self-Determination

Rational self-determination refers to the capacity of a person to deliberate about reasons, form considered intentions, regulate impulses, and act in accordance with values that the person reflectively endorses. It is therefore closely connected with autonomy, practical reason, and self-control. Addiction presents a philosophical challenge because addicted persons often remain capable of understanding consequences and expressing choices, yet their capacity to govern conduct through reflective judgment may be substantially weakened. The problem is not simply that an addicted person "chooses badly." Rather, addiction can reorganize motivation, attention, emotion, valuation, and habits in ways that make immediate reward unusually powerful and long-term reasons increasingly difficult to translate into action. Contemporary research consequently supports a nuanced position: addiction can diminish rational self-determination without necessarily eliminating agency altogether (509).

A useful starting point is Harry Frankfurt's distinction between first-order desires and second-order volitions. Human beings do not merely desire things; they can reflect upon their desires and decide which desires they want to govern their conduct. For Frankfurt, freedom of the will involves the capacity for a person's effective desire to correspond with the desire he or she wants to constitute the will (10-11). Addiction becomes philosophically significant when an individual sincerely wishes not to be controlled by a particular desire but repeatedly finds that desire determining behaviour. A person may desire sobriety, health, family stability, or academic success while simultaneously experiencing an intense desire to drink, gamble, use drugs, or engage compulsively in another rewarding activity. The conflict reveals that having reasons and preferences is not identical with having effective control over action. This distinction helps explain why addiction should not be reduced to ordinary bad decision-making. Ordinary practical reasoning permits people to compare competing goods and revise their choices. Addiction can interfere with this process by making certain cues disproportionately salient. Robinson and Berridge's incentive-sensitization theory explains addiction partly through the development of heightened "wanting" toward addiction-related stimuli. Their 2025 review emphasizes that repeated exposure can sensitize neural systems involved in incentive motivation, so that cues associated with addictive rewards acquire excessive motivational significance.

The weakening of self-determination is also visible in the phenomenon of temporal discounting. Rational self-government requires some ability to integrate present decisions with future interests. Addiction can narrow practical attention toward immediate relief or pleasure while discounting distant consequences. The addicted person may know that continued use threatens employment, relationships, finances, physical well-being, or future plans, yet the immediate expected reward repeatedly dominates the decision process. Levy describes addiction as involving a significant loss of control that nevertheless remains compatible with the retention of agency, making it different from simple external coercion (Levy 1-15). The addict may still deliberate, choose, and act intentionally, but deliberation becomes distorted by unusually powerful short-term incentives. Emotional dysregulation provides another mechanism through which addiction can weaken rational self-determination. Henden argues that autonomy depends not only on the ability to select an action but also on capacities for comprehension, reflection, and effective implementation of decisions. Emotional dysregulation can interfere with the formation and stability of preferences, thereby affecting autonomous agency even when a person voluntarily consumes an addictive substance (Henden 7). This insight challenges the simplistic

distinction between “forced” and “freely chosen” addictive behaviour. A person may say, “I want this,” and genuinely mean it at that moment, while the desire itself has been shaped by a recurrent emotional and motivational pattern that conflicts with broader commitments.

Addiction may further weaken self-determination by reshaping the person’s evaluative landscape. Henden argues that emotional dysregulation can gradually contribute to a reorientation of values in which addiction-related experiences become central to a person’s conception of the good. This is philosophically significant because autonomy requires more than selecting among options; it involves having a relatively stable capacity to determine what matters. If maintaining access to an addictive reward becomes the organizing priority around which relationships, work, finances, and daily routines are arranged, other values may be subordinated. The person can therefore become increasingly governed by a motivational system that was initially only one part of life. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to conclude that addiction completely destroys rationality or responsibility. The evidence points instead to impairment that can vary in degree and context. The 2024 scoping review by Herchenroeder and colleagues shows that Self-Determination Theory has been increasingly applied to substance use and treatment, emphasizing the relevance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Research on self-change also demonstrates that addictive patterns are not invariably irreversible. De Meyer and colleagues’ 2024 scoping review identifies substantial research on self-change, indicating that some individuals alter problematic substance use without formal treatment. Such evidence is philosophically important because it preserves room for agency while recognizing that agency may be constrained.

The practical implication is that rational self-determination should be understood as something that can be supported or undermined by personal and social conditions. Kennett argued that self-control has a normative dimension: it concerns not merely the possession of cognitive resources but the capacity to shape a life one has reason to value (144-64). Treatment, therefore, should not be understood simply as forcing abstinence. Approaches that strengthen competence, social support, meaningful goals, emotional regulation, and participation in decisions can help restore practical control.

Practical Strategies for Developing Responsible Freedom Among Youths

Freedom is a fundamental dimension of human existence, but it becomes meaningful only when accompanied by responsibility, self-discipline, sound judgment, and concern for others. In this context, responsible freedom refers to the ability of young people to make voluntary, informed, and morally conscious choices while accepting the consequences of their actions. This is particularly important during adolescence and emerging adulthood, when youths gradually assume greater independence from parents, teachers, and other authorities. Positive youth development therefore emphasizes young people as active participants in their own development rather than passive recipients of adult instruction (3–14). The first practical strategy is moral and critical-thinking education. Young people should not merely be given rules; they should understand the reasons behind moral choices. Education should encourage reflection on justice, honesty, respect, compassion, accountability, solidarity, and human dignity. Through realistic discussions involving peer pressure, substance abuse, sexuality, academic dishonesty, social media, relationships, finances, and career decisions, youths can learn to identify alternatives, examine consequences, consider competing values, and defend their choices rationally. Responsible freedom consequently develops when young people learn to connect freedom of choice with responsibility for consequences.

The second strategy is progressive autonomy within reasonable boundaries. Responsible freedom cannot flourish through either excessive parental control or complete permissiveness. Parents and educators should gradually transfer responsibilities as young people's competence and maturity increase. Areas such as time management, finances, studies, friendships, and internet use can initially involve guidance and progressively greater independence. Soenens *et al*. distinguish genuine autonomy from mere independence, explaining that autonomy involves acting voluntarily and with personal endorsement rather than simply acting without supervision (11). The objective is therefore to develop youths who can exercise sound judgment even when authority is absent. Supporting this approach, a 2024 systematic review and meta-analysis of thirty-six self-determination-theory interventions involving over 11,000 participants found evidence that such interventions can enhance students' autonomy and competence (9). A third important strategy is strengthening accountability. Freedom should never be interpreted as freedom from responsibility. Parents and teachers should establish clear expectations and proportionate consequences. When youths make mistakes, responses should encourage reflection rather than punishment alone. Questions such as What happened? Why did you choose this action? Who was affected? What could you have done differently? can promote moral responsibility. Restorative approaches are particularly useful because they help youths recognize how their decisions affect other people and encourage them to repair harm.

Another strategy is developing self-regulation and emotional competence. Rational freedom is compromised when anger, fear, frustration, impulsivity, or peer pressure controls behaviour. Youth programmes should therefore teach stress management, delayed gratification, conflict resolution, emotional awareness, and resistance to destructive impulses. Positive youth development research identifies self-regulation, emotional regulation, goal setting, identity, purpose, and supportive relationships as important elements of youth flourishing (Arnold and Ferrari 23). The aim is not to eliminate emotions but to prevent temporary emotional states from producing lasting harmful decisions. Mentoring and intergenerational relationships also play a significant role. Youths benefit from trustworthy parents, teachers, religious leaders, coaches, counsellors, and other caring adults who combine encouragement with appropriate boundaries. Samuelson emphasizes trusted adults, safe communities, agency, identity development, and purposeful futures as important principles of effective youth-service organizations. Mentors provide experience and guidance without taking away the young person's responsibility to decide. In this way, mentorship strengthens judgment, confidence, and responsible independence (22). The fifth and final strategy derived from the discussion of this paper is digital citizenship education. It is essential because contemporary youths exercise considerable freedom through digital platforms. They can communicate, publish, purchase, create, and share information instantly, but such freedom involves responsibilities concerning privacy, truthfulness, intellectual property, misinformation, cyberbullying, digital footprints, and respect for others. Research on adolescents' moral reasoning concerning online incivility and cyberbullying demonstrates the importance of moral education for responsible digital citizenship (Harrison and Polizzi 5).

Conclusion

Finally, families, schools, religious institutions, communities, and government must cooperate in creating environments conducive to responsible freedom. It is unrealistic to expect individual youths to make responsible choices while surrounded by institutions that provide poor models of responsibility. Adults must therefore model honesty, accountability, respect, disciplined freedom, and constructive conflict resolution. Youth development is

ecological: young people are influenced by interconnected relationships and settings rather than by individual instruction alone. Positive youth development research stresses the importance of supportive developmental settings and relationships in enabling young people to flourish. The most practical approach is to teach young people how to think, give them opportunities to choose, allow them to experience manageable consequences, provide trustworthy guidance, and gradually expand their responsibilities.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: August 25, 2026 **Accepted**: September 26, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026

Citation: Sodiq, Okunola O. (2026). "Large Language Models and Emerging Cybersecurity Challenges: Implications for Digital Security Systems in Nigeria." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 181-194.

Article **Open Access**

LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS AND EMERGING CYBERSECURITY CHALLENGES: IMPLICATIONS FOR DIGITAL SECURITY SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Large Language Models (LLMs) are increasingly being incorporated into digital systems and cybersecurity workflows for tasks such as threat-intelligence analysis, security-log interpretation, incident documentation, vulnerability assessment and policy compliance. Their adoption, however, also creates new attack surfaces because LLMs can be manipulated through malicious instructions, exposed to sensitive information, connected to untrusted data, or granted excessive access to external tools. This paper examines the emerging cybersecurity challenges associated with LLM-enabled systems and their implications for digital security in Nigeria. It adopts a qualitative integrative literature review, Nigerian researches, official policy documents, cybersecurity guidance and AI risk-management frameworks. The analysis is organised around four themes: LLM capabilities for cybersecurity, LLM-specific and system-level threats, defensive applications, and socio-technical governance requirements. The review shows that security implications of LLMs extend beyond model behaviour to the data, retrieval systems, applications, interfaces, users and organisational processes surrounding the model. In the Nigerian context, these risks interact with infrastructure constraints, cybersecurity skills gaps, institutional capacity, data-protection obligations and dependence on external technology providers. The paper develops a Nigerian LLM Cybersecurity Resilience Framework comprising five mutually reinforcing layers: technical security, data governance, human oversight, organisational governance and national regulatory governance, with continuous evaluation as a cross-cutting principle. The framework contributes a context-sensitive structure for assessing and governing LLM deployment in Nigerian digital-security environments.

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Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, Cyber Resilience, Digital Security, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI), Large Language Models (LLM), Nigeria.

Introduction

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has altered the way digital systems process information, generate content and support human decision-making. Large Language Models (LLMs) are particularly significant because they can process and generate natural language at scale and can be integrated into applications that retrieve information, analyse documents, assist with programming and interact with external tools. In cybersecurity, these capabilities create opportunities for improving information-intensive activities such as threat intelligence, security analysis, vulnerability assessment and incident response (Ferrag *et al*., 2025; Jaffal *et al*., 2025; Karras *et al*., 2025). The cybersecurity significance of LLMs is nevertheless broader than their usefulness as defensive tools. Once an LLM is incorporated into an operational system, the model becomes part of a larger computational and organisational environment. Inputs may originate from users, documents, websites, retrieval systems or other applications; outputs may subsequently be passed to software tools or used by security personnel to make decisions. Consequently, vulnerabilities can arise not only from the model but also from the interfaces, data, permissions, applications and processes surrounding it. ENISA (2023) distinguishes between using AI for cybersecurity and securing AI systems themselves, a distinction that is particularly useful for understanding LLM-enabled security environments.

The Open Worldwide Application Security Project (OWASP) Top 10 for Large Language Model Applications identifies major application-level risks including prompt injection, sensitive information disclosure, supply-chain vulnerabilities, data and model poisoning, improper output handling, excessive agency, system-prompt leakage, vector and embedding weaknesses, misinformation and unbounded consumption (OWASP Foundation, 2025). Recent systematic reviews similarly show that LLM security must be considered across the wider software and model lifecycle rather than only at the model layer (Jaffal *et al*., 2025; Moia *et al*., 2026). These developments are important for Nigeria because digital financial services, telecommunications, public digital services and other technology-dependent activities increasingly rely on interconnected information systems. Nigeria's National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy (NNCPS) identifies cybersecurity as an important enabler of national security and economic development, while the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy identifies AI as a strategic area of technological and economic development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2024). The Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023 also establishes a legal framework for personal-data processing and security. LLM deployment therefore intersects with existing cybersecurity, data-protection and AI-governance responsibilities.

Nigerian researches on AI and cybersecurity indicate that adoption is shaped by infrastructure, workforce capacity, institutional readiness and governance. Eke (2026), for example, reported evidence of AI-enabled cybersecurity adoption in Nigerian banking while identifying workforce readiness, access to appropriate tools and infrastructure as constraints. Bade, Babate and Bara (2026) identified AI-assisted threats and defensive applications within Nigeria's digital economy and emphasise governance, workforce and infrastructure challenges. Ndoh, Iwuh and Ugochukwu (2026) similarly argued from a socio-technical perspective that effective AI adoption requires technological capability to be integrated with institutional capacity, governance and human development. Despite this emerging literature, there remains a need for a context-sensitive analysis that can connect LLM-specific

cybersecurity threats with the infrastructural, organisational, human and regulatory conditions of Nigerian digital systems. Existing international reviews provide detailed taxonomies of applications, threats and mitigations, but they do not establish how those findings should be interpreted within Nigeria's institutional and technological environment. This paper addresses that gap by synthesising international LLM-cybersecurity research with Nigerian AI, cybersecurity and governance literature and translating the synthesis into a Nigerian LLM Cybersecurity Resilience Framework (LLM-CRF).

The paper is guided by three research questions:

i. **RQ1:** What emerging cybersecurity threats are associated with the deployment of LLMs in digital-security systems?
ii. **RQ2:** What defensive cybersecurity functions can LLMs support, and what limitations constrain their safe use?
iii. **RQ3:** What technical, organisational, human and regulatory safeguards are required for resilient LLM deployment in Nigeria?

The paper makes three contributions. First, it synthesises LLM capabilities and vulnerabilities from a systems-oriented cybersecurity perspective. Second, it relates those risks to Nigerian infrastructure, workforce, institutional and regulatory conditions. Third, it proposes a layered resilience framework that maps LLM-related threats to technical and socio-organisational controls.

Conceptual Background

Artificial intelligence refers broadly to computational systems designed to perform tasks associated with functions such as learning, pattern recognition, reasoning, prediction and decision support. Within contemporary AI, machine-learning systems learn patterns from data, while generative models produce new content. LLMs are generative models designed primarily for language processing and generation, although contemporary systems can also work with code, structured information and multimodal inputs. Their cybersecurity relevance follows partly from their ability to transform large quantities of technical and textual information into forms that human analysts can interpret. The practical distinction between an LLM and an LLM-enabled system is important. An LLM by itself generates outputs in response to inputs; an LLM-enabled application may additionally include retrieval systems, databases, APIs, plugins, identity systems, monitoring components and automated actions. Security risks can therefore emerge at multiple layers. Moia *et al*. (2026) emphasise this wider system perspective by reviewing threats across real-world LLM deployment and the software and model lifecycles.

On the other hand, cybersecurity concerns the protection and resilient operation of digital systems, networks, applications and data against threats that may compromise confidentiality, integrity or availability. Cains *et al*. (2022) show that cybersecurity is inherently contextual and socio-technical, with human factors and resilient system functionality forming important components of cyber-risk analysis. This understanding is appropriate for LLM-enabled environments because security cannot be reduced to the protection of model parameters. Digital security systems should therefore be understood as interconnected arrangements of software, hardware, data, communication infrastructure, human users, organisational procedures and governance mechanisms. An LLM inserted into such an arrangement inherits some existing security risks while introducing additional ones associated with natural-language interaction, probabilistic output, external knowledge retrieval and tool use. Two related but distinct questions arise. The first concerns AI for

cybersecurity: how LLMs can assist security personnel in detecting, analysing and responding to threats. The second concerns security of AI: how LLM-based systems themselves can be protected. ENISA (2023) identifies both as important research areas. The distinction prevents an organisation from assuming that an LLM is secure merely because it is being used for security work. A model may assist a security operation while simultaneously becoming an additional attack surface.

Literature Review

The literature on large language models (LLMs) and cybersecurity has expanded rapidly as these systems have moved from general-purpose language applications into security operations, threat intelligence, vulnerability analysis, incident response, and security-policy processes. At the same time, researchers have identified significant risks associated with their deployment, including prompt injection, sensitive information disclosure, data and model poisoning, supply-chain vulnerabilities, improper output handling, and overreliance on potentially inaccurate outputs. The literature therefore presents LLMs as both cybersecurity enablers and sources of new security vulnerabilities. This section reviews existing scholarship on the applications, vulnerabilities, and governance challenges associated with LLMs in cybersecurity, with particular attention to their implications for Nigeria's emerging digital-security environment. It first examines the defensive applications of LLMs, then considers the principal vulnerabilities of LLM-enabled systems. The review subsequently situates these issues within Nigeria's evolving artificial intelligence, data-protection, and cybersecurity policy landscape. It then identifies the gap in existing literature that provides the basis for the Nigerian LLM Cybersecurity Resilience Framework proposed in this study.

Recent literature documents a wide range of LLM applications in cybersecurity. Jaffal *et al*. (2025) reviewed applications across network security, software and system security, cloud security, threat intelligence, social engineering, critical infrastructure and Internet-of-Things security. Ferrag *et al*. (2025) similarly reviewed applications in intrusion detection, software engineering, cyber-threat intelligence, malware detection and phishing detection. Karras *et al*. (2025) synthesised research on threat detection, incident response, vulnerability assessment and security analytics. The literature suggests that the strongest immediate role of LLMs is often analytical augmentation rather than autonomous replacement of specialist security technologies. LLMs therefore summarise threat reports, classify textual information, explain code, organise incident information and help analysts navigate complex documentation. These functions may reduce information-processing burdens, but they remain dependent on the quality of input data and the reliability of model outputs. The second literature strand concerns vulnerabilities. OWASP (2025) identifies a broad set of LLM application risks, while Ferrag *et al*. (2025), Jaffal *et al*. (2025) and Moia *et al*. (2026) showed that threats arise across model, application, data and integration layers. Prompt injection is particularly important because malicious content can influence how an LLM interprets instructions, especially where the model can access external data or tools. Improper output handling creates another risk when generated content is trusted or passed directly to another application. Data and model poisoning, sensitive information disclosure and supply-chain vulnerabilities further demonstrate that LLM security is inseparable from data and infrastructure security. Excessive agency increases the significance of these risks because a manipulated or erroneous model output can have consequences beyond the production of incorrect text when the system has permission to perform actions.

Nigerian literature provides evidence that AI adoption is influenced by conditions beyond technical capability. Eke (2026) reported that AI-enabled cybersecurity adoption in the banking sector is affected by workforce readiness, access to appropriate tools and infrastructure. Bade *et al*. (2026) identifed AI-assisted phishing, deepfake impersonation, automated malware deployment and intrusion-detection evasion alongside AI-based anomaly detection, intrusion prevention and incident response in Nigeria's digital economy. Ndoh *et al*. (2026) emphasised infrastructure, policy, institutional capacity and human capability as interconnected conditions of AI-security adoption. These studies are relevant to LLMs but do not by themselves provide an LLM-specific Nigerian resilience framework. The research gap therefore lies less in establishing that AI creates opportunities and risks and more in specifying how LLM-specific vulnerabilities should be integrated with Nigerian organisational and regulatory conditions. Existing international reviews are increasingly comprehensive, but their primary concern is the general LLM-cybersecurity landscape. Nigerian studies, by contrast, focus more broadly on AI, cybersecurity, digital transformation or security governance. The gap addressed here is the intersection of these literatures: the conditions under which LLM-enabled security systems can be deployed and governed within Nigeria. The proposed framework is intended to bridge this gap rather than compete with existing technical taxonomies.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical lens is Sociotechnical Systems Theory (STS). Baxter and Sommerville (2011) argued that technical systems should be understood in relation to the organisational and social environments in which they are developed and used. The approach is appropriate because the security outcome of an LLM depends on the interaction among model capabilities, data, users, organisational procedures, infrastructure and governance. Applied to LLM cybersecurity, STS implies that a technically capable model may still generate insecure outcomes if it receives poorly governed data, has excessive permissions, operates without monitoring, or is used by personnel without adequate verification procedures. Conversely, a model with known limitations can provide useful support when embedded in a layered architecture with appropriate controls. The second analytical lens is the dual-use character of AI. LLM capabilities that assist defenders can also assist attackers. Natural-language generation can support security documentation and awareness training but can also facilitate convincing social-engineering content. Code assistance can support secure development but can also lower barriers to harmful coding activities. The dual-use perspective therefore prevents a one-sided assessment of LLMs as either beneficial or harmful. The two perspectives are complementary. STS explains how cybersecurity outcomes emerge from interactions among technical and social components, while the dual-use perspective explains why a single capability may produce different outcomes depending on its use and level of access. They both support a systems-oriented analysis in which LLM capability, threat exposure, organisational context and governance are treated as interdependent.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative integrative literature review. An integrative review is appropriate where evidence from different source types must be synthesised to develop a conceptual understanding rather than calculate a pooled statistical effect. The review therefore combines peer-reviewed research, Nigerian studies, official policy documents and authoritative cybersecurity and AI-risk frameworks. The study is deliberately not presented

as a PRISMA systematic review. It does not claim exhaustive retrieval or statistical synthesis. Instead, it uses a structured process of source identification, relevance screening, thematic organisation and conceptual synthesis. This distinction is important because recent systematic reviews such as Jaffal *et al*. (2025), Karras *et al*. (2025) and Moia *et al*. (2026) already provide systematic evidence bases; the present study's contribution is the contextual synthesis and Nigerian resilience framework. Priority was given to sources published from 2023 to 2026 for rapidly changing LLM-security issues, while earlier sources were retained for theoretical and conceptual foundations. Sources were considered relevant when they addressed one or more of the following: LLM cybersecurity applications; LLM vulnerabilities; AI-enabled cyber threats; cybersecurity governance; AI risk management; Nigerian cybersecurity; Nigerian AI governance; or data protection. The principal source categories were: (1) peer-reviewed LLM and cybersecurity research; (2) Nigerian studies on AI and cybersecurity; (3) official Nigerian cybersecurity, AI and data-protection documents; and (4) established international guidance from bodies such as NIST, OWASP and ENISA. Sources were excluded when they addressed AI only in general terms without a meaningful connection to cybersecurity, digital security, governance or the Nigerian context.

The literature was organised into four analytical themes: LLM capabilities for cybersecurity; LLM-enabled threats; defensive applications and limitations; and governance, resilience and Nigerian contextual conditions. The themes were then compared to identify relationships between threats and controls. Particular attention was given to whether a risk originated at the model layer or emerged through interaction with data, retrieval systems, applications, users or organisational procedures. The final analytical stage involved synthesising the findings into the Nigerian LLM Cybersecurity Resilience Framework. The framework is therefore a conceptual product of the literature synthesis, not an empirically validated operational model. Its proposed controls should consequently be tested in future studies involving Nigerian organisations and real-world LLM deployments. The use of authoritative standards and recent peer-reviewed reviews strengthens the conceptual basis of the study. However, an integrative review is subject to selection and interpretation bias and does not establish causal effects. In addition, Nigeria-specific empirical evidence concerning operational LLM deployment remains limited. The framework should therefore be understood as a research-informed conceptual framework requiring empirical validation.

