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Research & Development Conference**

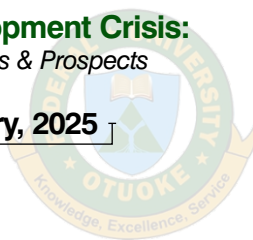
Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa State - Nigeria

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Theme: Nigeria's Development Crisis:
Emerging Issues, Challenges & Prospects

22nd - 23rd January, 2025

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10TH INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OTUOKE

THEME

Nigeria's Development Crisis: Emerging Issues, Challenges & Prospects

DATE: Wednesday 22nd – Thursday 23rd January, 2025

TIME: 10:00am

CONFERENCE LOC

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Federal University, Otuoke - Bayelsa State

Dr. Raimi Lasisi

Federal University, Otuoke - Bayelsa State

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10TH INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OTUOKE

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DAY ONE: **Wednesday 22nd January, 2025**

Conference Briefing via Google Meet	- 9:00am - 9:30am
Online Visual Presentation via Google Meet	- 9:30am - 1:00pm
WhatsApp Video Presentations	- 3:00pm - 4:00pm

DAY TWO: **Thursday 23rd January, 2025**

Conference Briefing via Google Meet	- 9:00am - 9:30am
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WhatsApp Video Presentations	- 3:00pm - 4:00pm

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BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS



PROMOTING PEACEFUL AND NON-VIOLENT LIFESTYLE AMONG TERTIARY EDUCATION STUDENTS IN BAYELSA STATE: THE CASE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

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Faculty of Education, Federal University Otuoke*

Abstract

Keywords: *Guidance and Counselling, Peaceful Lifestyle, Non-Violence, Tertiary Education Students*

Background to the Study

In recent years, the need to foster peaceful and non-violent lifestyles among tertiary education students has become a critical area of focus in educational discourse. Higher education institutions are expected to produce well-rounded individuals who excel academically and contribute positively to society. However, with the increasing prevalence of violence, conflicts, and aggression among students in various institutions, it has become essential to explore practical strategies to promote peace and non-violence within these academic environments (Taiwo & Agwu, 2017; Balongo et al., 2019). In Bayelsa State, the rising concerns regarding student unrest, bullying, and violent behaviours have necessitated investigating the role of guidance and counselling services in promoting peaceful coexistence among students.

A peaceful academic environment is crucial for effective learning and personal development, as it encourages open dialogue, respect for differing opinions, and harmonious relationships. In this context, guidance and counselling services have been identified as key interventions aimed at fostering non-violent behaviours by addressing conflicts, promoting healthy communication, and enhancing emotional well-being (Rosen, 2013; Korikiye, 2017; Olufemi, 2019; Alhassan et al., 2017; Kolawole, 2014). These services are critical in tertiary institutions, where students often face numerous challenges, such as academic stress, interpersonal conflicts, and societal pressures, all of which can contribute to negative behaviours if not effectively managed (Efuntade, 2023; Aduwari, 2022).

Guidance and counselling programs in higher education institutions are designed to support students in managing their academic, personal, and social challenges. These programs typically include one-on-one counselling, group therapy sessions, conflict resolution workshops, and mental health seminars. These programs aim to equip students with the skills and knowledge to resolve conflicts peacefully, manage their emotions, and develop positive peer relationships (Chukwu & Molokwu, 2022). Given the diverse cultural, social, and academic backgrounds of students, these services must be adaptable to meet the varied needs of the student population.

Despite the promising potential of guidance and counselling services, their effectiveness in promoting peaceful coexistence and reducing violence among students in Bayelsa State has not been extensively explored. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the role of guidance and counselling in promoting a peaceful and non-violent lifestyle among tertiary education students in the state. The study aims to assess students' perceptions of the impact of guidance and counselling programs on their behaviour and the challenges counselling units face in achieving their objectives.

This study is anchored on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which posits that individuals learn behaviors, attitudes, and emotional responses through observation, imitation, and modeling. The theory emphasizes that human behavior is shaped by environmental influences, particularly through interactions with role models and reinforcement mechanisms. In the context of this study, guidance and counselling programs serve as structured interventions that model and reinforce non-violent behaviors, teaching students conflict resolution skills, emotional regulation, and interpersonal communication. By providing a supportive environment where students can observe and practice peaceful conflict resolution strategies, counselling services align with Bandura's assertion that positive behavioral change occurs through guided learning and social reinforcement. Therefore, the Social Learning Theory provides a strong theoretical basis for understanding how guidance and counselling can be effectively utilized to promote peaceful and non-violent lifestyles among tertiary education students in Bayelsa State.

Okoro and Adebayo (2020) submitted that tertiary institutions' cultural and institutional environment heavily influences the prevalence of peaceful and non-violent behaviours among students the cultural and institutional environment of tertiary institutions influence the prevalence of peaceful and non-violent behaviours among students. Using a descriptive survey, their study revealed that students exposed to conflict resolution workshops and peace education programs exhibited significantly fewer incidences of violent behaviour. The findings align with the importance of understanding the prevalence of such behaviours to design effective interventions. Also, the study highlighted that many students viewed peaceful practices as essential for academic success and personal well-being, suggesting that monitoring these behaviours is critical in tertiary education.

Adebisi and Olajide (2018) investigated the impact of guidance and counselling programs on fostering harmonious relationships among university students in Southern Nigeria. Through a mixed-method approach involving surveys and interviews, the study found that students who regularly participated in counselling sessions developed better conflict resolution skills and showed a greater inclination toward peaceful coexistence. The researchers emphasized that guidance and counselling programs provided students practical tools for managing stress and interpersonal conflicts. Their findings underline the relevance of assessing the perceived impact of these programs on students' abilities to engage in peaceful practices.

Chukwuma and Ibrahim (2021) explored the challenges counselling units face in promoting non-violent behaviour among Nigerian tertiary students. Using a qualitative case study method, they identified several key barriers, including insufficient funding, lack of professional counselors, and limited student awareness

about the benefits of counseling services. Also, cultural stigmas and administrative bottlenecks were found to hinder the effectiveness of these units. The study concluded that addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort by institutional stakeholders to prioritize and adequately support counselling services. These findings underscore the need to identify and address specific counselling units' challenges to maximize their impact on student behaviour.

Hence, the research questions formulated to guide this study are;

- i. What is the prevalence of non-violent and peaceful lifestyle practices among tertiary education students in Bayelsa State?
- ii. What is the perceived impact of guidance and counselling programs on promoting peaceful coexistence among tertiary education students?
- iii. What challenges do guidance and counselling units face in fostering non-violent behaviour among tertiary education students?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the case of guidance and counselling programs in promoting peaceful and non-violent lifestyles among tertiary education students in Bayelsa State. The population of the study comprised all students enrolled in all the 8 tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

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A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 407 students from four major tertiary institutions in the state who had participated in guidance and counselling programs. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Guidance and Counselling Programs for Peaceful Coexistence Questionnaire" (GCPCQ), developed by the researchers. This questionnaire consisted of four sections: Section A measured the demographic variables of the respondents, including age, gender, institution, and academic year.

Section B comprised 10 items focusing on the prevalence of peaceful and non-violent lifestyle practices among the students, measured on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Section C included 10 items assessing the perceived impact of guidance and counselling programs on peaceful coexistence, also structured on a 4-point rating scale. Section D included 10 items assessing the challenges do guidance and counselling units face in fostering non-violent behaviour among tertiary education students, also structured on a 4-point rating scale.

The content and face validity of the instrument were ensured by experts in Guidance and Counselling as well as Measurement and Evaluation, whose corrections and suggestions contributed to the final draft used in the study. A trial test was conducted with 15 students from a tertiary institution not included in the main

study, and the reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.85 using the Cronbach Alpha formula, indicating that the instrument was highly reliable. Data collected through the questionnaires were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The decision rule for interpreting the results was based on the average of the 4-point scale, where any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was considered agreed (major for research question 3), while a mean score below 2.50 was considered disagree (minor for research question 3).

Results

Research Question 1

What is the prevalence of non-violent and peaceful lifestyle practices among tertiary education students in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the prevalence of non-violent and peaceful lifestyle practices among tertiary education students in Bayelsa State

S/N	statement	X	SD	Remark
1.	I avoid engaging in physical fights or violent behavior within the school environment.	2.88	.85	A
2.	I resolve conflicts with fellow students through dialogue and mutual understanding.	2.64	.74	A
3.	I discourage my peers from using violent means to address disagreements.	2.34	.50	D
4.	I actively promote harmony and cooperation among my classmates.	2.43	.53	D
5.	I respect the opinions and rights of others, even when they differ from mine.	2.40	.48	D
6.	I refrain from using offensive language or gestures during disagreements.	2.18	.53	D
7.	I participate in school activities that promote peace and unity among students.	2.51	.5	A
8.	I believe in settling disputes through proper channels, such as mediation or counselling.	2.89	.34	A
9.	I actively seek peaceful solutions when faced with conflicts in my academic or social life.	2.06	.74	D
10.	I am willing to report incidents of violence or bullying to appropriate authorities.	2.65	.37	A
GRAND MEAN		2.48	.56	D

Source: Fieldwork (2024) *A=Agree D=Disagree

Table 1 above presents the mean and standard deviation of responses on the prevalence of non-violent and peaceful lifestyle practices among tertiary education students in Bayelsa State. Out of the ten items, five had mean values above the cut-off value of 2.50, indicating that respondents agreed on the prevalence of some peaceful and non-violent lifestyle practices. The statement with the highest mean (2.89), "I believe in settling disputes through proper channels, such as mediation or counselling," shows a strong consensus among students on the importance of resolving conflicts through formal and peaceful avenues. Similarly, "I avoid engaging in physical fights or violent behaviour within the school environment" recorded a mean of 2.88, further highlighting that many students refrain from physical altercations.

Other items with agreement include “I resolve conflicts with fellow students through dialogue and mutual understanding” (mean = 2.64) and “I am willing to report incidents of violence or bullying to appropriate authorities” (mean = 2.65), indicating that some students actively promote non-violent solutions. However, statements such as “I discourage my peers from using violent means to address disagreements” (mean = 2.34) and “I actively promote harmony and cooperation among my classmates” (mean = 2.43) recorded mean values below the cut-off, suggesting a lack of consensus or practice in these areas.

The grand mean of 2.48 indicates an overall disagreement on the prevalence of peaceful and non-violent lifestyle practices among tertiary students in Bayelsa State, with responses showing varied levels of agreement. The relatively low standard deviation (0.56) signifies that the students' perceptions on the prevalence of these practices are moderately consistent. This result implies that while certain peaceful behaviours are practiced by a portion of the students, there is room for significant improvement in fostering a widespread non-violent and harmonious lifestyle within these institutions.

Research Question 2

What is the perceived impact of guidance and counselling programs on promoting peaceful coexistence among tertiary education students?

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Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the perceived impact of guidance and counselling programs on promoting peaceful coexistence among tertiary education students

S/N	STATEMENT	X	SD	REMARK
1.	Guidance and counselling programs in my institution promote awareness of peaceful conflict resolution strategies.	2.12	.38	A
2.	Counsellors provide effective support to students in managing interpersonal conflicts.	2.21	.89	D
3.	The counselling unit regularly organizes seminars and workshops on peaceful coexistence.	2.08	1.52	D
4.	Counselling sessions have helped me develop better communication skills for resolving disagreements.	2.03	.35	D
5.	Guidance and counselling programs encourage tolerance and understanding among students of different backgrounds.	2.33	.30	D
6.	I have learned techniques for anger management through counselling activities.	2.14	.35	D
7.	The counselling services have positively influenced my ability to handle peer pressure non-violently.	3.12	.38	A
8.	Guidance and counselling programs create a safe environment for discussing issues that could lead to violence.	2.78	1.52	A
9.	Counselling initiatives in my school emphasize the importance of respecting others' opinions and rights.	2.56	.35	A
10.	Guidance and counselling services have reduced the prevalence of violent behaviors among students in my institution.	2.47	.30	D
Grand Mean		2.38	0.63	A

Source: Fieldwork (2024) *A=Agree D=Disagree

Table 2 above presents the mean and standard deviation of responses regarding the perceived impact of guidance and counselling programs on promoting peaceful coexistence among tertiary education students in Bayelsa State. Out of the ten items, only four had mean values above the cut-off of 2.50, indicating agreement that specific guidance and counselling efforts positively influence peaceful coexistence. The statement with the highest mean (3.12), "The counselling services have positively influenced my ability to handle peer pressure non-violently," highlights a significant positive impact in this area. Similarly, "Guidance and counselling programs create a safe environment for discussing issues that could lead to violence" recorded a mean of 2.78, underscoring the value of counselling services in fostering open communication.

Other areas of agreement include "Counselling initiatives in my school emphasize the importance of respecting others' opinions and rights" (mean = 2.56) and "Guidance and counselling programs in my institution promote awareness of peaceful conflict resolution strategies" (mean = 2.12). However, items such as "The counselling unit regularly organizes seminars and workshops on peaceful coexistence" (mean = 2.08) and "Counsellors provide effective support to students in managing interpersonal conflicts" (mean = 2.21) fell below the cut-off, indicating limited effectiveness or engagement in these areas. The grand mean of 2.38 suggests that, on average, students perceive the impact of guidance and counselling programs on peaceful coexistence as moderate, with varied effectiveness across different aspects of the programs. The relatively low standard deviation (0.63) indicates consistency in responses among the students. These findings imply that while certain aspects of guidance and counselling programs have positively impacted students, there is a need to strengthen efforts in areas such as conflict management support, regular workshops, and skills development to enhance their overall effectiveness.

Research Question 3

What challenges do guidance and counselling units face in fostering non-violent behaviour among tertiary education students?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the challenges guidance and counselling units face in fostering non-violent behaviour among tertiary education students

S/N	STATEMENT	X	SD	REMARK
1.	Inadequate funding limits the effectiveness of guidance and counselling programs in my institution.	3.12	.38	M
2.	There are insufficient counsellors to address the needs of all students.	3.21	.89	M
3.	Lack of professional training and development opportunities for counsellors affects service delivery.	3.08	.52	M
4.	Students are often reluctant to seek guidance and counselling services for conflict resolution.	3.03	.35	M
5.	Counselling units lack adequate facilities and resources to promote non-violent behavior.	3.03	.30	M
6.	Cultural and social stigmas hinder students from engaging with counselling services.	3.14	.35	M
7.	Heavy workloads and administrative duties reduce counsellors' availability for student support.	3.12	.89	M
8.	There is a lack of institutional support for guidance and counselling programs aimed at fostering peace.	3.21	.72	M
9.	Poor awareness of the role of counselling services limits student participation in non-violence initiatives.	3.08	.35	M
10.	Miscommunication or mistrust between students and counsellors affects the effectiveness of counselling programs.	3.03	.30	M
	GRAND MEAN	3.10	0.50	M

Source: Fieldwork (2024) *M=Major, Mi=Minor

Table 3 above presents the mean and standard deviation of responses regarding the challenges faced by guidance and counselling units in fostering non-violent behaviour among tertiary education students in Bayelsa State. All the items recorded mean values above the cut-off point of 2.50, indicating that respondents perceive these challenges as major. The statement with the highest mean (3.21), "There are insufficient counsellors to address the needs of all students," emphasizes the significant challenge of inadequate staffing in counselling units. Similarly, "There is a lack of institutional support for guidance and counselling programs aimed at fostering peace" (mean = 3.21) highlights the critical need for institutional backing to enhance program effectiveness.

Other prominent challenges include "Cultural and social stigmas hinder students from engaging with counselling services" (mean = 3.14) and "Inadequate funding limits the effectiveness of guidance and counselling programs in my institution" (mean = 3.12), both pointing to systemic and social barriers that restrict the reach and impact of counselling services. Additional concerns, such as "Lack of professional training and development opportunities for counsellors" (mean = 3.08) and "Heavy workloads and administrative duties reduce counsellors' availability for student support" (mean = 3.12), further demonstrate operational and professional constraints faced by counselling units.

The grand mean of 3.10 indicates that these challenges are perceived as major across the board, with a relatively low standard deviation (0.50) showing consistency in the respondents' views. These findings suggest that guidance and counselling units require enhanced funding, institutional support, staffing, and professional development opportunities to effectively foster non-violent behaviour among students. Addressing cultural and social stigmas and raising awareness about the importance of counselling services are also essential steps to maximize their impact.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from Research Question 1 revealed that the prevalence of non-violent and peaceful lifestyle practices among tertiary education students in Bayelsa State is relatively low, as indicated by the grand mean of 2.48. These findings suggest that although there is some level of peaceful conduct among students, significant gaps remain in fostering a culture of non-violence and mutual respect in tertiary institutions. The results align with the findings of Ndungu (2015) and Kairiza et al. (2017), who emphasized the importance of structured interventions to promote harmonious relationships and reduce violence within academic environments. Ndungu (2015) highlighted that resource-intensive strategies, such as targeted awareness programs and counseling services, are crucial in reducing conflict and fostering student peace. Similarly, Kairiza et al. (2017) noted that despite institutions' efforts, unresolved gaps in effective conflict resolution mechanisms can impede the development of peaceful coexistence.

The findings from Research Question 2 indicate that the perceived impact of guidance and counseling programs on promoting peaceful coexistence among tertiary education students in Bayelsa State is generally low, with a grand mean of 2.38, which is slightly below the cut-off value of 2.50. These findings align with previous research by Taiwo and Agwu (2017) and Rosen (2013), highlighting the significant potential of guidance and counselling programs to reduce violent behaviours and promote peaceful interactions. However, the mixed responses observed in the present study suggest that while counseling services may have some positive influence, they may not be fully effective in instilling lasting changes in students' conflict-resolution behaviours. As suggested by Efuntade (2023), the success of such programs largely depends on the quality and frequency of their delivery and students' willingness to engage with these services.

The results suggest that tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State should enhance the visibility and accessibility of their counseling services. This can be achieved by increasing the frequency of counseling programs, providing targeted workshops on non-violence, and ensuring students are more informed about available services. Moreover, it is crucial for guidance and counseling units to employ a more personalized and proactive approach to addressing the unique needs of students, as these strategies foster greater student engagement and more effective promotion of

peaceful coexistence. In addition, continued advocacy for the importance of guidance and counseling, as noted by Chukwu and Molokwu (2022), can further elevate students' participation and benefit from these essential services.

The findings from Research Question 3 reveal that guidance and counseling units in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State face several significant challenges in fostering non-violent behaviour among students, with a grand mean of 3.10, indicating a significant impact of these challenges. These results resonate with the findings of Ndungu (2015) and Kairiza et al. (2017), emphasizing the importance of adequate resources, trained professionals, and institutional backing in successfully implementing guidance and counseling programs. The lack of sufficient funding and support can prevent counseling units from organizing regular programs and providing adequate resources to reach all students effectively. Additionally, the challenges of stigmatization and reluctance to seek counselling services echo the findings of Chukwu and Molokwu (2022), who highlighted the importance of breaking down barriers to accessing mental health support in educational settings.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of guidance and counselling programs in promoting peaceful and non-violent lifestyles among tertiary education students in Bayelsa State. Specifically, it seeks to assess the prevalence of peaceful practices, evaluate the perceived impact of counselling services, and identify challenges faced by counselling units in fostering non-violent behaviors among students. The findings revealed that while students engage in some non-violent and peaceful practices, such as resolving conflicts through dialogue and avoiding physical fights, there are notable areas where improvement is needed. Guidance and counselling programs have a perceived positive impact on students' ability to manage conflicts peacefully; however, the effectiveness of these programs is significantly hindered by challenges such as inadequate funding, insufficient counselling staff, and cultural stigmas. The results underscore the need for strategic interventions to enhance the overall impact of counselling programs in fostering peaceful coexistence.

The implications of the study highlight the critical role that both individual and institutional efforts play in promoting a non-violent and peaceful culture within tertiary institutions. The prevalence of non-violent behaviours, although notable, suggests that more could be done to encourage and institutionalize peaceful conflict resolution practices. This study emphasizes the need for robust guidance and counselling services that not only address students' psychological needs but also foster a culture of peace. Additionally, the identified challenges in the delivery of guidance and counselling services point to the necessity of strengthening institutional support and providing adequate resources to meet the growing demands of students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Tertiary institutions should increase funding and resources for guidance and counselling programs to improve their capacity in promoting peaceful coexistence among students.
- ii. Universities should hire more trained counsellors to adequately address the needs of students and ensure effective conflict resolution support.
- iii. Institutions should implement awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and encourage student participation in guidance and counselling programs aimed at fostering non-violent behaviour.

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INFORMATION DISSEMINATION PRACTICES ADOPTED BY SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES FOR SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS OPERATIONS IN EBONYI STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated information dissemination practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State. Guided by one research question and a null hypothesis, the study employed a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of 2,433 registered SMEs, with a sample size of 344. A validated structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The Cronbach Alpha Reliability coefficient was 0.92. Descriptive statistics and t-test were used for data analysis. Findings revealed that SMEs use social media, YouTube, billboards, WhatsApp, radio, and television for information dissemination. No significant difference was found between male and female operators' ratings on information dissemination practices. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended, among others, those small and medium scale enterprises operators should social media platforms for business information dissemination. Business education teachers should emphasize the benefits of information dissemination practices in promoting business activities.

Keywords: Information, Dissemination Practices, Business operators, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises, Successful Business Operations

Background to the Study

Information dissemination is a crucial aspect of business operations, enabling organizations to communicate their value propositions, products, and services to their target audience. Information dissemination practices refer to the methods and strategies used to share and communicate information to various audiences, stakeholders, or communities. This involves tailoring messages for specific audiences and choosing suitable channels, such as social media, email, and publications. Igwe (2024) views information dissemination as the act of delivering principles, ideas, opinions, and information to people, especially consumers of a product. Information dissemination practices refer to the processes and methods used to share, distribute, and communicate information to various audiences, stakeholders, or target groups. According to Underwood (2021), information dissemination is a signal or message that flows between a sender and a receiver. Bennet (2020) defines information as interpreted data. Salamiet et al. (2014) posit that determining the requirements of market women requires knowing who they are. Effective information dissemination is crucial in various fields, including education, healthcare, business, and development. It also involves developing engaging, informative content. Moorthy (2022) noted that the use of business information influences the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises.

Small-scale and medium-scale enterprises are business organizations set up by individuals or groups of individuals, known as business operators, to provide goods and services (Igwe, Oduma, and Utebor, 2024). The capital to operate the business is supplied by one person or a few people who are the managers of the business. These enterprises usually take the form of sole proprietorships, partnerships, or family-owned companies. According to Olufemi (2017), small-scale and medium-scale enterprises exist in the form of sole proprietorships and partnerships, although some may be registered as limited liability companies. They are characterized by simple management structures, informal employer-employee relationships, labor-intensive operations, simple technology, fusion of ownership and management, and limited access to capital. Their classification into small and medium enterprises depends on the scale or size of business operators' control. Furthermore, small-scale and medium-scale enterprises engage in various activities, including construction, agro-allied, information technology, manufacturing, educational establishments, business services, tourism, and leisure.

In Ebonyi State, small-scale and medium-scale enterprises have continued to thrive even before the state's creation in 1996. Nwusulor, in Igwe, Oduma, and Utebor (2024), states that about 80% of all economic activities in Ebonyi State are purely small-scale and medium-scale enterprises. This accounts for their significant contributions to the state's economy. According to SMEDAN (2022), Ebonyi State has 2,433 small-scale and medium-scale enterprises. These enterprises provide employment opportunities, reduce poverty, and diversify the economy. They operate

in various dimensions, including water production, cassava processing, rice milling, provision stores, hairdressing, fruit juice making, computer centers, shoe making, palm oil production, vehicle repairs and maintenance, laundry and dry-cleaning services, bookshops, transport services, carpentry, electronics repairs and accessories, poultry farms, restaurants, and fast food centers.

Despite their contributions to the state's economy, small-scale and medium-scale enterprises in Ebonyi State face challenges, including a high rate of failure. According to West and Wood (2012), 90% of business failures result from a lack of experience and knowledge about the market. In today's information age, business information is a valuable asset that aids management decision-making and provides a competitive edge. Igwe (2020) noted that no business is without competitors, and gathering information about competitors is critical. Effective information dissemination practices are vital for small-scale and medium-scale enterprises to thrive in today's competitive business landscape. These practices enable enterprises to showcase their products, services, and brand identity, fostering visibility and credibility. This, in turn, attracts customers, investors, and partners, driving business expansion. Igwe (2024) stated that accurate and timely information dissemination empowers small-scale and medium-scale enterprise managers to make informed decisions. Data-driven insights facilitate strategic planning, risk management, and innovation. Information dissemination practices also facilitate open communication channels with customers, suppliers, and business partners, ensuring seamless collaboration, feedback, and issue resolution. Small-scale and medium-scale businesses that effectively disseminate information differentiate themselves from competitors. Igwe (2024) adds that information dissemination practices directly enhance business revenue by increasing customer awareness, engagement, and loyalty, leading to higher sales and market share. Customer feedback and insights gathered through information dissemination practices enable small-scale and medium-scale enterprises to refine their products and services. These practices ensure that enterprises stay competitive, adaptable, and responsive to market changes, guaranteeing long-term sustainability. Consistent, engaging communication builds trust and credibility, attracting customers, talent, and partners.

In this 21st century, people interact with others to get things done through various online platforms because much of our printed information is available electronically. The integration of social media platforms in the business world can help small and medium-scale enterprises disseminate information to the general public, connect with customers, and business partners who share similar business interests or activities online. It would also help small and medium-scale owners/managers access or disseminate information and resources needed to work together effectively and solve business problems online. Akujo (2020) outlines some social media platforms that small and medium-scale enterprises can use to disseminate

information about their products to customers, including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, WhatsApp, YouTube, SharePoint, Instagram, and LinkedIn, among others. She further notes that these platforms allow small and medium-scale owners to tap into what people are saying about their product brand and other services, participate in the conversation, be open to new ideas, and use this insight to make better business decisions.

The use of Twitter by owners/managers of small and medium-scale enterprises can also help disseminate information about business activities. Twitter is a free online micro-blogging tool that allows people to stay in constant contact with each other through shared communication. Akujo (2020) notes that the use of Twitter in disseminating information about business can help small and medium-scale business enterprises stay connected with their customers and get in touch with them on the latest business developments. It also enables owners to monitor their competitors by reading through their tweets. Jeremy (2013) opines that business owners who use Twitter put their business out there to a large audience that they would not have been able to reach otherwise. YouTube is another important modern way of information dissemination in this information technology age. Urchin, as cited in Akujo (2020), postulates that YouTube is an online video service that allows people to share videos. Akujo notes that YouTube is the leader in online video and the primary destination to watch and share original videos worldwide through the web. It allows people to easily upload and share video clips across the Internet through websites, mobile devices, blogs, and email. Businesses and individuals use YouTube to disseminate and find videos, including entertainment, promotions, and instructional content. Furthermore, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp can help business owners/managers disseminate information about their products or services to the general public through online platforms. Facebook is a powerful tool for small and medium-scale enterprises to disseminate information, connect with customers, and grow their business. The manager/owner can create a Facebook business page separate from their personal profile, choose a clear and concise page name, add a business profile and cover photos, and a compelling bio. They can also set up page categories and tags for discovery. This will help SME owners/managers share vital information about their new products with customers through their WhatsApp page or Facebook account. Akujo (2020) noted that Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are social platforms that encourage active social communication between business owners and followers. These platforms offer many advantages in disseminating business information that can help owners grow their business. According to Fergerman and Seth (2014), Facebook and Instagram are great platforms for promoting all types of business information.

Another medium through which small and medium-scale operators can disseminate information is email. Electronic mail has become a vital, fast, and convenient way of disseminating information and building strategic relationships in business. It has

also been transformed into an important medium for transporting electronic copies of documents, data files, and multimedia content. Lesikar, Pettit, and Flatley (2019) concur with this line of reasoning, stating that email transmissions work with computer systems, sending documents to an electronic mail box. These electronic mail boxes can be set up on a company's computers, on a service provider's computer, or on a private subscriber information services computer. O'Brien (2020) points out that, as with email, you need to know the telephone number of the receiving fax to send the message, and someone on the receiving end needs to check the fax and deliver the message. Another way to disseminate business information is through radio broadcasts. Coulson (2021) highlights the extremely high proportion of households that possess a radio. Coulson further states that a growing proportion of cars have radios, and cassette players are fitted to cars in increasing quantities. Radios are broadcast in many working situations. Portable transistor radios are listened to by the mobile young, and many young mothers listen to the radio while doing their housework. According to Okoro (2015), the radio is a popular and ubiquitous medium for disseminating information because it has the potential to reach many people efficiently for business, educational, informational, entertainment, and cultural purposes. Furthermore, radio advertisements may be heard by listeners who are driving, walking, working, or engaging in other activities. This was supported by Williams and Sawyer (2021), who stated that advertising, events, marketing, and publicity are done through radio. According to the authors, television also carries a captivating glamor. Outdoor advertising and personal selling are additional ways small and medium-scale enterprises can share information with customers. This method involves signs and posters placed outside along highways or other areas with heavy traffic. Reibstein (2015) describes outdoor advertising as a catchall category for anything not on the airwaves or in print. Outdoor media includes billboards, posters, signs, and printed shopping bags. Small and medium-scale enterprises using outdoor advertising determine the location by studying traffic patterns and the proximity of distribution outlets. Outdoor advertising is particularly effective in large urban areas with high concentrations of pedestrians, automobiles, or public transit users. Orogwu (2019) views personal selling as a special form of information dissemination. Its goal is to provide information to prospective buyers in a way that elicits a purchase. Although personal selling is just one of the several promotional tools available to marketing managers, it is unique in that it is a form of dyadic communication. Ile (2021) noted that personal selling is an oral presentation in a conversation with one or more prospective purchasers for the purpose of making sales.

The bulk of work in business organizations can be affected by information transmission. Most SMEs have an abundance of information within the company. According to Lau, Choy, Wong, and Fungi (2013), this information is the main input for any business organization that wants to function effectively and efficiently. The fact remains that SMEs cannot exist successfully without well-defined and analyzed

information management. If the communication network is inadequate, small and medium-scale enterprise owners would not know what their colleagues are doing or what customers are requesting at any given time. This may be due to the information and communication technological revolution that has transformed business. Ajayi (2018) notes that the introduction of the Internet as a readily accessible and cost-effective means of communication has rapidly transformed the way Nigerian society conducts business and shares information. This is why modern small and medium enterprises use the internet, intranets, extranets, and other networks to support every step of the commercial process.

Small and medium-scale businesses are not exclusive to men; they involve different genders, including men and women. In this study, the first demographic characteristic is gender, referring to the physical differences between people who are male, female, or intersex. Gender is also defined as the different biological and physiological characteristics of males and females. Turner and Akinremi, as cited in Ucha (2021), note that the gender of owners/operators of small and medium-scale enterprises may influence the way one thinks and behaves. Thus, gender might influence business owners/managers' opinions on the utilization of modern information management practices in small and medium-scale businesses. A study conducted by Akujo (2019) shows that females make more use of information management than men in carrying out their business activities. According to Akujo, females use more information channels, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube, to share business information than men. This may also be the case for small and medium-scale enterprises in Ebonyi State. However, these views are either theoretical or have not been empirically proven to affect small and medium-scale business operators' utilization of information dissemination management practices in Ebonyi State. Against this background, the researcher empirically determined the information dissemination management practices adopted by small and medium-scale business enterprises for successful business operations in Ebonyi State.

Statement of the Problem

Small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) dominate the investment landscape of Ebonyi State, playing a vital role in the state's economic development. They employ a significant percentage of the active working population and contribute substantially to the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The problem is that the great number of small and medium scale enterprise (SMEs) springing up on daily bases keep folding up leaving little or no significant impact on the economic development of the State. The researcher is worried that the rate of failure on the part of small and medium scale enterprise operators may be due to lack of information management practices. However, despite the crucial role of effective information dissemination in driving business success, many small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Ebonyi State continue to struggle with inadequate information management practices, leading to poor decision-making, reduced competitiveness, and limited

growth prospects. The lack of empirical research on the information dissemination practices adopted by SMEs in Ebonyi State has resulted in a significant knowledge gap, making it challenging for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and stakeholders to develop targeted interventions to support the growth and sustainability of SMEs in the region. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the information dissemination practices adopted by SMEs in Ebonyi State, with a view to identifying the challenges and opportunities for improving information management practices and promoting successful business operations."

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the information dissemination practices adopted by small and medium-scale enterprises for successful business operations in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study aimed to:

Determine the information dissemination practices adopted by small and medium-scale enterprises for successful business operations in Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

What are the information dissemination practices adopted by small and medium-scale enterprises for successful business operations in Ebonyi State?

Hypotheses

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The following null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study and was tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female operators of small and medium-scale enterprises regarding information dissemination management practices adopted by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi State.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Ebonyi State, one of the five states in the South East Geographical Zone of Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 2,433 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) registered with the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). A sample size of 344 SMEs was determined using the Yaro Yamane formula. A structured questionnaire, titled "Information Dissemination Management Practices Adopted by SMEs," was designed by the researcher for data collection. The instrument contained 12 items, arranged in five clusters, with a four-point rating scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). The questionnaire was validated by three experts from the Business Education and Science Education departments. A pilot test was conducted using a sample of 30 SMEs in Enugu State, and the data collected was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, yielding a reliability index of 0.82. The questionnaire was

administered to 344 respondents with the help of four research assistants. However, only 321 questionnaires (93%) were retrieved and used for data analysis, while 21 were not returned. The data collected was analyzed using the Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-test statistic at an alpha level of 0.05 significance. Items with a mean value of 2.50 or higher were considered as one of the information management practices adopted by SMEs, while a mean value below 2.50 indicated disagreement. The results of hypotheses tested using the t-test were accepted when the calculated p-value was greater than 0.05 and rejected when the calculated p-value was less than 0.05.

Results

Research Questions: What are the information dissemination practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Information Dissemination Practices Adopted by Small and Medium Scale Enterprises N=Sample Size

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std.	Decision
1	Post sales promotion on Face book				Agree
2	Uploading business videos on YouTube	321	3.52	0.61	Strongly Agree
3	Displaying bill board with vital information	321	3.49	0.65	Agree
4	Advertising products on Instagram	321	1.36	0.59	Disagree
5	Sharing product photos on Twitter handle	321	1.40	0.56	Disagree
6	Chatting with the customers on WhatsApp	321	3.42	0.69	Agree
7	Publishing articles in the magazines	321	1.54	0.68	Disagree
8	Use of radio announcement	321	3.36	0.74	Agree
9	Using television announcement	321	3.31	0.73	Agree
10	Dispatching business correspondence to customers	321	1.43	0.66	Disagree
11	Creating chat customers group with snap chat	321	1.39	0.55	Disagree
12	Sharing business information on blog	321	1.50	0.61	Disagree

Data in Table 1 show that items 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9 have mean scores ranging from 3.31 to 3.52, exceeding the 2.50 cut-off point. These items represent information dissemination practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State. Conversely, items 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, and 12 have mean values of 1.36, 1.40, 1.54, 1.43, 1.39, and 1.56, respectively, falling below the 2.50 cut-off point and indicating disagreement among small and medium scale business operators. The respondents agreed on the following information dissemination practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State: posting sales promotions on Facebook, uploading business videos on YouTube, displaying billboards with vital information, chatting with customers on WhatsApp, using radio announcements, and utilizing television announcements.

Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in mean rating of male and female operators of small and medium scale enterprises regarding information dissemination management practices adopted by small and medium enterprises successful business operations in Ebonyi State.

Table 2: Independent t-test of Mean Ratings of Responses of Male and Female operators of Small and Medium scale Enterprises on Information Dissemination Management Practices Adopted by small and Medium Scale Enterprises

Items	Gender	N	Mean	Std.	Df	t-cal	Alpha	p-val.	Decision
Item1	Male	188	3.48	.54	319	.10	0.05	.91	Not significant
	Female	133	3.49	.63					
Item2	Male	188	3.52	.64	319	.00	0.05	.99	Not significant
	Female	133	3.52	.57					
Item3	Male	188	3.54	.61	319	1.54	0.05	.12	Not significant
	Female	133	3.42	.69					
Item4	Male	188	1.35	.59	319	.17	0.05	.85	Not significant
	Female	133	1.36	.59					
Item5	Male	188	1.44	.59	319	1.38	0.05	.16	Not significant
	Female	133	1.35	.51					
Item6	Male	188	3.42	.70	319	.10	0.05	.91	Not Significant
	Female	133	3.42	.67					
Item7	Male	188	1.54	.68	319	.18	0.05	.85	Not significant
	Female	133	1.53	.68					
Item8	Male	188	3.37	.75	319	.46	0.05	.64	Not Significant
	Female	133	3.33	.72					
Item9	Male	188	3.32	.75	319	.28	0.05	.77	Not Significant
	Female	133	3.30	.69					
Item10	Male	188	1.45	.67	319	.78	0.05	.43	Not significant
	Female	133	1.39	.65					
Item11	Male	188	1.41	.57	319	.62	0.05	.53	Not significant
	Female	133	1.37	.51					
Item12	Male	188	1.50	.60	319	.12	0.05	.89	Not Significant
	Female	133	1.49	.63					
					319	.83	0.05	.67	Not significant

The t-test analysis results in Table 2 reveal no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female operators of small and medium scale enterprises regarding information dissemination management practices adopted for successful business operations in Ebonyi State. This is evident from the p-values in Table 2, which range from 0.16 to 0.99, all exceeding 0.05. The grand p-value of 0.676 also surpasses 0.05, leading to the non-rejection of the null hypothesis stating no significant difference in mean ratings between male and female operators.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed how SME operators responded to the information dissemination management practices adopted by small and medium enterprises for successful business operations in Ebonyi State. The findings showed that information dissemination practices were barely applied by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi State. This means that post-sales promotions on Facebook, uploading business videos on YouTube, displaying billboards with vital information, chatting with customers on WhatsApp, using radio announcements, and television announcements were slightly applied by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi State. The findings are in line with the report of the World Bank (2015), which states that most small and medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria do not maintain and practice complete information dissemination in their business ventures. The findings agree with Akujo (2020), who noted that the use of Twitter in disseminating information about business could help small and medium-scale business enterprises stay connected with their customers and get in touch with them on the latest business developments. This would also enable owners to monitor their competitors by reading through their tweets. The findings also agree with Jeremy (2013), who opined that business owners who use Twitter put their business out there to a large audience that they would not have been able to reach otherwise. Additionally, the findings concur with Urchin in Akujo (2020), who postulated that YouTube is an online video service that allows people to share videos. The findings also support the view of Akujo (2020), who noted that Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are social platforms that encourage active social communication between business owners and followers. These platforms offer many advantages in disseminating business information, which can help owners grow their business. The findings are also consistent with Orogwu (2019), who views personal selling as a special form of disseminating information. Its goal is to provide information to prospective buyers in a way that elicits a purchase. Furthermore, the findings agree with Mgbodile (2016), who averred that the use of a register is one of the most acceptable means of disseminating information in business offices. This is because it is where each member of the workforce can sign, with a date, indicating that they have received the information. Finally, the findings are consistent with Okorie (2021), who maintained that face-to-face discussions, the use of bulletins, announcements, notice boards, letters, and memoranda, as well as the installation of more intercommunication and telephones in the office, can facilitate information dissemination to employees. Regular staff meetings can also ensure that information is disseminated early, saving employers or managers the embarrassment of not getting the message out.