Emerging Cybersecurity Challenges of LLMs

The growing use of LLMs in digital systems also introduces new cybersecurity risks that can affect the confidentiality, integrity and reliability of information systems. These risks arise from both the capabilities of LLMs and the ways in which they are integrated with data, applications and external tools. Some of the major cybersecurity challenges associated with LLM deployment, including prompt injection, information disclosure, data poisoning, supply-chain vulnerabilities, hallucination, excessive agency and social engineering.

i. **Prompt Injection:** Prompt injection occurs when untrusted content influences an LLM's interpretation of instructions. The risk becomes particularly consequential when the model retrieves external information or has access to software tools. OWASP (2025) treated prompt injection as a leading LLM application risk. Mitigation should therefore include separation of trusted instructions from untrusted content, least-privilege permissions, input and output validation, adversarial testing and human approval for high-risk actions.
ii. **Sensitive Information Disclosure:** LLMs may process personal, financial, commercial or institutional information supplied through prompts, documents, retrieval systems or

connected applications. The risk is therefore partly a data-flow problem. In Nigeria, this intersects directly with the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, which establishes requirements concerning lawful and accountable personal-data processing and security (Nigeria Data Protection Commission, 2023). Organisations should apply data minimisation, access control, retention limits and appropriate contractual and technical safeguards when external LLM services are used.

iii. **Data and Model Poisoning:** Poisoning occurs when malicious or misleading information is introduced into training, fine-tuning, retrieval or related data pipelines. In retrieval-augmented systems, the integrity and provenance of documents become security concerns because manipulated information may influence downstream outputs. Security controls should therefore cover the provenance, integrity and access permissions of retrieval corpora and model-development datasets (OWASP, 2025; Zou *et al*., 2025).

iv. **Supply-Chain Vulnerabilities:** LLM applications depend on models, APIs, datasets, libraries, embeddings, cloud services and other third-party components. A weakness in one component can affect the security of the complete system. Nigerian organisations should therefore assess provider security, data-processing arrangements, service continuity, contractual controls, dependency concentration and incident-notification obligations (Autio *et al*., 2024).

v. **Improper Output Handling:** LLM outputs should not automatically be treated as trusted commands or verified facts. Where outputs are passed to software systems, inadequate validation can convert a model error into an application-level vulnerability. Output validation, structured interfaces, permission boundaries and human approval should therefore be applied before high-impact actions are executed (OWASP, 2025).

vi. **Hallucination and False Security Judgements:** LLM hallucination refers to plausible but inaccurate generated content. In cybersecurity, inaccurate classification, vulnerability explanations or incident recommendations can produce false assurance or inappropriate responses. The central risk is therefore not merely factual error but the possibility that fluent output will be mistaken for reliable evidence. Security workflows should require verification against logs, threat intelligence, system telemetry and established procedures (Ji *et al*., 2023).

vii. **Phishing and Social Engineering:** LLMs can generate fluent and context-sensitive language. The same capability may assist security-awareness activities while also increasing the quality and scalability of deceptive communications. The defensive response should therefore combine technical email and identity controls with awareness, detection and verification mechanisms rather than relying on the linguistic quality of generated content as evidence of legitimacy (Heiding *et al*., 2024).

viii. **Misinformation and Overreliance:** Overreliance occurs when users defer excessively to model outputs despite uncertainty or lack of evidence. This is a socio-technical risk because the model's limitation becomes consequential through human interpretation. Appropriate use policies, training, verification requirements and accountability structures are therefore necessary (Passi *et al*., 2024; Passi & Vorvoreanu, 2022).

Defensive Capabilities of LLMs

Large Language Models (LLMs) are not only sources of new cybersecurity risks but can also provide useful capabilities for strengthening digital security. Their ability to analyse large amounts of information, identify patterns and generate useful responses can support different areas of cybersecurity operations, including threat intelligence, security log analysis,

incident response, vulnerability analysis, policy compliance and Security Operations Centre activities. In threat intelligence, LLMs can assist analysts in summarising threat reports, extracting indicators, comparing descriptions and organising intelligence drawn from multiple textual sources. Recent research identifies this kind of multilingual, cross-source threat-intelligence extraction as an emerging application of LLMs in cybersecurity practice (Özbay *et al*., 2026). Their principal value in this area lies in information processing and analyst augmentation rather than in replacing specialised detection systems. A related capability concerns security log and event analysis. Because security operations generate large volumes of textual and semi-structured records, LLMs can help interpret event data and summarise relationships across logs that would otherwise be time-consuming for analysts to review manually (Kheddar, 2025). This value is nonetheless conditional: because automated summaries can omit or misinterpret evidence, analysts should retain access to the underlying logs and telemetry rather than relying on LLM-generated summaries alone.

LLMs can also support incident response by assisting with incident classification, documentation, identification of affected systems and coordination of response activities. Research examining LLMs specifically within cybersecurity incident-management workflows found that they can meaningfully support analysts in interpreting incidents, while cautioning that this support functions best as an aid to human judgement rather than a substitute for it (Jones *et al*., 2025). Consistent with this caution, high-impact containment or system-modification decisions should remain subject to controlled approval and verification rather than being executed automatically. Beyond incident handling, LLMs can assist with vulnerability analysis and secure coding by explaining code and helping to identify possible vulnerabilities. This capability should be treated as a starting point rather than a conclusion: because generated code and vulnerability assessments may themselves contain errors, their suggestions should be tested using established software-security methods before being relied upon. A similar logic applies to compliance and policy analysis, where LLMs can assist with mapping organisational controls to complex cybersecurity and regulatory requirements. Cadet *et al*. (2024) illustrate this potential in the context of policy compliance and risk mitigation, showing how LLMs can help organisations interpret regulatory obligations more efficiently. Even so, regulatory interpretation generated in this way should be verified against authoritative legal and policy texts rather than treated as a final determination. Within Security Operations Centres, LLMs are increasingly explored as components of Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) and agentic architectures intended to support analyst workflows (Alqahtani & gKumar, 2026). The evidence nonetheless points toward a layered rather than autonomous architecture: specialised detection technologies identify events, the LLM assists with interpretation, human analysts must verify that interpretation, as controlled mechanisms execute only approved responses. This layered architecture is important precisely because it limits the consequences of hallucination, prompt manipulation and excessive agency, each of which becomes more dangerous when an LLM is allowed to act without human verification.

Implications for Digital Security Systems in Nigeria

The growing use of Large Language Models (LLMs) has important implications for digital security systems in Nigeria. While LLMs can improve threat detection, incident response and other cybersecurity activities, their use may also introduce new risks to government systems, financial institutions, telecommunications networks and digital platforms. These implications are particularly important in Nigeria because of existing infrastructure limitations, cybersecurity skills gaps and data governance concerns that recent Nigerian research on AI

and security has identified as socio-technical constraints on responsible adoption (Ndoh *et al*., 2026). Government systems can potentially use LLMs for document processing, information retrieval, citizen-service support and security analysis. Because such systems may process sensitive personal and administrative information, deployment should be accompanied by strict access control, data governance, auditability and human oversight. Nigeria's national cybersecurity strategy and AI strategy provide broader policy contexts within which such deployment should be considered (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021; National Information Technology Development Agency [NITDA], 2024). Digital financial systems present a related but distinct case: they are attractive settings for LLM-assisted security because of the volume of transaction, fraud and incident information they generate, yet unrestricted model access could create significant confidentiality and integrity risks. Evidence from Nigerian banking research indicates that workforce readiness and infrastructure remain relevant constraints on AI-enabled cybersecurity (Eke, 2026). Telecommunications and digital platforms raise similar concerns at greater scale: they generate extensive operational and security information, and while LLMs may assist with analysis and incident management, the scale of these systems increases the consequences of weak permissions, data leakage or automated errors.

These sector-specific risks point to a broader workforce implication. LLM deployment changes the skill profile required of cybersecurity personnel, who increasingly need AI literacy, understanding of model limitations, output verification, secure prompt and context management, AI-security assessment, data governance and regulatory awareness. Nigerian capacity-building programmes should therefore treat AI security as a component of cybersecurity professional development rather than a separate specialism. This human-capacity dimension is closely tied to infrastructure: LLM deployment may require reliable connectivity, cloud or local computing resources, monitoring infrastructure and skilled personnel, and Nigerian organisations should assess whether they can securely operate the complete LLM application rather than equating access to an external model with cybersecurity capability. Where organisations depend on external LLM providers, this assessment must also extend to questions of data sovereignty, including where data are processed, how long they are retained, what access providers retain, how service continuity is assured, and how contractual and architectural changes on the provider's side are managed. These concerns do not make external services inherently insecure, but they introduce third-party and data-governance risks that should be assessed before deployment rather than after. Nigeria already has important components of a governance environment relevant to LLM deployment, including the National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy, the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023 and the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021; Nigeria Data Protection Commission, 2023; National Information Technology Development Agency [NITDA], 2024). The regulatory challenge is to translate these broad principles into operational requirements for LLM-enabled systems, covering risk assessment, data governance, model evaluation, incident reporting, human oversight, third-party risk management, security testing and accountability.

Discussion

The review indicates that LLMs can expand the information-processing capacity of cybersecurity teams, with their contribution strongest where large volumes of textual information must be summarised, interpreted or organised — a strength consistent with what recent reviews describe as LLMs' emerging role as semantic reasoning and decision-support components in security workflows (Kasri et al., 2025). This can be particularly

valuable where organisations face shortages of specialised personnel, as is often the case in the Nigerian context discussed earlier in this paper. However, augmentation should not be confused with autonomous reliability: security decisions remain dependent on evidence, context and verification, not on the fluency of a model's output alone. At the same time, the integration of an LLM into an operational system adds new security-relevant interfaces. The relevant security boundary extends beyond the model itself to include prompts, retrieved information, model outputs, APIs, databases, plugins and tools, which explains why securing the model alone is insufficient. The transition toward retrieval-augmented and agentic systems makes this systems perspective increasingly important, since autonomy and tool integration introduce new points at which manipulation or error can propagate through a security pipeline (Moia et al., 2026; Jabbar et al., 2025). These two findings converge on a single socio-technical conclusion: capability does not automatically produce security. A technically advanced model can generate insecure outcomes if it is connected to excessive privileges, poorly governed data or inadequate monitoring, while an imperfect model can still be useful when its role is bounded, its outputs are verified and its permissions are limited. This is consistent with the view, drawn from sociotechnical systems theory, that the performance of a technical system cannot be separated from the human and organisational arrangements within which it operates (Baxter & Sommerville, 2011). Resilience, in other words, depends less on the sophistication of the model than on the interaction between technical safeguards and human and organisational controls.

Nigerian LLM Cybersecurity Resilience Framework

The Nigerian LLM Cybersecurity Resilience Framework translates the preceding analysis into a layered model. Its central proposition is that resilient LLM deployment requires simultaneous attention to the technical system, information flows, human decision-making, organisational governance and national regulation, with continuous evaluation cutting across all five layers.

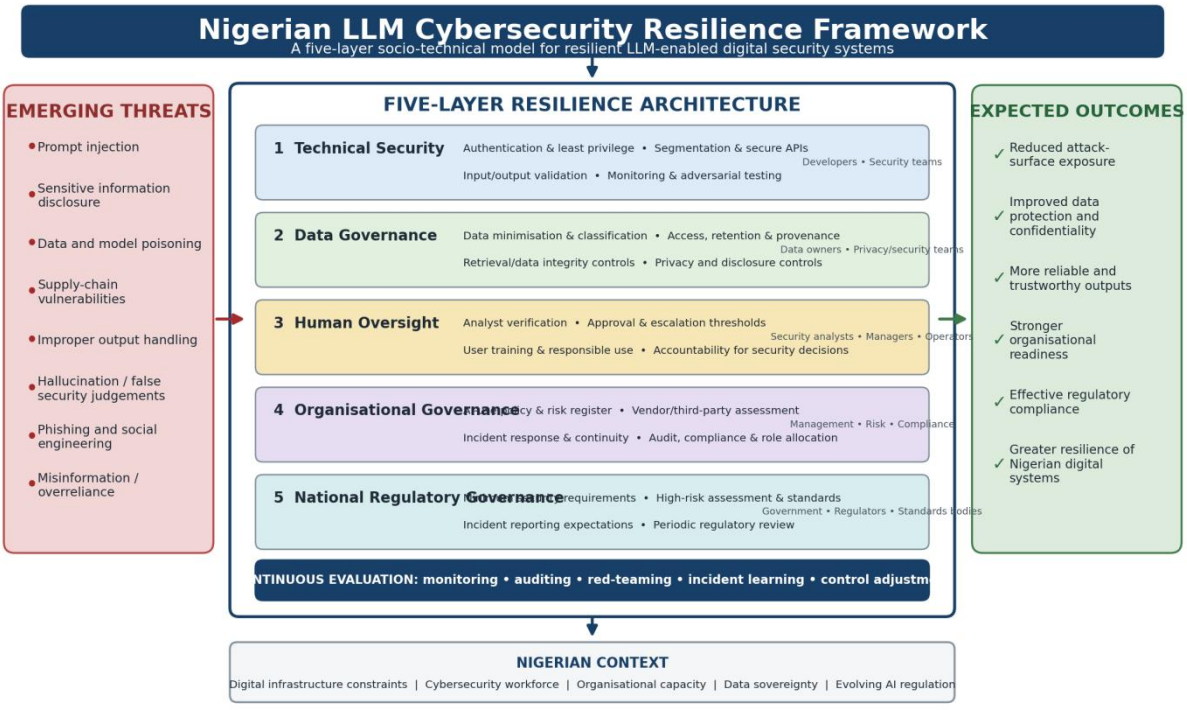


Figure 1. Nigerian LLM Cybersecurity Resilience Framework

Source: *Author's synthesis, drawing on OWASP (2025), Autio et al. (2024), Baxter and Sommerville (2011), Federal Republic of Nigeria (2021, 2024) and Nigeria Data Protection Commission (2023).*

Layer	Primary risks addressed	Core controls	Primary responsibility
1. Technical security	Prompt injection; insecure outputs; excessive agency; API and integration vulnerabilities	Authentication; least privilege; segmentation; input/output validation; monitoring; adversarial testing; secure APIs	Developers, architects, security teams
2. Data governance	Sensitive-data disclosure; poisoning; retrieval compromise; provenance failure	Data minimisation; classification; access control; retention; provenance; retrieval protection; privacy controls	Data owners, privacy officers, security teams
3. Human oversight	Hallucination; false security judgements; automation bias	Analyst review; approval thresholds; verification; escalation; training; accountability	Security analysts, managers, system operators
4. Organisational governance	Unsafe use; unmanaged third-party risk; weak incident response	AI-use policy; risk register; audits; vendor assessment; incident plans; role allocation	Boards, management, risk and compliance units
5. National regulatory governance	Regulatory gaps; inconsistent standards; systemic risk	Guidelines; high-risk assessment; minimum controls; incident reporting; provider standards; periodic review	Government, regulators, standards bodies
Cross-cutting: continuous evaluation	Changing threats and model capabilities	Testing; monitoring; red-teaming; incident learning; control adjustment; re-evaluation	All stakeholders

Figure 2. Nigerian LLM Cybersecurity Resilience Framework.

Source: *Author's synthesis, drawing on OWASP (2025), Autio et al. (2024), Federal Republic of Nigeria (2021, 2024) and Nigeria Data Protection Commission (2023).*

Technical security forms the first line of defence. Controls should be proportionate to the model's function and level of access: a document-summarisation system should not be treated in the same manner as an LLM connected to a banking platform, government database or security operations environment. Least privilege is especially important here, because it limits the consequences of manipulated or erroneous outputs before they can propagate further into a system. This technical layer must be matched by a second layer of data governance, protecting information entering, passing through and leaving the LLM-enabled system through data minimisation, classification, retention controls, provenance management and retrieval-database security. This layer should be aligned with the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023 and applicable sectoral requirements (Nigeria Data Protection Commission, 2023).

Technical and data controls alone are insufficient without a third layer of human oversight, which should be risk-sensitive rather than universal: low-risk tasks may be

automated more extensively, whereas high-consequence actions should require verification and approval. The objective is to prevent a model output from becoming an unexamined security decision, a concern consistent with OWASP's recommendation that high-risk actions in LLM applications require human approval (OWASP Foundation, 2025). Beyond individual decisions, organisations need a fourth layer of organisational governance, establishing clear rules for selecting, deploying, monitoring and retiring LLM systems. This should include acceptable-use policies, risk registers, third-party assessments, incident-response arrangements, staff training and accountability mechanisms, so that oversight is not left to the judgement of individual analysts alone. At the national level, a fifth layer of regulatory governance should establish a baseline for secure LLM deployment without prescribing controls so rigidly that they become obsolete as technology changes. High-risk applications, critical systems, da ta protection, incident reporting, provider dependence and professional competence are areas in which regulatory guidance may be particularly relevant, building on the foundations already provided by Nigeria's National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy and National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021; National Information Technology Development Agency [NITDA], 2024). Cutting across all five layers is a continuous evaluation cycle, testing, monitoring, red-teaming, incident learning, control adjustment and re-evaluation, which reflects the dynamic character of LLM capabilities and threat techniques. This is consistent with the literature's emphasis on lifecycle evaluation, which identifies fragmented evaluation practices and limited longitudinal testing as persistent weaknesses in current LLM-security research (Alqahtani & Kumar, 2026; Jabbar *et al*., 2025)

Recommendations

Based on the literature synthesis and the proposed framework, the following recommendations are made.

i. Organisations deploying LLMs for cybersecurity should conduct application-level threat modelling before granting access to sensitive data or external tools.
ii. High-risk LLM actions should operate under least-privilege permissions and appropriate human approval thresholds.
iii. Nigerian organisations should establish LLM-specific data-governance procedures covering input data, retrieval corpora, retention, provider access and data transfers.
iv. Cybersecurity teams should receive training in prompt injection, model limitations, output validation, AI supply-chain risk and AI-specific incident response.
v. Organisations should maintain an LLM inventory and risk register identifying models, providers, connected tools, datasets, permissions and responsible personnel.
vi. Government and relevant regulators should develop practical guidance for high-risk LLM deployments in critical digital systems while aligning new requirements with existing cybersecurity and data-protection frameworks.
vii. Third-party LLM providers should be assessed for security controls, data-processing practices, service continuity, incident notification and contractual accountability.
viii. Universities and professional institutions should expand interdisciplinary training connecting computer science, cybersecurity, data protection, AI governance and responsible AI.
ix. Future Nigerian research should empirically test the proposed framework in banking, telecommunications, government digital services and higher-education environments.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited by its reliance on secondary literature. It does not measure the performance of a particular LLM, conduct penetration testing, or empirically validate the proposed framework in a Nigerian organisation. The Nigerian empirical literature on operational LLM deployment is also still developing. These limitations mean that the framework should be interpreted as a conceptual and research-informed model rather than a validated security standard. Future research should therefore operationalise the framework through case studies and field surveys of Nigerian organisations. Studies could develop measurable indicators for each framework layer and test relationships among LLM access, security incidents, human oversight, organisational maturity and regulatory compliance. Experimental research could also evaluate LLM-assisted threat detection, log analysis and incident response using Nigerian datasets. Such work would provide empirical evidence for refining the framework.

Conclusion

LLMs are becoming relevant to cybersecurity because they can process and generate information at a scale useful for threat intelligence, security analysis, incident response, vulnerability assessment and compliance activities. Their adoption, however, also changes the cybersecurity boundary. Prompt injection, sensitive information disclosure, poisoning, insecure outputs, excessive agency, misinformation and supply-chain vulnerabilities demonstrate that the model cannot be secured independently of the wider system. For Nigeria, these risks are shaped by infrastructure, workforce capability, institutional readiness, data-protection requirements and dependence on external technology providers. The central argument of this paper is therefore that LLM cybersecurity should be treated as a socio-technical resilience problem rather than simply a model-performance problem. The proposed Nigerian LLM Cybersecurity Resilience Framework provides a structured response through five mutually reinforcing layers: technical security, data governance, human oversight, organisational governance and national regulatory governance, supported by continuous evaluation. Its contribution is to connect established LLM-security concerns with the particular institutional and technological conditions of Nigerian digital systems. The framework should now be subjected to empirical testing so that its controls, responsibilities and maturity indicators can be refined for practical adoption.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: August 26, 2026 **Accepted**: September 27, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026

Citation: Okwara, Donatus N. U. & Obuegbe, Francis O. (2026). "The Humanities as Tools for Peace Building and Conflict Resolution: African Perspectives." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 195-206.

Article **Open Access**

THE HUMANITIES AS TOOLS FOR PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The persistence of violent conflicts, political instability, ethnic tensions, religious intolerance, social exclusion, and cultural divisions across contemporary societies raises important questions about the effectiveness of conventional approaches to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The research used a philosophical and interdisciplinary approach to examine how humanistic knowledge can contribute to transforming destructive attitudes and conflict narratives into constructive relationships. Particular attention is given to African perspectives, including communalism, solidarity, reconciliation, indigenous systems of mediation, and the philosophical principle of shared humanity associated with Ubuntu. This paper argued that the Humanities constitute indispensable tools for building sustainable peace because they address the values, beliefs, narratives, identities, and relationships that often lie beneath visible manifestations of conflict. Through disciplines such as Philosophy, History, Literature, Religious Studies, Languages, and Cultural Studies, the Humanities provide critical resources for cultivating dialogue, empathy, tolerance, justice, human dignity, and respect for difference. The paper maintains that sustainable peace cannot be achieved merely through political agreements, legal mechanisms, or the suppression of violence; it requires a transformation of the moral and cultural conditions that generate and perpetuate conflict. The Humanities therefore have a crucial role in promoting critical thinking, historical consciousness, intercultural understanding, ethical responsibility, and peaceful coexistence. The paper concludes that greater integration of Humanities scholarship into peace education, conflict-resolution initiatives, policymaking, and community-based reconciliation programs would strengthen efforts toward sustainable peace, particularly within African societies.

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Keywords: Humanities, Peacebuilding, Conflict Resolution, Dialogue, Human Dignity, African Philosophy.

Introduction

Peacebuilding and conflict resolution have become increasingly important concerns in contemporary societies characterized by political instability, communal tensions, ethnic and religious divisions, social inequalities, displacement, violent extremism, and competing identities. Although conventional approaches to conflict resolution have often emphasized political negotiation, security interventions, mediation, institutional reform, and economic reconstruction, the persistence and recurrence of conflicts demonstrate that violence cannot be adequately addressed through political and security mechanisms alone. Conflicts are deeply embedded in the ways individuals and communities understand identity, history, culture, justice, dignity, belonging, and their relationship with others. Consequently, sustainable peace requires approaches capable of engaging not only the structural causes of conflict but also the ideas, values, narratives, memories, emotions, and cultural practices through which people interpret their social world. It is within this context that the humanities assume considerable importance as instruments of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The humanities, encompassing disciplines such as philosophy, history, literature, languages, religious studies, cultural studies, and the arts, are fundamentally concerned with human beings, their experiences, values, meanings, relationships, and cultural expressions. Their contribution to peacebuilding lies partly in their capacity to encourage critical reflection on the assumptions, beliefs, narratives, and value systems that shape human conduct. In societies experiencing conflict, the humanities can provide intellectual and cultural spaces in which competing perspectives are examined, historical experiences are interpreted, identities are negotiated, and possibilities for coexistence are explored. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that culture can function as a bridge across social differences and can contribute to social cohesion, peace, and security, although culture may also be manipulated to reinforce division and conflict. This dual character makes humanities-based approaches particularly significant because they can help societies understand how cultural identities are constructed and how cultural resources can either intensify conflict or facilitate reconciliation.

The relevance of the humanities becomes even more evident in the African context. Many African societies possess indigenous traditions of mediation, communal dialogue, storytelling, reconciliation, restorative justice, and collective decision-making. These traditions demonstrate that conflict resolution has historically involved more than formal political institutions or coercive mechanisms. Community elders, religious leaders, traditional authorities, oral traditions, proverbs, songs, ceremonies, and other cultural practices have often provided mechanisms for managing disagreements and restoring social relationships. Contemporary peacebuilding can therefore benefit from an engagement between formal conflict-resolution theories and indigenous knowledge systems. UNESCO (2021) similarly argues that cultural diversity can serve as a resource for social cohesion and stability when cultural rights and intercultural dialogue are protected. The humanities provide an appropriate intellectual space for recovering, interpreting, evaluating, and adapting these cultural resources to contemporary circumstances. This article therefore examines humanities as tools for peacebuilding and conflict resolution, with particular attention to the contributions of philosophy, history, literature, religion, language, culture, and the arts. It argues that sustainable peace requires more than the management or termination of

immediate violence; it requires the transformation of attitudes, narratives, relationships, values, and social structures that make conflict possible. By cultivating critical thinking, empathy, dialogue, historical consciousness, cultural understanding, ethical responsibility, and respect for human dignity, the humanities can make a significant contribution to both the prevention of conflict and the construction of peaceful and cohesive societies. The article further argues that incorporating African cultural resources and indigenous approaches into contemporary humanities scholarship can strengthen the relevance of peacebuilding strategies in Nigeria and other African societies.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of the Humanities: The humanities constitute a broad field of intellectual inquiry concerned with the study of human beings, their values, experiences, cultures, beliefs, creativity, relationships, and interpretations of the world. They include disciplines such as philosophy, history, literature, languages, religious studies, cultural studies, and the arts. Unlike approaches that primarily examine human beings through biological, technological, or economic categories, the humanities are particularly concerned with questions of meaning, identity, morality, interpretation, dignity, justice, and human relationships. This orientation makes them relevant to peacebuilding because conflicts are not merely struggles over material resources; they are frequently shaped by competing interpretations of identity, history, justice, belonging, and recognition.