The researcher is of the view that the result is so because, in the 21st century, people interact with others to get things done through various online platforms, as much of our printed information is now available electronically. The integration of social media platforms in the business world can help small and medium-scale enterprises disseminate information to the general public, connect with customers, and

business partners who share similar business interests or activities online. It would also help small and medium-scale owners/managers access or disseminate information and resources needed to work together effectively and solve business problems online. Similarly, the test of the third null hypothesis indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female operators of small and medium-scale enterprises regarding the information dissemination management practices adopted by small and medium enterprises for successful business operations in Ebonyi State. The findings of the study also agree with Nkuma and Adebajo (2021), who found that gender, did not influence business owners/operators of small and medium-scale businesses' views on the utilization of modern information management practices in small and medium-scale businesses. In contrast, Turner and Akinremi, as cited in Ucha (2021), found that the gender of business owners/operators of small and medium-scale businesses influenced the way one thinks and behaves.

Conclusion

The study concludes that when properly utilized, information dissemination management practices can create a conducive environment for the effective functioning of small and medium-scale business activities in Ebonyi State and beyond. However, small and medium-scale business operators' inability to effectively utilize information dissemination practices has made it challenging for them to survive and make an impact in a competitive environment in Ebonyi State.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Small and medium-scale enterprise operators should adopt social media platforms to disseminate business information to customers, creating awareness and a favorable business environment. Additionally, handbills and posters should be circulated to educate the public about their existence.
- ii. Government and other business support organizations should consider organizing training programs for small and medium-scale enterprises on information retrieval strategies to ensure success in business enterprises.

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IMPACT OF LAND DISPUTES ON RURAL POVERTY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abia State, Nigeria*

Abstract

Land disputes in Nigeria, particularly in Abia State, have severe socioeconomic consequences, devastating communities and hindering human capital and infrastructure development. This study reviews existing literature on the impact of land disputes on rural poverty and community development in Abia State, employing historical and descriptive research design based on qualitative data collection and analysis methods. The findings reveal that land disputes are a pervasive issue in Abia State, caused by various interconnected factors, including ambiguities in customary land tenure, territorial boundary conflicts, succession-related conflicts, land acquisition and development-related disputes, and inadequacies in land administration. These disputes have led to reduced agricultural productivity, food insecurity, and poverty among rural households. To address land disputes in Abia State, the government should enhance land administration by investing in digital registration systems and training administrators. Additionally, establishing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as community-based mediation centers, can help resolve disputes amicably. Promoting sustainable land use practices, like agroforestry and conservation agriculture, and supporting community-led land use planning can also prevent conflicts. Finally, improving access to essential resources, including land, water, and credit facilities, is vital to reduce poverty and improve agricultural productivity.

Keywords: Land disputes, rural poverty, community development

Background to the Study

In Nigeria, the quest for land control and the emotional ties to ancestral territories are primary drivers of conflict (Agheyisi, 2019). Land access can unlock opportunities for socioeconomic mobility, education, and youth empowerment. However, competing land claims have fueled around 90% of violent communal clashes, with farmer-herder conflicts escalating tensions (Otite & Albert, 2012; von Uexkull & Pettersson, 2018; Watson, 2023). Research on communal conflict highlights the pivotal role of shared community identity, which can be shaped by demographic, socioeconomic, and situational factors (Brosche & Elfversson, 2015). The struggle for control over resources like land and local political power often leads to violent confrontations. Historically, communal land conflicts have caused widespread displacement, hardship, and devastation, resulting in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Land-related issues, including disputes, invasions, and annexations, as well as farmer-herder clashes, are key catalysts of communal conflict (Anierobi & Obasi, 2012).

Land disputes are a persistent challenge in Abia State, Nigeria, driven by the quest for land control and emotional ties to ancestral territories (Uche, 2013). Access to land is crucial for socioeconomic mobility, education, and youth empowerment in the state (Nwajiuba, 2017). However, competing land claims have fueled violent communal clashes, with farmer-herder conflicts escalating tensions in Abia State (Ikejiolor, 2018; Okoro, 2019). Research highlights the pivotal role of shared community identity in communal conflict, shaped by demographic, socioeconomic, and situational factors (Okoli, 2015). The struggle for control over land resources and local political power often leads to violent confrontations in Abia State. Historically, communal land conflicts have caused displacement, hardship, and devastation, resulting in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the state (Anierobi & Obasi, 2021). Land-related issues, including disputes, invasions, and annexations, as well as farmer-herder clashes, are key catalysts of communal conflict in Abia State (Ezeanya, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The pervasive issue of land disputes in Nigeria has far-reaching consequences for the socioeconomic fabric of both rural and urban areas. The fallout from these disputes can have devastating and potentially lethal repercussions, affecting not only individuals but also entire communities and societies (Mbazor, 2019). This research endeavours to explore the nexus between land disputes and the development of human capital and infrastructure in affected communities with focus in Abia State, Nigeria. To this end, the study undertakes examination of the specific ways in which land disputes impede community development in the State, with a view to identifying pragmatic solutions to mitigate these disputes and promote sustainable rural growth. Abia State, Nigeria, is grappling with the entrenched issue of land disputes, which has severe repercussions for rural socioeconomic dynamics and

community growth. The confluence of fertile agricultural land and escalating demands for urban expansion and industrial growth has spawned a complex web of competing land claims, igniting inter-personal, inter-communal, and inter-ethnic conflicts. These disputes have stifled rural progress, entrenched poverty, and eroded social harmony. The fallout of land disputes on rural poverty is particularly distressing. Land-related conflicts have precipitated the displacement of rural populations, loss of income-generating activities, and destruction of agricultural assets. This has exacerbated poverty, food insecurity, and vulnerability among rural households. Moreover, land disputes have also hindered community development by fostering social discord, undermining institutional trust, and diverting resources away from critical public services. The protracted nature of land disputes in Abia State, Nigeria, underscores the need for a nuanced examination of their impact on rural poverty and community development.

The Objective of the Study

To review existing literature on the impact of land disputes on rural poverty and community development in Abia State, Nigeria.

Method

The study employed historical and descriptive research design. Qualitative data collection from secondary was adopted, which were analysis analysed based on their content and documentary relevance to the topic.

The Study Area: Abia State

Abia State, located in southeastern Nigeria, is a hub of commerce and industry, renowned for its vibrant markets, craftsmanship, and innovations in manufacturing. The state is deeply rooted in its cultural heritage, while embracing modern advancements, making it an attractive place for entrepreneurs and innovators.



Figure 1: The Political Map of Abia State

Brief History

Abia State was created on August 27, 1991, following the division of the former Imo State. Its capital is Umuahia, while Aba is its commercial nerve center. The state is made up of 17 local government areas and has a long history of commerce, craftsmanship, and agricultural production.

Leadership

The current Governor of Abia State is Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, OFR, a Nigerian economist, banker, investor, philanthropist, and writer. He was sworn in on May 29, 2023, and is currently serving his first term in office, with Engr Ikechukwu Emetu as his Deputy Governor.

Economy and Geography

Abia State is bordered by Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, Rivers, and Akwa Ibom States. The state has a variety of geographic features, including rivers, forests, and fertile lands, making agriculture a major part of its economy. Abia is an important player in oil palm production, yam, cassava, and vegetable cultivation. Apart from agriculture, Abia is also rich in crude oil and gas, contributing to Nigeria's petroleum industry.

Cultural Heritage

Abia is predominantly inhabited by the Igbo people, and its residents are known for their strong cultural identity and entrepreneurship. The state is renowned for Akwete cloth, a traditional textile unique to the Akwete people in the Ukwu East local government area. Ekpe and Masquerade festivals are integral parts of the state's cultural heritage, reflecting the rich traditional beliefs and practices of the people.

Demographics

The population of Abia State is about 4.8 million people, with 46% of the population in the labour force. 70% of the labour involved in agriculture. The literacy rate is about 89%, representing a significant pool of skilled labour. The internet penetration in the state is about 58%.

Conceptualization

The Concept of Land Disputes

Land disputes and insecure land tenure exacerbate rural poverty, while secure land ownership can be a powerful catalyst for economic growth and poverty alleviation. In rural areas, limited access to land perpetuates poverty, undermines food security, and restricts household income. Land disputes, in particular, can lead to the displacement of rural communities, loss of livelihoods, and destruction of agricultural infrastructure, thereby entrenching poverty. Conversely, resolving land disputes and securing land rights can empower marginalized communities, enhance their food security, and increase their household income, ultimately contributing to sustainable rural development (Cotula, Toulmin & Quan, 2006).

A substantial body of research indicates that a more equitable distribution of land is conducive to robust economic expansion (Deininger & Squire, 1998). Although historical precedents, such as the industrialization of Great Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries, demonstrate that economic development can occur despite significant land inequality, empirical evidence suggests that countries with more balanced land distributions tend to exhibit higher economic growth rates over the long term (Deininger, 2003). Furthermore, a more equitable distribution of land is also linked to enhanced social stability and cohesion, as concentrated land ownership can foster perceptions of injustice, potentially culminating in land invasions and violent confrontations (Cotula et al., 2006).

The interplay between land access and poverty alleviation is inextricably linked to the broader landscape of agricultural and economic policies, as well as rural development strategies and environmental considerations. The allocation of land rights and opportunities for land access has far-reaching implications for wealth distribution, economic growth rates, poverty levels, and the trajectory of agricultural development (Cotula et al., 2004). Moreover, the dynamics of agricultural development exert a profound influence on farm incomes, land values, and demands for land resources, underscoring the need for a holistic approach to addressing the complex relationships between land access, poverty, and sustainable development. In Abia State, the prevalence of land disputes has been linked to the state's complex land tenure system, which is characterized by overlapping claims, conflicting interests, and inadequate land administration (Ikejiofor, 2018).

The Concept of Rural Poverty

Poverty constitutes a multifaceted societal issue characterized by insufficient access to essential resources, thereby hindering individuals' ability to participate fully in economic and social activities. This deprivation can lead to social exclusion, as individuals are compelled to restrict their consumption below the minimum standards accepted within their country or region. Furthermore, poverty can also be spatially concentrated, affecting specific geographic areas, such as peripheral regions distant from major urban centers. The complexities of poverty extend beyond mere financial constraints or low consumption levels, encompassing also the notion of "consumption convention," which denotes an objectively assessable deprivation of fundamental needs, ultimately impeding social integration (Kalinowski, 2016).

Concept of Community Development

According to Ebo and Udentia (2023), rural development constitutes a holistic concept that integrates multiple dimensions, including socioeconomic advancement, educational progress, and political empowerment. To achieve economic prosperity, rural populations must adopt rational economic practices and cultivate competitiveness. However, World Bank Group (2018) states that rural

development is a targeted strategy aimed at enhancing the economic and social welfare of rural populations, particularly the most disadvantaged. This approach involves ensuring that the benefits of development are shared equitably with vulnerable rural populations, including smallholder farmers, tenants, and landless individuals, who rely heavily on rural resources for their livelihoods. Key indicators of rural development examined in this study include agricultural productivity, healthcare service delivery, and human capital development.

Rural development entails a multifaceted transformation aimed at elevating rural communities to optimal standards of living, characterized by social cohesion, economic viability, political empowerment, educational advancement, and infrastructural development. According to the workshop on Rural Development in Africa and the workshop group on integrated approach to Rural Development (1996), Rural Development is predicated on the equitable allocation of national resources, recognizing that comprehensive national growth necessitates the inclusive participation of all segments of the population. This concept is further elucidated as a socioeconomic process geared towards achieving a more balanced distribution of resources and income within a societal context. A pivotal aspect of Rural Development involves the economic mainstreaming of rural populations, who constitute a significant majority in most developing countries. In many of these countries, agricultural activities serve as the primary occupation for a substantial proportion of rural inhabitants. *Proceedings | page 32*

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Conflict theory

Social conflict theory posits that social change arises from conflicts, not gradual value adjustments. This perspective counters structural functional theory, which emphasizes societal order. Conflict is a pervasive social phenomenon, driven by power struggles and competing interests. It is a normal aspect of community dynamics, but becomes problematic when violence is involved. Conflict is an inherent part of human awareness, shaping individual and collective experiences. Through conflict, societies undergo transformative processes, yielding new social orders and compromises that differ from initial conditions (Prayogi, 2023).

The foundations of conflict theory can be traced back to Karl Marx's seminal work in 1814, which centered on the dialectical tensions between the ruling elite (bourgeoisie) and the subjugated masses (proletariat). Marx's critical examination of capitalism's ascendancy in Europe revealed a system fraught with economic, social, and political disparities. He posited that the inherent contradictions between the dominant bourgeoisie and the exploited proletariat would inevitably spawn conflict, as their interests were fundamentally incompatible, and resources were disproportionately allocated in favor of the powerful minority. The connection between land and conflict is often unbreakable. Land and natural resource disputes

frequently underlie or significantly contribute to the outbreak of conflict. Research has shown that natural resources have been a factor in at least 40% of internal conflicts worldwide (UNEP, 2009). Furthermore, land issues have been a major driver of nearly all intra-state conflicts in Africa since 1990, with only three exceptions (Wiley, 2005).

Social Conflict Theory sheds light on the complexities of land disputes in Abia State, Nigeria. It reveals how unequal land distribution fuels social tensions, economic hardship, and stifled community progress. By examining the intricate relationships between land disputes, rural poverty, and community development, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the issue. Furthermore, this theoretical framework highlights the role of competing interests, power struggles, and resource inequality in driving social transformation. In Abia State, land disputes often mirror class divisions between affluent landowners and marginalized rural communities. The influence of power dynamics on land allocation perpetuates poverty and hinders growth. Nevertheless, conflict can catalyze positive change, paving the way for more equitable land access and sustainable development.

Empirical Review

Causes of land disputes in Abia State, Nigeria

Land-related tensions are a pervasive issue in Nigeria and other African nations (van Baalen, 2024). The age-old conundrum is particularly pronounced in boundary communities, where the value attached to land is a significant factor. As a vital resource that sustains life, communities are reluctant to cede control to outsiders (Nwokafor, Obasi, & Emenike, 2020). Any perceived infringement on land rights is met with fierce resistance, often escalating into violent conflict (Obasi, Nwokafor, & Olisa, 2020). Communal land disputes can assume various forms, including intra-community, inter-community, and inter-state conflicts. In some instances, these disputes involve government entities and communities, resulting in devastating consequences, including loss of life, property destruction, and displacement (Ugwuoke, Ajah, 2020). A study examining land disputes in Nigeria's Southeast zone revealed alarming losses in human lives and materials. In Abia State, for example, approximately 5,000 individuals across 20 communities in 17 Local Council Areas were displaced.

The proliferation of land disputes in Abia State, Nigeria, can be attributed to a multitude of interconnected factors, which include but not limited to:

Ambiguities in Customary Land Tenure: The customary land tenure system in Abia State is often shrouded in ambiguity, leading to contentious issues surrounding land ownership. This ambiguity can precipitate disputes, particularly when competing claims or overlapping boundaries are involved (Umeoduagu, 2018).

Territorial Boundary Conflicts: Conflicts over territorial boundaries are a pervasive issue in Abia State, frequently arising from disagreements between communities or individuals regarding the precise delineation of their lands. Such disputes can escalate into encroachment, trespassing, and other forms of conflict (Eke, 2017).

Succession-Related Conflicts: The demise of a landowner can trigger intense disputes among family members or beneficiaries regarding the rightful inheritance of the land. The absence of a clear will or succession plan can exacerbate these conflicts (Nwagbara, 2015).

Land Acquisition and Development-Related Disputes: The increasing demand for land in Abia State has led to conflicts between communities, individuals, and government agencies regarding land ownership, compensation, and development. These disputes can be complex and contentious (Uche, 2020).

Inadequacies in Land Administration: The ineffective administration of land in Abia State is a fundamental cause of land disputes. Inadequate land registration, poor record-keeping, and inefficient dispute resolution mechanisms all contribute to the prevalence of land disputes in the state (Okoye, 2013).

Impact of Land Disputes on Rural Poverty and Development in Abia State

Land disputes can have devastating effects on a country's progress, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon. In these places, weak laws and corrupt systems make it hard for poor communities to access the land they need to survive (Wehrmann, 2008). Land conflicts can ruin lives, communities, and even entire nations. They also stop cities from growing and developing. Since land is crucial for people's livelihoods and well-being in Nigeria, as Mudenda (2006) says, "Land gives us food, shelter, status, and power," this study looks at how land disputes affect people's lives and community development.

Nigeria's land dispute landscape is characterized by intricate layers of complexity, with shifting dynamics influenced by regional specifics. Unraveling the intricacies of land disputes in Nigeria, particularly those that escalate into violent crises and impede urban growth, necessitates a nuanced understanding of the diverse dispute categories and a critical examination of their historical antecedents and contemporary contexts. As Gausset, Michael and Torben (2005) astutely noted, disparate perceptions of the same territorial space can fuel conflicts, which often stem from fundamental disagreements over resource definitions, management protocols, and competing perspectives.

The key areas where land disputes have affected rural poverty and development in Abia State, Nigeria, are:

Food Insecurity: Land disputes have led to reduced agricultural productivity, resulting in food insecurity and poverty among rural households (IFAD, 2013; Olomola, 2015).

Lack Livelihood Diversification: The lack of access to land has forced rural households to diversify their livelihoods, often leading to unsustainable practices and further poverty (World Bank, 2018; Ajayi, 2015).

Resource Base Needs: Land disputes have hindered rural farmers' access to essential resources, including land, water, and credit facilities (Oxfam, 2017; UNEP, 2009).

Agricultural Land Availability: Abia State's agricultural land availability is a significant concern, with only a fraction of the state's land area being economically utilized (NBS, 2017; Olomola, 2015).

Economic Opportunities: Land disputes have limited economic opportunities for rural households, forcing them to rely on unsustainable livelihoods and perpetuating poverty (World Bank, 2018; Ajayi, 2015).

Lack of Social Cohesion and Conflict: Land disputes erode social cohesion, fueling conflict, violence, and displacement in Abia State, leading to loss of lives, property, and livelihoods (UNEP, 2009; Olomola, 2015). They also cause displacement, exacerbating social tensions and conflict (IFAD, 2013).

Poor Economic Development and Infrastructure: Land disputes hinder economic development in Abia State, reducing investment, economic growth, and increasing poverty (World Bank, 2018; Ajayi, 2015). They also impede agricultural development, a significant contributor to the state's economy (AfDB, 2017, p. 20), and reduce infrastructure development (NBS, 2017).

Lack of Environmental Sustainability: Land disputes lead to environmental degradation in Abia State, causing deforestation, land degradation, and loss of biodiversity (UNEP, 2009, p. 25). They also result in pollution and soil erosion (NEST, 2015, p. 15).

Conclusion

In conclusion, land disputes are a pervasive issue in Abia State, Nigeria, with far-reaching consequences for rural poverty and development. The customary land tenure system, territorial boundary conflicts, succession-related conflicts, land acquisition and development-related disputes, and inadequacies in land administration are some of the interconnected factors contributing to land disputes in the state. The impact of land disputes on rural poverty and development in Abia

State is devastating. Land disputes have led to reduced agricultural productivity, resulting in food insecurity and poverty among rural households. They have also hindered rural farmers' access to essential resources, including land, water, and credit facilities, and limited economic opportunities for rural households. Furthermore, land disputes have significant social and economic implications for community development in Abia State. They erode social cohesion, fueling conflict, violence, and displacement, leading to loss of lives, property, and livelihoods. Land disputes also hinder economic development in the state, reducing investment, economic growth, and increasing poverty.

Recommendations

To address the issues of land disputes in Abia State, Nigeria, the Abia State Government should take the following key steps:

- i. **Enhance Land Administration:** The Abia State Government should establish efficient and transparent land registration, surveying, and mapping systems. This can be achieved by investing in digital land registration systems, training land administrators, and promoting community involvement in land administration.
- ii. **Establish Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms:** The Abia State Government should set up community-based mediation centers, train mediators, and promote the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. This will help resolve land disputes amicably and reduce the burden on the formal justice system.
- iii. **Promote Sustainable Land Use Practices:** The Abia State Government should encourage sustainable land use practices, such as agroforestry and conservation agriculture. This can be achieved by providing incentives for sustainable land use practices, promoting extension services, and supporting community-led conservation initiatives.
- iv. **Support Community-Led Land Use Planning:** The Abia State Government should provide technical assistance to communities, promote participatory planning processes, and support community-led initiatives. This will help prevent land use conflicts and promote sustainable land use practices.
- v. **Improve Access to Essential Resources:** The Abia State Government should promote land reform initiatives, support irrigation development, and provide microfinance services to rural farmers. This will help ensure that rural farmers have access to essential resources, including land, water, and credit facilities, to improve agricultural productivity and reduce poverty.

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10TH INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

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THE IMPACT OF POOR INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY AND PUBLIC DEBT ON ECONOMIC GROWTH IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Poor institutional quality and public debt has tremendous impact on economic growth in Nigeria from 2000 to 2021, sourced from WDI and CBN statistical bulletin. The study is anchored on endogenous growth model and by using Auto-Regressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model. The variables used are GDP growth rate, while poor governance (PG), corruption perception index (CPI) and public debt (PD) are the explanatory variables. The result from the ARDL Bound test revealed that there exists long run relationship among the variables. From the ARDL estimate, Poor governance was found to have significant impact on economic growth in Nigeria, both in the long run and the short run. Corruption perception index was found to have a negative impact on economic growth in Nigeria in the long run and in the short run. Public debt was found to have a significant adverse impact on economic growth in the long run but not significant in the short run. The findings reveal that inadequate institutional frameworks significantly hinder economic growth, while escalating public debt imposes constraints on fiscal policies, thus further undermining growth prospects. The policy recommendations aimed at improving institutional quality and managing public debt to foster sustainable economic growth in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Economic Growth, Governance, Institutional Quality,
Public Debt*

Background to the Study

Strong institutions promote macroeconomic stability and social cohesiveness, which boost investment and economic growth (Utile, Ijirshar & Sem, 2021). According to Abubakar (2020) nations with robust institutions support robust legal frameworks for effective funding mobilization and allocation, which lowers the risk of doing business in those nations. Study has moreover underscored the significance of robust institutional quality in sustaining expansion and advancement (Iheonu, Ihedimma, & 2017; Parks, Buntaine & Buch, 2017). Inadequate institutional governance or a lack of institutional control has increased the cost of investment in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) nations like Nigeria (Iyoboyi, & Pedro, 2014). Due to the high expenses of investment, the uncertainty brought about by tax enforcement of laws and regulations, and the inefficiency of the legal system, businesses have been compelled to become more selective about where they place their money. According to Anna (2018), Nigeria's institutional quality has historically been poorly documented in terms of the country's ability to protect property rights, the degree to which laws and regulations are not applied fairly because of a high level of corruption, the country's voice and accountability, political instability, terrorism, and government efficacy (Ugwuanyi & Eze, 2023).

According to Muhammad & Charles (2018), low institutional quality can result in unnecessarily high costs associated with conducting business in a highly corrupt economy. This is because low institutional quality can be seen in the corruption of civil servants, bureaucracy, and high levels of extortion. These factors can spawn mistrust, which can be unhealthy for doing business for both domestic and foreign investors. Furthermore, the lack of clear definition of property rights may result in significant risks of expropriation, discouraging investors from patenting their inventions to small businesses (Ebekozen, Ugochukwu, & Okoye, 2015).

Efobi & Osabuohien (2011) argued that, poor economic performance in most African countries is attributable to various factors including poor governance and poor institutional quality, amongst others. They further argue that the global financial crisis left many countries including African countries vulnerable and it brought up the importance of strong institutional quality to the fore. According to Zubair (2023) institutional quality matters as it ensures that debt is managed efficiently and poor institutions are likely to impair borrowing decisions and divert the borrowed funds to “fruitless” projects. About five SADC countries are heavily indebted and poor institutional quality in developing countries is used to explain why some of these countries are heavily indebted (Abdullahi, et al., 2019). Understanding the implication that public debt displays on the rate of growth is key mostly to policymakers who deal with growing fiscal imbalances (Mojapelo, 2020). Even more, determining the aftermath of the national debt on the economy stands indispensable because it directly concerns existing taxpayers, the future generation and can ultimately affect expectations about the future (Georgiev, 2012). The synergy

between poor institutional quality and escalating public debt raises critical questions about Nigeria's economic stability and growth potential. As public debt accumulates, limited fiscal space restricts necessary investments in infrastructure and social services, while inadequate governance exacerbates inefficiencies.

Given Nigeria's declining institutional quality, the country's economic growth has become highly precarious. Available literature has shown that institutions are viewed as a basic requirement for economic success and long-term progress and that institutional quality consists of a broad range of factors, some of which are hard to measure (Zubair, 2018). More importantly, while there is widespread agreement that the quality of institutions and economic growth are inextricably related, the relevant economic literature is divided on the exact nature of this relationship (Bruinshoofd, 2016). Hope (2017) posited that institutional quality indicators is inversely related to economic performance. Poor institutional quality reduces human capital, discourage investors, and the multiplier effects transmit into low productivity and low private investment, which translate into poor economic performance (Khan & Naeem, 2020). Even though the common consensus is that institutional quality is more likely to promote economic growth than the reverse direction of causality, it must be re-examined empirically, hence the need for this study. Therefore, the broad objectives of this study is to examine the relationship between institutional quality and public debt on economic growth in Nigeria.

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The specific objectives are to:

- i. Assess the current state of institutional quality and public debt in Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the relationship between institutional quality, public debt, and economic growth.
- iii. Provide policy recommendations to address the challenges posed by poor institutional quality and high public debt.

Literature Review

Institutional Quality

Institutional quality refers to the effectiveness and integrity of institutions in governance, law enforcement, and public administration. According to North (1990), institutions shape economic performance by defining the rules of the game and determining how resources are allocated. Promoting financial inclusion and effective mobile money system depends on quality institutions (Zubair, et al 2024). Quality institutions promote financial access through inclusive policies (Sanga & Aziakpono, 2022; Balach & Law, 2015; Djankov et al., 2006). Poor institutional quality undermines investor confidence, hampers economic activities, and fosters a culture of corruption. Institutions reduce financial intermediation process by providing stable financial environment that support banks core functions of liquidity creation, and thus improves bank intermediation function of credit (Marcelin and Mathur, 2014). Zeqiraj et al. (2022) find that development in institutions is key ingredient for

social progress and welfare. Zubair. (2021) on the effect of institutional matters on economic conditions, argue that it is “quality” institutions that matters. Countries with extractive institutions in the form of insecure property rights and distortionary policies have disproportionately income distribution, whereas countries with “better” institutions or inclusive institutions achieve higher income (Zubair et al., 2025). Therefore, institutional failures would constitute market exclusion, inefficiency, resource misallocation, and lead to more deprivation and financial exclusion (Acemoglu et al., 2021; North, 1990; Haselmann & Wachtel, 2010; Troilo et al., 2019) Institutions issue.

Concept of Public Debt

The total amount of money borrowed by the government and local authorities to cover their budget deficits is referred to as the government, public, or national debt, according to Mishkin (2013). Thus, up to a certain amount, the real budget deficit is equal to the amount of government debt. The amount of government debt is often stated as a percentage of GDP to facilitate understanding. Local lenders' loans are classified as domestic debts, whereas foreign lenders' loans are classified as external debts. The government prints bonds in order to borrow funds from companies and private citizens. Since the government can increase taxes or create new money to cover the principle and interest on government bonds when they mature, bonds issued in local currency are regarded as credit-free. Due to the possibility of exchange rate risk and the likelihood that the government may not have enough foreign currency to service its debts, foreign government bonds frequently carry a larger credit risk than local government bonds (Nguyen, 2023).

Concept of Economic Growth

The term "economic growth" typically refers to an increase in the market value of the goods and services generated by an economy over time, adjusted for inflation. It is measured as the rate of growth in real GDP, typically expressed in terms of per capita. Growth usually is calculated in real terms, that is, inflation-adjusted terms. Economic growth also means increased growth in the level of output produced by a country over time and it crucially measures the economic performance of a country. Jhingan (2002) defines economic growth as a mechanism through which real per capita income of an economy rises over a long period of time. He states that economic growth is determined by the rise in the quantity of commodities and services through time. Therefore, an economy experiences growth as its productive capacity rises, which is then employed to produce additional commodities and services.

The Interplay Between Institutional Quality, Public Debt, and Economic Growth

The literature highlights a significant relationship between institutional quality, public debt, and economic growth. Poor institutions can lead to mismanagement of public resources, resulting in excessive borrowing to cover deficits (King & Levine,

1993). Simultaneously, high public debt levels can strain institutional capacities, often resulting in inefficient public spending and further deteriorating governance structures (Usman & Muhammad, 2019). Numerous theoretical investigations have underscored the adverse correlation between governmental debt and sustained economic growth. According to these studies, rising public debt reduces national savings and gross capital accumulation, which in turn impedes long-term economic growth (Barro, 1990; Blanchard, 1985; Elmendorf & Mankiw, 1999). These studies suggest that public debt may have a number of long-term effects on economic growth, such as reduced productivity in current public spending and reduced size in future public spending.

The Nigerian Context

In Nigeria, the challenges of poor institutional quality and rising public debt have been longstanding. Key studies have emphasized the negative impacts of corruption and inefficiency in public sectors as contributory factors to subdued economic growth (Adeniyi & Oloyede, 2018; Tella & Adesola, 2020).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed analytical research design because they are advantageous for assessing large and small populations especially where a small population is to be derived from a large one (Onwumere, 2005). Model specification is used in the research design to analyze time series data. The Auto Regressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) Model approach was used by the researcher to construct a multiple regression model. The estimation encompassed the years 1990–2021, and the secondary data came from the World Bank Data Bank and the CBN Statistical Bulletin for different years. Econometric view (E-view) version 10.0 was used to analyze the data series in order to determine the link between the explanatory variables and the dependent variable, or gross domestic product (poor governance, corruption, capital flow and public debt). Consequently, the research design aligns with the study's goal.

Sources of Data

The study employed secondary data from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Statistical Bulletin (2021) and World Bank WDI (2021) to objectively assess the influence of poor governance, corruption perception index and public debt on economic growth in Nigeria. GDP growth rate, and poor governance data were sourced from the World Bank, while public debt was sourced from CBN. Secondary data was used for this study because it is considered to be the most appropriate method for the needed information ranging from 2000–2021, which covers the period of 22 years. However, this has been chosen among other instruments of data collection as the basic method of collecting data for this time series study. Again, secondary data has some added advantages over other methods, it saves time and it is cost effective.

Estimation and Evaluation Techniques and Procedure

The research instruments adopted in this study are the Philip Perron (PP) unit root test, ARDL cointegration Test, Error Correction Model and Normality test for normality proposed by Brown, Durbin& Evans (1975) to estimate the equation.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Summarizes the institutional quality scores based on World Governance Indicators (WGI) for Nigeria from 2000 to 2022.

Year	Voice and Accountability	Political Stability	Government Effectiveness	Regulatory Quality	Rule of Law
2000	-0.22	-0.89	-0.23	-0.38	-0.34
2010	-0.12	-0.75	-0.15	-0.20	-0.29
2020	0.05	-0.60	-0.07	-0.15	-0.20
2022	0.12	-0.55	0.03	-0.12	-0.18

Public Debt Trends

Nigeria's public debt trends indicate significant growth over recent years, particularly in response to fiscal deficits. According to the Debt Management Office (DMO), Nigeria's total public debt rose from approximately \$35 billion in 2010 to over \$90 billion by 2022, translating to a debt-to-GDP ratio of 23.7% in 2022.

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Impact of Institutional Quality on Economic Growth

The regression analysis suggests a significant negative relationship between poor institutional quality and economic growth. The results indicate that a 1% increase in the Governance Index is associated with a 0.5% increase in GDP growth ($p < 0.01$). This finding corroborates the assertions made by previous studies (Adeniyi & Oloyede, 2018).

Impact of Public Debt on Economic Growth

The statistical analysis also reveals that rising public debt negatively impacts economic growth. Specifically, for every 1% increase in public debt as a percentage of GDP, GDP growth declines by approximately 0.4% ($p < 0.05$). This relationship highlights the potential for unsustainable debt levels to hinder fiscal policy effectiveness and economic dynamism (Reinhart & Rogoff, 2010).

Policy Implication of Findings

The policy impact of the major findings of this research study is presented as follows: Poor Governance was found to have a negative impact on economic growth in Nigeria in the long run and in the short run. This implies that Poor Governance brings about a decline in economic activities. The implication of this finding is that Poor Governance lowers the purchasing power of money and reduces the country's competitiveness in the international community. It makes room for so much

uncertainty and this greatly discourages investment, thereby making the growth unsustainable.

Public Debt was found to have a significant adverse impact on economic growth in the long run but not significant in the short run. The policy implication of this development is that the periods of high credit growth are often associated with macroeconomic instability when Poor Governance increases, bad debt rises uncontrollably, the ability to absorb capital in the economy is negatively affected. In these circumstances, credit growth plays a crucial role to maintain economic development, the banking system is forced to pump credit to keep the pace of growth, even though the efficiency of loan usage is not ensured. Thus, the Apex bank and other financial regulatory organisation need to direct credit to sectors that will promote growth or possess the potential for positive spill over effect.

Discussion

The data reveal a dangerous cycle in Nigeria: poor institutional quality leads to mismanagement of resources, contributing to rising public debt levels, which in turn hampers economic growth. This cycle underscores the critical need for reforms that enhance institutional frameworks and implement prudent fiscal policies.

Conclusion

This study highlights the detrimental impacts of poor institutional quality and increasing public debt on economic growth in Nigeria. Institutional inefficiencies significantly undermine growth potential while escalating public debt constrains fiscal policy, leading to adverse economic outcomes.

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Recommendations

Based on findings from the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Governments should implement policies and plans to promote good governance in order to safeguard economic growth through institutional quality. The suggested policy goes hand in hand with enhancing weak institutional quality and accounting for it in varied economies.
- ii. On corruption a more realistic effort is necessary by the monetary authorities and anti-graft agencies, effort geared toward curbing corruption must be intensified to reduce corruption perception index to the barest minimum.
- iii. Concerning public debt, there is need to determine significant channels that must be used in order for public debt to work efficiently. Public debt and other probable mechanisms through which debt influences growth and the long-run effect should be examined to comprehend the link between institutions, public debt and economic growth. In addition, we need to determine the forms and uses of debt and find out who are the players involved in the use of debt. Further research should explore longitudinal studies to examine the

causal relationships between institutional quality, public debt, and economic growth over time, as well as case studies on successful reform initiatives within Nigeria.

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ADDRESSING RURAL POVERTY IN NIGERIA: EXPLORING JEREMY BENTHAM'S UTILITARIAN PRINCIPLE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Rural poverty remains a persistent challenge in Nigeria, marked by inadequate access to basic amenities, and limited economic opportunities. This paper critically examined the application of Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian principle, which emphasizes the greatest happiness for the greatest number, as a framework for addressing rural poverty. By aligning the theoretical underpinnings of utilitarianism with practical strategies for poverty alleviation, the study explored how community-based approaches enhance social welfare, equity, and sustainable development in rural areas. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from existing literature, case studies, the research identified key barriers to rural development, including artificial rural poverty, and governance challenges, while proposing utilitarian-driven interventions such as participatory governance. The paper argued that real utilitarian approach can foster inclusive policies and practices that prioritize collective well-being over individual. The paper in the main recommends strengthening of institutional frameworks to enhance accountability and transparency in rural and community development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Rural poverty, Rural development, Community development, Utilitarianism, Nigeria, Sustainable development

Background to the Study

Rural poverty in Nigeria remains a pressing issue, undermining efforts toward national development and social equity. With approximately 52% of Nigeria's population residing in rural areas, the disparities in access to basic amenities such as healthcare, education, and clean water are stark. Addressing this challenge requires innovative approaches that align ethical principles with practical solutions. This paper examines Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian principle, "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" as a guiding framework for formulating and implementing community development strategies. Notably, over 60 % of Nigeria's rural population lives below the poverty line, compared to 40 % in urban areas (World Bank, 2020); income inequality, stands at 0.48, indicating a significant wealth gap between the rich and the poor (World Bank, 2020; NBS, 2022); only 43.6% of households have access to improved sanitation facilities, and 30.5% have access to improved water sources (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

Observably, despite numerous governmental and non-governmental interventions, the rural population continues to experience high levels of poverty, poor infrastructure, and limited opportunities for sustainable development. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, ethical, and pragmatic approach that prioritizes the well-being of the majority while ensuring equitable resource distribution and access to opportunities. One potential framework for addressing rural poverty in Nigeria is Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian principle which emphasizes the maximization of happiness and well-being for the greatest number of people. Utilitarianism, as a moral philosophy, advocates for policies and actions that generate the most overall benefit and minimize suffering. In the context of community development, Bentham's utilitarian approach provides a rational basis for designing and implementing interventions that prioritize the collective welfare of rural communities (Bentham, 1789).

By applying utilitarian principles to rural poverty alleviation, policymakers and development practitioners can focus on initiatives that deliver the highest social and economic returns. This involves strategic investment in critical sectors such as agriculture, education, healthcare, infrastructure, and empowerment programs, all aimed at enhancing the quality of life for rural dwellers. In addition, utilitarianism calls for evidence-based decision-making, cost-benefit analyses, and participatory approaches to ensure that development efforts are both effective and inclusive.

This exploration delves into how Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian philosophy can be leveraged to tackle rural poverty in Nigeria. It examines key areas such as:

- i. Understanding the dimensions of rural poverty – Analyzing the socio-economic challenges faced by rural communities in Nigeria, including lack of access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

- ii. Utilitarianism as a guiding principle – Exploring how Bentham's ideas of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" can inform policy design and community development initiatives.
- iii. Strategic interventions – Highlighting practical measures that align with utilitarian values, such as community-based projects, infrastructure development, and inclusive economic policies.
- iv. Challenges and ethical considerations – Addressing potential criticisms of utilitarian approaches, including concerns about equity, minority rights, and sustainability (Bentham, 1789). Ultimately, adopting a utilitarian approach to rural poverty alleviation in Nigeria has the potential to create transformative change by ensuring that development efforts are guided by the overarching goal of maximizing societal welfare and fostering long-term community resilience.

Statement of the Problem

Rural poverty remains a persistent challenge in Nigeria, characterized by inadequate access to basic amenities such as healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. Despite various government interventions and development programmes, poverty levels in rural areas continue to rise, exacerbating social inequalities and hindering national development. Many of these initiatives have failed due to issues such as poor policy implementation, corruption, and a lack of community participation. The utilitarian principle, as proposed by Jeremy Bentham, emphasizes the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Applying this ethical framework to community development efforts in Nigeria could offer a more people-centered approach, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and equitably to maximize overall well-being. However, there is a gap in understanding how utilitarianism can be practically integrated into rural development policies and programmes to address the complex socio-economic challenges faced by rural communities. This study seeks to explore the potential of Bentham's utilitarian principle as a guiding framework for rural development initiatives in Nigeria. It aims to examine whether the application of this principle can lead to more effective poverty alleviation strategies by prioritizing community needs and optimizing resource distribution for the collective good.