Understanding Peacebuilding: Peacebuilding refers to processes and activities designed to address the underlying causes of conflict and create conditions for sustainable peace. It extends beyond the immediate cessation of violence by focusing on relationships, institutions, social structures, justice, reconciliation, and the prevention of renewed conflict. Contemporary approaches increasingly understand peacebuilding as a long-term and transformative process involving individuals, communities, institutions, and states. This broader conception of peace is consistent with UNESCO's recent approach to education and peace. Its 2023 Recommendation stresses that peace requires individuals and communities to develop the capacities necessary to prevent and address violence, protect human rights, promote tolerance, and participate constructively in social and democratic life (UNESCO 2023). Thus, peacebuilding should not be understood merely as the absence of war or physical violence. It should also involve the establishment of social conditions characterized by justice, inclusion, equality, respect, dialogue, and human dignity.

Conflict Resolution: Conflict resolution concerns the processes through which individuals, groups, communities, or states seek to address the causes and consequences of disagreement and establish more constructive relationships. Conflict itself is not necessarily destructive. Differences in interests, beliefs, values, identities, and expectations are natural features of human societies. Conflict becomes particularly problematic when differences are transformed into hostility, discrimination, exclusion, oppression, or violence. Conflict resolution therefore requires more than suppressing disagreement (Ibebunjo & Iroye, 2018). It involves understanding the causes of conflict, facilitating communication between conflicting parties, addressing legitimate grievances, and creating conditions under which differences can be managed constructively. Education has an important role in this process because it can develop the knowledge, attitudes, and social and emotional competencies necessary for dialogue and cooperation. UNESCO (2023) specifically emphasizes education's

role in developing capacities for mutual understanding, tolerance, cooperation, participation, and the prevention of violence.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on four complementary theoretical perspectives: Conflict Transformation Theory, Positive Peace Theory and Communicative Action Theory. The combination of these theories provides a multidisciplinary framework for explaining how humanities disciplines can contribute to the prevention, management, and transformation of conflicts. While Conflict Transformation Theory focuses on transforming relationships and structures that generate conflict, Positive Peace Theory emphasizes the creation of conditions characterized by justice and social harmony. Communicative Action Theory highlights dialogue and mutual understanding, while the Human Dignity and Recognition perspective emphasizes respect for the worth and equal status of persons and communities. Together, these perspectives provide a useful foundation for examining the contribution of the humanities to sustainable peace.

Conflict Transformation Theory

Conflict Transformation Theory provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding peacebuilding as a process that goes beyond the termination of violence. Associated particularly with the work of John Paul Lederach, conflict transformation views conflict as an opportunity to transform destructive relationships, structures, discourses, and social conditions. Rather than asking only how a conflict can be ended, the approach asks how the relationships and circumstances that produced the conflict can be transformed. This perspective is particularly relevant to the humanities because many conflicts are sustained through narratives, identities, historical memories, cultural assumptions, and systems of meaning. Ibebunjo (2012: p. 37), noted that conflict must be kept within manageable limits for conflicts to be transformable. History, literature, philosophy, religious studies, and cultural studies can therefore contribute to conflict transformation by examining the deeper narratives through which groups understand themselves and others. The humanities can challenge stereotypes, expose exclusionary narratives, and create alternative interpretations that encourage coexistence.

Conflict transformation also recognizes that conflict occurs simultaneously at personal, relational, structural, and cultural levels. Consequently, sustainable peace requires interventions that address individual attitudes as well as relationships and social institutions. This is consistent with contemporary approaches to peace education that emphasize the development of knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviours necessary for peaceful and inclusive societies (UNESCO 2023). The relevance of Conflict Transformation Theory to this study lies in its understanding that sustainable peace requires transforming the conditions and relationships that produce violence rather than merely controlling the symptoms of conflict (Lamorde & Ibebunjo, 2022). The humanities are well positioned to facilitate this transformation because they interrogate the meanings, values, narratives, and cultural practices through which individuals and communities construct their social realities.

Johan Galtung's Positive Peace Theory

A second theoretical foundation is Johan Galtung's distinction between negative and positive peace. Negative peace refers broadly to the absence or reduction of direct violence, whereas positive peace concerns the presence of justice, equality, cooperation, harmonious relationships, and social conditions that reduce the likelihood of violence. This distinction is important because a society may experience an apparent absence of open warfare while

continuing to experience discrimination, exclusion, inequality, structural injustice, and cultural hostility. Such conditions may constitute an unstable form of peace because unresolved grievances can eventually generate renewed conflict. Contemporary peacebuilding consequently emphasizes the need to address the structural and relational conditions underlying violence rather than focusing exclusively on immediate security (UNESCO 2021).

The humanities contribute to positive peace by encouraging reflection on the values and principles necessary for a just society. Philosophy examines justice, equality, freedom, responsibility, and human dignity; history examines patterns of domination and exclusion; literature provides representations of marginalized experiences; religious studies explores ethical traditions of forgiveness and reconciliation; while the arts can provide spaces for dialogue and social expression. From the perspective of this study, the humanities therefore contribute to positive peace by helping societies move from merely ending violence to constructing conditions in which violence becomes less likely to occur. Humanities education can promote tolerance, critical thinking, empathy, respect for difference, and recognition of shared humanity. These are important foundations of social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

Communicative Action and Dialogue

The third theoretical perspective is derived from the theory of communicative action associated with Jürgen Habermas. The central idea is that communication can provide a basis for mutual understanding when participants engage one another through reasoned dialogue rather than coercion, manipulation, or domination. Dialogue is particularly important in conflict resolution because conflicts are frequently intensified by misunderstanding, stereotypes, misinformation, distrust, and the inability of opposing groups to recognize one another's perspectives. Genuine dialogue creates opportunities for participants to articulate their concerns, listen to others, reconsider assumptions, and search for areas of common understanding. The humanities provide multiple platforms for such communicative engagement. Philosophy develops skills of argumentation and critical reasoning; literature exposes readers to alternative perspectives; history encourages examination of competing interpretations of events; religious studies creates opportunities for interfaith dialogue; and the arts can provide shared cultural spaces where communities communicate experiences that may be difficult to express through conventional political discourse. Recent international policy on peace education similarly emphasizes dialogue, mutual understanding, intercultural cooperation, human rights, and respect for diversity as essential components of education for peace (UNESCO 2023). Thus, communicative approaches provide a theoretical explanation for why humanities education can contribute to conflict prevention: it develops the intellectual and interpersonal capacities required to engage difference constructively.

The Humanities and the Understanding of Conflict

Conflict is a complex human and social phenomenon that cannot be adequately explained through political, economic, or security factors alone. It is also shaped by people's interpretations of identity, history, religion, culture, language, justice, dignity, and belonging. For this reason, understanding conflict requires approaches capable of examining the meanings and values through which individuals and communities interpret their experiences. The humanities are particularly relevant because they provide critical tools for examining human beliefs, narratives, cultural practices, moral judgments, and relationships. UNESCO

(2023) similarly emphasizes that education for peace requires critical understanding, dialogue, intercultural respect, human rights, and the capacity to live together despite differences. Philosophy contributes to the understanding of conflict by encouraging individuals and societies to examine critically the assumptions, values, and arguments underlying their beliefs and actions. Conflicts are frequently sustained by unexamined assumptions about who is right or wrong, who belongs or does not belong, and whose interests deserve recognition. Philosophical inquiry challenges such assumptions through rational questioning, argumentation, conceptual clarification, and ethical reflection. The philosophical examination of justice, equality, freedom, responsibility, human dignity, tolerance, and the common good is particularly important to peacebuilding. Where communities perceive social, political, or economic arrangements as unjust, grievances can become sources of prolonged conflict. Philosophy enables such claims to be examined critically and provides conceptual resources for evaluating whether institutions and social practices treat persons fairly.

History plays an important role in understanding conflict because contemporary conflicts often have roots in historical experiences. Colonialism, political exclusion, ethnic competition, religious tensions, territorial disputes, previous violence, and perceived injustices can remain embedded in collective memory long after the original events have occurred (Majaka, et. al., 2025). Communities may interpret contemporary events through these memories, thereby reproducing suspicion and hostility between groups. Literature provides another significant humanities-based approach to understanding conflict. Novels, poetry, drama, short stories, biographies, and other literary forms provide representations of human experiences that may not be accessible through conventional political or statistical accounts. Literature can place readers in contact with experiences of displacement, discrimination, grief, exclusion, injustice, reconciliation, and hope. The humanities provide multiple pathways for understanding and responding to conflict. Philosophy provides critical and ethical reflection; history promotes critical engagement with collective memory; literature develops empathy and narrative understanding; religious and ethical studies provide resources for reconciliation; language and communication facilitate constructive dialogue; and the arts provide spaces for cultural expression and social connection. Together, these disciplines address the intellectual, cultural, moral, and relational dimensions of conflict that conventional approaches may overlook. The central argument is therefore that peacebuilding must engage the human meanings behind conflict. Political agreements and security measures may stop immediate violence, but durable peace requires changes in attitudes, narratives, relationships, values, and cultural practices. It is precisely in these areas that the humanities possess distinctive capacities to contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Humanities as Instruments of Conflict Prevention and Resolution

The contribution of the humanities to peacebuilding extends beyond the intellectual understanding of conflict to the practical prevention, management, and resolution of disputes. Conflict prevention requires societies to identify and address the conditions that make violence possible, while conflict resolution requires mechanisms through which conflicting parties can communicate, negotiate, reconcile, and rebuild relationships. Although political, economic, legal, and security institutions remain important to these processes, they are often insufficient when the underlying causes of conflict are rooted in identity, historical grievances, cultural narratives, prejudice, religious misunderstanding, or failures of recognition (Ibebunjo, 2023). The humanities provide important resources for

addressing these human and cultural dimensions of conflict. Conflict prevention begins with the ability to recognize tensions before they develop into open violence. As Agbaenyi & Ibebunjo (2021) noted, social tensions may emerge from discrimination, unequal recognition, historical grievances, political exclusion, cultural misunderstanding, religious intolerance, or competing interpretations of identity. Humanities disciplines can contribute to the early understanding of these tensions by examining social narratives, historical relationships, cultural practices, political rhetoric, and patterns of communication. History, for instance, can identify unresolved grievances that continue to influence relationships between communities. Philosophy can examine claims concerning justice and injustice, while literature and cultural studies can reveal how particular groups perceive themselves and others. Religious studies can help identify theological or cultural misunderstandings that may contribute to social tension.

Dialogue represents one of the most important instruments of conflict prevention and resolution. Where individuals and communities have little opportunity to communicate with one another, stereotypes and misconceptions can become entrenched. Dialogue creates opportunities for people to explain their experiences, listen to competing perspectives, clarify misunderstandings, and identify areas of common interest. The humanities are particularly suited to promoting dialogue because they provide intellectual and cultural spaces in which different perspectives can be explored. Philosophy encourages rational discussion; literature enables individuals to encounter unfamiliar experiences; religious studies facilitate interfaith understanding; history exposes different interpretations of the past; while the arts create shared cultural experiences. Stereotypes frequently provide the cultural foundation for conflict. When a particular ethnic, religious, political, or cultural group is represented as inherently inferior, dangerous, dishonest, or hostile, discrimination and exclusion can become socially acceptable. Such representations can eventually contribute to dehumanization and violence. The humanities can challenge stereotypes by exposing their historical and cultural construction. Literature can provide alternative representations of marginalized communities, history can reveal the complexity of intergroup relations, and philosophy can examine the logical and ethical weaknesses of prejudicial claims. Humanities education can therefore help individuals distinguish between legitimate criticism and generalized prejudice. This distinction is essential because peaceful coexistence does not require people to ignore genuine disagreements; it requires them to avoid transforming disagreements into hostility toward entire communities.

Language can either prevent or intensify conflict. Political leaders, religious figures, community organizations, and individuals can use language to encourage tolerance and dialogue or to generate fear and hostility. Hate speech, dehumanizing expressions, inflammatory rhetoric, and misinformation can contribute to social polarization. Humanities disciplines concerned with language, rhetoric, literature, and communication can help society understand how language influences human behaviour. Students can learn to recognize manipulative rhetoric, identify stereotypes, distinguish evidence-based claims from propaganda, and communicate disagreement responsibly. This is particularly important in the digital environment, where inflammatory messages can reach large audiences within a very short period. UNESCO's contemporary work on education and peace highlights the need for critical engagement with information and communication environments and the development of capacities that support responsible participation in society (UNESCO 2023). The humanities can therefore contribute to conflict prevention by developing citizens who are able to recognize harmful narratives and resist becoming instruments for the spread of

hatred. The humanities can serve as practical instruments of conflict prevention and resolution because they address the human dimensions of conflict that cannot be resolved through coercive or technical mechanisms alone. They help societies understand historical grievances, challenge prejudice, facilitate dialogue, develop empathy, examine moral questions, preserve cultural memory, and create opportunities for reconciliation. The argument here is that conflict prevention begins with understanding, while conflict resolution requires dialogue, recognition, justice, and transformation**.** The humanities contribute to each of these processes. When integrated with political, legal, economic, and security approaches, they can help create a more comprehensive and culturally responsive framework for sustainable peacebuilding. In the African context, the integration of contemporary humanities scholarship with indigenous traditions of dialogue, mediation, storytelling, communal responsibility, and reconciliation offers particular possibilities for developing peacebuilding approaches that are both locally grounded and theoretically sophisticated.

Humanities and Peacebuilding in the African Context

The role of the humanities in peacebuilding becomes particularly significant when examined within the African context. African societies are characterized by considerable ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, and historical diversity. This diversity constitutes an important social resource, but it can also become a source of tension when political interests, historical grievances, inequality, exclusion, or identity politics transform cultural differences into antagonistic divisions. Consequently, peacebuilding in Africa requires approaches that take seriously the continent's cultural histories, indigenous knowledge systems, communal values, and diverse conceptions of personhood and social responsibility. The humanities provide an important framework for examining these dimensions of African social life. One of the important resources within African thought for peacebuilding is the emphasis on communal relationships. In many African philosophical traditions, the individual is understood not simply as an isolated autonomous entity but as a person whose identity and well-being are connected to the community. This relational understanding provides an alternative to highly individualistic conceptions of social life and can support principles of solidarity, cooperation, mutual responsibility, and social cohesion. The communal orientation is relevant to peacebuilding because conflict rarely affects only the individuals directly involved. Violence can damage families, communities, institutions, cultural relationships, and intergenerational trust. A communal approach consequently encourages societies to consider the wider consequences of conflict and to pursue solutions that restore relationships rather than merely determine winners and losers. From this perspective, the humanities can recover and critically examine African philosophical conceptions of community, personhood, solidarity, justice, and reconciliation. Such philosophical reflection can contribute to contemporary discussions about how African societies can construct peace without abandoning their distinctive cultural resources.

The philosophy of Ubuntu provides another important African resource for peacebuilding. Ubuntu is commonly associated with ideas of shared humanity, relational existence, mutual recognition, compassion, and social responsibility. Its fundamental orientation challenges conceptions of the other as an enemy whose interests are necessarily opposed to one's own. Ubuntu is relevant to conflict resolution because it places relationships at the centre of social life. Peace is therefore not simply a condition in which opposing parties stop fighting; it is a condition in which relationships can be restored and communities can once again recognize their shared humanity. Recent scholarship on Ubuntu

continues to examine its relevance to justice, reconciliation, leadership, community, and social transformation in African contexts. Within peacebuilding, the philosophy provides a framework for emphasizing dialogue, restoration, forgiveness, recognition, and collective responsibility rather than revenge and exclusion. The relevance of Ubuntu to the humanities is particularly strong because philosophy, literature, religious studies, history, and the arts provide spaces through which the meaning and contemporary application of Ubuntu can be critically explored. Ubuntu should not, however, be treated as a simplistic solution to every African conflict. Its principles must be critically examined alongside questions of power, gender, inequality, political institutions, human rights, and individual freedoms. Before the development of modern state institutions, African communities developed diverse mechanisms for resolving disputes. These included mediation by elders, family councils, community assemblies, traditional authorities, storytelling, oath-taking, reconciliation ceremonies, compensation, and restorative processes. Although these practices differed considerably across societies, many emphasized restoring social harmony and relationships.

The humanities can contribute to peacebuilding by documenting and critically evaluating these indigenous mechanisms. Anthropology, history, philosophy, religious studies, literature, and cultural studies can investigate how traditional communities understood wrongdoing, justice, reconciliation, responsibility, and restoration. Such approaches can complement contemporary conflict-resolution mechanisms because they are often grounded in local cultural understandings. However, indigenous practices should not be adopted uncritically. Some traditional systems may contain practices that conflict with contemporary principles of equality, human rights, or individual freedom. A constructive approach therefore requires critical integration rather than uncritical preservation**.** The African humanities possess significant resources for peacebuilding and conflict resolution. African communal philosophies, Ubuntu, indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms, oral traditions, languages, religious values, historical knowledge, literature, and artistic expression can all contribute to the construction of peaceful societies. However, the contribution of African humanities should not be romanticized. Indigenous traditions must be critically examined in relation to contemporary human rights, equality, democratic participation, and human dignity. The most productive approach is therefore one that combines valuable African cultural resources with contemporary theories and practices of peacebuilding. The African experience demonstrates that sustainable peace requires cultural understanding, relational responsibility, critical reflection, dialogue, recognition, and reconciliation**.** By placing these dimensions at the centre of peacebuilding, the humanities can contribute significantly to addressing both the visible and deeper cultural causes of conflict in Africa and particularly in Nigeria.

Strategies for Strengthening the Role of the Humanities in Peacebuilding

The preceding discussion demonstrates that although the humanities possess considerable potential for peacebuilding and conflict resolution, their contribution is often constrained by inadequate institutional recognition, politicization of cultural narratives, weak interdisciplinary collaboration, insufficient funding, and limited integration into formal peacebuilding structures. Strengthening the contribution of the humanities therefore requires deliberate strategies that connect humanities scholarship with educational practice, community engagement, public policy, indigenous knowledge, and contemporary technologies. The objective should be to move the humanities from being regarded primarily as disciplines that interpret human experience to being recognized as active contributors to social cohesion, reconciliation, and sustainable peace. One of the most important strategies

is the systematic integration of peace education into humanities curricula. Philosophy, history, literature, religious studies, languages, theatre, cultural studies, and the arts should explicitly engage questions of peace, conflict, human rights, justice, reconciliation, tolerance, and human dignity. Rather than treating peace education as an isolated subject, institutions can integrate peace-oriented themes throughout existing courses. Philosophy courses, for example, can examine justice, dialogue, nonviolence, human dignity, and ethical responsibility. History courses can critically examine historical conflicts, collective memory, reconciliation, and peace processes. Literature can explore narratives of conflict and reconciliation, while religious studies can examine interfaith dialogue and religious resources for peace.

Humanities education should move beyond predominantly lecture-based and examination-oriented approaches toward pedagogies that actively develop critical thinking and dialogue. Students should be encouraged to question assumptions, compare perspectives, examine evidence, debate controversial issues respectfully, and reflect upon their own positions. Dialogue-based pedagogy is particularly valuable because it models the practices necessary for conflict resolution. Students learn that disagreement does not necessarily require hostility and that opposing positions can be examined through reasoned argument. Contemporary conflicts are too complex to be adequately addressed by a single academic discipline. Humanities scholars should therefore collaborate with researchers in political science, sociology, psychology, law, economics, education, communication, security studies, and development studies. For example, a study of communal conflict may require historical analysis to understand its origins, philosophical analysis to examine justice and responsibility, psychological research to understand prejudice, political analysis to examine power relations, and sociological research to investigate community dynamics.

A particularly important strategy is to place human dignity at the centre of humanities-based peacebuilding. Different communities may disagree about religion, politics, culture, or historical interpretation, but recognition of the basic worth of every person provides a possible foundation for dialogue. Humanities disciplines can examine human dignity from philosophical, religious, historical, literary, and cultural perspectives. UNESCO (2023) places human dignity, human rights, equality, tolerance, and solidarity among the important principles underlying education for peace. A dignity-based approach discourages dehumanization and provides an ethical basis for addressing differences without resorting to discrimination or violence. Strengthening the role of the humanities in peacebuilding requires a deliberate shift from viewing these disciplines as primarily theoretical fields to recognizing them as important resources for social transformation. Such a shift requires curricular reform, interdisciplinary collaboration, community engagement, indigenous knowledge integration, digital innovation, teacher training, policy engagement, adequate funding, and systematic evaluation. For Africa, and particularly Nigeria, the development of a culturally grounded humanities-based approach to peacebuilding offers an important opportunity to connect indigenous traditions of communal responsibility and reconciliation with contemporary theories of conflict transformation, human rights, and positive peace. Such an approach can contribute not only to resolving existing conflicts but also to preventing future conflicts by cultivating citizens and institutions committed to justice, dialogue, human dignity, and peaceful coexistence.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has established that the humanities possess significant intellectual, ethical, cultural, and practical resources for peacebuilding and conflict resolution. While

conflicts are frequently addressed through political negotiation, legal mechanisms, economic interventions, and security measures, these approaches alone may not adequately address the deeper human factors that sustain conflict. Questions of identity, historical memory, cultural difference, religious belief, moral values, injustice, dignity, language, and social recognition are central to the way individuals and communities understand conflict. The humanities are particularly equipped to engage these dimensions of human experience. Philosophy, history, literature, religious studies, languages, theatre, and the arts contribute to peacebuilding in different but interconnected ways. Philosophy provides critical and ethical frameworks for examining justice, freedom, responsibility, equality, human dignity, and the common good. History enables societies to critically examine the past, understand the origins of grievances, and prevent the manipulation of historical memory. Literature provides access to diverse human experiences and can cultivate empathy and recognition of the humanity of others. Religious and ethical studies facilitate interfaith understanding and provide moral resources for forgiveness, reconciliation, compassion, and social responsibility. Languages and communication studies contribute to the understanding of how discourse can either promote dialogue or intensify hostility. The arts create spaces for expression, remembrance, cultural interaction, and reconciliation.

A major conclusion of this study is that peace should not be understood simply as the absence of physical violence. The cessation of violence may represent negative peace, but sustainable peace requires the transformation of the conditions that generate injustice, exclusion, discrimination, fear, and hostility. The humanities contribute to this broader understanding by examining the values and meanings underlying social relationships. A society may experience relative political stability while continuing to suffer from discrimination, inequality, cultural marginalization, religious intolerance, or historical resentment. Such conditions can eventually generate renewed conflict. Peacebuilding is closely connected with sustainable development. Societies affected by prolonged conflict often experience educational disruption, economic decline, displacement, institutional weakness, and social fragmentation. Sustainable development therefore requires peaceful and inclusive social environments. The humanities contribute to sustainable development by strengthening the values and capacities that allow societies to cooperate. Critical thinking, ethical responsibility, cultural understanding, empathy, dialogue, respect for diversity, and civic responsibility are essential not only for peace but also for effective democratic institutions and inclusive development. Their greatest contribution may therefore be preventive and transformative. By educating individuals to think critically, appreciate cultural differences, engage in dialogue, recognize the humanity of others, and act according to ethical principles, the humanities help create the intellectual and moral conditions necessary for peaceful coexistence. For Africa and particularly Nigeria, this contribution should be grounded in the continent's own intellectual and cultural resources while remaining open to contemporary theories of peace, human rights, conflict transformation, and sustainable development. African philosophies of communal responsibility, indigenous practices of mediation, oral traditions, religious resources, literature, languages, and the arts can be brought into constructive dialogue with modern peacebuilding approaches.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

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Received: August 26, 2026 **Accepted**: September 27, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026

Citation: Anyaoha, Samuel (2026). "Nigeria's Development Finance Diplomacy and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA): Assessing the Nexus between Regional Integration and Sustainable Development Partnerships." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 207-226.