Conceptual Framework

Rural Poverty

Rural poverty refers to the condition of poverty experienced by people living in rural areas, where access to resources, services, and economic opportunities is often limited. It is characterized by a lack of basic necessities such as adequate food, clean water, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. Rural poverty tends to be more severe and persistent compared to urban poverty due to factors such as geographic isolation, low population density, and a heavy reliance on agriculture and natural resources.

Key Indicators of Rural Poverty in Nigeria

- i. **Income Inequality:** As earlier averred, over 60% of rural households live below the poverty line.
- ii. **Education Disparities:** Limited access to quality education perpetuates the cycle of poverty.
- iii. **Healthcare Deficits:** High maternal and infant mortality rates highlight gaps in rural healthcare.
- iv. **Infrastructure Challenges:** Poor road networks and inadequate electricity hinder economic activities.

Root Causes

- I. **Governance Issues:** Weak institutional frameworks and corruption undermine development efforts. Notwithstanding current move by President Bola Tinubu in trying to revitalize local government councils via fiscal autonomy (Titus, 2016:36; Awofeso, 2000:191), rural poverty in Nigeria remains artificial. Example is electricity, the engine room of development of any country in the 21st Century. Where is sense in trying to draw power all the way from kanji dam in Niger State to supply electricity in Akwa Ibom State (741km) when solar power is possible – promoting vandalism, wastefulness endangering of lives and properties, etc. in the name of executive list? Similarly, the power stations in states (like that of Akwa Ibom State in Ikot Abasi) is not permitted to use its generated power in the State until it is transferred to the frequently collapsing national grid (12 reported incidents in 2024 alone) in the north, at Jebba, kainji, and Shiroro. Indeed, rural poverty in Nigeria is artificial, not natural or accidental.
- ii. **Economic Marginalization:** Rural economies are heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture with minimal value addition.
- iii. **Social Exclusion:** Women and other vulnerable groups face systemic barriers to participation in development. Incidentally, this exclusion and perceived victimization of women led to the 1929 women's riot killing many like my step-grandmother in Utu Ikot Imonte Village, Etim Ekpo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
- iv. **Infrastructure Deprivation:** Regrettably, most governments in developing countries devote more attention and resources on infrastructure in Government Reserved Areas (GRAs) at the expense of the Rural Areas (RAs) – perpetuating the colonial masters' mentality and legacy. To this end, the paper strongly advocates approach change from GRAs to RAs.

Consequences of Rural Poverty

- i. Higher rates of malnutrition and poor health outcomes.
- ii. Migration to urban areas, leading to overcrowded cities.
- iii. Intergenerational poverty cycle with limited social mobility.
- iv. Low productivity and economic stagnation in rural communities.

Potential Solutions to Rural Poverty

- i. **Improved Infrastructure Development:** Better roads, electricity, and internet connectivity.
- ii. **Agricultural Innovation and Support:** i. Access to modern farming techniques and equipment, ii. Financial support and insurance schemes for farmers.
- iii. **Education and Skill Development:** i. Vocational training programs to diversify income sources
 - Scholarships and incentives to encourage schooling.
- iv. **Access to Healthcare Services:** i. Mobile clinics and telemedicine solutions
 - Government subsidies for essential medical services.
- v. **Microfinance and Economic Inclusion:** i. Providing small loans and financial literacy programmes
 - Encouraging local entrepreneurship and cooperatives.
 - Efforts to reduce rural poverty require a holistic approach involving government policies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector involvement to create sustainable development opportunities.

Corruption must be sincerely fought to its barest minimum by a autocratic leader. Nigerian government must stop borrowing to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor masses. The saying “he who goes borrowing goes sorrowing” is true to the poor masses in Nigeria, not the hegemonic corrupt politicians.

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that evaluates actions based on their consequences, specifically in terms of maximizing overall happiness or well-being. It is a form of consequentialism, meaning that the morality of an action is determined by its outcomes rather than intrinsic qualities or intentions. Utilitarianism seeks to promote the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Invariably, as much as government cannot satisfy the needs of all its citizens at the same time, it can the greatest number of them as in most developed countries of the world including Bentham's England where he first offered the principle in 1789.

Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism is grounded in the principle of maximizing collective happiness while minimizing suffering or unhappiness. In fact, there is no gain saying the fact that happy people make a happy nation while unhappy people make an unhappy country. Corroborating this fact in the holy book, the Bible, psalms 144:11-15 “deliver me from...from the hands of foreigners whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful. Then our sons in their youth will be like well-nurtured plants, and our daughters will be like pillars carved to adorn a palace. Our barns will be filled with every kind of provision. Our sheep will increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields” (NIV)...that there be no complaining

in our streets. Happy is that people that is in such a case... (KJV). Proverbs 17: 22 “a happy heart is good medicine and a cheerful mind works healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones” (Amp.Version). By the above biblical provisions, sons (youths) blossom and realize their dreams early in life as daughters (youths) follow suit being polished in character and learning in a food security or happiness-attained country after being delivered from mischievous, deceitful political leaders. Also, the present Nigerian “streets” full of complaints as a result of economic doldrums biting villagers the most is diametrically the opposite of the positive bible pictures above.

Key tenets of utilitarianism include inter-alia: Equity, impartiality, inclusivity, availability, affordability and efficiency—aligned closely with the goals of sustainable development (Bentham, 1789: 12-13).

Strengths of Utilitarianism

- i. **Practicality:** Provides a clear decision-making framework based on consequences.
- ii. **Flexibility:** Can adapt to different situations by focusing on outcomes.
- iii. **Impartiality:** Encourages fairness by considering everyone's happiness equally.
- iv. **Focus on Human Welfare:** Prioritizes well-being and reducing suffering.

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Criticism of Utilitarianism

- i. **Measurement Problem:** It's challenging to quantify happiness or compare different people's well-being. However, in response to this criticism, Udokang (2000:160) posited and averred “To him (Bentham) the test of institution's utility lies in how far it tends to promote 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' as can be measured”. Similarly, Mbachu (1998:118-119) opined “Bentham is fully aware that personal happiness and the happiness of the greatest number are not always identical, and he sees two means by which the gulf between individual selfishness and communal good can be bridged. First, education...Second, legislation”. Understandably, education here means that educated mind is an informed mind, and an informed mind in formed to perform transformation ally and vice versa. Legislation comes in to regulate and checkmate the inherent excesses of man.
- ii. **Justice and Rights:** Utilitarianism may justify harmful actions (e.g., sacrificing one for many) if they maximize overall happiness.
- iii. **Demandingness:** It requires people to always act in ways that maximize overall happiness, which can be burdensome.
- iv. **Predictability:** Consequences of actions are often uncertain, making it difficult to apply the theory reliably.

Rural Development

Rural development refers to the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas with limited access to resources and services compared to urban areas. It encompasses a broad range of initiatives aimed at enhancing infrastructure, social services, economic opportunities, and environmental sustainability in rural communities. Still, in the context of rural development, this ethical framework provides a lens for evaluating policies and interventions based on their capacity to enhance the overall well-being of rural populations. In fact, the most reliable index for measuring development of any country is not the number of cars or availability of social amenities in the few urban centers but the degree of development in the rural areas. Ironically, most of the universities in Ghana (patronized by Nigerians) are in villages with constant electricity.

Key Aspects of rural Development

- i. **Economic Development:** i. Promoting agriculture, small-scale industries, and rural entrepreneurship, ii. Providing access to credit and markets for rural producers iii. Encouraging sustainable practices to boost productivity.
- ii. **Infrastructure Development:** i. Building roads, bridges, and transportation facilities ii. Expanding access to electricity and water supply, iii. Improving digital connectivity and communication networks.
- iii. **Social Development:** i. Enhancing healthcare and education services ii. Providing skill development and training programmes, iii. Ensuring social inclusion and empowerment of marginalized groups.
- iv. **Environmental Sustainability:** i. promoting sustainable agricultural practices ii. Managing natural resources effectively, iii. Addressing climate change challenges and disaster resilience.
- v. **Governance and Policy:** i. Implementing government schemes and policies targeting rural uplift, ii. Strengthening local governance (e.g., Panchayati Raj system in India), iii. Encouraging community participation in development initiatives. Here, Indian villages are most preferred because of availability and affordability of social amenities and less taxes.

Importance of Rural Development

- i. Reduces rural-urban migration by creating opportunities in rural areas.
- ii. Enhances food security through better agricultural support.
- iii. Improves living standards and reduces poverty.
- iv. Strengthens national economic growth by leveraging rural potential.

Various governments, NGOs, and international organizations, such as the United Nations, focus on rural development through programmes and policies aimed at sustainable growth and self-sufficiency of rural populations towards the earlier

averred 2030 SDGs. This global initiative is informed by the fact that the development of the 'backward' or 'undeveloped' arrears is desideratum as it would positively affect global economic survival (Eminue, 2009:556).

Community Development

This is a process where individuals, groups, and organizations come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems within their community. It focuses on empowering people, improving social and economic conditions, and fostering sustainable growth through collaboration, participation, and capacity building.

Key Aspects of Community Development

- i. **Participation:** Encouraging active involvement of community members in decision-making and development initiatives.
- ii. **Empowerment:** Equipping individuals and groups with the skills, knowledge, and resources to create positive change.
- iii. **Capacity Building:** Strengthening the abilities of people and organizations to address community challenges effectively.
- iv. **Sustainability:** Ensuring long-term improvements that benefit current and future generations.
- v. **Social Justice:** Promoting equality, inclusion, and addressing issues related to poverty, discrimination, and inequality.
- vi. **Collaboration:** Engaging various stakeholders such as government, non-profits, businesses, and community members in a shared effort.

Examples of Community Development Activities

- i. Establishing local businesses and cooperatives.
- ii. Improving access to education and healthcare.
- iii. Developing infrastructure, such as clean water and sanitation projects.
- iv. Promoting cultural and social initiatives to strengthen community identity.
- v. Organizing skill development and employment programmes.

Overall, community development is about fostering self-reliance, enhancing quality of life, and creating stronger, more resilient communities.

Relevance of Utilitarianism to Community Development

Utilitarianism emphasizes outcomes that benefit the majority, making it a pragmatic approach to addressing rural poverty. Community development initiatives that integrate this principle prioritize participatory decision-making, fair distribution of resources, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. Also, studies have shown that community-driven development programmes, which involve local communities in decision-making and implementation, can be effective in reducing poverty and improving livelihoods (World Bank, 2019).

Applying utilitarian principles to community development

- i. **Participatory Governance:** A utilitarian approach emphasizes the inclusion of community members in decision-making processes to ensure that interventions reflect their needs and priorities. Participatory governance fosters trust, accountability, and transparency, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes. Invariably, Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methods, which involve local communities in the planning and implementation of development projects, have shown to increase community ownership and project sustainability (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2018).
- ii. **Equitable Resource Allocation:** Utilitarianism advocates for the fair distribution of resources to maximize collective well-being. Policies should prioritize investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure in underserved rural areas to bridge the development gap.
- iii. **Grassroots Empowerment:** Empowering rural communities to take ownership of development initiatives enhances their capacity to address local challenges. Skills training, microfinance programmes, and women's empowerment initiatives align with utilitarian goals by creating pathways for economic independence and improved quality of life.

The Role of Community Leaders in Community Development

The role of community leaders in this noble advocacy cannot be overemphasized. Community leaders serve as middle men between the government or NGOs and the land or people in the area or community. These leaders make or mar developmental projects. For instance, the largesse flowing from the government to the communities could be appropriated by the leaders as their personal or political rewards. In fact, this is what happened in some of the villages in Akwa Ibom State in 2023 when government rice, beans etc. were shared in villages (Titus, 2025:36)

Sustainable Development

This is a development approach that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It seeks to balance economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being to ensure long-term prosperity for people and the planet.

Key principles of sustainable development

- I. **Economic Sustainability:** i. Promoting economic growth without depleting natural resources ii. Encouraging responsible production and consumption patterns, iii. Creating job opportunities and reducing inequalities.
- ii. **Environmental Sustainability:** i. Protecting ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources ii. Reducing pollution, carbon emissions, and waste, iii. Promoting renewable energy and sustainable agriculture.

- iii. **Social Sustainability:** i. Ensuring equitable access to resources, education, and healthcare ii. Promoting human rights and social inclusion, iii. Reducing poverty and gender inequality.

Utilitarianism and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The UN has defined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Some of the goals within this context include:

- i. No Poverty (Goal 1)
- ii. Quality Education (Goal 4)
- iii. Clean Water and Sanitation (Goal 6)
- iv. Affordable and Clean Energy (Goal 7)
- v. Climate Action (Goal 13)
- vi. Responsible Consumption and Production (Goal 12).

Examples of sustainable development practices are:

- i. Using renewable energy sources (solar, wind, hydro).
- ii. Promoting eco-friendly products and recycling programs.
- iii. Implementing green building designs.
- iv. Encouraging public transport and sustainable urban planning.

Sustainable development aims to create a fair, prosperous, and environmentally sound future for everyone. Interestingly, poverty, the number one goal in this context needs to be pursued vigorously in the remaining five years or suffer another failure in developing countries like Nigeria. This “gate” position of poverty issue in the 2030 SDGs depicts its importance and relevance to all other goals towards their achievement or otherwise (Titus, 2016:108-111).

Nigeria

Nigeria is a country in West Africa and situated between the Sahel to the North and Gulf of Guinea to the South in the Atlantic Ocean. It is the most populous and naturally endowed, yet poverty stricken in Africa.



Figure 1: Sub-administrative-units map of Nigeria showing its large size of 923,768km square, too big for a leader with African mentality to manage effectively.

Theoretical Framework

This study explores the issue of rural poverty in Nigeria through the lens of Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarian Principle, which posits that actions should be guided by the principle of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number." The theoretical foundation integrates classical utilitarianism with community development strategies to assess how policies and interventions can maximize social welfare and economic well-being in rural areas.

Utilitarianism Theory

Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism serves as the primary theoretical framework for this study. Utilitarianism, a consequentialist ethical theory, argues that the morality of actions should be determined by their capacity to produce happiness or pleasure while minimizing pain. This principle is particularly **relevant** to rural poverty alleviation efforts, as it provides a normative basis for evaluating public policies, community interventions, and resource allocations that aim to enhance overall societal well-being. Invariably, utilitarianism could be applied to global issues like climate change, economic development, human rights and cultural renaissance. Same goes for technological advancement and socio-economic inequality.

Accordingly, key tenets of utilitarianism that guide this framework include:

- i. **Hedonic Calculus:** This has to do with measurement of pleasure and pain to determine the most beneficial course of action.
- ii. **Maximization of Utility:** It ensures that development efforts generate the greatest benefits for the largest segment of the rural population.
- iii. **Impartiality:** Here, the theory addresses poverty in a way that benefits all members of the community equitably (Bentham, 1789)

Community Development Theory

Community development theory complements the utilitarian approach by emphasizing participatory, inclusive, and sustainable development practices. This theory focuses on empowering local communities through capacity building, resource mobilization, and participatory governance to achieve long-term poverty reduction. Important aspects include:

- i. **Participation:** Engaging community members in decision-making to ensure interventions align with their needs.
- ii. **Sustainability:** Implementing development programs that are economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable.
- iii. **Empowerment:** Providing rural populations with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to drive their own development.

By integrating utilitarianism with community development provides a holistic perspective on addressing rural poverty in Nigeria while ensuring that interventions are both effective and ethical.

Pseudo Utilitarianism in Nigeria

The **Ministry of Happiness and Purpose Fulfillment** was a controversial government initiative established in 2017 by the former governor of **Imo State, Nigeria, Rochas Okorocha**. The ministry was created with the aim of addressing issues related to citizens' welfare, emotional well-being, and purpose in life. According to Okorocha, the ministry was intended to help residents "discover their talents and skills" and live more fulfilling lives.

Key points about the ministry:

- i. Criticism and Public Backlash:** The establishment of the ministry was widely criticized and ridiculed, both locally and internationally. Many saw it as an unnecessary bureaucratic expansion in a state facing economic challenges and infrastructure deficits. Critics argued that the government should focus on tangible development issues such as healthcare, education, and job creation instead of "happiness."
- ii. Leadership:** Governor Okorocha appointed his sister, **Ogechi Ololo**, as the commissioner in charge of the ministry. This sparked allegations of nepotism and further controversy.
- iii. Objectives (As Stated by the Government):**
 - i.** To address issues related to unemployment and social welfare.
 - ii.** To ensure that government policies positively impact people's emotional well-being.
 - iii.** To promote purpose-driven living among citizens.
- iv. Public Reaction:** The ministry became a subject of jokes and memes on social media. Many saw it as a misallocation of resources in a state with pressing development needs.
- v. Current Status:** The ministry was largely considered inactive after Okorocha left office in 2019. The succeeding administration of Governor Hope Uzodinma did not continue with the initiative.

Similarly, Governor Umo Eno of Akwa Ibom State introduced the "Happy Hour" initiative, designating Fridays from 5 PM to 6 PM for bars to offer drinks at discounted prices. This policy aims to stimulate local businesses and provide residents with an opportunity to unwind. The initiative has been met with mixed reactions. Some residents appreciate the support for local businesses and the chance to relax, while others believe the government should prioritize more pressing issues like unemployment and education.

Case Studies: Utilitarianism in Action

The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT)

The Nigerian government's CCT program provides financial assistance to low-income households, conditional upon children's school attendance and regular health check-ups. This aligns with utilitarian principles by directly addressing poverty while promoting long-term societal benefits.

Community-Based Health Insurance Scheme

In rural Nigeria, community-driven health insurance schemes have improved access to affordable healthcare, reducing mortality rates and enhancing overall well-being. These initiatives demonstrate the effectiveness of collective action in achieving utilitarian objectives.

Agricultural Cooperatives

Rural cooperatives have facilitated access to markets, credit, and technology for smallholder farmers, improving productivity and income levels. By prioritizing the collective good, these cooperatives exemplify the practical application of utilitarian principles (Titus, Asuquo and Etuk, 2024:43)

Worthy of note at this point is the fact that local governance in the 1970s was more proficient than the present local government area system in Nigeria. Then, Etim Ekpo was called "Touring Area" under Abak Division (today's local government area status). Despite the sub-sub status of the former, all the government ministries, agencies and parastatals in Abak were repleated in Etim Ekpo headquarters. Impacts of these offices robbed off on clans and villages developmentally. As a matter of fact, like other ministries resident in the area, ministry of works provided pipe-borne water (in addition to the natural streams around) and road maintenance within and outside the council. Indeed, this was utilitarianism in action, not empty big nomenclature without substance to show.

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Empirical Review

Empirical studies on rural poverty in Nigeria have examined various socio-economic and policy-driven approaches aimed at improving the living conditions of rural dwellers. Utilizing Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian principle, which advocates for the greatest happiness for the greatest number, provides a theoretical lens to assess the effectiveness of community development initiatives. This review explores empirical evidence from various studies that analyze the impact of utilitarian-driven interventions on rural poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Rural Poverty in Nigeria

Several studies have documented the prevalence of poverty in rural Nigeria, identifying factors such as lack of access to education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic opportunities. For instance, Omonona (2010) analyzed the determinants of rural poverty and found that low agricultural productivity and inadequate social amenities contribute significantly to poverty levels. Similarly, Aigbokhan (2008) highlighted the role of government policies in addressing poverty but noted a lack of sustainability in many interventions.

In a study conducted by Okojie (2013), the effectiveness of community-driven development (CDD) projects was evaluated. The findings revealed that participatory approaches that align with utilitarian principles, such as inclusive decision-making and resource allocation, resulted in improved rural livelihoods. However, the study also identified challenges such as corruption and mismanagement that hinder the full realization of community benefits.