Article **Open Access**

NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT FINANCE DIPLOMACY AND THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (AFCFTA): ASSESSING THE NEXUS BETWEEN REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

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Abstract

This article analyzed Nigeria's development finance diplomacy within the AfCFTA umbrella and its regional integration and sustainable development partnership implications. The problem of research is with the interrelationship between Nigeria's development finance policy and AfCFTA institutional frameworks for enhancing partnerships for sustainable development in addressing capacity limitations, weak governance, and rival regional great power agendas. Qualitative research design grounded on content analysis of policy documents, literature, and case studies of Nigeria's multilateral and bilateral development finance initiatives on the continent is utilized within this research. Thematic and comparative analysis are used to determine how the development finance strategy of Nigeria, governance architecture, and implementation framework compare to those of other African regional economic leaders and if they are aligned with AfCFTA goals. The results indicated that although Nigeria has tremendous potential as a development finance player via institutions such as the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) and bilateral cooperation arrangements, it is constrained by zero financial capacity, unreliable policy application, internal economic issues, and poor coordination with AfCFTA regimes. The research concluded that Nigerian finance diplomacy for development has propelled West African infrastructure financing and trade facilitation but not ideal transformative regional integration under AfCFTA. Although Nigeria's initiative indicates a shift toward African-led development solutions, structural barriers inhibit it from optimizing the opportunities of AfCFTA. Policy advice targets building financial resilience, strengthening policy consistency

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between national development goals and AfCFTA obligations, institutional implementation structures, and strengthening South-South cooperation arrangements amongst others.

Keywords: African Continental Free Trade Agreement, Development Finance Diplomacy, Nigeria, Regional Integration, Sustainable Development Partnerships,.

Background to the Study

African integration efforts have evolved significantly since the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, reflecting the continent's persistent quest for economic independence and collective self-determination (Adedeji, 2021). The historical trajectory of regional integration in Africa has been shaped by post-colonial aspirations to overcome structural economic dependencies inherited from European colonialism and to establish autonomous development pathways that prioritize African interests (Oloruntoba & Muchie, 2020). From the Lagos Plan of Action (1980) to the Abuja Treaty (1991) establishing the African Economic Community, continental leaders have consistently articulated visions for integrated markets, infrastructure networks, and collaborative development frameworks (African Union, 2015). The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCTA), which entered into force in 2021, represents the most ambitious integration initiative in African history, creating a single market of over 1.3 billion people with a combined GDP exceeding $3.4trillion (UNCTAD, 2021). Unlike previous regional integration schemes that remained largely aspirational, the AfCFTA establishes concrete mechanisms for tariff liberalization, trade facilitation, and harmonization of regulatory frameworks across the continent (Fofack & Bah, 2023). The agreement's objectives extend beyond trade liberalization to encompass industrial development, infrastructure connectivity, and sustainable economic transformation aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063 (Luke & Macleod, 2020).

Nigeria's role within this continental architecture is particularly significant given its position as Africa's largest economy and most populous nation. With a GDP of approximately $477 billion and a population exceeding 220 million, Nigeria possesses substantial economic weight that could catalyze or constrain AfCFTA's success (World Bank, 2023). However, Nigeria's engagement with the AfCFTA has been characterized by initial hesitation, delayed ratification, and ongoing tensions between protectionist domestic constituencies and pro-integration advocates (Adewale & Osabuohien, 2022). This ambivalence reflects deeper contradictions in Nigeria's foreign economic policy, where rhetorical commitments to Pan-Africanism often clash with inward-looking economic nationalism and rent-seeking interests (Okolo, 2021). Development finance diplomacy has emerged as a critical instrument through which Nigeria seeks to project influence and advance strategic interests across Africa. Through institutions such as the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) (where Nigeria is a major shareholder), bilateral trade agreements, and infrastructure financing initiatives, Nigeria attempts to position itself as a regional development partner rather than merely a commercial actor (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020). Yet questions persist regarding whether Nigeria's development finance approach genuinely promotes mutual benefit and regional integration, or primarily serves to secure access to markets and resources for Nigerian businesses while maintaining asymmetrical relationships with smaller African economies (Eze & Nwankwo, 2023).

The study of Nigeria's development finance diplomacy within the AfCFTA framework is crucial because it illuminates broader tensions between national sovereignty and regional integration, between economic nationalism and Pan-African solidarity, and between inclusive development and elite-driven accumulation strategies (Senghor & Tella, 2022).

Traditional approaches to African integration have been criticized for prioritizing state-centric frameworks that neglect the interests of non-state actors, fail to address structural inequalities between member states, and lack effective implementation mechanisms (Igue, 2020). The AfCFTA attempts to address these limitations through enhanced private sector engagement, stronger dispute resolution mechanisms, and clearer protocols for progressive tariff elimination (Signé & van der Ven, 2020). Critical scholarship questions whether Nigeria possesses the institutional capacity, political will, and policy coherence necessary to effectively leverage AfCFTA opportunities while simultaneously addressing domestic development challenges including poverty, unemployment, and infrastructure deficits (Nwosu *et al*., 2021). Nigeria's development finance initiatives often suffer from weak institutional coordination, limited financial resources relative to commitments made, and vulnerability to political interference that undermines long-term strategic planning (Ajakaiye & Tella, 2020). Furthermore, Nigeria's historically protectionist trade policies and concerns about smuggling across porous borders create tensions with AfCFTA's liberalization agenda (Jerome & Bisong, 2021).

The central research question is whether Nigeria's development finance diplomacy can evolve from its current ad hoc, often reactive character into a coherent strategic framework that advances both national interests and continental integration objectives. Specifically, this study investigates: (1) How effectively Nigeria's development finance approach align with and support AfCFTA implementation mechanisms? (2) What governance structures and institutional frameworks shape Nigeria's development finance partnerships within Africa? (3) What principal obstacles are preventing Nigeria from fully capitalizing on AfCFTA opportunities through development finance diplomacy? (4) How Nigeria's performance as a development finance actor compare with other major African economies engaging with AfCFTA? These questions guide the analysis of whether Nigeria's development finance diplomacy represents a transformative contribution to African integration or merely reproduces existing patterns of uneven development and dependency relationships under new institutional arrangements.

Literature/Conceptual Review

Definition and Evolution of Regional Integration in Africa: Regional integration in Africa encompasses multifaceted processes through which neighbouring States collaborate to create larger economic spaces, harmonize policies, and establish common institutions for managing shared challenges and opportunities (Hartzenberg, 2021). Unlike integration experiences in Europe or Asia, African integration has been fundamentally shaped by the continent's colonial legacy, which created fragmented economies oriented toward metropolitan centers rather than intra-African exchange (Mkandawire & Soludo, 2022). The conceptual foundations of African integration derive from Pan-Africanist ideology, which envisions continental unity as essential for overcoming political fragmentation and economic marginalization within global capitalism (Nyamnjoh, 2020). The evolution of regional integration in Africa can be traced through several phases. The immediate post-independence period (1960s-1970s) emphasized political solidarity and decolonization struggles, with economic integration viewed primarily as a mechanism for reducing dependence on former colonial powers (Adedeji, 2021). The Lagos Plan of Action (1980) marked a shift toward more explicit economic integration objectives, advocating for collective self-reliance and industrialization strategies (OAU, 1980). However, structural adjustment programmes imposed by international financial institutions during the 1980s-

1990s undermined these integration efforts by promoting outward-oriented liberalization that often conflicted with regional cooperation objectives (Mkandawire, 2020). Contemporary regional integration in Africa operates through multiple overlapping frameworks, including Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as ECOWAS, SADC, and EAC, which serve as building blocks for continental integration (Qobo & Soko, 2021). The establishment of AfCFTA represents an attempt to rationalize these fragmented arrangements into a coherent continental framework, though challenges of overlapping memberships and conflicting protocols persist (Fofack & Bah, 2023). Critics argued that African integration remains largely elite-driven, with limited grassroots participation or accountability mechanisms ensuring that integration benefits extend beyond political and business elites to ordinary citizens (Igue, 2020).

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement: Structure, Objectives, and Implementation

The AfCFTA represents the world's largest free trade area by number of countries, encompassing 54 of 55 African Union member states (Eritrea being the sole non-signatory) (African Union, 2021). The agreement's structural architecture consists of three phases: Phase I focused on trade in goods and services; Phase II addresses intellectual property, investment, and competition policy; Phase III will tackle e-commerce and other emerging issues (UNCTAD, 2021). Unlike previous integration attempts, AfCFTA establishes binding legal commitments with dispute resolution mechanisms intended to ensure compliance and prevent backsliding (Luke & Macleod, 2020). The agreement's primary objectives include creating a single continental market, promoting industrialization through value chain integration, enhancing competitiveness through economies of scale, and facilitating free movement of business persons and investments (AfCFTA Secretariat, 2020). Tariff liberalization schedules require 90% of goods to reach zero tariffs within five years for developed African countries and ten years for least developed countries, with sensitive products subject to longer phase-out periods (Signé & van der Ven, 2020). Rules of origin protocols aim to prevent trade deflection while ensuring that liberalization benefits genuinely African production rather than serving as backdoor entry for extra-African goods (Erasmus *et al*., 2021).

However, implementation challenges are substantial. Infrastructure deficits, including inadequate transportation networks and unreliable electricity supply, constrain the ability of African producers to capitalize on expanded market access (Songwe et al., 2021). Non-tariff barriers, such as cumbersome customs procedures, multiple roadblocks, and arbitrary regulatory requirements, often constitute more significant impediments to intra-African trade than formal tariffs (Fofack & Bah, 2023). Additionally, limited productive capacity in many African countries means that trade liberalization may primarily benefit more industrialized economies like South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria, potentially exacerbating existing inequalities (Mevel & Karingi, 2020). Institutional weaknesses further complicate implementation. The AfCFTA Secretariat, established in Accra, Ghana, faces challenges of limited financial resources, inadequate technical capacity, and dependence on external donor funding that may compromise its autonomy (Adewale & Osabuohien, 2022). Coordination between the AfCFTA Secretariat, RECs, and national governments remains problematic, with unclear division of responsibilities and competing bureaucratic interests hindering coherent policy implementation (Qobo & Soko, 2021). Whether AfCFTA can overcome these obstacles to achieve its transformative vision remains an open question requiring sustained political commitment and substantial financial investment.

Nigeria's Foreign Economic Policy and Development Finance Diplomacy

Nigeria's foreign economic policy has historically oscillated between Pan-African solidarity rhetoric and pragmatic pursuit of national commercial interests (Okolo, 2021). As Africa's largest economy and most populous nation, Nigeria has periodically attempted to exercise regional leadership through initiatives such as the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme and provision of peacekeeping forces for regional stability operations (Adewale, 2020). However, Nigeria's regional influence has been constrained by domestic economic vulnerabilities, including dependence on oil revenues, persistent infrastructure deficits, and weak institutional capacity for sustained policy implementation (Ajakaiye & Tella, 2020). Development finance diplomacy encompasses Nigeria's use of financial instruments, including bilateral loans, trade credits, infrastructure financing, and equity investments, to advance strategic objectives and cultivate political influence across Africa (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020). Unlike China's Belt and Road Initiative or India's development partnership programmes, Nigeria's development finance activities remain relatively modest in scale and largely concentrated within West Africa (Eze & Nwankwo, 2023). Nigerian banks and corporations have expanded across the continent, particularly in telecommunications, banking, and retail sectors, but this commercial expansion does not necessarily translate into coherent state-led development finance strategy (Nwosu *et al*., 2021).

Nigeria's engagement with multilateral development finance institutions presents a mixed picture. As a significant shareholder in Afreximbank, Nigeria has supported the institution's trade finance programmes and infrastructure initiatives across Africa (Afreximbank, 2022). However, Nigeria's own development finance institutions, such as the Nigerian Export-Import Bank (NEXIM) and Bank of Industry (BOI), face severe capital constraints and limited operational reach beyond national borders (Jerome & Bisong, 2021). This institutional weakness undermines Nigeria's capacity to deploy development finance as an effective instrument of economic diplomacy. Critical scholars have questioned whether Nigeria's development finance initiatives genuinely promote equitable partnerships or primarily serve to advance narrow commercial interests of Nigerian elites (Senghor & Tella, 2022). Nigerian businesses operating across Africa have sometimes been criticized for exploitative labor practices, limited technology transfer, and failure to meaningfully integrate into local economies (Oloruntoba & Muchie, 2020). Furthermore, Nigeria's domestic economic challenges, including high unemployment, poverty, and inequality, raise questions about the appropriateness of directing scarce financial resources toward external development finance when domestic needs remain acute (Nwosu *et al*., 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Dependency Theory: Dependency Theory, articulated by scholars including Raúl Prebisch, André Gunder Frank, and Samir Amin, posits that underdevelopment in peripheral economies results from structural relationships of exploitation embedded in global capitalism (Prebisch, 1950; Frank, 1967; Amin, 1974). This theoretical perspective emphasizes how international economic institutions, trade patterns, and financial flows systematically transfer value from developing to developed countries, perpetuating inequality and constraining autonomous development in the Global South (Dos Santos, 1970). Within this framework, regional integration initiatives like AfCFTA can be understood as attempts to restructure dependency relationships by creating larger markets, enhancing bargaining power vis-à-vis external actors, and fostering intra-peripheral economic linkages that reduce reliance on core economies (Mkandawire, 2020). Applied to Nigeria's

development finance diplomacy within AfCFTA, Dependency Theory suggests examining whether Nigerian initiatives genuinely challenge existing dependency structures or merely reproduce them at regional scales. Nigeria's own economic structure remains heavily dependent on oil exports to global markets, with limited domestic value addition and persistent vulnerability to external price shocks (Ajakaiye & Tella, 2020). This structural dependency potentially constrains Nigeria's capacity to serve as an alternative development finance provider, as its own financial resources remain ultimately derived from integration into global commodity chains dominated by core economies (Okolo, 2021). Furthermore, Dependency Theory highlights risks that regional integration under conditions of uneven development may create new forms of dependency, with less industrialized African countries becoming dependent on more developed regional powers like Nigeria, South Africa, or Egypt (Mevel & Karingi, 2020). If Nigeria's development finance diplomacy primarily facilitates market access for Nigerian corporations without promoting genuine industrial development or technology transfer in recipient countries, it may reproduce dependency dynamics rather than challenging them (Oloruntoba & Muchie, 2020). The theory thus provides a critical lens for assessing whether AfCFTA and associated development finance initiatives represent transformative restructuring of African economies or merely reconfigure existing patterns of unequal exchange within continental rather than global frameworks.

New Regionalism Theory

New Regionalism Theory emerged in the 1990s to explain the proliferation of regional integration arrangements following the Cold War, emphasizing multidimensional integration encompassing economic, political, and social dimensions (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000). Unlike earlier regionalism theories focused primarily on trade liberalization, New Regionalism recognizes the importance of non-state actors, the role of regional identity formation, and linkages between regional integration and global governance structures (Fawcett, 2021). This theoretical approach is particularly relevant for understanding African integration initiatives, which explicitly link economic objectives to broader goals of political cooperation, peace, and security (Qobo & Soko, 2021). Applied to Nigeria's development finance diplomacy within AfCFTA, New Regionalism Theory suggests analyzing how financial cooperation intersects with other dimensions of regional integration. Nigeria's provision of development finance cannot be separated from its broader regional leadership aspirations, its role in ECOWAS peacekeeping operations, or its diplomatic efforts to shape African Union policy positions (Adewale, 2020). Development finance serves not merely as technical economic cooperation but as a mechanism for cultivating political influence, building regional coalitions, and projecting Nigerian power across the continent (Eze & Nwankwo, 2023). However, New Regionalism Theory also highlights potential contradictions between different integration dimensions. Nigeria's security concerns regarding porous borders and smuggling have sometimes conflicted with trade liberalization commitments, illustrating tensions between economic integration objectives and sovereignty considerations (Jerome & Bisong, 2021). Furthermore, the theory emphasizes the importance of non-state actors, including civil society organizations and private sector entities, whose interests may diverge from state-led integration agendas (Hartzenberg, 2021). Understanding Nigeria's development finance diplomacy requires examining how state institutions navigate these competing interests and reconcile contradictory pressures from diverse stakeholders.

Development Finance Theory

Development Finance Theory examines how financial institutions, instruments, and policies can be structured to promote economic transformation, poverty reduction, and sustainable development (Griffith-Jones & Ocampo, 2018). This theoretical perspective distinguishes development finance from commercial finance through its emphasis on long-term investment horizons, willingness to accept below-market returns, and explicit orientation toward developmental objectives rather than profit maximization (Mazzucato & Penna, 2016). Within African contexts, development finance theory particularly emphasizes the need for patient capital to support infrastructure development, industrialization, and economic diversification away from commodity dependence (Songwe *et al*., 2021). Applied to Nigeria's engagement with AfCFTA, Development Finance Theory provides frameworks for evaluating whether Nigerian financial institutions and policies effectively support continental integration objectives. The theory suggests that successful development finance requires institutional capacity for project appraisal, risk management, and impact evaluation; adequate capital resources to sustain lending operations; and governance structures that insulate development objectives from short-term political interference (Studart & Gallagher, 2016). Nigeria's development finance institutions face significant challenges in all these dimensions, constraining their effectiveness as instruments of regional development strategy (Nwosu *et al*., 2021). Furthermore, Development Finance Theory highlights the importance of complementarity between public and private finance. While public development finance institutions can catalyze investment by reducing risks and demonstrating project viability, sustainable development ultimately requires mobilizing private capital flows (Songwe *et al*., 2021). Nigeria's development finance diplomacy must therefore consider how to leverage limited public resources to crowd in private investment, both domestic and foreign, toward productive sectors aligned with AfCFTA objectives (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020). The theory thus provides analytical tools for assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of Nigeria's development finance approach in supporting regional integration and sustainable development outcomes.

Empirical Review

Empirical research on Nigeria's role in African regional integration has produced diverse findings regarding the country's effectiveness as a development partner. Adewale and Osabuohien (2022) conducted a comprehensive analysis of Nigeria's AfCFTA engagement, documenting initial hesitation rooted in concerns about protecting domestic industries from competition, particularly from more industrialized African economies. Their research revealed that Nigerian manufacturers, especially in sectors like textiles, plastics, and pharmaceuticals, expressed significant anxiety about market liberalization that could expose them to competition from South African and Egyptian producers with superior productive capacity. However, the study also identified potential opportunities for Nigerian exporters in agricultural products, processed foods, and services sectors across West and Central Africa. Eze and Nwankwo (2023) examined Nigerian corporate expansion across Africa, finding that Nigerian banks, telecommunications companies, and consumer goods manufacturers have established significant regional footprints. Their case studies documented how Guaranty Trust Bank, Access Bank, and United Bank for Africa have expanded operations across multiple African countries, providing financial services and potentially facilitating trade financing aligned with AfCFTA objectives. However, the research also revealed limitations: these commercial expansions primarily served Nigerian diaspora communities and large corporations rather than fostering broad-based economic development or supporting small

and medium enterprises in host countries. Comparative studies have assessed Nigeria's development finance capabilities relative to other major African economies. Ajakaiye and Tella (2020) contrasted Nigeria's approach with South Africa's more institutionalized development finance framework, including the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the Industrial Development Corporation. Their analysis revealed that despite Nigeria's larger economy, its development finance institutions remain significantly less capitalized, less technically sophisticated, and less effective at project implementation than South African counterparts. This institutional gap constrains Nigeria's capacity to deploy development finance as an effective instrument of regional influence.

Research on AfCFTA implementation challenges has identified numerous obstacles affecting all participating countries, including Nigeria. Fofack and Bah (2023) documented how infrastructure deficits, particularly in transportation, energy, and digital connectivity, fundamentally constrain intra-African trade potential regardless of tariff liberalization. Their quantitative modeling suggested that addressing infrastructure gaps could generate larger trade gains than tariff elimination alone. For Nigeria specifically, inadequate port infrastructure, unreliable electricity supply, and poor road networks limit the country's ability to serve as a manufacturing hub for continental markets despite its large domestic market and demographic advantages. Studies examining Nigeria's engagement with multilateral African institutions provide additional insights. Asongu and Odhiambo (2020) analyzed Nigeria's participation in Afreximbank, noting that while Nigeria is among the bank's largest shareholders, Nigerian businesses and government entities have underutilized Afreximbank's trade finance facilities relative to the country's economic size. Their research identified institutional coordination failures, limited awareness among potential beneficiaries, and cumbersome application procedures as factors explaining this underutilization. This suggests that even where institutional frameworks exist to support Nigeria's regional engagement, practical obstacles prevent effective implementation. Case studies of specific Nigerian development finance initiatives in Africa illustrate both successes and limitations. Nwosu *et al*. (2021) examined Nigeria's bilateral trade agreements with neighboring West African countries, finding that while these agreements established frameworks for cooperation, actual implementation remained weak due to border disputes, non-tariff barriers, and limited institutional capacity for monitoring compliance. Their research documented cases where Nigerian exports faced arbitrary restrictions despite formal agreements, while smuggling of goods into Nigeria continued unabated, suggesting that formal diplomatic agreements often fail to translate into meaningful economic integration.

Research on political economy dimensions of Nigeria's AfCFTA engagement reveals complex domestic dynamics. Jerome and Bisong (2021) analyzed how different interest groups within Nigeria have positioned themselves regarding continental integration. Their findings showed that while some export-oriented sectors (particularly in services and agribusiness) supported AfCFTA implementation, import-competing manufacturers and labor unions in declining industries mobilized significant opposition. This domestic political fragmentation complicates Nigeria's capacity to formulate and implement coherent regional development finance strategies, as policymakers must navigate competing pressures from diverse constituencies. Studies examining AfCFTA's potential impact on Nigeria offer varying projections. Mevel and Karingi (2020) utilized computable general equilibrium modeling to estimate that Nigeria could gain approximately $14 billion in additional income by 2035 through AfCFTA implementation, primarily through expanded exports of processed goods

and services. However, their analysis also cautioned that these gains depend on substantial complementary investments in infrastructure, regulatory reform, and productive capacity enhancement that may not materialize given Nigeria's fiscal constraints and governance challenges. Critical scholarship has questioned whether Nigeria's development finance approaches genuinely promote equitable partnerships. Oloruntoba and Muchie (2020) argued that Nigerian corporate expansion across Africa sometimes reproduces exploitative patterns similar to those associated with multinational corporations from developed countries, including limited local employment creation, minimal technology transfer, and profit repatriation that drains resources from host economies. Their research called for more critical examination of whether Nigerian development finance diplomacy serves mutual development objectives or primarily advances narrow commercial interests.

Comparative research on regional powers' approaches to development finance within their respective regions provides useful context. Senghor and Tella (2022) contrasted Nigeria's relatively ad hoc development finance diplomacy with more structured approaches pursued by countries like China in Asia or Brazil in Latin America. Their analysis identified institutional weaknesses, limited financial resources, and absence of coherent strategic vision as factors distinguishing Nigeria's approach from more effective regional powers. This suggests that Nigeria's potential as a development finance actor remains substantially unrealized due to domestic constraints rather than external obstacles. Recent research has begun examining specific sectoral opportunities for Nigeria within AfCFTA. Okolo (2021) analyzed Nigeria's potential in the digital economy, identifying technology services, fintech, and creative industries as sectors where Nigerian firms possess competitive advantages that could be leveraged across African markets. However, the research also documented regulatory barriers, inadequate digital infrastructure, and limited harmonization of standards as obstacles preventing Nigerian digital firms from fully capitalizing on continental market opportunities. Studies of institutional coordination challenges affecting AfCFTA implementation in Nigeria reveal substantial governance gaps. Qobo and Soko (2021) documented how multiple Nigerian government agencies with overlapping mandates for trade policy, regional integration, and development finance often pursue conflicting objectives without effective coordination mechanisms. This institutional fragmentation undermines policy coherence and prevents Nigeria from presenting unified positions in regional negotiations or effectively implementing commitments once agreements are signed.

Research Methodology

Research Design: This study employs a qualitative research design to critically examine Nigeria's development finance diplomacy within the AfCFTA framework and assess its implications for regional integration and sustainable development partnerships. Qualitative methodology is particularly appropriate for this investigation because it enables deep contextual analysis of institutional practices, policy frameworks, and governance structures that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research seeks to understand not merely what Nigeria does in terms of development finance, but how and why it pursues particular strategies, what constraints shape its choices, and what implications its approach holds for broader continental integration objectives. The primary research strategy is content analysis, which focused on systematic examination of textual materials to identify patterns, themes, and meanings relevant to research questions (Krippendorff, 2018). This approach allows for rigorous analysis of diverse documentary sources including policy statements, institutional reports,

academic scholarship, and case study materials to construct a comprehensive understanding of Nigeria's development finance diplomacy. Content analysis is particularly valuable for studying complex policy domains where multiple actors pursue intersecting and sometimes contradictory objectives, as enables systematic comparison across sources and identification of discrepancies between rhetoric and practice (Bowen, 2009).

Data Collection Method

Given the qualitative nature of this study, it relies exclusively on secondary data sources. This includes:

i. **Policy Documents:** Official statements from the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Trade and Investment, and Central Bank of Nigeria regarding AfCFTA engagement and development finance policies. African Union documents including AfCFTA texts, implementation protocols, and progress reports. ECOWAS policy frameworks addressing regional integration and development cooperation.
ii. **Academic Literature**: Peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly monographs, and edited volumes examining African regional integration, development finance institutions, and Nigeria's foreign economic policy. Theoretical and empirical studies analyzing AfCFTA implementation challenges, regional power dynamics, and development finance effectiveness in African contexts.
iii. **Institutional Reports**: Publications from multilateral development finance institutions including Afreximbank, African Development Bank, and World Bank addressing African trade integration and infrastructure financing. Reports from Nigerian development finance institutions including NEXIM and Bank of Industry regarding their regional operations and strategic priorities.
iv. **Case Study Materials**: Documented analyses of specific Nigerian development finance initiatives in Africa, including bilateral cooperation agreements, corporate investments, and infrastructure projects. Comparative case studies examining how other regional powers deploy development finance diplomacy.

Data sources were selected based on criteria of credibility, relevance, and accessibility. Academic materials were drawn from established databases including JSTOR, Google Scholar, EconLit, and African Journals Online. Official documents were obtained from government websites, institutional repositories, and international organization databases. All sources underwent preliminary assessment to verify authenticity and reliability before inclusion in the analysis.

Data Analysis Technique

This study employs two complementary analytical techniques: thematic analysis and comparative analysis.

i. **Thematic Analysis**: Following Braun and Clarke (2021), the research identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns of meaning across the collected data. The analytical process involves: (1) Familiarization with data through repeated reading; (2) Generation of initial codes identifying significant features; (3) Searching for themes by clustering related codes; (4) Reviewing themes to ensure internal coherence and external distinctiveness; (5) Defining and naming themes to capture their essence; (6) Producing the analysis by integrating themes into a coherent narrative addressing research questions. Key themes examined include: Nigeria's institutional frameworks for development finance; alignment between Nigerian policies and AfCFTA objectives; governance challenges

affecting implementation; comparative advantages and constraints shaping Nigeria's regional role; implications for sustainable development and equitable partnerships.

ii. **Comparative Analysis**: The study systematically compares Nigeria's development finance approach with those of other significant African economies including South Africa, Egypt, and Kenya. Comparison focuses on: institutional capacity and financial resources; policy coherence and strategic vision; implementation effectiveness; alignment with AfCFTA mechanisms; development outcomes and distributional impacts. This comparative dimension enables assessment of whether Nigeria's performance reflects unique national circumstances or represents broader patterns affecting African development finance more generally (Collier, 1993).

Justification of Methodology

Qualitative methodology is particularly appropriate for this research because it enables investigation of complex institutional dynamics, power relationships, and policy implementation processes that cannot be adequately understood through quantitative indicators alone (Yin, 2018). Development finance diplomacy operates through multifaceted interactions among government agencies, financial institutions, corporations, and international organizations, requiring analytical approaches capable of capturing this complexity. Content analysis of documentary sources provides access to official policy positions, institutional practices, and analytical perspectives from diverse stakeholders without requiring primary data collection that would face significant practical obstacles given the geographic scope and institutional access requirements involved (Bowen, 2009). The combination of thematic and comparative analysis enables both depth (through detailed examination of Nigerian cases) and breadth (through systematic comparison with other African countries), producing insights that neither approach could generate independently. This methodology acknowledges inherent limitations including reliance on publicly available information that may not capture confidential deliberations or informal practices, and dependence on existing scholarship that may reflect particular theoretical or ideological orientations. However, these limitations are mitigated through triangulation across multiple sources, critical engagement with diverse perspectives, and explicit acknowledgment of analytical assumptions informing interpretation (Flick, 2018).

Findings and Discussion

Nigeria's Institutional Framework for Development Finance within AfCFTA: Analysis reveals that Nigeria's institutional architecture for development finance diplomacy remains fragmented, undercapitalized, and inadequately coordinated with AfCFTA implementation mechanisms. The primary institutions include the Nigerian Export-Import Bank (NEXIM), Bank of Industry (BOI), and Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA), each operating with distinct mandates and limited inter-agency coordination (Jerome & Bisong, 2021). NEXIM, theoretically positioned to facilitate export financing aligned with continental market opportunities, faces severe capital constraints with authorized capital of only ₦500 billion (approximately $1.2 billion), dramatically smaller than comparable institutions in countries with smaller economies (Ajakaiye & Tella, 2020). Documentary analysis of institutional reports reveals significant gaps between stated objectives and operational capacity. While NEXIM's strategic documents reference AfCFTA as a priority focus area, actual lending to support continental trade expansion remains minimal, with the overwhelming majority of facilities directed toward domestic manufacturing and traditional export sectors (NEXIM,

2022). This suggests that institutional rhetoric about continental engagement outpaces genuine strategic reorientation toward regional development finance priorities.

Comparative analysis with South African development finance institutions highlights Nigeria's institutional deficiencies. The Development Bank of Southern Africa operates with substantially greater capital resources, more sophisticated project appraisal capabilities, and stronger linkages to regional infrastructure initiatives including those supported by African Union programs (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020). South Africa's more coherent institutional framework enables it to deploy development finance more effectively as an instrument of regional influence despite Nigeria's larger economy and population. Policy documents reveal limited coordination between Nigeria's AfCFTA negotiating positions and development finance strategies. The National Action Committee on AfCFTA, established to oversee implementation, operates with minimal integration with development finance institutions, creating policy silos that undermine coherent strategy formulation (Adewale & Osabuohien, 2022). This institutional fragmentation reflects broader governance challenges in Nigeria's public administration, where bureaucratic rivalries and unclear mandates impede effective policy implementation.

Alignment Between Nigerian Development Finance Policies and AfCFTA Objectives

Examination of policy documents and implementation reports indicates substantial misalignment between Nigeria's development finance approaches and AfCFTA's continental integration vision. AfCFTA emphasizes value chain integration, industrial complementarity, and infrastructure connectivity enabling seamless movement of goods, services, and investments across Africa (AfCFTA Secretariat, 2020). However, Nigerian development finance initiatives remain predominantly focused on supporting domestic firms' competitiveness within national borders rather than facilitating transnational economic integration (Okolo, 2021). Analysis of NEXIM and BOI lending portfolios reveals overwhelmingly domestic orientation, with minimal financing directed toward cross-border infrastructure projects, regional value chains, or partnerships between Nigerian and other African enterprises (Nwosu et al., 2021). This domestic focus reflects Nigeria's protectionist political economy, where import-competing industries wield significant influence over policy formulation and resist genuine market liberalization that might expose them to regional competition (Jerome & Bisong, 2021).

Case study examination of Nigeria's bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries demonstrates limited translation of formal commitments into practical cooperation on development finance. While Nigeria has signed numerous memoranda of understanding regarding trade facilitation, infrastructure development, and investment promotion with West African countries, implementation remains weak due to inadequate financing mechanisms, bureaucratic obstacles, and limited political prioritization (Eze & Nwankwo, 2023: Oaikhena & Ibebunjo, 2023). This research identifies specific areas where Nigerian development finance could better align with AfCFTA objectives. These include: financing for trade facilitation infrastructure at border crossings; support for regional value chains in sectors like agribusiness and light manufacturing where Nigeria possesses comparative advantages; capitalization of regional infrastructure initiatives such as transport corridors connecting Nigeria to neighboring markets; provision of trade finance facilities enabling small and medium enterprises to access continental markets (Songwe *et al*., 2021). However, current institutional capacity and political will remain insufficient to meaningfully pursue these opportunities.

Challenges Constraining Nigeria's Development Finance Diplomacy

The study identifies multiple interconnected challenges limiting Nigeria's effectiveness as a development finance actor within AfCFTA.

i. **Financial Constraints** represent the most fundamental obstacle. Nigeria's development finance institutions operate with capital bases dramatically smaller than required to meaningfully impact continental development (Ajakaiye & Tella, 2020). NEXIM's total assets of approximately $3 billion pale in comparison to Afreximbank's $25 billion or South Africa's Industrial Development Corporation's $8 billion, constraining Nigeria's capacity to finance large-scale infrastructure projects or provide substantial trade credit facilities (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020).

ii. **Domestic Economic Vulnerabilities** further limit Nigeria's regional development finance capacity. The country's persistent fiscal deficits, high debt service ratios, and dependence on volatile oil revenues create macroeconomic instability that constrains government capacity to capitalize development finance institutions or sustain long-term regional initiatives (Okolo, 2021). The naira's depreciation against major currencies and periodic foreign exchange shortages complicate cross-border financing arrangements and undermine confidence in Nigerian financial commitments (Jerome & Bisong, 2021).

iii. **Governance and Institutional Weaknesses** systematically undermine policy implementation. Documentary evidence reveals frequent leadership changes in development finance institutions, inconsistent strategic priorities across political administrations, and vulnerability to corruption that diverts resources from developmental objectives (Nwosu *et al*., 2021). The absence of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks prevents systematic assessment of whether development finance initiatives achieve intended outcomes, enabling persistent inefficiencies without accountability (Adewale & Osabuohien, 2022).

iv. **Infrastructure Deficits** within Nigeria itself constrain the country's capacity to serve as a regional economic hub. Unreliable electricity supply, inadequate transport networks, and congested ports increase production costs for Nigerian manufacturers and limit their competitiveness in continental markets (Fofack & Bah, 2023). These domestic infrastructure challenges undermine Nigeria's ability to leverage AfCFTA opportunities regardless of development finance availability, as productive capacity constraints prevent Nigerian firms from scaling up to serve larger markets.

v. **Political Economy Obstacles** reflect tensions between continental integration rhetoric and protectionist domestic interests. Analysis of stakeholder positions reveals that powerful manufacturing lobbies, labour unions in import-competing sectors, and state-level political actors often oppose genuine market liberalization that AfCFTA requires (Jerome & Bisong, 2021). This creates political constraints on development finance policies, as institutions face pressure to support defensive strategies protecting existing industries rather than offensive strategies capitalizing on new continental market opportunities.

vi. **Border Management Challenges** specific to Nigeria's geography further complicate regional integration efforts. Nigeria shares porous land borders with multiple countries across which substantial informal trade and smuggling occur, creating concerns that AfCFTA implementation might exacerbate revenue losses and security vulnerabilities (Adewale, 2020). These concerns have periodically prompted border closures that directly contradict integration commitments, revealing fundamental tensions in Nigeria's approach to regional cooperation.

vii. **Limited Private Sector Engagement** constrains development finance effectiveness. While Nigerian corporations have expanded across Africa, particularly in banking, telecommunications, and consumer goods, this expansion often proceeds independently of government development finance strategies (Eze & Nwankwo, 2023). The absence of effective public-private partnerships means that limited public development finance resources fail to catalyze larger private capital flows toward productive investments aligned with AfCFTA objectives (Songwe *et al*., 2021).

Comparative Performance: Nigeria Versus Other African Development Finance Actors

Comparative analysis reveals that Nigeria significantly underperforms relative to its economic potential as a development finance actor. South Africa operates more sophisticated development finance institutions with clearer mandates, greater technical capacity, and stronger governance frameworks (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020). The Development Bank of Southern Africa has financed numerous regional infrastructure projects across SADC and beyond, establishing South Africa as a credible development partner. South Africa's participation in BRICS and leadership of the New Development Bank further enhances its development finance capabilities and continental influence. Egypt has leveraged its strategic position and infrastructure development experience to play significant roles in African development finance. Egyptian construction firms and state-owned enterprises have undertaken major projects across Africa, supported by government financing mechanisms and strategic partnerships with Gulf states and China (Senghor & Tella, 2022). Egypt's more coherent infrastructure development strategy, exemplified by its domestic megaprojects, provides credibility for regional engagement that Nigeria's inconsistent infrastructure record lacks.

Kenya demonstrates that regional development finance leadership does not require the largest economy. Through institutions like the Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank and active engagement in East African Community infrastructure initiatives, Kenya has positioned itself as a development finance hub for its region (Qobo & Soko, 2021). Kenya's more business-friendly regulatory environment, better-developed financial sector, and stable macroeconomic management enable it to punch above its economic weight in regional development finance. Morocco, despite not being an African Union member for much of its history, has pursued aggressive economic diplomacy across Africa through strategic investments, infrastructure projects, and development partnerships, particularly in West Africa (Oloruntoba & Muchie, 2020). Moroccan banks, telecommunications firms, and phosphate companies have established substantial African footprints supported by government financing and diplomatic engagement. Morocco's focused strategy contrasts with Nigeria's more diffuse approach. These comparisons reveal that Nigeria's underperformance reflects institutional and governance deficiencies rather than inevitable constraints of economic structure or geographic position. Countries with smaller economies but stronger institutions, clearer strategies, and more consistent implementation achieve greater development finance impact than Nigeria despite its larger GDP and population (Ajakaiye & Tella, 2020).

Development Outcomes and Implications for Regional Integration

Assessment of development outcomes from Nigeria's engagement with AfCFTA and development finance diplomacy reveals limited transformative impact. Infrastructure development supported by Nigerian financing remains minimal beyond a few bilateral projects with immediate neighbors (Nwosu *et al*., 2021). Unlike South Africa's extensive

involvement in regional energy, transport, and telecommunications infrastructure, or China's Belt and Road projects across Africa, Nigeria has not emerged as a significant infrastructure financier despite rhetorical commitments. Trade facilitation outcomes show marginal improvements. While Nigerian participation in AfCFTA theoretically opens continental market access, practical trade flows have not dramatically increased (Adewale & Osabuohien, 2022). Persistent non-tariff barriers, cumbersome customs procedures, and inadequate trade finance availability constrain actual trade expansion. Nigerian development finance institutions have not effectively addressed these bottlenecks through targeted interventions in trade infrastructure or working capital financing. Industrial development impacts remain limited. AfCFTA's promise of fostering regional value chains and industrial complementarity has not materialized significantly in Nigeria's case (Okolo, 2021). Nigerian manufacturing continues to focus primarily on domestic markets, with limited integration into continental production networks. Development finance has not catalyzed the industrial restructuring necessary to capitalize on continental market opportunities, reflecting both financial constraints and policy incoherence.

Employment and social development outcomes show minimal positive impact from Nigeria's AfCFTA engagement and development finance activities (Eze & Nwankwo, 2023). While some Nigerian corporations expanding across Africa create employment in host countries, overall job creation effects remain modest. The absence of strategic focus on labor-intensive sectors or small enterprise development means that Nigeria's regional economic activities primarily benefit elites rather than generating broad-based development. Sovereignty and policy autonomy considerations present mixed pictures. AfCFTA theoretically enhances African countries' collective bargaining power vis-à-vis external actors and reduces dependence on Western-dominated trade and financial systems (Fofack & Bah, 2023). However, Nigeria's continued reliance on external financing from China, multilateral development banks, and bilateral donors suggests that AfCFTA has not yet substantially enhanced Nigerian financial autonomy. Development finance flows within Africa remain dwarfed by external financial relationships.

Nigeria's Role in Continental Financial Governance and AfCFTA Implementation

Analysis of Nigeria's participation in continental financial governance institutions reveals inconsistent engagement and limited strategic vision. As a significant Afreximbank shareholder, Nigeria theoretically possesses influence over the institution's priorities and operations (Afreximbank, 2022). However, documentary evidence suggests that Nigeria has not systematically leveraged this position to advance coherent regional development finance strategies or ensure Afreximbank's activities align with Nigerian interests. Nigeria's engagement with the AfCFTA Secretariat shows similar patterns of inconsistent participation. While Nigerian officials participate in technical negotiations and implementation committees, the absence of whole-of-government coordination means that different ministries and agencies sometimes advance contradictory positions (Adewale & Osabuohien, 2022). This undermines Nigeria's capacity to shape AfCFTA implementation in ways that maximize benefits for Nigerian development priorities. Comparative analysis reveals that South Africa, Egypt, and Kenya exercise disproportionate influence over AfCFTA implementation relative to Nigeria despite the latter's larger economy (Qobo & Soko, 2021). These countries deploy more strategic diplomatic engagement, provide greater financial and technical support to the AfCFTA Secretariat, and demonstrate more consistent commitment to implementation. Nigeria's influence deficit reflects institutional weaknesses and policy incoherence rather than lack of formal representation. Nigeria's limited engagement with the African

Continental Free Trade Area Adjustment Facility, established to support countries facing adjustment costs from liberalization, represents a missed opportunity (Songwe *et al*., 2021). Nigerian policymakers could leverage this mechanism to access financing for industrial restructuring and trade facilitation infrastructure, but limited awareness and weak institutional capacity for project preparation constrain utilization.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions: This study critically examined Nigeria's development finance diplomacy within the AfCFTA framework and assessed its implications for regional integration and sustainable development partnerships. The findings lead to several significant conclusions:

i. First, Nigeria's development finance diplomacy remains substantially underdeveloped relative to the country's economic size and regional leadership aspirations. Institutional fragmentation, inadequate capitalization, and limited strategic coherence constrain Nigeria's capacity to deploy development finance as an effective instrument of regional influence or continental integration support (Ajakaiye & Tella, 2020). While institutions like NEXIM and BOI theoretically provide mechanisms for financing regional economic engagement, their operational focus remains overwhelmingly domestic, and their resources insufficient to meaningfully impact continental development finance flows.

ii. Second, significant misalignment exists between Nigeria's development finance approaches and AfCFTA's continental integration objectives. AfCFTA envisions value chain integration, infrastructure connectivity, and industrial complementarity requiring coordinated development finance to realize (AfCFTA Secretariat, 2020). However, Nigerian development finance policies predominantly support defensive strategies protecting existing industries rather than offensive strategies capitalizing on continental market opportunities (Jerome & Bisong, 2021). This misalignment reflects deeper tensions between protectionist political economy forces within Nigeria and the liberalization logic underlying AfCFTA.

iii. Third, Nigeria significantly underperforms as a development finance actor compared to regional peers including South Africa, Egypt, and Kenya. This underperformance reflects governance deficiencies, institutional weaknesses, and policy inconsistency rather than inevitable constraints of economic structure (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020). Countries with smaller economies but stronger institutions and clearer strategies achieve greater development finance impact, suggesting that Nigeria's challenges are primarily institutional and political rather than resource-constrained.

iv. Fourth, development outcomes from Nigeria's AfCFTA engagement and development finance activities remain limited. Infrastructure development, trade facilitation improvements, industrial restructuring, and employment generation effects have been marginal (Nwosu et al., 2021). While Nigerian corporations have expanded across Africa, this commercial activity has not translated into strategic development partnerships generating broad-based benefits for host countries or meaningfully advancing regional integration objectives (Eze & Nwankwo, 2023).

v. Fifth, Nigeria's participation in continental financial governance institutions including Afreximbank and AfCFTA implementation bodies remains inconsistent and strategically unfocused. The absence of whole-of-government coordination means Nigeria fails to leverage its formal positions to advance coherent regional development finance agendas (Adewale & Osabuohien, 2022). This represents a significant missed

opportunity, as more strategic engagement could enhance both Nigerian interests and broader continental integration objectives.

vi. Sixth, fundamental political economy obstacles constrain Nigeria's capacity to fully embrace AfCFTA and align development finance policies accordingly. Powerful domestic constituencies benefiting from protectionism resist genuine market liberalization, creating political constraints on policymakers attempting to reorient development finance toward supporting continental integration (Jerome & Bisong, 2021). Overcoming these obstacles requires not merely technical policy adjustments but political coalition-building to shift domestic economic interests toward integration-supporting positions.

The study concludes that while Nigeria possesses substantial potential to serve as a development finance leader supporting African regional integration, realizing this potential requires fundamental institutional reforms, enhanced financial capacity, improved governance and coordination, and political commitment to prioritizing continental integration alongside domestic development objectives. Without such reforms, Nigeria risks remaining a passive participant in AfCFTA rather than an active architect of continental economic transformation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, this study offers several policy recommendations for enhancing Nigeria's development finance diplomacy within the AfCFTA framework:

i. **Institutional Capacity Enhancement**: Nigeria should substantially recapitalize its development finance institutions, particularly NEXIM and BOI, to levels commensurate with the country's economic size and regional ambitions. This requires dedicated fiscal commitments potentially supplemented through partnership with multilateral institutions and strategic investors. Additionally, Nigeria should establish a specialized African Integration Fund explicitly mandated to finance projects supporting AfCFTA implementation, including trade facilitation infrastructure, regional value chain development, and SME export capacity building.

ii. **Strategic Coherence and Coordination**: Nigeria must establish effective coordination mechanisms linking development finance institutions, trade ministries, and AfCFTA implementation bodies. Creating an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Development Finance and Regional Integration, with authority to align policies across agencies and resolve bureaucratic conflicts, could address current fragmentation. This committee should develop and oversee implementation of a comprehensive National AfCFTA Strategy explicitly integrating development finance components.

iii. **Policy Alignment with AfCFTA Objectives**: Nigerian development finance policies should be systematically reoriented to prioritize projects directly supporting continental integration. Priority areas should include: (1) Border infrastructure and trade facilitation systems enabling seamless movement of goods; (2) Regional value chains in sectors where Nigeria possesses competitive advantages including agribusiness, light manufacturing, and services; (3) Digital infrastructure supporting e-commerce and digital trade across Africa; (4) SME financing specifically targeting firms with export potential to continental markets; (5) Skills development and technology transfer initiatives enhancing Nigerian firms' competitiveness in regional markets.

iv. **Governance and Transparency Reforms**: Nigeria's development finance institutions require strengthened governance frameworks insulating developmental objectives from short-term political interference while ensuring accountability for results. Reforms

should include: (1) Transparent project selection criteria emphasizing developmental impact and AfCFTA alignment; (2) Independent monitoring and evaluation systems systematically assessing outcomes; (3) Public disclosure requirements for major lending decisions and project results; (4) Professional management structures with clear performance metrics and accountability mechanisms; (5) Anti-corruption safeguards preventing diversion of resources.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: August 26, 2026 **Accepted**: September 27, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026

Citation: Ibebunjo, Basil O. & Oruchukwu, Nwaduhu B. (2026). "Social Media as Political Communication Platforms: An Evaluation of Facebook, Twitter and Youtube in Enugu State, Nigeria." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 227-236.

Article **Open Access**

SOCIAL MEDIA AS POLITICAL COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS: AN EVALUATION OF FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND YOUTUBE IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study evaluated social media as platforms for political communication during election periods in Enugu State, Nigeria. It examined (i) the extent to which social media are used for political communication and (ii) the contribution of social-media information systems to campaign communication. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The manuscript reports a population of 2,350 users associated with Facebook, Twitter, Telegram and YouTube, and a sample of 342 derived using the Taro Yamane formula at a 5% margin of error. Of the 342 questionnaires administered, 340 properly completed questionnaires were analysed. The 17-item questionnaire used a four-point response scale, and the instrument's reported Cronbach's alpha was .86. Data were analysed using weighted means, with 2.50 as the decision benchmark. Twitter (M = 3.43) and Facebook (M = 3.33) received the highest ratings for prominence during election periods, followed by Telegram (M = 2.85); YouTube fell just below the benchmark (M = 2.49). Respondents also viewed social-media pages as preferred campaign sources (M = 3.12) and social media as a strong campaign channel (M = 3.28). However, the low rating for the proposition that politicians achieve their political ambitions through social media (M = 2.30) cautions against equating communication reach with electoral success. The findings suggest that social media are important perceived channels of political communication in Enugu State, although their democratic and electoral effects depend on information quality, audience engagement, digital literacy and the wider political environment. The study recommends platform-specific communication strategies, stronger verification of campaign information, improved digital and political-media literacy,

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and integration of social media with traditional media. The population allocation and standard deviations require confirmation from the original field records before publication.