Utilitarian Principle in community Development:

Applying Bentham's utilitarian principle in community development implies that interventions should be designed to maximize the collective well-being of rural populations. Empirical evidence from Nigeria suggests that projects that prioritize community involvement and equitable resource distribution yield better outcomes. A study by Adebayo and Ajayi (2014) examined the impact of microfinance programs in rural communities through a utilitarian lens. The results indicated that access to microcredit significantly improved household income and welfare, aligning with the principle of maximizing happiness. However, the study also noted challenges such as high interest rates and lack of financial literacy, which limited the benefits.

Case Studies of Utilitarian-Driven Intervention:

The National Fadama Development Project: Empirical findings by Nkonya et al. (2008) showed that the project, which focused on providing agricultural support to rural farmers, led to increased productivity and income levels. The project's participatory approach ensured that the needs of the majority were addressed, resonating with Bentham's utilitarian principle.

Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes: Studies such as that by Anyanwu (2019) demonstrated that cash transfers targeting vulnerable households resulted in improved access to education and healthcare, thereby enhancing overall community welfare. Despite the successes recorded in various community development initiatives, empirical studies reveal persistent challenges. Issues such as policy inconsistency, lack of community ownership, and poor monitoring frameworks have been identified (Obadeyi, 2020). These challenges often result in suboptimal outcomes that fail to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number.

Examples of Countries with Significant Progress in Rural Development include:

China: China's implemented policies have greatly reduced rural poverty by promoting agricultural development – resulting in significant reduction in poverty rates.

India: India, with its initiatives in improved rural infrastructure, training and support to rural farmers has promoted rural entrepreneurship.

Brazil: Brazil is known for supports to small-scale farmers, improved access to

education and healthcare in rural areas. These countries demonstrate that with the right policies, implementation and investments, rural development can be a powerful tool for reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development goals (SDGs) globally.

Challenges and Recommendations

Challenges

- i. **Policy Implementation Gaps:** Weak enforcement mechanisms hinder the impact of well-intentioned programmes.
- ii. **Corruption and Mismanagement:** Diverted resources undermine trust and efficacy. To this end, a thorough sanitization is urgently needed in Nigeria.
- iii. **Cultural Barriers:** Resistance to change and entrenched power dynamics can impede progress (World Bank, 2021). Eg. Lack of education to the girl child

A typical example of sanitizing a polluted system was twice demonstrated by Jesus Christ himself as recorded in John 2:14-17 and Matthew 21:12-13 thus: And Jesus found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge...he drove them out of the temple...poured out the changer's money, and overthrew the tables...my house shall be called house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

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From the above scripture account, it could be deduced that Jesus' sanitization of the defiled/misused temple of God was thorough, uncompromising; he left no stone unturned. He actually stepped on toes, particularly those of the money-driven temple Levites. He called spade a spade and without mincing words by calling them thieves. Succinctly speaking, until Nigerian executives (being the heads at the federal and state levels) stop stealing public funds and show good examples to follow in that direction, Nigerian's change or whatever initiative, will never see the light of day; reason being that, the head controls and regulates all other part of the body – human or non-human alike. Invariably, other parts of the body are vulnerable to condition of the head. No part of the body can be cleaner or higher than the head.

This is to say that the same method of washing ourselves or one taking his or her bath from top down or from head down to the toes, the same method needs to be applied here, if the sanitizing in Nigeria's politics for sustainable development must be achieved and sustained (Titus, and Onwuhanze, 2023:164).

Recommendations

- I. **Stakeholders to strengthen institutional frameworks** to enhance accountability and transparency in governance.

- ii. **Public-Private Partnerships should be promoted to** leverage private sector expertise and resources for rural development.
- iii. **Invest in Education and Advocacy should be prioritized to** raise awareness about the benefits of participatory governance and inclusive policies.

Objectives

- i. To examine the concept of rural poverty in Nigeria: this is where the causes, consequences and current state of rural poverty are being analyzed
- ii. To explore Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian principle: here, tenets of utilitarianism and their applications are being discussed
- iii. To apply utilitarian principle to community development in rural Nigeria: this is where how the principle of maximizing overall happiness and well-being can be applied to community development initiatives in rural Nigeria

Conclusion

Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian principle offers a robust ethical framework for addressing rural poverty in Nigeria. In simple terms, the principle argues that actions are right if they promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. Also, by prioritizing the collective happiness and well-being of rural populations, community development initiatives can achieve sustainable and equitable outcomes. This study underscores the importance of aligning philosophical principles with practical strategies, providing a roadmap for policymakers and stakeholders committed to transforming Nigeria's rural communities.

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10TH INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

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CURBING YOUTH UNREST AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA REGION: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

Records have shown that conflict arising from youth unrest involves the youths and young people hence this study is centred on curbing youth unrest and insecurity in Nigeria's Niger Delta region: Challenges and the way forward. The study made use of secondary and primary data. The study combined the elite theory and the frustration aggression theories as its theoretical framework in explaining why conflict and insecurity still persist in the Niger Delta region. Analysis was done qualitatively through content analysis. Findings from the study revealed that several socio-economic and political factors account for youth unrest and insecurity in the Niger Delta region. These factors include: marginalization and exclusion from the oil and gas sector, poor implementation of the federal governments amnesty programme in the Niger Delta, unemployment, poor governance at the state and local government levels etc. It is the position of this paper that massive investment in human capacity especially the youths will go a long way in curbing youth unrest and insecurity in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta region.

Keywords: *Curbing, Youth Unrest, Insecurity, Niger Delta, Challenges and Way forward.*

Background to the Study

Conflict especially youth unrest/uprising is a common feature of most developing states and Africa in particular hence, most states allocate huge public funds and resources in addressing conflict related issues at the expenses of national development and integration. While some states adopt nonviolent measures in managing and resolving conflict others rely on the use of military force. It is believed that the failure of the state to address key national issues and needs of citizens accounts for revolts and uprisings in most societies. While outlining the consequences of unresolved conflict Alao (2007), stated that for Africa, the implications of conflict caused by natural resources can be severe sometimes and underlining several issues including the collapse of state structures/institutions, massive human right abuses, the weakening of civil society, the disintegration of traditional institutions (Alao, 2007: p.2). Conflict scholars including Alao (2007), Achebe (1984) and Burton (1997) in their works reiterated that all the factors driving any conflict must be identified and addressed as quickly as possible to avoid its escalation which may be counterproductive for both the citizens and the state. Youth uprising or conflict at any level is detrimental to the citizens and the state hence, this study examines youth unrest and insecurity in Nigeria's Niger Delta region with a view to proffering solutions that will minimize all forms of violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta region.

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Theoretical and Conceptual Elucidation

The study relied on the elite theory and the frustration-aggression theory in explaining the cause of youth unrest and insecurity in the Niger Delta region. Elites political theory was founded by an Italian economist and scholar called Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) who defined an elite as those with the highest level of excellence in a particular society. Vilfredo Pareto went further to develop the theory of the circulation of elites. On his part, Gactano Mosca (1941) added that in all societies there are two classes of people, the rulers and the ruled. According to him, the rulers are the elites while the ruled are the citizens (followers). In most societies, policies and actions of the state emanate from the elites who often dominate the political space hence, Arthur Benthly (1958) argued that political actions and policies are geared towards protecting the aspirations and desires of the ruling class (elites) in any society. This therefore implies that the failure of the state and the ruling elites to address issues affecting the citizens accounts for distrust and disenchantment which often degenerate into conflict, violence and insecurity as recorded in different parts of Nigeria. Proponents of the elite theory include: Vilfredo Pareto (1923), Gactano Mosca (1941) and Robert Michaels (1936). In the same vein, the frustration aggression theory was also applied in explaining the reasons for youth unrest, conflict and insecurity in Nigeria and the Niger Delta in particular. According to Dollard et al. (1939), when people find it difficult to achieve their goals and aspirations in any system or society, they are motivated to react negatively by

engaging in aggressive conduct. Frustration-aggression theory scholars therefore maintain that aggression is propelled by factors which tends to deny individuals of their benefits and privileges and in most cases, it is traced to the failure of the state to perform its roles and responsibilities. Green (1941) and others reiterated that aggression is caused by frustration and that when people are prevented from attaining their goals or targets in any society, they become frustrated. This situation according to frustration-aggression scholars can transform into aggression when something triggers it. From this analogy, it is obvious that aggressive behaviour by youths in the Niger Delta and Nigeria in general is aggravated to frustration and deprivation as reflected in the Kaiama declaration document, the Ogoni bill of rights etc. the position of conflict scholars is that deprivation, exclusion and frustration are indices to watch out for in order to prevent conflict in any society.

Conceptual Elucidation

Youth unrest and insecurity are clear signs of conflict hence, this aspect of the study will examine conflict, conflict analysis and conflict resolution methods and strategies. Adidu 2006 cited in Kalama (2012) defined conflict as the discord that arises when the goals, values or interest of different individuals or groups block or thwart each other's attempt to achieve their objective. In the same vein, Nelson and Quick (1997) also defined conflict as any situation in which incomplete goals, emotions, or behaviour Lead to disagreement or opposition between two or more parties. Basically, conflict occur as a result of disagreement or misunderstanding between groups, individuals, communities, regions and states hence, conflict can be personal, local, national or international depending on the variables and circumstances involved. On the other hand, conflict analysis is the systematic study of the profile, causes, actors, and dynamics of conflict which in turn helps development, humanitarian and peace building organizations to gain a better understanding of the context in which they work and their role in that context. It is instructive to add that conflict analysis can be carried out at various levels (e.g. local, state, regional, national and global etc.) and seeks to establish the linkages between these levels identifying the appropriate focus for the conflict analysis is crucial while the issues and dynamics at the national level may be different yet linking the level of conflict analysis with the level of intervention hence, it is also important to establish systematic linkages with other interrelated levels of conflict dynamics since all of these different levels impact on each other.

Youth Unrest and Insecurity in Nigeria

Available records show that most unrest and mass protests are mobilized and activated by young people (youths) ranging from 18-35 years. Examples of unrest and uprisings engineered by youths in Nigeria include: The Oodua People's Congress (OPC) which was led by Ganiyu Adams and DR Frederick Faseun, Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) led by Nnamdi Kanu who is currently detained by the

Nigerian State, Boko Haram Insurgency led by Mohammed Yusuf etc. Whether these uprisings and unrest are justified remains a source of worry and debate among conflict scholars. However, these uprisings and unrest impacted negatively on the economy and citizens of Nigeria since several lives and properties were destroyed as a result of conflict and insurgency across the nation. The Boko Haram Insurgency for instance have remained protracted due to a number of factors ranging from lack of political will, corruption and criminal conspiracy and sabotage on the part of members of the armed forces and some civilian collaborators. This explains why the conflict in different parts of the country has remained unabated (endless). Alao (2007) argue that most devastating conflicts in Nigeria and Africa in the past and the present are connected to the struggle for power and control of mineral resources. Conflict scholars are therefore of the view that poorly managed conflict or uprising could experience escalation while properly managed conflict is likely to experience a steady decline (reduction). While referring to the Niger Delta conflict Ibeanu (2008) stated thus; it appears that each advancement system created for the Niger Delta has incomprehensively under-developed the area (Ibeanu, 2008: p.4). It is therefore imperative for a thorough conflict analysis to be done before prescribing any conflict resolution methodology or framework.

Pre-Amnesty Niger Delta Region

While x-raying the activities of multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta Love O. Arugu (2013) in a paper titled "Oil Multinationals and Community Development: Reflections on SPDC and the Niger Delta", published in the Niger Delta Research Digest (NDRD) Journal of the Centre for Niger Delta Studies, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, contended that multinational oil companies have contributed to the growth and development of less developing countries but that their unethical practices, designed for exploitation and profit maximization injure the economy and society of developing countries. The scholar listed the following as some of the negative activities of multinational oil companies: Environmental pollution, refusal to transfer technology/expertise, recapitalization through over invoicing, under invoicing, tax evasion and intrusion and inference in local politics.

With a table showing records of gas flaring among OPEC and non-OPEC countries, the author stated categorically that Nigeria ranks number one in the world when it comes to gas flaring which takes place daily in the Niger Delta region. Arugu (2013) maintained that oil spills and gas flaring resulting from the activities of the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) have devastated and affected communities in the Niger Delta and wondered why the communities are not adequately compensated whenever oil spills and pollution occur in the region. Citing Ibaba (2005) Arugu added "... the compensation rate for a mature Mahogany tree is N600.00, when such a tree can generate over N7, 000.00 when processed into wooden boards or planks. The same is true of the rates for Iroko, Ogbonom

Camwood, etc. It is sad to note for instance that the rate for a mature “Ogbono” tree is just N340.00 when it can generate an average of N10, 00.00 a year for a period not less than 30 years. This also applies to the Star Apple (Udara) tree with a compensation rate of N100.00 for a mature tree, when it generates thousands of naira a year for a period not less than 20 years (Ibaba, 2005:29). The irony here is that these unrealistic and unjust compensation rates are fixed by the federal government of Nigeria through its Ministry of Environment, Solid Mineral Resources and Agriculture, yet the multinational oil companies uphold such rates because it promotes their business interest of maximizing profits. This explains why scholars and environmental rights groups have continued to call for environmental justice and reparation to oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta. Also commenting on the challenges encountered by the Nigeria Government in its demobilization, disarmament and re-integration (DDR) programme in the Niger Delta, Zibima Tubodenyefa and Allison Timipere Felix (2013) in their article “The state in conflict management: The amnesty programme and the nature of stakeholder cooperation in Nigeria's Niger Delta”, published in the Journal of the Center for Niger Delta Studies volume 7, number 1, contended that the DDR exercise carried out by the Nigeria Government did not follow international standards in terms of content and methodology. They observed that the fact that amnesty programme succeeded in drastically reducing the incidence of violence is a short-term gain arising from the greed of militant Generals under the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) flagship and of the State represented by the political class. They therefore predicted that the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta may collapse and hostilities may resume because addressing the social and institutional drivers of the conflict is far removed from the objective of the Nigerian State when it moved to implement the programme. They argued further that rather than address the social issues that led to the conflict, the entire programme was monetized with the militant leaders and combatants earning huge allowances and stipends before the usual nonviolent tests and training hence, the cooperation between the government and stakeholders seems sustained by narrow and selfish economic interests of political elites and Niger Delta combustions facilitated through formal state institutions and informal social relations. Both scholars observed that the fundamental objective of any disarmament demobilization and reintegration exercise is to discourage ex-combatants from engaging in activities that could re-militarize their psyche or put in jeopardy the existing peace. They argued further that the aim of a DDR Programme is to help ex-combatants and militants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income without compromising the security of the state and its institutions. Citing UNAMID, 2012, Nzeshi, 2012 and Ezigbo 2012, they stated categorically that the case in the Niger Delta is full of inconsistencies and contradictions which could scuttle the entire amnesty programme. According to them, it is inappropriate and a threat to national security, the deliberate strategy of the Nigeria ruling class to co-opt ex-combatants into the economic mainstream

while the fundamental issues instigating armed conflicts in the Niger Delta region remain unattended to. While substantiating this position they maintained that in Bayelsa State which arguably was the boiling pot of militant activities before DDR, a group of ex-combatants were awarded oil pipelines and facilities security contracts in the state through their security firm BAJEROS while in Delta state where hostilities were equally intense, the Oil Facilities Surveillance Limited (OFSL) also owned by a former militant was contracted to police oil facilities. Wondering why this form of patronage must continue even after the DDR, they argued further that the relationship between the federal government and ex-combatant leaders raise doubts about the potentialities for DDR sustaining peace in the region and Nigeria as a whole. In their paper, they cited The Wall Street Journal (2012) which revealed the value of the oil pipeline security contracts awarded to ex-combatants during the post-amnesty era by Nigeria's state oil company, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Details of the contract according to The Wall Street Journal 2012, and Aluede, 2012 are listed below.

Table 1: Security/Surveillance Contracts awarded to top ex-militant Commanders in the Niger Delta Region

S/No	Name of Ex-Combatant Leaders	Amount Received and the Purpose
1	Gen. Ebikabowei Victor Ben (Boy loaf)	3.8 million US \$ (559.64 Million Naira) to secure oil facilities in Bayelsa State.
2	Gen. Ateke Tom	3.8 million US \$ (559.64 Million Naira) to secure oil facilities in River State.
3	Alhaji (Gen.) Mujahid Asari Dokubo	9 million US \$ (1.42) Billion Naira) River State to secure oil facilities in River State.
4	Gen. Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo)	22.9 million US \$ 3.614 Billion Naira) to secure oil facilities in Delta State

Source: Wall Street Journal, 2012; Amaizi, 2012).

The above financial inducement given to top militant commanders by the Nigeria Government have constantly pitched the ex-combatants in fierce battles with oil facilities saboteurs (some of whom are former militant foot soldiers who feel short changed by their leaders) who have proved relentless in sabotaging critical oil installations (the Wall Street Journal, 2012; Amaizi, 2012).

Curbing Youth Unrest and insecurity in the Niger Delta Region: Challenges and the Way forward

Scholars and advocates of development in the Niger Delta believed that the federal government of Nigeria set up several agencies and structures to drive and implement the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta. Thus, they re-iterated that the federal government set up a technical committee on the Niger Delta and the presidential Amnesty committee on Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of militants in the Niger Delta. It is important to note that the first committee was

chaired by the then Minister of Defence, Maj. Gen. Godwin Abbe (rtd). Issues relating to poor leadership and the mismanagement of the N60 billion released to the committee prompted the Federal Government to dissolve the presidential committee in November 2009. By the 16th of December 2009, the federal government to drive the amnesty programme. This time several stake holders including militant leaders and their nominees were co-opted as members of some of the committees. At the end of the disarmament and demobilization phase, ex-militants were profiled and documented and deployed to a camp at Obubra in Cross River State for further trainings on peace building and nonviolence. In the words of Sofiri Joab (2017), an estimated total of twenty thousand, one hundred and ninety-two (20,192) ex-militants were to be admitted into the camp for intensive nonviolence transformational training and re-orientation programme that runs for a period of fourteen (14) days per batch of between one thousand (1000) and one thousand five hundred (1,500) ex-militants (Sofiri: Joab, 2017; p. 131). Abazie (2014) noted that the federal government amnesty programme objectives and deliverables was expected to run in three phases as listed below:

- i. A disarmament phase which was to last from 6th August 2009 and 4th October 2009 and to include the collection of biometric data and oath taking.
- ii. A demobilization and rehabilitation phase expected to last from 6 to 12 months and to include the provision of, among other things counselling and career guidance for the ex-combatants and participants.
- iii. A re-integration phase expected to last up to five years and to include the provision of, among other things, training and micro credit for the participants.
- iv. The amnesty programme objectives and expected deliverables is listed in the table below.

Table 2: Components of the federal governments amnesty programme

Disarmament	Demobilization	Reintegration
Duration: August 6-October 4, 2009	Rehabilitation duration:6-12 months	Duration: up to 5 years
Key activities ❖ Collection of arms and ammunitions, explosives etc.	Key activities ❖ Ex-militants report to camp ❖ Verification and documentation ❖ Transformational training. ❖ Peace building and conflict resolution ❖ Counselling ❖ Career guidance ❖ Wellness assessment ❖ Reintegration classification ❖ Education and vocational placement ❖ Graduation and demobilization	Key activities ❖ Knowledge and skills acquisition ❖ Financial empowerment ❖ Placement programmes ❖ Micro credit ❖ Education ❖ Reconciliation with local community ❖ Conflict resolution framework/mechanism ❖ Monitoring and evaluation ❖ Exit of amnesty
Key Enabler Disarmament camp Massive campaign.	Key Enabler Transformational training centres Proceedings Rehabilitation camps.	Key Enabler Partnering government agencies, NGOs and private organizations, OGIS training and support framework.