Keywords: Facebook, Social Media, Political Communication, Twitter, Youtube, Political Campaigns, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Political communication has undergone substantial transformation with the development of digital technologies and internet-mediated communication. Traditional political communication was largely characterised by a one-to-many structure in which journalists and media organisations mediated communication between political actors and citizens. Digital and social media have altered this arrangement by enabling politicians, parties, citizens and interest groups to create, distribute, comment on and recirculate political content with less dependence on conventional gatekeepers. This development is consistent with the hybrid media system, in which older and newer media logics interact rather than one simply replacing the other (Chadwick, 2017; McQuail & Deuze, 2021). The significance of this transformation is particularly visible during election periods. Political actors can use social-media platforms to publicise programmes, mobilise supporters, respond to opponents, frame issues and maintain contact with voters. Citizens can comment on political messages, share campaign materials, participate in online discussions and circulate information within their networks. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube therefore represent not merely alternative publicity channels but components of a changing political communication ecology. At the same time, social media create challenges involving misinformation, selective exposure, political polarisation, unequal digital access and the professional management of political communication (Ibebunjo, 2026). The Nigerian political environment also requires attention to the wider structures within which digital communication operates. Agbaenyi and Ibebunjo (2021) identify structural constraints on democratic participation, while Ibebunjo and Udeoji (2019) illustrate how communication, influence and strategic power operate within Nigeria's regional political environment. Ibebunjo (2026) further demonstrates that social-media communication can facilitate civic engagement while simultaneously intensifying polarisation. Together, these contributions support a contextual rather than technologically deterministic interpretation of social-media political communication.

In Nigeria, the growth of social media has coincided with increasing public interest in digital political communication. Evidence from the 2023 general elections indicates that social media have become part of the contemporary political communication environment. Nigerian scholarship also shows that political communication operates within broader structures of democratic participation and social relations (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2023; Agbaenyi & Ibebunjo, 2021). The central issue, therefore, is not simply whether social media are used, but how users perceive their contribution to political communication and whether such communication supports meaningful political participation. The problem addressed by this study is not whether social media exist as political communication channels, but the extent to which respondents perceive them as instruments of political communication and campaign engagement in Enugu State. The original study identified three objectives: to determine the extent to which social media are used for political communication; to determine how social-media information systems contribute to political communication; and to examine perceptions of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as mechanisms for mobilising participation in political discourse. However, the available results contain no separate table or sufficient empirical evidence for the third objective. This revised article therefore

addresses only the first two objectives and treats the third as an evidence gap rather than reporting an unsupported finding. This distinction matters because political visibility and online interaction do not necessarily constitute substantive political participation (Kushin & Kitchener, 2009; Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2017). The study addresses two empirically analysed research questions:

i. To what extent are social media used as political communication during election periods?
ii. To what extent do social-media information systems contribute to political communication?

Literature Review

Social Media and Political Communication: Social media are web-based communication environments that permit users to create, share and interact with content. Their political significance derives partly from their interactivity. Whereas traditional mass media have often been described as predominantly one-to-many channels, social media allow many-to-many communication in which users can simultaneously function as audiences, producers, commentators and distributors of information. This changes the speed and direction of political information flows and reduces some of the barriers associated with conventional media access. The literature links social media with information diffusion, political discussion, mobilisation and public communication. Social-media analytics can reveal patterns in information circulation and public attention, although the political meaning of such data requires contextual interpretation (Agrawal et al., 2011; Zeng et al., 2010; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Political actors can construct and disseminate messages without waiting entirely for conventional editorial selection, while citizens can react publicly through likes, comments, shares and replies. This changes the speed and direction of political information flows, but it also creates opportunities for strategic persuasion, selective exposure and polarisation (Conover et al., 2011; Hermida, 2010). The hybrid media perspective is useful for understanding this process. Chadwick (2017) argues that political communication is shaped by interaction between older and newer media logics rather than a simple replacement of traditional media by digital media. Political campaigns may therefore use television, radio, newspapers, rallies and social media simultaneously. This is particularly relevant in settings where internet access and digital literacy are uneven.

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in Political Campaigns

Facebook provides political actors with pages, profiles, groups and multimedia functions through which campaign information can be distributed and discussed. Research on political parties and Web 2.0 indicates that digital platforms can create architectures of participation, although the depth of participation depends on how citizens actually use those opportunities (Jackson & Lilleker, 2009; Kushin & Kitchener, 2009). Twitter is particularly associated with rapid, short-form political communication and electoral visibility. Studies of politicians and electoral communication show that Twitter can strengthen the connection between political actors and citizens, while network structure may also reinforce partisan clustering (Hong & Nadler, 2011; Lassen & Brown, 2011; Conover et al., 2011). Twitter (now X) is particularly associated with short-form, rapid political communication. Hashtags, replies, reposting and networked visibility enable political issues to gain attention quickly. Research on political campaigning indicates that Twitter can strengthen communication between political actors and citizens, although partisan clustering may also limit cross-group communication (Conover et al., 2011; Lassen & Brown, 2011). This pattern is consistent with research showing that micro-blogging can contribute to a distinctive campaign style (Vergeer

et al., 2013). YouTube differs from Facebook and Twitter through its emphasis on video. Political actors can use video for speeches, campaign advertisements, interviews and debates. Its lower ratings in the present study suggest that technical capacity does not automatically translate into perceived political influence. Audience habits, content format, internet costs and campaign practice may shape the effectiveness of individual platforms.

Social Media, Democracy and Participation

The democratic promise of social media lies partly in their potential to lower communication barriers. Participatory democratic theory emphasises citizens' active involvement in political processes and decision-making. Carole Pateman's influential account argues that participation can develop citizens' political capacities and strengthen democratic practice, while C. B. Macpherson situates participatory democracy within a broader critique of liberal-democratic arrangements (Macpherson, 1977; Pateman, 1970). Applied to digital communication, this perspective suggests that social media may widen opportunities for citizens to receive information, express views, respond to political actors and participate in public discourse. Such opportunities, however, do not by themselves demonstrate that meaningful participation has occurred. However, participation should be distinguished from visibility and interaction. A like, share or comment may represent political interest, but it does not necessarily indicate informed deliberation, voting behaviour, volunteering or sustained civic action. Research on digital political participation shows that online engagement can be relatively low-cost, making it important to distinguish communicative activity from deeper forms of participation (Kushin & Kitchener, 2009; Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2017). Another concern is fragmentation. Networked political communication can facilitate communities of shared political identity, but it can also produce partisan clustering and polarisation. Evidence from Twitter networks demonstrates ideological separation in political communication, reinforcing the need to consider both the participatory opportunities and the risks of information disorder (Conover et al., 2011). Social media should therefore be understood as ambivalent democratic infrastructure.

Empirical Literature

The reviewed literature contains substantial international evidence on digital political communication, but Nigeria-specific evidence remains context dependent. A study of the 2023 general elections in Omu-Aran demonstrates the relevance of social media to political communication in Nigeria (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2023). Related Nigerian scholarship points to the wider institutional and social environment within which political communication operates, including democratic participation, strategic influence, civil society and national integration (Agbaenyi & Ibebunjo, 2021; Ibebunjo & Udeoji, 2019; Iroye & Ibebunjo, 2019; Shaibu et al., 2022). Ibebunjo (2026) further highlights the capacity of social-media communication to facilitate engagement while also creating possibilities for discord in Nigeria's plural society. Evidence from Ghana similarly demonstrates the growing role of social media in election campaigning in an African context (Penplusbytes, 2017). The present study contributes local survey evidence from Enugu State.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in participatory democratic theory (PDT). Participatory democracy is associated particularly with Carole Pateman's Participation and Democratic Theory (1970), which argues that participation is not limited to choosing representatives but can also develop citizens' political competence and capacity for collective decision-making. C. B. Macpherson (1977) further developed a participatory critique of liberal democracy. The

central proposition relevant to this study is that democratic life is strengthened when citizens have meaningful opportunities to access information, express views, deliberate and influence political processes. Applied to social media, PDT suggests that platforms may lower some communication barriers and enable more direct exchanges between political actors and citizens. Previous research on political parties' use of Web 2.0 and government social-media communication illustrates how digital platforms can support public interaction and information sharing (Jackson & Lilleker, 2009; Kavanaugh et al., 2012). PDT is relevant because the first two research questions examine the perceived use and contribution of social-media systems to political communication. The relatively high means for Twitter, Facebook and campaign communication indicate that respondents perceive these platforms as useful channels. They do not, however, establish that social media automatically produce democratic participation or electoral success. Meaningful participation depends on the quality and reliability of information, equitable access, citizens' capacity to evaluate messages, willingness of political actors to engage, and institutional responsiveness. The theory is therefore used as an interpretive framework, not as proof of a causal relationship.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study was conducted in Enugu State and focused on users of social-media platforms relevant to political communication. The manuscript reports a population of 2,350, allocated as Facebook (520), Twitter (650), Telegram (600) and YouTube (580). These figures sum to 2,350. The sample size was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula at a 5% margin of error, yielding approximately 341.8 and therefore a target sample of 342 respondents. The source and procedure used to construct the population frame were not specified in the material available for revision. Before publication, the authors should identify the source of the frame, the date of compilation, the eligibility criteria and how users were counted. The allocation of respondents across platforms should also be checked against the original sampling records because the original document contains inconsistent platform labels. The instrument was a structured questionnaire containing 17 items. It used a four-point response scale: strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2 and strongly disagree = 1. Experts reviewed the instrument before administration, and a trial test involving 15 participants was used to assess reliability. Cronbach's alpha was reported as .86, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The manuscript reports that 342 questionnaires were administered and 340 properly completed questionnaires were returned and analysed. The reported means were checked against the weighted totals and a denominator of 340 where the underlying totals were available. Means are presented to two decimal places. In particular, the YouTube item in the first results table is 2.49, not 2.4, and the YouTube-account item in the second table is reported as 2.44. The 2.50 decision benchmark is applied consistently: means above 2.50 indicate agreement, while means below 2.50 indicate disagreement. The data were analysed using weighted means. A mean of 2.50 was adopted as the decision benchmark: scores above 2.50 were interpreted as agreement and scores below 2.50 as disagreement. Standard deviations cannot be calculated from the manuscript as supplied because item-level response distributions or respondent-level data are not included. They should be added only after checking the original questionnaires or dataset. The reported population allocation also requires verification against the original field records; no replacement figures have been invented in this revision.

Results

Use of Social Media as Political Communication: The first research question examined the extent to which social media are used as political communication. The reported results show generally positive assessments. Twitter obtained the highest mean score (3.43) for dominance in political programmes during election periods, followed by Facebook (3.33). Telegram recorded a mean of 2.85, while YouTube recorded 2.49 and therefore fell below the 2.50 decision benchmark. Respondents also agreed that social-media pages were a preferred source of political campaign information (3.12), that politicians continued to use social media during election periods (3.03), and that politicians maintained Twitter profiles (3.17).

Table 1: Respondents' Ratings on the Use of Social Media as Political Communication Platforms During Election Periods in Enugu State

Indicator	Mean	**Decision**
Twitter dominates political programmes during elections	3.43	Agree
Facebook dominates political programmes during elections	3.33	Agree
YouTube dominates political programmes during elections	2.49	Disagree
Telegram dominates political programmes during elections	2.85	Agree
Social-media pages are preferred campaign sources	3.12	Agree
Politicians continue using social media during elections	3.03	Agree
Politicians have Twitter profiles	3.17	Agree

Note: M = weighted mean. Standard deviations are not reported because the underlying response-level data were not supplied; calculate and insert them from the original dataset before submission. Decision benchmark = 2.50. The pattern suggests that respondents perceive Twitter and Facebook as particularly prominent channels during election periods. The relatively lower YouTube rating is important because it demonstrates that respondents did not regard all platforms as equally influential. The overall pattern supports the study's conclusion that social media are established components of political communication in Enugu State, while also indicating differences between platforms.

Contribution of Social-Media Information Systems

The second research question examined how social-media information systems contribute to political communication. Respondents agreed that many voters follow politicians through Twitter (M = 2.97), Facebook (M = 3.06) and Telegram (M = 3.01). The mean for following politicians' YouTube accounts was 2.44, below the 2.50 benchmark. Respondents also agreed that social media support campaign advertising (M = 3.16) and constitute a strong campaign channel during election periods (M = 3.28). The item stating that politicians achieve their political ambitions through social media received a mean of 2.30.

Table 2: Respondents' Ratings on the Contribution of Social-Media Information Systems to Political Communication in Enugu State

Indicator	Mean	**Decision**
Many voters follow politicians' Twitter accounts	2.97	Agree
Many voters follow politicians' Facebook accounts	3.06	Agree
Many voters follow politicians' Telegram accounts	3.01	Agree
Many voters follow politicians' YouTube accounts	2.44	Disagree
Social media support campaign advertising	3.16	Agree
Social media are a strong campaign channel	3.28	Agree
Politicians achieve political ambitions through social media	2.30	Disagree

Note: M = weighted mean. Standard deviations are not reported because the underlying response-level data were not supplied; calculate and insert them from the original dataset before submission. Decision benchmark = 2.50. The results indicate that respondents

recognise the communication reach of social media, especially Facebook and Twitter. They also regard social media as useful for campaign advertising. However, the low score on the item concerning the achievement of political ambitions is a caution against interpreting platform use as evidence of electoral success. Communication effectiveness and electoral effectiveness are related but distinct outcomes.

Discussion

The findings provide support for the central proposition of the study: social media have become significant channels of political communication in Enugu State. The high ratings for Twitter, Facebook, campaign pages and continued political use indicate strong perceived communicative value. This is consistent with the hybrid media perspective, which views political communication as an interaction between traditional and digital media rather than the simple replacement of older media (Chadwick, 2017; McQuail & Deuze, 2021). The Nigerian evidence is also consistent with research showing that social media have become part of contemporary political communication and civic discourse in Nigeria (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2023; Ibebunjo, 2026). The prominence of Twitter and Facebook is consistent with research on political campaigning and digital participation. Twitter's rapid circulation and networked visibility make it useful for campaign communication, while Facebook's pages, groups and interpersonal networks provide opportunities for sustained audience engagement (Jackson & Lilleker, 2009; Lassen & Brown, 2011; Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2017). The lower YouTube rating in this study suggests that platform affordances should be considered alongside audience habits and communication objectives rather than assuming equivalent political value across platforms. The findings also have implications for participatory democratic theory. Respondents perceive social media as platforms through which voters can follow political actors and access campaign messages. This indicates an expanded opportunity structure for participation. Yet participation should not be inferred solely from access or exposure. The findings are better interpreted as evidence of increased communicative opportunity than as conclusive evidence of strengthened democratic participation (Kushin & Kitchener, 2009; Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2017).

The relatively low YouTube rating is another important finding. Video has substantial communicative potential, but platform effectiveness depends on user habits and campaign strategy. A platform may be technically capable of delivering rich political messages but still have less perceived campaign prominence among a particular population. This reinforces the argument that political actors should select platforms on the basis of audience characteristics, communication objectives and content format rather than assuming that all social-media channels have equivalent political value. The study's findings also suggest the importance of social-media analytics. Political actors and institutions can monitor audience responses, identify emerging issues and assess campaign communication through systematic analysis of user-generated content (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013; Zeng et al., 2010). Government use of social media also demonstrates the importance of moving from routine broadcasting to responsive communication (Kavanaugh et al., 2012). Such monitoring should nevertheless be guided by transparency, privacy, ethical standards and respect for legitimate political participation. A further implication concerns the relationship between social media and traditional media. The study should not be interpreted as evidence that radio, television and newspapers have become irrelevant. A hybrid strategy remains appropriate because social media provide speed and interaction while conventional media can support broader reach, professional verification and access to audiences with limited connectivity (Chadwick, 2017; McQuail & Deuze, 2021). In the Nigerian context, communication also needs to be

sensitive to wider issues of democratic participation, civil society and social inclusion (Agbaenyi & Ibebunjo, 2021; Iroye & Ibebunjo, 2019; Shaibu et al., 2022). Finally, the study illustrates the importance of distinguishing political communication from political outcomes. Respondents' agreement that social media are useful campaign channels does not establish that they determine voting behaviour, electoral victory or democratic quality. The low score for the proposition that politicians achieve political ambitions through social media is particularly instructive. Communication reach should therefore be treated as an enabling condition rather than as evidence of electoral causation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Facebook, Twitter and other social-media platforms have become important components of political communication in Enugu State. The empirical evidence shows particularly strong perceptions of Twitter and Facebook as election-period communication channels, while YouTube received comparatively lower ratings. Respondents also regarded social media as useful for campaign advertising and for maintaining contact with voters. The central contribution of the study is therefore empirical rather than technological: it demonstrates that political communication in the study area is increasingly networked, interactive and platform-based. At the same time, the evidence cautions against equating online visibility with electoral success. Social media can create opportunities for political communication and participation, but democratic outcomes depend on the quality of communication, the credibility of information, citizens' media literacy, institutional responsiveness and the broader political environment.

Recommendations

i. Strengthen platform-specific political communication. In response to Objective 1, political parties and candidates should develop communication strategies around the platforms that respondents perceive as most prominent.
ii. Integrate social-media communication with hybrid media practice. Also responding to Objective 1, political communication teams should coordinate social-media activity with radio, television and other established media. This is particularly important where digital access, data affordability or digital literacy limits online reach. Social media should extend, rather than automatically replace, conventional political communication.
iii. Build evidence-based social-media information systems. In response to Objective 2, political parties and campaign organisations should establish systematic mechanisms for monitoring audience engagement, identifying recurring public concerns and evaluating the reach of campaign information.
iv. Improve the quality and credibility of campaign information. Because Objective 2 concerns the contribution of social-media information systems to political communication, campaign organisations should strengthen fact-checking, source verification, correction procedures and responsible content management. This would help ensure that increased communication volume also produces more useful political information.

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JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT
Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)
ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)
Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com
Received: August 26, 2026 **Accepted**: September 27, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026
Citation: Isenyo, Ogaba S.; Hiko, Yohanna A. & Cynthia, Ganchuk (2026). "The Relevance of African Epistemology to African Medicine." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 237-248.

Article **Open Access**

THE RELEVANCE OF AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY TO AFRICAN MEDICINE

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Abstract
African medicine constitutes an important component of indigenous knowledge systems that has historically developed through observation, experience, apprenticeship, communal participation, oral transmission, and sustained interaction with the natural environment. Yet, the dominance of Western biomedical epistemology and the historical effects of colonialism have contributed to the marginalisation of indigenous African medical knowledge within formal healthcare and knowledge-production institutions. This paper critically examines the relevance of African epistemology to African medicine, with particular attention to the ways African modes of knowing contribute to the preservation, interpretation, validation, and possible integration of indigenous medical knowledge into contemporary healthcare. The study adopts a qualitative philosophical methodology, employing conceptual analysis and critical interpretation of relevant philosophical, historical, medical, and interdisciplinary literature. The paper argues that African epistemology provides an important intellectual framework for recognising experiential, communal, contextual, and holistic dimensions of African medical knowledge that are often inadequately represented within conventional biomedical frameworks. It further contends that epistemic recognition should not be confused with automatic acceptance of traditional therapeutic claims. Rather, indigenous medical knowledge requires critical examination through empirical investigation, pharmacological assessment, ethical scrutiny, safety evaluation, standardisation, and appropriate regulatory mechanisms. The study therefore advances a complementary approach in which African epistemological resources inform the identification and preservation of indigenous medical knowledge, while scientific and ethical procedures determine its suitability for contemporary healthcare application. Such an approach

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contributes to epistemic decolonisation without rejecting the achievements of biomedical science. The paper concludes that a critically integrated relationship between African epistemology, indigenous medicine, and modern healthcare can promote culturally responsive healthcare, preserve valuable knowledge, strengthen African participation in knowledge production, and support more inclusive health policies.

Keywords: African Epistemology; African Traditional Medicine; Indigenous Knowledge; Epistemic Decolonisation; Healthcare Integration.

Introduction

African societies have always had many types of knowledge regarding health and sickness, healing, use of medicinal plants, nutrition and the relationship between the human person and the environment. This information has been conveyed through observation, experience, apprenticeship, oral history and communal practice and it has been a factor in healing practice such as herbal medicine (Tobi 2020). It is therefore necessary to view African traditional medicine as not merely a collection of medicines but as a system of indigenous knowledge that Africans have employed as a way to elucidate disease and manage health matters (Abdullahi 2011). Traditional medicine has always been relevant to present day health practice and policy. Today the World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledges it as one of the important areas of health care, and the integration of traditional medicine with contemporary health care is being carried out respecting the culture of people, and emphasizing evidence, safety, quality and regulation (WHO 2019; WHO 2025). The epistemological foundations of African medicine, on which the knowledge is produced, transmitted, affirmed and applied, represent the philosophic value of the medicine. African philosophies have emphasized the importance of experience, experiential knowledge, communal life, and culture-specific knowledge. But it is not to say that all the elements of tradition should be kept sacred and that criticism of tradition should be avoided. As Gyekye proposed, the examination of the inherited African practices is necessary to articulate the need for a critical engagement with tradition and modernity, while Wiredu's conceptual decolonisation is necessary to question concepts and assumptions, which influenced thinking in Africa during the colonial period (Gyekye 1996; Wiredu 1995). More recent work on Wiredu also show that conceptual decolonisation is not about discarding concepts that come from outside the borders of indigenous conceptual resources, but about challenging them in an uncritical way, and then fruitfully engaging with them (Futter 2023).

This is an important point of interest in the study of African medicine, as the colonial encounters contributed to the marginalisation of the knowledge of indigenous medicine and increased the legitimacy of the biomedical frameworks of knowledge in determining what is legitimate knowledge (Abdullahi 2011). However, accepting any of the traditional medical claims for medical correction is not enough. Rather, the philosophical challenge is to identify how indigenous knowledge might be acknowledged and at the same time critically explored. The cultural or indigenous aspect of a medical statement is not enough to establish its therapeutic value, and the absence of such a paradigm does not annul the epistemicity of indigenous knowledge. Studies of African traditional medicine (Abdullahi 2011; Rafiu 2025; Terefe 2026) have focused on its history, culture, pharmacology and health care but very little research has been conducted on its epistemological aspect as a tool for explaining and critically assessing African medical knowledge. This study is aimed at filling this gap as it concerns the epistemological relevance in African medicine. It asserts that the epistemological views of Africa can illuminate these experiential, communal, contextual and

holistic features of African medical knowledge, and that the epistemological approach is open to critical enquiry, empirical investigations, ethical review and proper regulation. The study thus seeks to show that Africa's knowledge in medicine should not be dismissed outright as a purely supernatural phenomenon or uncritically accepted as a valid medical knowledge, but rather approached within a critical framework which enables the critical evaluation of a given medical claim in light of an appropriate validation process, while preserving its epistemological value.

Literature Review

African Epistemology and Indigenous Knowledge: The study of African epistemology is a field that is concerned with the origin, nature, justification, transmission and use of knowledge in the African cultural and intellectual world (Janzen 1979). But the study of African epistemology can't be treated as a single entity or monolithic entity, and the study of specific African conceptions of knowledge, belief and justification is required, as was stated in the case of Udefi (2014). The relevance of this role in the present study is that, if one does not have the same medical assumptions or epistemological structure, one cannot discuss the African traditional system of medicine at all. Instead, medical knowledge is created in specific historical, cultural, ecological and communal settings. This view is further advanced in recent scholarship regarding the communal and experiential aspects of African peoples' knowledge systems. Ositadinma and Eke (2026) indicate that the maintenance of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems is through communal experience, disciplined oral transmission, testimony and discipline with the environment. Their analysis is a challenge to the notion that knowledge which is not formally transmitted from the scientific sphere is somehow irrational or epistemically empty. Instead, they suggest a form of epistemic pluralism that involves critical examination of indigenous knowledge in the light of the dynamics of their own knowledge systems and also other ways of judging. This philosophy is directly applicable to African medicine as a lot of medical knowledge has been transmitted by observation, apprenticeship, oral teaching and repeated practice.