Source: Adapted from Arugu and Okoye 2014 p.80.

The above analysis shows that the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region recorded some degree of success but also had challenges which if not addressed could lead to a resurgence of violence and insecurity in the oil-rich region. Bassey & Oshita, (2007) however blamed the conflict in the Niger Delta on the political economy of the Nigerian State which is structured to favour some regions against the minorities. Citing (Le Billion, 2001), they posited that the state centric nature of oil exploration concentrates oil wealth in the hand of the ruling elite, their foreign partners and the multinational oil companies (MNOCS) where they most probably maintain vested interests. Thus, they affirmed that state backed oil activities in the Niger Delta have impacted negatively on the psycho social and physical environment, causing stress, violence, and insecurity. While commenting on the consequences of oil exploration in the Niger Delta Bassey, and Oshita noted that communities in the Niger Delta, predominantly riverine communities have experienced consistent oil exploration for decades and have also suffered oil spillages, gas flaring, and other forms of ecological disasters at different times without adequate compensation and attention. They contended that the conflict

over oil in Niger Delta climaxed in 1995, following the execution of nine Ogoni leaders, including the minority rights activist, Ken Sarowiwa. These extra-judicial killings were globally condemned, and led to Nigeria's suspension from the (Common Wealth) hence, the federal government under General Sani Abacha, determined to protect multinational oil companies MNOCs (Chevron, Shell, Mobil, Elf, Agip, etc.), deployed armed personnels to guard oil installations, to deter protesters. Ironically, there were more demonstrations, seizure of oil rigs, and abduction of staff of MNOCs, vandalization of oil pipelines, emergence of youth militia groups and the proliferation of militant camps across the Niger Delta region. They therefore concluded that the conflict in Niger Delta could be linked to be a denial of the ontological needs of the people, and complicated by the communal content, governance of the state and international linkages (Bassey, and Oshita, 2007: p. 246). The above position clearly revealed that a combination of factors contributed to the crisis in the Niger Delta while the structure of the state further led to the escalation of the crisis. The international dimension and the role played by multinational oil companies no doubt also helped to aggravate the conflict with the active support of the Nigerian state. The views expressed by Bassey and Oshita, affirm the position of Ted Gurr, (1994) who stated that when minority groups within a given society are excluded from political and economic sphere/transactions, frustration and aggression including rebellion against the state becomes necessary and fundamental. In his work "minorities at risk" Ted Gurr, R. posited that exclusion of minorities in the distribution of benefits and amenities accounts for the struggle for power and conflict across the world.

The submissions of Ted Gurr (1994), Bassey, & Oshita, (2007) clearly indicate that the Niger Delta require new strategies for peace and peace building in order to curb youth unrest and insecurity in the oil-rich region. They posited that conflict necessitates peace building which seeks to secure peace through conflict prevention, resolution and management (World Bank, 2006; Ibeanu, 2006; Francis 2006; Best, 2007. According to Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006, Peace building is aimed at preventing and managing armed conflict and sustaining peace after large-scale organized violence.

In the words of Bassey (2002), peace building is also enhanced by knowledge of the motives for conflict and peculiarities of conflict systems. He reiterated that conflict prevention requires the identification and containment of possible conflict drivers before they trigger conflicts. Nevertheless, the following strategies will help to curb youth unrest and insecurity in Nigeria's Niger Delta region:

1. Socio-political and Economic Reforms: Data from the study clearly shows that some laws and policies in the country helps to encourage exclusion and marginalization of youths and citizens of the Niger Delta hence, there is urgent need for socio-political and economic reforms to create room for people-oriented policies

and programmes at all levels. This explains why Achebe (1984) and Ted Gur (1994), argued that lack of inclusiveness and transparency in the political decision-making process can lead to frustration and aggression which could degenerate into violence, conflict and insecurity especially in third world countries. In the case of the Niger Delta and other minorities in Nigeria, socio-political and economic reforms when carried out transparently and faithfully will lead to the repealing and eradication of out-dated anti-development laws, policies and legislations in the Niger Delta and Nigeria in general.

2. Skills Acquisition and Employment Creation: Data from the study also affirm that oil exploration and gas flaring by multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta has destroyed and contaminated the land, streams and the ecosystem which has affected the livelihood and economy of the people prompting some of the youths to resort to vandalism, oil theft through the establishment of local artisanal refineries. In the short terms, provision of skill acquisition schemes/programmes and employment of youths especially in the rural areas will help to check and stop crime, violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta region.

3. The study also shows that the disbursement of funds for the DDR programme was characterised by corruption and neglect of the welfare of the amnesty trainees hence, the entire amnesty programme should be properly interrogated and re-evaluated to ensure justice for all the parties including community stakeholders who were ignored and side lined throughout the commencement of the programme.

4. Aggressive Investment and Development: Ibaba (2007) stated categorically that previous interventions in the Niger Delta did not yield the desired results because precious interventions by the federal government and oil companies failed to address the root causes and drivers of conflict. In his work “mopping the wet floor while overlooking the leaking roof: Rethinking peace building in the Niger Delta” he stated that previous state responses to the conflict in Niger Delta were merely based on military force. He advocated for massive investment and infrastructural development in the region. According to him, this will in turn address other socio-economic variables plaguing the region.

5. Apart from providing employment, there is need to also provide social security and safety nets for the less privileged youths, children and vulnerable groups in the Niger Delta. Ibaba (2012) posited that sociopathic personality occur due to parental irresponsibility, sexual promiscuity and the associated really pregnancy leading to early and unplanned family living by uneducated and unskilled teenage mothers and fathers; and large family size etc. According to him, sociopathic personality is the outcome of Antisocial personality disorder (APD) which refers to pervasive pattern for, and violation of, the rights of others. He reiterated that this category of

youths (boys and girls) are deadly and dangerous. In his words persons with sociopathic personality are usually filled with pent up anger, given their feeling of alienation, deprivation and refection by the society. They lack social responsibility and love the attitude to take from society by whatever means, what they perceive to love been denied them. The social breakdown theory explains that such person's form or join social groups or mass movements to advance their private interest/agenda (Ibaba, 2017: p.90). Thus, to avert further insurgency and resurgence of violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta region, children and youths with sociopathic traits should be taken care of through policy initiatives and actions by the local government, state government, federal government and other critical stakeholders.

6. Enthronement of quality Leadership at all levels: The study revealed that youth unrest and the conflict in the Niger Delta region was triggered and aggravated by the absence of basic social amenities which ought to have been provided by the local, state, federal government and the multinational oil companies. Thus, the enthronement of honest, patriotic and disciplined leadership at all levels will no doubt help to build peace and stability in the region. Achebe (1984) made this point clear when he stated that the problem of Nigeria and Africa is purely that of leadership failure.

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Conclusion

The study examined youth unrest and insecurity in Nigeria's Niger Delta region with a view to interrogating the challenges and charting a way forward. In terms of structure, the study was arranged in the following order: Abstract, introduction, theoretical and conceptual elucidation, youth unrest and insecurity in Nigeria, pre-amnesty Niger Delta region, curbing youth unrest and insecurity in the Niger Delta region: Challenges and the way forward, conclusion, recommendations and references. The study highlighted the dangers posed by youth unrest, key drivers of conflict in Niger Delta including proffering strategic options (way forward) aimed at curbing youth unrest and insecurity in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. It is important to note that the short comings in the federal governments amnesty policy are yet to be addressed hence, the study identified potential factors that may lead to the resurgence of violence and insecurity in the oil-rich Niger Delta region. Thus, the study posits that addressing the fundamental factors responsible for youth unrest and conflict in the oil-rich region is very fundamental to the resolution of conflict and maintenance of peace and security in Niger Delta region and Nigeria in general. Curbing youth unrest and insecurity in Nigeria's Niger Delta region therefore requires collective action and commitment from all stakeholders including the federal government, state governments, community leaders, multinational oil companies, the agitators (ex-militants) Local governments, intellectuals from oil producing communities etc.

Recommendations

Any form of unrest in the Niger Delta will be detrimental to the national economy, stability and security hence, the recommendations listed below will go a long way in addressing the menace of youth unrest and insecurity in the Niger Delta and the nation as a whole:

- i. There is need for synergy among oil producing states, local governments and intervention agencies like the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The current practice where development efforts are duplicated will not help the Niger Delta and the people especially those in the grass root.
- ii. The study clearly shows that youths and young people are the drivers and mobilizers of protest and conflict hence, there should be special development programmes set aside for the youths in order to engage them meaningfully and also channel their energies to the right direction.
- iii. Special attention should also be given to children of ex-combatants through government policy actions so that such children are not recycled back to the creeks as sea-pirates and agitators of tomorrow.
- iv. The present amnesty policy of the federal government should be reviewed and re-evaluated so that emphasis can shift from militant-centred to community and people centred policy. Thus, there is need for the federal government to focus its energy on developing oil producing communities rather than focusing on the welfare and needs of militant leaders and Generals as they are called.
- v. In order to ensure peace and sustainable development in the Niger Delta, the government at all levels must look beyond politics in its actions, programmes and policies. This is imperative and fundamental because oil producing states and communities are controlled by different political parties (APC, PDP, Labour Party etc.) whereas the central government is controlled by the Ahmed Bola Tinubu-led All Progressives Congress. Distributing development projects and benefits on the basis of equity, fairness and justice irrespective of political party affiliation is therefore very necessary and fundamental.

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WEALTH INEQUALITY, POLITICAL PATRONAGE, AND THE EXPLOITATION OF THUGS IN ELECTORAL PROCESSES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper explores the intricate relationship between wealth inequality, political patronage, and the exploitation of thugs in Nigeria's electoral processes. It examines how economic disparities fuel political clientelism and the systematic use of violence to manipulate elections. The study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing secondary sources, including election reports, and policy documents. The elite theory was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. Findings indicate that political elites leverage economic power to sustain patronage networks, recruiting disenfranchised youths as electoral thugs to secure electoral advantages. The prevalence of wealth inequality creates an environment where political actors can easily co-opt unemployed and impoverished individuals into violent electoral activities. The study further highlights that the failure of state institutions to enforce electoral laws and prosecute perpetrators contributes to the perpetuation of these practices. Addressing these issues requires a multi-pronged approach, including institutional reforms, economic empowerment initiatives, strict enforcement of electoral laws, and civic education to discourage political violence. By examining these dynamics through the lens of elite theory, this paper underscores the urgent need for structural changes to enhance democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The study concludes by advocating for international cooperation, policy interventions, and grassroots mobilization to dismantle the structures of political patronage and promote fair electoral processes.

Keywords: *Wealth inequality, Political patronage, Electoral violence, Elite theory*

Background to the Study

Wealth inequality remains a defining challenge in Nigeria's socio-political landscape, significantly influencing political participation, governance, and electoral outcomes (Akinboye & Fashagba, 2021). Nigeria ranks among the most unequal societies in the world, with a significant portion of the population living in poverty while a small elite class controls vast economic and political resources (NBS, 2020). The widening economic gap has led to increased social tension and the manipulation of vulnerable populations, particularly unemployed youth, who are often recruited as political thugs (Arowolo & Aluko, 2021).

The political system in Nigeria has historically been characterized by patronage networks, where political actors distribute state resources to maintain loyalty and control (Van de Walle, 2007). This patronage system thrives on economic dependence, as politicians exploit poverty and joblessness to recruit individuals willing to engage in electoral violence (Oni, 2018). Studies have shown that political elites often finance violent groups to intimidate opponents, manipulate electoral outcomes, and maintain dominance in governance structures (Omotola, 2010). This not only disrupts the democratic process but also perpetuates cycles of violence and instability in the country.

Electoral thuggery has become a recurrent feature of Nigeria's elections, manifesting in various forms such as voter intimidation, ballot box snatching, and targeted assassinations (Human Rights Watch, 2019). These activities are often orchestrated by political godfathers who provide financial incentives, weapons, and immunity from prosecution to their recruits (Adebanjo, 2021). The role of security agencies in addressing electoral violence has been largely ineffective due to corruption and political interference (Olawale, 2020). Consequently, the lack of accountability has emboldened political actors to continue exploiting thugs as instruments of electoral manipulation. The persistence of electoral violence has far-reaching implications for Nigeria's democratic stability and governance. A climate of fear and insecurity discourages voter participation, leading to low turnout and disenfranchisement of the electorate (Ibrahim, 2019). Furthermore, electoral violence undermines public trust in democratic institutions and contributes to the overall decline in political legitimacy (Olawale, 2020). Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach that includes legal and institutional reforms, economic empowerment programs, and civic education initiatives to promote political awareness and discourage youth involvement in electoral violence. This paper seeks to answer three

critical questions: How does wealth inequality contribute to political patronage in Nigeria? In what ways are thugs recruited and deployed in electoral processes? What policy measures can be implemented to address the exploitation of thugs in elections? By exploring these questions, the study aims to provide insights into the systemic factors fueling electoral violence and propose strategies for mitigating its impact on Nigeria's democratic trajectory.

Theoretical Framework

Elite theory provides a fundamental explanation for the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of a small ruling class. According to Higley and Burton (2006), elites maintain dominance by controlling state institutions, economic resources, and access to political opportunities. In Nigeria, this dynamic is evident in how wealth inequality allows political elites to manipulate democratic processes, including elections. The elite class sustains its authority through a network of patronage, in which financial inducements and coercive measures are used to consolidate power (Arowolo & Aluko, 2021). This system of elite dominance reinforces electoral violence as a tool for maintaining political control and eliminating opposition.

The relevance of elite theory in the Nigerian context is further emphasized by the work of Pareto (1935), who argued that society is naturally stratified between elites and non-elites. In Nigeria, political elites use their economic advantages to recruit disenfranchised youths, transforming them into instruments of electoral violence. This elite manipulation is exacerbated by weak institutional frameworks, where law enforcement agencies often serve the interests of the ruling class rather than the broader public (Omotola, 2010). The institutionalization of political thuggery, therefore, becomes a deliberate strategy for sustaining elite rule and suppressing democratic competition. C. Wright Mills (1956) expanded on elite theory by highlighting the intersection of economic, political, and military elites in governance structures. In Nigeria, the collaboration between political elites, security forces, and financial powerhouses ensures that electoral violence remains a persistent strategy for political dominance (Adebanjo, 2021). The use of thugs is not merely a spontaneous phenomenon but an orchestrated effort to secure political advantages. Through financial incentives, elites empower criminal networks that intimidate voters, disrupt polling activities, and reinforce political loyalty through violence (Human Rights Watch, 2019). This entrenched system of elite dominance underscores the challenges of achieving free and fair elections in Nigeria.

Additionally, the elite's ability to manipulate electoral processes is linked to the lack of economic mobility among the lower classes. Robert Michels' (1911) concept of the "iron law of oligarchy" posits that political systems inevitably evolve into structures where power is concentrated in a select few. In Nigeria, this is reflected in the

continuous recycling of political elites who use electoral violence and patronage to sustain their influence (Olawale, 2020). The inability of marginalized groups to challenge elite dominance ensures that electoral violence persists, as economic dependence forces many into compliance with the ruling class. Addressing this imbalance requires structural reforms aimed at weakening the entrenched elite networks that exploit electoral processes for self-preservation.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design that relies exclusively on secondary sources to explore the relationship between wealth inequality, political patronage, and the exploitation of thugs in Nigerian electoral processes. Secondary data is essential in capturing the historical and contemporary trends in electoral violence, political clientelism, and wealth disparity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study systematically reviews academic literature, government reports, policy briefs, and publications from reputable organizations such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Human Rights Watch, and the International Crisis Group. These sources provide valuable insights into how political elites utilize economic power to sustain patronage networks and orchestrate electoral violence. In addition, newspaper articles and investigative reports from media organizations such as the BBC, Al Jazeera, and Premium Times are analyzed to track real-time cases of electoral thuggery and their socio-political implications.

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To analyze the collected data, the study employs a thematic content analysis approach. This method enables the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and discourses in the literature regarding wealth inequality and electoral manipulation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through a systematic coding process, the study categorizes data into key thematic areas such as the role of political elites in sustaining electoral violence, the economic motivations behind thug recruitment, and the institutional weaknesses that facilitate the persistence of political patronage. Comparative analysis is also applied by examining case studies of elections across different regions in Nigeria to establish trends and variations in the use of thuggery in electoral processes.

To enhance the credibility and reliability of findings, the study employs source triangulation by cross-referencing multiple secondary sources to validate claims and interpretations (Denzin, 2012). The use of diverse data sources minimizes biases associated with any single dataset and strengthens the robustness of the study. Furthermore, ethical considerations are upheld by ensuring that all referenced materials are properly cited according to APA 7th edition guidelines. Through this methodological approach, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the systemic linkages between wealth inequality, political patronage, and the exploitation of thugs in Nigeria's electoral landscape.

Literature Interrogations and Discussion

Wealth Inequality and Political Control in Nigeria

Wealth inequality in Nigeria has remained a persistent challenge, contributing to political instability and the erosion of democratic principles. The disparity in income distribution is largely a result of structural economic policies, corruption, and the concentration of wealth within a small elite class (Arowolo & Aluko, 2021). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2020), a significant percentage of Nigeria's population lives below the poverty line, while a small fraction controls the nation's vast resources. This economic imbalance translates into political dominance, as the wealthy elite manipulate electoral processes to maintain their grip on power. The lack of economic opportunities for the majority creates a cycle of dependence on political patronage, where the masses rely on elite-controlled resources for survival (Omotola, 2010).

The control of political power by the wealthy elite is reinforced through patron-client relationships, where political actors distribute resources in exchange for political loyalty (Van de Walle, 2007). In Nigeria, this practice is evident in the way politicians provide financial incentives to maintain control over political structures, particularly during elections. Political godfathers, who are often business moguls or former officeholders, finance electoral campaigns and, in return, expect political favors and policy decisions that serve their interests (Oni, 2018). This system not only entrenches inequality but also limits political participation to those who have financial backing, excluding ordinary citizens from meaningful engagement in governance. One of the most damaging consequences of wealth inequality in Nigeria's political landscape is the recruitment and exploitation of thugs for electoral violence. Due to widespread poverty and unemployment, many young people find themselves vulnerable to manipulation by political elites who offer them financial incentives to engage in violent activities (Human Rights Watch, 2019). These youths are often armed and deployed to intimidate opposition supporters, disrupt polling stations, and enforce the dominance of their political sponsors. The use of thuggery as a political tool further alienates marginalized populations from the electoral process, reducing trust in democratic institutions and exacerbating instability (Adebanjo, 2021).

The entrenchment of political control through economic disparity also undermines institutional accountability. Weak governance structures, coupled with the influence of wealthy political actors, hinder the enforcement of electoral laws and regulations (Olawale, 2020). Law enforcement agencies and the judiciary often lack the independence needed to prosecute electoral offenders, as they are either underfunded or co-opted by the same elites who benefit from electoral malpractices. This lack of accountability creates a culture of impunity, where political violence and election rigging continue unchecked (Ibrahim, 2019). As a result, political power

remains concentrated in the hands of the wealthy elite, while the masses remain disempowered and disenfranchised.

Furthermore, the consequences of wealth inequality extend beyond elections, shaping policy decisions and governance outcomes in ways that perpetuate elite dominance. Elected officials, who often emerge through the sponsorship of wealthy patrons, prioritize policies that protect the interests of their benefactors rather than those of the general public (Omotola, 2010). Public resources meant for development projects are frequently diverted to sustain patronage networks, further widening the economic gap between the elite and the impoverished majority. This form of governance not only stifles economic growth but also fosters resentment and social unrest, as citizens become increasingly frustrated with the lack of equitable development (Akinboye & Fashagba, 2021).