Indigenous Knowledge and the Transmission of African Medical Knowledge

Numerous studies have focused on the subject of preserving and transmitting indigenous knowledge, particularly for indigenous knowledge traditionally transmitted orally. One of the factors that makes it difficult to systematically preserve indigenous medical knowledge is the factor of 'secrecy' as described by Masango (2020). The study highlights a crucial issue about the possibility and/or desirability of codifying all aspects of African traditional medicine, especially in medical knowledge that has both public and esoteric aspects. This is an epistemological matter in Africa. Knowledge becomes embedded in relationships among healers, apprentices, families, communities and the environment, and is malleable when it is written down or institutionalized. Concurrently, not documenting indigenous medical knowledge can lead to potential loss, distortion, and appropriation. Therefore, solutions need to be found today that include and integrate the IP rights, the cultural authority and the participation of indigenous knowledge holders and at the same time preserve the knowledge. Preservation of African medical knowledge should take the form of making lists of medicinal plants, or documenting therapeutic procedures, says Masango (2020). In his opinion, social relations, languages, practices, values and contexts in which knowledge is produced and disseminated need to be taken into consideration. This justifies the argument of the relevance of African epistemology in medicine in the present study because it not only

communicates information about healing, but also because of its ability to give insight into how the information becomes socially and culturally meaningful.

Colonialism, Epistemic Marginalisation and African Medicine

Although the colonialism and biomedical dominance of institutional medicine has had a negative impact on the community, as argued by Terefe (2026), traditional medicine practices in Africa have survived. His study shows how epistemological conflicts have been continuing since then between the biomedical and indigenous approaches, and also concerns the clinical validation, standardisation, research infrastructure and regulation. The study does not just tell the history of colonial medicine; it also explains how. Colonial marginalisation had an impact on the legitimacy of certain types of knowledge that could be accepted in universities, research institutions, hospitals and government health systems. The modern discussion on traditional medicine in Africa, therefore, has an epistemological aspect that helps to answer the question: does biomedical knowledge still need to be the only one that one can adopt to understand medical knowledge in Africa and to evaluate it? Maqutu (2026) builds on this argument, using the notion of epistemic decolonisation. Maqutu argues that the epistemological role of African traditional medicine within mainstream knowledge systems, may be considered as epistemic injustice, and decolonisation should not just be about the symbolic recognition of African traditional medicine, but also the inclusion of indigenous epistemic resources. This is particularly relevant in the present study since it is a shift from defending African medicine and an inquiry into the possibility of how African knowledge can meaningfully assist in the production of knowledge in the present day. Decolonisation however, is not merely about rejecting biomedical science as a whole. A more defensible position, however, is that of critical epistemic pluralism: that indigenous and biomedical knowledge can be placed in dialogue, and that there are other medical standards of evidence and ethical concerns which some medical claims must meet.

Scientific Validation and the Contemporary Relevance of African Traditional Medicine

The focus of African traditional medicine is shifting from issues related to cultural legitimacy towards scientific validation. Terefe (2026), Africa's medicinal biodiversity and indigenous knowledge has a great potential for ethnopharmacological research and natural-product discovery. He also listed issues for integration such as the absence of clinical validation, the inconsistent quality control, lack of standardisation, lack of coherence in regulations and lack of research infrastructure. This however is an important tension. Traditional use alone is not evidence of efficacy or safety, but can be a useful source of ideas for scientific research. Medicinal plants may have therapeutic effects and in addition be potentially toxic, contaminated, the dosage may be wrong, misidentified and/or they may interact with other medicines. That is why further research must be undertaken to take the indigenous knowledge to the clinical application. This is now WHO's policy stance. In its Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025-2034, it prioritises strengthening evidence, ensuring safety and regulation, integration of traditional medicine into health systems and optimising its contribution to health and sustainable development. It is not that traditional medicine and scientific medicine have to be in opposition for modern international policy, but rather that both are integrated on an evidence-based basis, and respecting cultural diversity. Existing literatures shows strong relationship between African epistemology, indigenous knowledge, traditional medicine, decolonisation, and contemporary healthcare. However, a conceptual gap remains because few studies examine what African epistemology specifically

contributes to the validation, preservation, interpretation, and responsible integration of African medical knowledge. This study addresses this gap by arguing that African epistemology can provide epistemic recognition and conceptual grounding for indigenous medicine while still requiring critical evaluation, scientific validation, and ethical regulation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the theory of conceptual decolonisation by Kwasi Wiredu. The theory was first put forward by the Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu (1931-2022) as a criticism of intellectual impacts of colonialism to African thought. Wiredu feels that the concepts, categories and assumptions of the Western intellectual tradition need to be critically examined in the context of intellectual development in Africa because they are inherited. Conceptual decolonisation is not a rejection of western knowledge but an examination of the inherited knowledge from the west, its appropriateness in the African intellectual and cultural context (Wiredu, 1995). The study of African epistemology also has more significance for Wiredu than for the political/economic changes that occurred in Africa during the colonial era, as it impacted the evaluation and classification of African knowledge systems. The indigenous knowledge systems were sometimes treated as rational, scientific and western. This also played its part in the marginalisation of traditional African medical systems and the biomedical western systems being given the advantage. Conceptual decolonisation thus allows for posing questions to the fallacy of the African epistemological categories being assimilated by means of external frameworks. But Wiredu's theory for medicine in Africa does not necessarily imply that traditional medicine is what it is said to be. Rather, it provides an opportunity to critically recollect, critically analyse and re-evaluate indigenous knowledge. African Medical knowledge was obtained through observation, experience, apprenticeship, oral, community involvement and interaction with the environment. These are forms of knowledge that may be thought of as legitimate objects of philosophy and scholarship rather than being ignored because they are practiced non-Western biomedical knowledge. Conceptual decolonisation, however, is not an uncritical celebration of tradition in Wiredu's hands because his emphasis is on critical reflection. Claims made by traditional African medicine need to be further investigated based on the proper standards of evidence, safety, ethics, effectiveness, and regulation. The theory proposes a way of thinking that runs counter to history's marginalisation of African knowledge, but not that being indigenous means being effective as a medicine maker. This separation can be interpreted in the context of the current emphasis on evidence, safety, quality, regulation and appropriate integration of traditional medicine with modern medicine (World Health Organization [WHO], 2025).

Three interrelated issues are explored in this study in the context of the theory. It does this firstly by questioning the epistemic hierarchy of biomedical knowledge that the west has over indigenous African medical knowledge. Secondly, it allows us to explore African epistemological resources - experiential knowledge, communal knowledge, oral knowledge, and contextual knowledge and how they are relevant to African medicine. Thirdly, it provides a basis for considering the application of African medical knowledge in today's healthcare without sacrificing the scientific rigorous process recognized by modern medical knowledge systems, and without the epistemic marginalisation that has been associated with colonial systems of medical knowledge. Hence, in the conceptualization of Wiredu, decolonisation offers the theoretical underpinning for this study. It is proposed that the epistemological dimension of African medicine can be usefully enriched with the African epistemology. The theory allows the study to go beyond the dichotomy of

traditional/modern, as it suggests critical analysis of both traditional and modern medicine. This is because it plays a central role in intellectualizing African knowledge systems to engage in knowledge production and assessment in healthcare, and in maintaining the empirical, ethical and regulatory assessment of specific medical practices.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study is a qualitative philosophical approach using conceptual analysis and critical interpretation of secondary sources of information concerning African epistemology, indigenous knowledge, traditional medicine, decolonisation, ethnopharmacology and modern healthcare. The scholarly books, peer-reviewed articles, and publications from relevant health institutions are discussed, including the classic works on African philosophy, and the latest research. The analysis helps to make sense of some of the concepts, looks at how African medical knowledge is generated and shared via experience, observation, oral tradition, apprenticeship, and communal involvement, and critically analyzes the practices in comparison to the today's standards of evidence, safety, efficacy, ethics, and regulation. The key theoretical approach is taken from Kwasi Wiredu's theory of conceptual decolonisation. The study does not include any human subjects or primary data; it is strictly a secondary data study using only documentary data. The methodology thus aims to acknowledge both the epistemic and cultural value of African medicine while upholding the critical assessments of its therapeutic claims.

African Epistemological Foundations of African Medicine

The African medicine is rooted in various African knowledge systems that were generated through community interaction, social system and natural environment. Instead, it is not possible to say there is one medical tradition in Africa, but it is possible to say there are multiple medical traditions, which are not homogeneous (Tabuti 2003). However, one can not talk about one single medical tradition in Africa, rather multiple medical traditions can be talked about, but not one homogeneous tradition. Understanding of traditions requires an understanding of the historical methods used to acquire, store, pass on and apply the knowledge of medicine. First, an experience and observation is a good foundation. Regular contact with disease and plants, and the environment, enabled communities to gain knowledge of symptoms, preparations, healing strategies and prevention. This was an area where knowledge was acquired through practice and not in the lab. Based on the argument of Luyaluka (2016) the epistemological foundation of indigenous knowledge is found in Africa, and cannot be assessed using the epistemological categories of Western epistemology. But if a medicine has an experiential source, it does not imply it is effective as a medicine. Second is the communal basis with respect to knowledge. The traditional medical knowledge was not only passed on from person to person through individual healers but also by family to family, apprentice to master, elder to apprentice, and community to community (Sofowora *et al*. 2013). The teaching method was oral, observing, listening, repeating and apprenticeship, passing on from generation to generation. This too is community-based medicine, and therefore very much connected with the communities in which it's known and passed down in community.

The third foundation is a relationship or relational awareness of health. African healing traditions have tended to express wellbeing in terms of social, psychological, environmental and spiritual aspects of health instead of exclusively biological mechanisms. This more general understanding offers an insightful philosophical point of view on health without needing to embrace all traditional theories of disease as valid. The environmental

factor is also very important. Through continuous interaction with nature, knowledge acquired about medicinal plants, the ecology, seasons and resources of the environment. In the present day, this information can be beneficial for ethnobotanic and pharmacologic research, sustainable health care and conservation (World Health Organization 2025). The foundations show that there are clear processes of knowledge production in Africa, and that these are not just beliefs. Evolutionary support does not equal scientific substantiation. Safety and clinical effectiveness are not the bases for determining the meaning of a medical practice - the meaning can be derived from the past history and the community. An African epistemology can thus play a role in the retention and the interpretation of African medicine knowledge while specific therapeutic claims are subject to empirical, ethical and regulatory assessment.

The Relevance of African Epistemology to African Medicine

In African Medicine, it is important to know and to use the wisdom of the past. The knowledge and use of the wisdom of the past is fundamental to African Medicine. African epistemology is significant to African medicine because it illuminates and preserves the means by which medical knowledge is produced, passed on and used in Africa. African medical knowledge has been gained over time, through observation, experience, through apprenticeship, through oral communication and, of course, through interaction with the natural and social environment. It thus serves as a vehicle for the recognition of indigenous knowledge, which also gives recognition to the diversity in African knowledge systems (Udefi, 2014). Epistemic recognition is one of the key contributions. African medicine was regarded as irrational and unscientific in many ways by colonial and western biomedicine. Colonial disruption, poor research infrastructure, lack of clinical validation, and poor regulation are still challenges with regard to the development of African traditional medicine (ATM) (Terefe, 2026). African epistemology, however, attempts to challenge the hierarchies and to get out of the way and look at indigenous knowledge. It also enhances the experience and community-based nature of medical knowledge. Traditional practitioners' knowledge is acquired through repeated observation and practice, and knowledge is transferable between healers, elders, families, apprentices and communities. It can be useful information for research, such as ethnopharmacology, but only after experience and cultural acceptance, therapeutic efficacy could be determined. Also, there should be attention paid to and documented with cultural ownership/consent, benefit sharing, and IP issues as part of its documentation and commercialisation (Wong *et al*., 2025).

The African epistemology also provides information about a holistic perspective on health that considers how the physical state is related to other aspects of health including social, psychological, environmental and spiritual. Omonzejele (2008) recommends taking into account the culture of Africa in the interpretation of the concept of health and diseases. Another lead emanating from indigenous environmental knowledge is the research of medicinal plants and natural products which still needs to be standardised, quality controlled, clinically validated and regulated (Terefe, 2026). African epistemology is used to create a critical dialogue between indigenist and biomedical knowledge. Combining the strengths of both indigenous knowledge and biomedical science can provide the means to locate culturally relevant therapeutic resources and practices, and to carry out clinical studies, pharmacological analysis, standardization and safety monitoring. The importance is not on the universal effectiveness of traditional medicine as medicine, but on the knowledge system or knowledge foundation of traditional medicine and medical claims based on

traditional medicine which must meet the criteria and evidence, ethics, safety and proper regulation.

African Epistemology, Herbal Medicine and Indigenous Pharmacological Knowledge

Herbal medicine is an important link between African epistemology and medicine. Medicinal plants knowledge has been acquired by observation, repeated experiences, apprenticeship, oral transmission and experiences of the environment. Knowing how to identify, prepare, use and apply plants for specific health issues (Udefi 2014; Fennell *et al* 2004). It is thus relevant to the understanding of the generation, retention and transmission of this knowledge to future generations; African epistemology is relevant. The use of traditional knowledge for medicinal purposes has also been investigated. Fennell *et al*. (2004) has well reported the research on African medicinal plants with their pharmacological and toxicological properties, while van Wyk (2008) has shown the ethnobotanical importance of medicinal plants in southern Africa. Similarly, ethnobotanical knowledge was found to be high in Nigeria in various ecological and cultural region by Rafiu *et al* (2025). Accordingly, these studies indicate that traditional knowledge holds potential for useful leads for pharmacology research instead of being considered unscientific. Traditional use is not necessarily synonymous, however, with therapeutic efficacy or safety. Dosage, toxicity, contamination, plant identification, preparation and interactions with conventional medicines are all issues that need scientific investigation (Fennell *et al*. 2004). Epistemological recognition of indigenous pharmacology knowledge needs to be separated from clinical validation of specific remedies. The conservation of this knowledge also brings issues of documentation, community involvement, IP and equitable benefits sharing up. It would not only lead to the loss of the culture, it would also involve loss of knowledge, which could be useful for future research. The WHO (2025) has emphasized evidence, safety, quality, regulation, sustainability and respect for traditional knowledge (TM) in the modern development of TM. African epistemology thus provides a platform for recognizing the value of other modes of knowledge (experiential and ecological) and justifiably exploring therapeutic claims scientifically and ethically. It is not about the science of drugs and medicines but is about providing a place for the conservation, critical reflection and sustainable improvement of indigenous knowledge.

African Epistemology and the Decolonization of African Medicine

The relationship between epistemic decolonisation and African medicine arises from the historical marginalisation of indigenous African knowledge under colonial systems of knowledge production. Colonial medicine often positioned Western biomedical knowledge as the authoritative basis for understanding health and illness while African healing practices were frequently dismissed as irrational, unscientific, or merely cultural (Wangensteen 2015). This produced an enduring hierarchy in which African communities were often treated as subjects of medical knowledge rather than as legitimate contributors to its production. Contemporary decolonial scholarship argues that addressing this history requires not only institutional reform but also a reconsideration of whose knowledge is recognised as legitimate. Epistemic decolonisation is therefore relevant to African medicine because it challenges the assumption that biomedical categories should constitute the only framework through which African health practices are interpreted. Wiredu's concept of conceptual decolonisation is particularly useful here. It calls for critical examination of inherited conceptual frameworks rather than their passive acceptance. Applied to medicine, this means examining whether African medical knowledge has been adequately understood on

its own conceptual and cultural terms before its value is determined according to external standards.

Recent scholarship provides direct support for this argument. Maqutu (2026) argues that the exclusion of African traditional medicine from dominant knowledge infrastructures constitutes a form of structural epistemic injustice. Her analysis shows how colonial epistemic hierarchies continue to influence contemporary healthcare by determining which forms of knowledge are considered legitimate and which are excluded. Similarly, Sarfo and Owusuaa (2026) argue that decolonising global health requires challenging epistemic hierarchies that undervalue African knowledge and strengthening African leadership in knowledge production. However, decolonising African medicine should not mean rejecting biomedical science or accepting every traditional practice as valid. Broadbent (2019) makes this important distinction in his discussion of the decolonisation of medicine, arguing for a critical approach that avoids both medical relativism and unquestioned biomedical dominance. African traditional medicine can therefore be recognised as an important knowledge system while individual therapeutic claims remain subject to appropriate evidence, safety, efficacy, and ethical assessment (Abebe 2002). The practical implication is a movement from epistemic exclusion to epistemic dialogue. Traditional practitioners and indigenous communities should participate meaningfully in research and healthcare discussions, while scientific institutions should investigate potentially valuable indigenous practices without stripping them completely from their cultural contexts (Gurib-Fakim 2006). Studies identifies epistemic bias and institutional exclusion as barriers to the integration of traditional medicine and emphasises the importance of recognising the lived experiences and knowledge of traditional healers. Thus, epistemic decolonisation contributes to African medicine by recovering the legitimacy of African knowledge producers, challenging inherited knowledge hierarchies, protecting indigenous medical knowledge, and creating possibilities for more equitable dialogue between traditional and biomedical systems. Its objective should not be the replacement of biomedical medicine with traditional medicine, but the development of a more inclusive knowledge environment in which African medical knowledge can be critically examined and, where supported by evidence, contribute to contemporary healthcare.

Prospects for Integrating African Medicine with Modern Healthcare

It is important that African Systems of Medicine (ASM) are recognised and the effectiveness of their medicines scientifically evaluated, in the process integrating African traditional medicine into modern healthcare. The traditional use information is important for research but does not guarantee safety or effectiveness. Hence, Nyika (2009) state that there is a need for systematic research work to enhance safety and efficacy of traditional medicine. One of the major challenges is that herbal medicines are not prepared, dosed, manufactured or of good quality enough in one consistent manner. The lack of regulatory control and safety supervision are still serious issues in Nigeria (Awodele *et al*., 2014). Quality assurance and safety, efficacy, and manufacturing issues have been noted in various traditional medicine systems in Africa (Mponda *et al*., 2025). More robust regulations are therefore needed to safeguard patient interests, to prevent misleading therapeutic claims and to ensure responsible development.

Ethical issues are also paramount. The benefits of research and commercialisation and the use of African medical knowledge could be great, but become exploitative if traditional practitioners and local communities are not part of research and/or ownership and commercialisation decisions. Willcox *et al*. (2015) point to the need for benefit sharing

and protection of IP, while Elvin-Lewis (2007) and Ngang and Agejoh (2019) emphasise the problems of IP protection of traditionally transmitted knowledge. Critical epistemic pluralism should thus be used as an integrating principle. African medicine should not be rejected on the grounds of being indigenous and it should not be accepted on the grounds of having been passed down through the ages. Rather, it should be acknowledged that its knowledge traditions should be recognised, and specific therapeutic claims should be scientifically, ethically, safely and regulatorily evaluated. The WHO (2025) has prioritized evidence, quality, safety, regulation, and appropriate integration which aligns with this position. Governments and health institutions should promote regular research and documentation with the traditional practitioners and communities. Safe, culturally appropriate healthcare can be achieved by better regulation of the preparation, dose, quality control, safety monitoring and therapeutic claims, and by collaboration among traditional healers, biomedical practitioners, researchers and policymakers.

Implications for Healthcare Policy and Practice

This research study has important implications for policy and practice in healthcare delivery in Africa. Firstly, healthcare policies should recognize the existence of African traditional medicine as an indigenous knowledge system developed in Africa but at the same time define a standard of evidence, safety, quality and therapeutic efficacy. It is crucial to remember, however, that recognition does not imply a tacit endorsement of traditional medical claims, but rather a systematic investigation and responsible incorporation of these claims (World Health Organization, 2025). Secondly, Governments and health institutions should enhance research and documentation of traditional knowledge. The program should involve traditional practitioners and local communities to ensure knowledge is preserved through the centuries, and free from cultural appropriation, infringement on cultural ownership, intellectual property, or fair benefits sharing (Willcox *et al*., 2015; Wong *et al*., 2025). Thirdly, the regulatory systems must be improved to solve issues related with failed standardization, dosage, quality control, safety monitoring and false therapeutic claims. Regulation has the potential to protect patients and at the same time afford avenues to evaluate and improve valuable traditional practices, if it is proper and adequate (Awodele *et al*., 2014; Mponda *et al*., 2025). Fourthly, traditional practitioners, biomedical practitioners, researchers and policy makers in healthcare practice should have a constructive dialogue. This synergy can contribute to culturally responsive health care and to ensure that that indigenous healing claims are met to scientific, ethical and regulatory standards. This approach is congruent with the argument of the study on critical epistemic pluralism rather than the rejection and/or critical acceptance of African medicine.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The epistemology of African medicine must be grounded in the epistemological principles of Africans, the principles of embodied knowledge that Africans observe, share, learn from and apprentice, as well as the principles of communication with the environment. This study aims to highlight these epistemological foundations, in order to address the historical neglect of African medical knowledge. But, do not mistake the act of recognising as automatic acceptance of all of the old therapeutic claims. Specific drugs and their effectiveness, safety, quality and appropriate use should be subject to scientific and moral evaluation. The study thus recommends incorporating African traditional medicine into the existing health care systems in a critical way. This should be done in a manner that ensures the involvement of traditional practitioners, biomedical practitioners, researchers and

communities and regulatory agencies. Policy should focus on the systematic documentation and preservation of indigenous medical knowledge, study of promising medicinal practices, quality control and standardisation of herbal products, training of practitioners and enhancement of regulation. As important as safeguarding the indigenous knowledge is to implement suitable IP and benefit sharing arrangements. In conclusion, African medicine cannot be dismissed as being "indigenous" nor accepted as "traditional" medicine alone. For its future role in healthcare, it is crucial to develop a framework that values, critically analyzes, scientifically studies, ethically safeguards and properly regulates African knowledge. It is a step toward epistemic decolonisation and maintains standards necessary for safe and effective health care.

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Acknowledgements: The researchers sincerely appreciate the Batch '6c' merged 2022 - 2026 TETFUND intervention in research project, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria.

SUPPORTED BY TETFUND , FEDERAL UNIVERSITY WUKARI, TARABA STATE , NIGERIA.

JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT
Volume 2, Number 3 (September, 2026)
ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)
Website: https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld **Email:** jppssuniuyo@gmail.com
Received: August 26, 2026 **Accepted**: September 27, 2026 **Published**: September 30, 2026
Citation: Ifiok, Chinenye A. (2026). "Entrepreneurship, Artificial Intelligence and Food Security in Nigeria." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 2 (3): 249-260.

Article **Open Access**

ENTREPRENEURSHIP, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Food insecurity remains a persistent challenge in Nigeria despite the country's considerable agricultural potential. This paper examines how technological costs, digital literacy and financial constraints may shape the contribution of artificial intelligence (AI) and entrepreneurship to food security in Nigeria. It adopts a qualitative, desk-based review of relevant literature on AI-enabled agriculture, entrepreneurship, food security, digital literacy, agricultural finance and environmental conditions. The discussion is conceptually informed by entrepreneurship scholarship on uncertainty and the potential of AI to improve prediction and decision-making; the paper does not report original fieldwork or a statistical test of relationships. The literature reviewed suggests that AI may support agricultural production, crop monitoring, weather forecasting, market access and the reduction of post-harvest losses. However, these potential benefits depend on affordable technology, reliable digital infrastructure, digital skills, access to finance and appropriate storage facilities. The paper argues that reducing food losses and improving food availability require coordinated investment in storage, agricultural technology and inclusive digital services. It recommends affordable AI tools suited to low-connectivity settings, stronger rural infrastructure, practical digital-literacy programmes, accessible agricultural finance and collaboration among government, technology developers, extension workers and farmers.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Digital Literacy, Entrepreneurship, Financial Constraints, Food Security, Technological Costs.

Introduction
Food security remains one of the most pressing challenges for nations globally, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria. Food security is defined as a condition in which all

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people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (World Food Summit, 1996). Nigeria's food insecurity arises from multiple, interconnected challenges. Food availability, or the supply of food through domestic production or imports, is constrained by low agricultural output, inefficient policies, corruption, civil insecurity, and climate change. Despite agriculture employing a large portion of the workforce and Nigeria's vast arable land and favorable agro-ecological zones, local production often falls short of demand, making the country heavily reliant on imports such as rice and wheat (Okoli & Ibebunjo, 2025). This dependence increases vulnerability to global market fluctuations and destabilizes food availability and affordability. Food accessibility, the ability of households to obtain adequate food, is further limited by rising poverty, income inequality, and high food prices, while poor infrastructure and insecurity restrict distribution to remote communities (Rahman et al., 2023). These systemic challenges contribute to widespread malnutrition, highlighting that food insecurity in Nigeria concerns not only production but also distribution and utilization. Over the last two decades, there has been growing recognition of the potential for technological innovations to address persistent agricultural challenges and strengthen food security. Traditional interventions, including mechanization, improved seed varieties, and irrigation systems, have provided incremental benefits but have not fully mitigated the structural issues contributing to food insecurity (FAO, 2021; Eme et al., 2014).

In context to this, Artificial Intelligence (AI), defined as computer-based systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as prediction, pattern recognition, and decision-making, has emerged as a transformative tool for agriculture. Globally, AI is applied to provide predictive analytics, monitor crop health, and improve supply chain efficiency, often demonstrating measurable impacts on yields, costs, and resilience (Javaid et al., 2023; Rangrej et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021). Despite these advances, AI adoption in Nigeria remains limited. Research and innovation in the Nigerian agricultural sector continue to emphasize conventional approaches, with minimal attention to AI-driven solutions (Akinola et al., 2022). Contextual differences between Nigeria and countries that have successfully deployed AI, such as India, China, and the United States, are substantial. These countries benefit from advanced infrastructure, robust financial systems, and high digital literacy, whereas over 70% of Nigerian farmers are smallholders with limited access to credit, weak connectivity, and minimal exposure to digital technologies (World Bank, 2022). These disparities highlight the need to explore how AI can be adapted to low-resource environments with infrastructural deficits, affordability constraints, and socio-cultural considerations. Limited scholarship examines AI as a transformative tool in Nigerian agriculture, and most studies on AI in agriculture focus on contexts with advanced infrastructure, digital literacy, and financial systems (Akinola et al., 2022; FAO, 2021; Eme et al., 2014; Rangrej et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021). Consequently, the applicability of global evidence to Nigeria is uncertain. Field-level insights into how AI tools such as weather prediction, pest detection, or soil monitoring perform in local farming contexts are scarce. Moreover, equity issues, including the potential exclusion of women, smallholders, and marginalized populations from AI benefits, remain largely unexplored (Clapp et al., 2022). This gap underscores the need to explore contextual adaptation strategies and provide actionable recommendations to ensure AI enhances food security inclusively in Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

i. Examination of the relationship between technological cost and food security in Nigeria.
ii. Examination of the role of digital literacy and food security in Nigeria.
iii. Examination of the role of financial constraints and food security in Nigeria.

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

AI is not easy to define, and there is no standard definition of what AI actually involves (Samoili et al., 2021). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an AI system is a "machine-based system that can, for a given set of human-defined objectives, make predictions, recommendations or decisions influencing real or virtual environments" (OECD, 2019, p. 7). In 2024, the OECD published an updated definition of an AI system as "a machine-based system that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments" (OECD, 2024, p. 4). Different AI systems vary in their levels of autonomy and adaptiveness after deployment. The outputs of an AI system include predictions, recommendations, decisions and, more recently, content. Prediction can involve forecasting, identifying patterns or generating information. A recommendation may support a human decision maker, while a decision represents a higher level of automation. Generative AI systems can also produce text, images, audio and video. For the purpose of this study, the importance of AI lies principally in its capacity to support prediction, decision-making, monitoring and improved management of agricultural activities.

Food Security

Food security is a flexible concept as reflected by the many attempts to define it in research and policy usage. The current widely accepted definition came from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO): food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2002). At the 2009 World Summit on Food Security, stability was added as a fourth dimension of food security and refers to the ability of food systems to withstand shocks, whether natural or man-made (FAO, 2009). More recently, sustainability has been suggested as a fifth dimension to encompass the long-term time dimension (Berry et al., 2015). The concept of food security has therefore moved from an initial emphasis on food availability and production to a wider understanding that incorporates access, utilisation and stability. This broader understanding is particularly relevant to Nigeria, where food insecurity is associated with problems of production, affordability, distribution, environmental conditions and social vulnerability.

Dimensions of Food Security

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2008), food security comprises four major dimensions: availability, accessibility, utilisation and stability. Food availability refers to the supply of food produced locally or imported from other countries to meet the nutritional needs of the population. Food accessibility concerns the physical and economic ability of individuals and households to obtain adequate food. Physical accessibility depends on factors such as transportation infrastructure and effective distribution networks, while economic accessibility is determined by people's purchasing power. It also encompasses sociocultural considerations and social protection measures that support vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. Food utilisation relates to the ability of individuals to consume sufficient quantities of nutritious and safe food to maintain a healthy and active life. This

dimension emphasises not only the quantity and quality of food consumed but also the importance of safe drinking water, proper sanitation and hygienic conditions for effective nutritional outcomes. Finally, food stability refers to the ability of nations, communities, households and individuals to maintain consistent access to adequate food over time, even in the face of disruptions. Such disruptions may arise from natural disasters, climate-related events, armed conflicts, wars and economic crises. These four dimensions are interrelated, and sustained food security depends on their effective functioning to ensure that people have reliable access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food.It may therefore be seen that food security exists at a number of levels: availability at the national level; accessibility at the household level; utilization at the individual level; and stability as a time dimension that affects all the levels. All four dimensions must be intact for full food security. More recent developments emphasize the importance of sustainability, which may be considered as the long-term dimension of food security. Sustainability involves ecological, biodiversity and climate-change considerations as well as socio-cultural and economic factors (Berry et al., 2015). These factors will affect the food security of future generations.

Entrepreneurship and Artificial Intelligence

AI has the potential to affect the core of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship theories are built around the fundamental question of how entrepreneurs deal with uncertainty. Entrepreneurs operate in environments where future possible states of the world and consequences of actions and their probabilities are unknown (Knight, 1921). There is uncertainty about market demand for novel products and services, social resistance to innovation, and responses of competitors; at the same time, entrepreneurs are constrained by limited resources. The key capability of AI is prediction, which has the potential to reduce uncertainty (Lupp, 2023; Agrawal et al., 2024). AI can be used to search through a very large set of options to identify opportunities, for example for product design or the choice of market segments. Entrepreneurship theories also emphasize that entrepreneurs employ imagination and creative approaches to decision-making to identify opportunities under uncertainty (Kier & McMullen, 2018). Generative AI is starting to show signs of creativity and may augment the creative abilities of entrepreneurs (van Gelderen et al., 2021). However, even if AI can help resolve what is possible, the human entrepreneur still needs to solve the fundamental problem of what is desirable according to the entrepreneur's goals, preferences and objectives (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). Entrepreneurial decision environments are characterized by uncertainty and are therefore a fundamental boundary even for enhanced AI (Townsend et al., 2023). A process perspective on entrepreneurship is useful in considering AI impacts on different stages of entrepreneurship (Shepherd et al., 2019; Chalmers et al., 2021; Obschonka & Fisch, 2022; Schiavone et al., 2022). Giuggioli and Pellegrini (2023) identify three clusters in the literature that align with sequential phases in an AI-enabled entrepreneurial process: opportunity, decision-making and performance. AI can assist in discovering or co-creating opportunities (Lupp, 2023). It may influence the decision to start a company and how entrepreneurs develop, design and scale (Chalmers et al., 2021). Large datasets and learning algorithms that identify patterns or make precise predictions can also be applied to entrepreneurial opportunity and exploitation (Cockburn et al., 2019). The relevance of these developments to food security lies in the possibility that agricultural entrepreneurs can use AI to identify opportunities, improve production decisions, strengthen market access and reduce losses across the food system.

Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Food Security

Artificial Intelligence (AI) transforms, destroys and creates human occupations and brings new opportunities and challenges to existing and potential entrepreneurs. AI may create new business opportunities for entrepreneurs (Shepherd & Majchrzak, 2022), but may also push individuals into self-employment whose prior wage jobs are automated through the implementation of AI. The key capability of AI is prediction, which has the potential to reduce uncertainty (Lupp, 2023; Agrawal et al., 2024). AI can be used to search through a very large set of options to identify opportunities, for example for product design or the choice of market segments. In agriculture, this capacity can support decision-making concerning production, crop monitoring, disease detection, weather forecasting, storage, marketing and distribution. A process perspective on entrepreneurship is useful to consider AI impacts on different stages of entrepreneurship (Shepherd et al., 2019; Chalmers et al., 2021; Obschonka & Fisch, 2022; Schiavone et al., 2022). Giuggioli and Pellegrini (2023) identify three clusters in the literature that align as sequential phases in an "AI-enabled entrepreneurial process": opportunity, decision-making, and performance. AI as a technological breakthrough changes the business environment and has been described as an external enabler of entrepreneurial activities and success (Davidsson et al., 2020; Davidsson & Sufyan, 2023). In the opportunity phase, the entrepreneur looks for ways to reshape and enhance traditional business model approaches with AI. AI can assist in discovering or co-creating opportunities (Lupp, 2023).

Large datasets and learning algorithms that can see otherwise imperceptible patterns or make precise predictions can be turned towards entrepreneurial opportunity and exploitation (Cockburn et al., 2019). AI may therefore provide opportunities for agricultural entrepreneurs to develop products and services that respond to problems of food production, storage, transportation, marketing and distribution. The application of AI in agriculture can include the use of sensors and data analytics, crop monitoring, disease identification and predictive systems. The digitisation of agriculture has created opportunities for smart farming and the application of digital technologies to agricultural production (Bacco et al., 2019). Machine learning has also become increasingly relevant to agriculture, particularly in relation to prediction, monitoring and decision-making (Benos et al., 2021). Akbar et al. (2023) observe that AI has applications in smart agriculture and can support agricultural processes through intelligent technologies. Similarly, Akinola et al. (2022) identify prospects for AI applications in Nigerian agriculture while also drawing attention to the challenges that may constrain adoption.

Role of Digital Literacy and Food Security in Nigeria

Digital literacy can help farmers use technology to improve market access, obtain agricultural information and reduce post-harvest losses. Its benefits are likely to be greater when farmers also have reliable electricity, connectivity, affordable devices and appropriate digital services. The paper therefore concludes that AI has potential to contribute to food security in Nigeria, but its effectiveness depends on infrastructure, finance, digital literacy, storage facilities and technologies adapted to local conditions. The benefits of AI cannot be fully realised where farmers lack the knowledge and skills required to use digital technologies. Digital literacy therefore represents an important condition for the effective application of AI in agriculture. Farmers need to be able to access information, interpret digital outputs and use available technologies in making production and marketing decisions. Digital literacy is also relevant to market access. Where farmers can obtain timely information about prices, demand, weather and market opportunities, they may be better

positioned to make decisions about what to produce, when to sell and where to sell. Digital technologies can also contribute to financial inclusion by connecting farmers and entrepreneurs with financial services. The relationship between digital literacy and food security must be considered alongside digital infrastructure. Where connectivity, electricity and access to digital devices are inadequate, digital literacy alone may not be sufficient. Digital capacity must therefore be developed alongside the infrastructure required to make that capacity useful.

Financial Constraints and Food Security in Nigeria

Agricultural financing is the acquisition and use of capital for agricultural activities. This can be obtained from various sources including personal savings, bank loans, loans from friends and family, cooperative societies and money lenders, government sources, charitable organizations and private companies. According to Muftau (2003), agricultural credit or finance refers to credit granted to farm and ranch operators to assist in planting and harvesting crops and to support the feeding and care of livestock. Credit to the agricultural sector could take the form of an overdraft, short-term, medium-term or long-term credit depending on the purpose and gestation period of the project. Financial constraints are particularly important in considering AI adoption because AI technologies may require expenditure on hardware, software, connectivity, data, maintenance and training. Small farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs who already experience difficulty accessing conventional agricultural credit may consequently face additional barriers to technological adoption. Waqar (2008) examined agricultural credit constraints and borrowing behaviour among rural farmers in Punjab and found that collateral requirements, complicated procedures, delays in disbursement and other obstacles affected access to credit. This study illustrates the importance of considering the conditions under which agricultural producers obtain finance. In Nigeria, Emmanuel (2008) examined the impact of the macroeconomic environment on agricultural-sector growth and included agricultural credit, nominal interest rates, exchange rates, world prices of agricultural produce, foreign private investment, government expenditure and inflation in the analysis. The study found relationships between agricultural production and these macroeconomic conditions. Similarly, Nwanyanwu (2009) examined the role of bank credit in economic growth in Nigeria and observed that bank credit had not significantly affected economic growth, attributing this partly to the reluctance of banks to lend to productive sectors such as agriculture. These findings remain relevant to the question of AI adoption. Where farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs cannot obtain adequate finance for ordinary agricultural inputs and activities, the additional costs associated with AI adoption may constitute a further barrier.

Environmental Conditions, Climate and Food Security

Food security cannot be separated from the environmental conditions in which agricultural production occurs. Agriculture depends on land, water, rainfall, vegetation and other natural resources. Environmental degradation and climate-related pressures can therefore affect agricultural productivity and the stability of food systems. Over a decade ago, Ibebunjo and Okokhere (2016) articulated the importance of environmental conditions in relations to the security of the environment and overall development of society. Osawe and Ibebunjo (2010) examined environmental security threats in the Niger Delta and identified climate change, environmental degradation, poverty, socio-political and health threats as interconnected environmental-security concerns. Their analysis demonstrates the close relationship between environmental conditions, human well-being and sustainable development. In a

related study, Ibebunjo and Osawe (2010) also found that conditions leading to environmental degradation can result in crises of national and international proportions.

Climate-related pressures may also contribute to competition over natural resources and affect agricultural livelihoods. Umenze et al. (2024) examined climate change and communal conflicts in Gurara Local Government Area of Niger State and highlighted the relationship between climate-related pressures, resource conditions and conflict. These conditions are relevant to food security because agricultural production and food availability may be disrupted when farmers lose access to land or water or when environmental changes reduce productive capacity. AI-enabled weather forecasting, crop monitoring and early warning systems may assist agricultural actors in anticipating some of these risks. However, AI cannot substitute for environmental protection or appropriate agricultural policy. Its contribution should be viewed as part of a wider strategy for strengthening agricultural resilience and food-system stability.

Technological Cost and Food Security

The cost of technology is one of the major considerations in the adoption of AI. Although AI applications can reduce some production and information costs, the initial cost of acquiring technology may be beyond the reach of many farmers and small agricultural businesses. AI adoption may require access to digital devices, sensors, data services, reliable electricity, connectivity, software and technical support. These costs can become particularly significant in rural areas where infrastructure is weak. Research on entrepreneurial AI adoption indicates that high fixed costs and specialised skills can disadvantage small businesses (McElheran et al., 2024). This concern is relevant to agricultural entrepreneurs who may lack the financial resources and technical capacity needed to implement sophisticated AI systems.

Consequently, the application of AI to Nigerian agriculture should not be based solely on the availability of sophisticated technology. Technologies must be adapted to farmers' and agricultural entrepreneurs' circumstances. Low-cost applications, low-bandwidth systems and technologies that can operate with limited infrastructure may offer more practical opportunities for rural communities. The problem is therefore not simply whether AI is available, but whether it is affordable and appropriate for the users who need it. Low-cost, locally adaptable and low-bandwidth technologies may be more appropriate for many Nigerian agricultural communities than expensive systems designed for highly developed agricultural environments.

AI, Food Security and the Nigerian Context

The foregoing discussion indicates that the contribution of AI to food security in Nigeria depends on the interaction between technological opportunity and the conditions within which agricultural actors operate. AI can support prediction, monitoring, decision-making, market access and agricultural innovation, but these benefits may be limited by technological costs, inadequate digital literacy, financial constraints and weak infrastructure.

Food security is also affected by wider social and environmental conditions. Migration can alter agricultural labour availability and rural livelihoods, while environmental degradation and climate-related pressures can affect agricultural production and resource access. If unchecked, these factors can exacerbate ethno-religious conflict, resulting in greater crises for society (Ukpe et al., 2025). Consequently, technological interventions should be situated within the broader social, economic and environmental context of Nigerian agriculture. AI therefore offers opportunities rather than an automatic solution. Its contribution to food security will depend on whether agricultural entrepreneurs and farmers are able to access

and use appropriate technologies and whether institutions provide the infrastructure, finance, skills and regulatory environment necessary for effective adoption.

From Technological Potential to Food-Security Outcomes

The evidence reviewed suggests that AI can contribute to food security through several pathways. At the production level, it can support crop monitoring, disease detection, weather forecasting and improved decision-making. At the market level, it can improve access to information, support market coordination and connect producers with consumers. At the storage and distribution levels, digital technologies can contribute to better management of agricultural products and reduce avoidable losses. The potential benefits are particularly important in a food system where losses can occur before, during and after production. Improving storage facilities and reducing post-harvest losses can increase the quantity of food available for consumption and reduce pressure on prices. Digital literacy is therefore central to the effective application of these technologies. Farmers must not only have access to technology but also possess the capacity to use it. The relationship between AI and food security can consequently be understood as a process in which technological capabilities are translated into agricultural applications through entrepreneurship, digital literacy, finance and infrastructure. Where these enabling conditions are weak, the potential contribution of AI may remain unrealised. The objective should therefore not be the indiscriminate adoption of AI but the development and application of appropriate technologies that respond to actual agricultural problems in Nigeria. AI applications should be affordable, accessible and capable of functioning within the infrastructural conditions of rural communities. This approach provides a basis for considering how AI can contribute to reducing food losses, improving agricultural productivity, strengthening market access and enhancing the stability of food systems in Nigeria.

Artificial Intelligence, Food Security and the Conditions for Effective Adoption

The preceding discussion indicates that Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers opportunities for addressing some of the persistent challenges affecting food security in Nigeria. However, the potential benefits of AI cannot be separated from the conditions under which farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs operate. The technology can improve prediction, information access, monitoring and decision-making, but its effectiveness depends on affordability, infrastructure, digital literacy, finance and the suitability of the technology to local conditions. AI may create new business opportunities for entrepreneurs while also transforming existing occupations and business activities (Shepherd & Majchrzak, 2022). In agriculture, this transformation can provide opportunities for new products and services based on data, prediction, digital platforms and intelligent systems. The challenge is to ensure that these opportunities contribute to improved food production, accessibility, utilisation and stability rather than widening existing inequalities. The evidence suggests that AI adoption is not evenly distributed across businesses. McElheran et al. (2024) found that firms using AI tend to be larger and that high fixed costs and specialised skill requirements may disadvantage small and entrepreneurial businesses. This has particular significance for Nigeria, where a substantial proportion of agricultural production is undertaken by smallholder farmers.

Towards a More Inclusive AI-Enabled Food System

The application of AI to food security should be inclusive. Food insecurity does not affect all groups equally, and the ability to benefit from new technologies is similarly uneven. Smallholder farmers, rural communities and other groups with limited access to finance and

digital infrastructure may be excluded from technological advances if adoption is left entirely to market forces. Digital literacy is therefore an essential component of an AI-enabled food system. Farmers require the knowledge and skills necessary to access agricultural information, interpret digital outputs and use technology in production and marketing decisions. Digital literacy can also support better market access and financial inclusion. However, digital literacy without digital infrastructure will have limited effect. Farmers require access to electricity, connectivity, affordable devices and appropriate digital services. The development of digital infrastructure must therefore accompany programmes designed to improve digital literacy. This is particularly important in rural communities where technological access may be constrained by physical and economic conditions. Agricultural innovation should consequently be designed around the realities of the intended users rather than around the technological capabilities of the developers.

Finance, Entrepreneurship and Technological Adoption

Financial constraints remain an important barrier to agricultural development and the adoption of new technologies. Farmers require finance not only for seeds, fertiliser, machinery and other conventional inputs but also increasingly for digital devices, connectivity, training and technological services. The literature reviewed indicates that access to agricultural credit has historically been constrained by collateral requirements, complicated procedures, delays and the reluctance of financial institutions to lend to productive sectors. These constraints can make the adoption of AI particularly difficult for small-scale agricultural producers. Entrepreneurial businesses may also face high initial costs associated with AI adoption. McElheran et al. (2024) identify high fixed costs and specialised skills as possible reasons for the lower adoption of AI among smaller firms. This suggests that agricultural finance and digital innovation should not be treated as separate policy areas. Access to finance can determine whether farmers and entrepreneurs are able to acquire and maintain technologies capable of improving agricultural production and food distribution.

Financial institutions, government agencies and private-sector actors therefore have important roles to play in creating financing mechanisms appropriate for agricultural technology adoption. Such mechanisms should recognise the distinctive characteristics of agricultural production, including seasonality, uncertainty and the relatively long gestation periods associated with some agricultural activities.

Environmental and Climate Dimensions of Food Security

The sustainability of food systems also depends on environmental conditions. Climate variability, environmental degradation and competition over natural resources can affect agricultural productivity and the livelihoods of rural communities. Environmental security concerns are therefore closely connected with food security. Osawe and Ibebunjo (2010) highlighted the relationship between environmental degradation, climate change, poverty and wider human-security concerns. These conditions demonstrate that environmental problems cannot be separated from questions of livelihood and sustainable development.

For agriculture, these issues have direct implications. Where farmers face environmental degradation, water scarcity, displacement or conflict, agricultural production and food availability may be disrupted. AI may contribute to the management of some of these risks through weather forecasting, crop monitoring, early warning systems and predictive analytics. Nevertheless, AI should be regarded as a supporting mechanism rather than a substitute for environmental management, conflict prevention, infrastructure development and appropriate agricultural policies.

The Nigerian Policy Challenge

The central policy challenge is not whether Nigeria should adopt AI, but how it can strengthen food security while remaining accessible to the agricultural population. In Northern Nigeria, terrorism has disrupted agricultural activities, displaced farming communities and undermined rural livelihoods, thereby aggravating food insecurity (Lamorde & Ibebunjo, 2022). Low-cost AI-powered tools that operate offline or with limited bandwidth are therefore important, particularly in rural communities affected by insecurity and inadequate infrastructure. Data governance is equally important. Agricultural AI systems depend on data, and their collection, storage and use require appropriate safeguards to protect farmers' information and build public confidence. There is also a need for collaboration among AI developers, agronomists, security agencies and local farmers. Such partnerships can help adapt technologies to local agricultural needs while accounting for insecurity and displacement. Government therefore has a critical role in strengthening food security through investment in digital infrastructure, agricultural research, training, financing and appropriate regulation. The private sector and entrepreneurial businesses can complement these efforts by developing affordable technologies that support agricultural recovery, improve food distribution and enhance resilience in terrorism-affected communities.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that reducing food losses and improving food security in Nigeria require attention to both pre-harvest and post-harvest conditions. Appropriate storage facilities can help preserve agricultural produce, reduce avoidable losses and improve the availability of food for consumers. Better storage and distribution may also reduce the pressure to incorporate storage losses into product prices. However, storage investment should form part of a wider strategy that includes improved production, transport, market access and agricultural support. Digital literacy can help farmers use technology to improve market access, obtain agricultural information and reduce post-harvest losses. Its benefits are likely to be greater when farmers also have reliable electricity, connectivity, affordable devices and appropriate digital services. The paper therefore concludes that AI has potential to contribute to food security in Nigeria, but its effectiveness depends on infrastructure, finance, digital literacy, storage facilities and technologies adapted to local conditions.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations are made:

i. Government, private-sector organisations and technology developers should prioritise affordable AI-powered agricultural tools that can operate in low-connectivity environments and respond to the specific needs of Nigerian farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs.
ii. Greater investment should be made in rural connectivity, electricity and other digital infrastructure, alongside practical digital-literacy programmes integrated into agricultural extension services.
iii. Greater attention should be given to appropriate and affordable storage facilities to reduce pre- and post-harvest losses. At the same time, accessible financing mechanisms should be developed to enable farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs to acquire appropriate technologies and other agricultural inputs.
iv. AI should not be treated as a stand-alone solution to food insecurity. Its adoption should be integrated with agricultural extension, storage, financing, infrastructure,

environmental management and market-development policies, with collaboration among AI developers, agronomists, extension workers and farmers to ensure that technological interventions are practical, accessible and sustainable.

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