Addressing the link between wealth inequality and political control in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach that includes electoral reforms, economic empowerment programs, and institutional strengthening. Strengthening anti-corruption agencies and ensuring judicial independence are critical steps toward dismantling elite dominance in politics. Additionally, initiatives aimed at reducing unemployment and poverty can minimize the pool of vulnerable youths who are susceptible to political exploitation (Oni, 2018). Civic education and awareness campaigns can also empower citizens to actively participate in the electoral process, reducing reliance on patronage networks. Without these interventions, wealth inequality will continue to undermine democracy and perpetuate electoral violence in Nigeria.

Political Patronage and the Recruitment of Electoral Thugs

Political patronage remains a dominant feature of Nigeria's political landscape, where access to power and resources is often mediated through patron-client relationships. Politicians, especially those with significant financial resources, distribute favors such as money, contracts, and political appointments in exchange for loyalty and electoral support (Omotola, 2010). This patronage system extends to the recruitment of electoral thugs, who serve as enforcers to intimidate opponents and manipulate electoral outcomes. The economic precarity faced by many young Nigerians makes them susceptible to exploitation by political elites who use patronage to secure their allegiance (Arowolo & Aluko, 2021).

The recruitment of electoral thugs is facilitated through networks of political godfathers who wield significant influence over local and national politics. These godfathers finance political campaigns and, in return, demand absolute loyalty from their protégés, including the use of coercion when necessary (Oni, 2018). Thugs recruited through these networks are often provided with financial rewards, drugs,

and weapons to carry out acts of intimidation and violence during elections (Human Rights Watch, 2019). This cycle of patronage and violence ensures that political elites remain in power, further entrenching wealth inequality and limiting democratic competition. A key driver of thug recruitment is the high rate of youth unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2020), a large percentage of Nigerian youths lack stable economic opportunities, making them vulnerable to offers of financial incentives from politicians (Adebanjo, 2021). Many of these young people view electoral thuggery as a means of survival, given the lack of alternative livelihood options. This economic desperation fuels the continuous use of political thugs in elections, reinforcing a cycle of violence and disenfranchisement.

The institutional weaknesses in Nigeria's political and security frameworks further facilitate the exploitation of thugs for electoral purposes. Law enforcement agencies often turn a blind eye to the activities of political thugs due to corruption or political interference (Olawale, 2020). Many of these thugs enjoy immunity from prosecution as long as they serve the interests of their political patrons. The failure to hold perpetrators accountable emboldens political actors to continue using violence as a strategy for electoral dominance (Ibrahim, 2019). The impact of political patronage and thug recruitment extends beyond elections, affecting governance and public policy. Elected officials who come to power through violent means often prioritize the interests of their sponsors over the needs of the public (Akinboye & Fashagba, 2021). This results in the misallocation of public resources, weak governance structures, and the perpetuation of economic and social inequalities. In turn, the lack of accountability and poor governance contribute to further disenfranchisement and public distrust in democratic institutions.

Addressing the issue of political patronage and thug recruitment requires comprehensive electoral reforms, stronger law enforcement mechanisms, and economic empowerment programs for youths. Strengthening legal frameworks to criminalize the use of political thugs, coupled with enhanced judicial independence, can deter politicians from engaging in electoral violence (Omotola, 2010). Furthermore, creating economic opportunities for young people through vocational training and entrepreneurship programs can reduce their vulnerability to exploitation by political elites (Oni, 2018). Without significant policy interventions, the cycle of patronage, violence, and inequality will continue to undermine Nigeria's democratic processes.

Electoral Violence and the Role of Thuggery

Electoral violence remains one of the most pressing threats to Nigeria's democratic stability, with thuggery playing a significant role in perpetuating political instability. The use of thugs to disrupt elections, intimidate voters, and attack political

opponents is a recurrent feature in Nigeria's electoral history (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Electoral violence, often fueled by political elites seeking to manipulate outcomes, undermines public confidence in the electoral process and hinders democratic consolidation. The prevalence of such violence is closely linked to the country's wealth inequality and the reliance on political patronage, which incentivizes the recruitment of thugs as tools of coercion (Omotola, 2010).

The recruitment of political thugs is driven by economic desperation, as many of these individuals are young, unemployed, and lack viable economic alternatives. Nigeria's high poverty rate creates a fertile ground for politicians to exploit vulnerable youth by offering them financial inducements to engage in acts of electoral violence (Arowolo & Aluko, 2021). These individuals, often drawn from marginalized communities, are equipped with weapons and given specific assignments such as ballot box snatching, voter suppression, and attacking opposition strongholds. As a result, the use of thuggery not only distorts electoral outcomes but also contributes to the cyclical nature of violence in Nigeria's political landscape (Adebanjo, 2021). Another factor exacerbating electoral violence is the weak institutional framework governing Nigeria's elections. Despite existing legal provisions that criminalize election-related violence, enforcement remains inconsistent due to corruption and political interference (Olawale, 2020). Many political thugs operate with impunity because they are protected by their sponsors, who use their influence to shield them from prosecution. The failure of law enforcement agencies to curb electoral violence emboldens politicians to continue deploying thugs as instruments of coercion, further eroding democratic norms (Ibrahim, 2019).

The impact of electoral violence extends beyond the immediate election period, affecting governance, security, and overall societal stability. When politicians ascend to power through violent means, their primary allegiance is often to their sponsors rather than to the electorate (Akinboye & Fashagba, 2021). This results in a lack of accountability, misallocation of resources, and policies that prioritize elite interests over the common good. Moreover, the normalization of electoral violence contributes to a culture of impunity, where political competition is defined not by ideology or policy but by the ability to deploy force (Oni, 2018).

Additionally, the persistence of thuggery in electoral processes exacerbates social divisions and perpetuates distrust in democratic institutions. Communities affected by electoral violence often experience long-term consequences such as displacement, destruction of property, and deepening ethnic or political rivalries (Human Rights Watch, 2019). This further alienates citizens from political participation, as many perceive elections as dangerous and futile exercises rather than legitimate avenues for change. The resulting voter apathy weakens democratic

engagement and allows corrupt elites to maintain their grip on power with minimal resistance (Omotola, 2010).

Addressing electoral violence and the role of thuggery requires comprehensive electoral and judicial reforms, enhanced security measures, and long-term socio-economic interventions. Strengthening electoral laws, ensuring the independence of security agencies, and prosecuting those responsible for election-related violence are crucial steps toward breaking the cycle of political thuggery (Olawale, 2020). Additionally, investment in education, job creation, and youth empowerment programs can reduce the economic vulnerability that drives young people into political thuggery. Without proactive and sustained efforts, electoral violence will continue to undermine Nigeria's democratic aspirations, entrenching a system where force, rather than the will of the people, determines political outcomes.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Addressing the systemic issues of wealth inequality, political patronage, and electoral violence in Nigeria requires a policy framework informed by elite theory. Elite theory posits that power is concentrated in the hands of a small, privileged group that uses state resources to maintain its dominance (Mosca, 1939; Pareto, 1968). In Nigeria, this elite class perpetuates its rule through the strategic distribution of wealth and patronage networks that encourage electoral violence. To mitigate these challenges, institutional reforms must focus on reducing elite capture of democratic institutions, ensuring transparency in electoral processes, and strengthening mechanisms that hold political actors accountable (Omotola, 2010).

A fundamental policy recommendation is the restructuring of Nigeria's electoral framework to diminish elite influence over election management bodies. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) must be granted full autonomy to prevent interference from political elites who manipulate electoral processes to maintain their dominance (Ibrahim, 2019). Adopting electronic voting, enhancing voter education, and ensuring real-time results transmission can reduce opportunities for elite-driven electoral fraud. Additionally, deploying independent observers and strengthening electoral laws to prosecute political elites who engage in election-related violence can help mitigate electoral malpractices (Akinboye & Fashagba, 2021). Another crucial policy intervention is the enforcement of laws against political violence and electoral thuggery. While Nigeria has legal provisions to criminalize electoral violence, political interference often undermines their enforcement (Olawale, 2020). Creating independent electoral courts to adjudicate election-related offenses and ensuring that political elites who sponsor violence face legal consequences would deter future violations. Moreover, law enforcement agencies must be insulated from elite control to guarantee impartial enforcement of electoral laws (Adebanjo, 2021).

Economic reforms targeting wealth redistribution are also necessary to reduce the socio-economic vulnerabilities that allow political elites to exploit disenfranchised youth. Nigeria's high unemployment rate provides a steady supply of individuals willing to engage in electoral violence for financial gain (Oni, 2018). Establishing social protection programs, increasing funding for youth entrepreneurship initiatives, and improving access to education and vocational training can help address the economic disparity that fuels political thuggery (Human Rights Watch, 2019). A more equitable distribution of wealth would weaken the patronage system and reduce the elite's ability to manipulate marginalized populations (Arowolo & Aluko, 2021). Political party reforms are essential to limiting elite dominance over electoral processes. Many Nigerian political parties' function as personal fiefdoms controlled by wealthy elites who use their resources to secure electoral victories through illicit means (Olawale, 2020). Implementing strict campaign finance regulations, enforcing internal democracy within parties, and limiting the role of money in candidate selection can reduce the influence of political godfathers. Additionally, the introduction of public funding for political parties could ensure a more level playing field, allowing candidates without elite backing to participate in elections (Ibrahim, 2019).

Finally, international cooperation and diplomatic pressure can play a critical role in curbing the elite-driven exploitation of electoral processes. Regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and international bodies like the United Nations (UN) should continue monitoring elections in Nigeria and imposing sanctions on individuals who engage in election-related violence (Akinboye & Fashagba, 2021). Travel bans, asset freezes, and restrictions on political elites implicated in electoral fraud and violence can serve as effective deterrents. Additionally, international donor agencies can support governance programs that promote transparency and democratic accountability in Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Conclusion

The persistence of wealth inequality, political patronage, and electoral violence in Nigeria remains a significant challenge to democratic consolidation. The entrenchment of political elites who manipulate economic disparities to maintain control over the electoral process has contributed to the exploitation of disenfranchised youths as thugs. Electoral violence, fueled by the patronage system, undermines public trust in democracy, weakens institutions, and perpetuates a cycle of insecurity and instability. Addressing these systemic issues requires a multi-faceted approach that prioritizes institutional reform, economic empowerment, and strict enforcement of electoral laws.

While policy interventions such as strengthening electoral institutions, enforcing anti-violence laws, and promoting political party reforms can help mitigate these challenges, sustainable change also depends on broader socio-economic transformations. Addressing youth unemployment and poverty through targeted economic empowerment programs can reduce the vulnerability of young people to political manipulation. Additionally, promoting civic education and public awareness campaigns can foster a democratic culture that discourages electoral violence and political thuggery. The role of civil society, the media, and international organizations in advocating for transparency and accountability remains crucial in this process.

Ultimately, the success of Nigeria's democratic future hinges on the collective commitment of stakeholders, including the government, political parties, security agencies, and citizens, to uphold democratic principles. Without decisive action to curb the influence of wealth inequality and political patronage on electoral processes, Nigeria risks further political instability and democratic backsliding. A holistic and sustained effort is required to build a political system that is inclusive, transparent, and resistant to electoral violence, ensuring that democracy serves the interests of all citizens rather than a privileged few.

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION FROM ECOWAS COUNTRIES

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between institutional quality and financial inclusion in five selected countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso. The study employed Pool Mean Group (PMG) as its technique for data analysis after established strong evidence of cointegration among the variables (institutional quality, financial inclusion, exchange rates, interest rates, and inflation) using Pedroni and Kao tests. Findings from PMG reveals that institutional quality positively influences investment in the long run, while increased financial inclusion has a negative impact on investment. Exchange rates do not significantly affect investment over the long term, but interest rates are associated with a decrease in investment, and inflation is positively related to investment. In the short run, the rapid adjustment towards equilibrium is indicated by the error correction term. The findings indicate that higher institutional quality correlates with increased financial inclusion, highlighting the need for effective governance and regulatory frameworks. The study concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between institutional quality and financial inclusion in the five selected countries of ECOWAS. The article concludes with recommendations for policymakers in ECOWAS countries to improve institutional frameworks and enhance financial inclusion strategies.

Keywords: *Economic Development, ECOWAS, Financial Inclusion, Governance, Institutional Quality*

Background to the Study

Institutional quality and financial inclusion are interconnected factors crucial to economic growth and development. Institutional quality refers to the effectiveness and efficiency of institutions, such as the legal system, regulatory frameworks, and governance structures, in promoting economic development (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2010). Good institutional quality is essential for creating an enabling environment for businesses, attracting investments, and ensuring stable economic conditions (Knack & Keefer, 1995). It provides a foundation of trust, transparency, and predictability that encourages private sector participation and enhances investor confidence (Acemoglu & Johnson, 2005). Financial inclusion is a vital driver of economic growth and development, offering the ability for individuals and businesses to access financial services that can enhance productivity, savings, and investment opportunities. In the context of West Africa, especially within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), financial inclusion remains a significant agenda given the high rates of poverty and economic informality. However, the quality of institutions varies greatly across the region, impacting the effectiveness of financial systems and the inclusivity of financial services.

Furthermore, financially inclusive economies provide a broader customer base and a deeper pool of capital, allowing businesses to access funds for expansion and investment in productive activities (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015). As financial inclusion improves, it stimulates private sector investment, leading to economic growth and poverty reduction. Beck et al. (2007) found that countries with higher levels of financial inclusion experienced faster economic growth. Demirgüç-Kunt and Klapper (2012) also demonstrated that improved access to finance through financial inclusion leads to higher entrepreneurial activity and investment levels. Financial inclusion improves risk management capabilities for businesses, encouraging investment in long-term projects (Honohan & Beck, 2007).

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) comprises 15-member countries in West Africa and aims to promote economic integration and development within the region. Despite the region's enormous natural and rich human resources, with an experimenting growth rate of population that is very high in the world, estimated by 2020 to be over 430 million (ECOWAS, 2007). However, the region is saddled with a poor investment environment (Draper, Grant, Kingombe and Velde, 2011). Despite progress in enhancing financial inclusion in many ECOWAS countries, challenges persist, particularly in terms of access and utilization of financial services among marginalized populations. Institutional quality, defined by factors such as governance, regulatory frameworks, and the legal environment, plays a crucial role in determining the level of financial inclusion. Therefore, understanding this relationship is essential for formulating effective policies. To

address this problem comprehensively, an investigation is needed to explore how financial inclusion and institutional quality influence investment in the ECOWAS region. This study aims to:

- i. Analyze the quality of institutions in five selected ECOWAS countries.
- ii. Assess the level of financial inclusion in five selected ECOWAS countries
- iii. Examine the correlation between institutional quality and financial inclusion.

Conceptual Literature

Institutional Quality

The concept of institutional quality is universally self-explanatory. However, the concept's abstract nature requires it to be unbundled for comprehension. The most widely accepted conceptualization is that of Douglass North (1990,1991,1997), who defines institutions as the human constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction. He argued that “institutions are the rules of the game in a society”. Institutions are the boundaries and means by which human activity is regulated, and as the institutions change, society 'evolves' (North, 1990). North is explicit in his conviction that institutions shape economic performance. Hence, he emphasizes a framework for understanding the complexity institutions apply to society. Subsequently, Zubair (2018) differentiated among institutions- informal institutions constituting norms, traditions and morals; and formal institutions shaping laws and property rights. From Zubair (2023) perspective, the quality of an institution is likely to affect financial inclusion through the ability of the financial market to channel resources to finance productive activities. At the same time, better institutions can facilitate access to finance by overcoming the effects of information and transaction cost.

Concept of Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion is defined as the access to and use of financial services by individuals and businesses. The Global Findex Database (World Bank, 2017) indicates that a significant portion of the population in developing countries remains unbanked. Financial inclusion is linked to poverty alleviation, economic growth, and social empowerment (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2018). The Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI) defines financial inclusion as access to financial services and quality of products and delivery. This definition has been criticized, particularly when conceptualized in developed countries since it does not differentiate between those who choose to be financially excluded and those forced to be financially included (Salignac et al 2016). Voluntary exclusion arises when individuals or firms choose not to use formal financial services because they do not need them or due to cultural or religious reasons (World Bank 2014). Although account penetration depicts financial access, it does not encompass financial inclusion. Due to data limitations and consistent with Beck (2016), Kumar (2013) and Sarma (2008), we use a narrow

definition by focusing on the formal banking sector. All the empirical findings should be viewed in that light. Furthermore, financial inclusion makes financial services accessible at affordable costs to all individuals and businesses, regardless of net worth and size (Grant & Kagan, 2019). It also implies the availability and equality of opportunities to access financial services that meet the specific needs of users without discrimination (Nanda & Kaur, 2016). Similarly, financial inclusion can be defined as how financially excluded and underserved people in a society have access to a range of available financial services without discrimination (World Bank, 2014). It also refers to all initiatives that make formal financial services accessible and affordable to all population segments (African Development Bank [AfDB], 2013). It, therefore, connotes the increase in access to formal financial services such as bank accounts and the use of credit and saving facilities of banks (Efobi, Beecroft & Osabuohien, 2014).

In addition, financial inclusion is also referred to as a process that ensures the ease of access, availability and usage of the formal financial system by all members of an economy, as well as the process of ensuring access to appropriate financial products and services needed by vulnerable groups such as weaker societal sections and low-income groups at an affordable cost fairly and transparently by mainstream institutional players. This, therefore, suggests that financial inclusion is the inability of the disadvantaged to access financial services or the process whereby people encounter difficulties accessing or using financial services and products in the mainstream market that are appropriate to their needs and enable them to lead a normal social life in the society in which they belong (Fadun, 2014).

Similarly, the financial exclusion would entail the obstacles such as an unfriendly business environment, lack of sustainable growth, insufficient infrastructure, limiting physical access, psychology (fear of financial institution's staff, structures, complicated financial products, etc.), information (lack of knowledge regarding products and procedures), low income and poor institutional quality, poor business practices (Zubair, 2024). Distance to financial institutions, costs of financial services, the integrity of regulatory and institutional infrastructure, etc., hinders access to formal financial services, despite the exceeding marginal benefits over marginal cost of using these services (Efobi, Beecroft & Osabuohien, 2014). Nevertheless, financial exclusion can either be voluntary – a condition where the segment of the population or firms choose not to use financial services either because they have no need for them or due to cultural or religious reasons, or involuntarily – a condition which arises from insufficient income and high-risk profile or due to discrimination, market failures and imperfection (Cyn-Young and Rogalio, 2018).

The Link between Institutional Quality and Financial Inclusion

Several studies underscore the importance of institutional quality in facilitating

financial inclusion. According to Zubair (2025), robust institutions enhance the development of financial markets, ensuring that financial services reach those in need. Conversely, weak institutions can lead to poor governance, corruption, and inadequate regulatory frameworks, hindering financial access. Zubair (2021) empirically examines the causal relationship between Economic growth and, institutional quality in Nigeria. The study reveals a bi-causal relationship between financial inclusion and inclusive growth on one hand and financial inclusion and government effectiveness on the other hand. The study concluded that there was a significant bi-directional causal relation between financial inclusion and institutional quality. By examining the role of institutional quality in the financial development of CEMAC countries, Kombo & Koumou (2021) showed that the quality of institutions was an essential factor in the financial development of CEMAC countries. The study used DOLS estimation from 2002 to 2018 on the panel data set and concludes that institutional quality positively impacts financial development. Ali, Nazir, Hashmi, & Ullah (2021) used a panel data set of 45 OIC countries from 2000 to 2016 employing system GMM and 2SLS estimation techniques to examine the moderation effect on the relationship between financial inclusion and institutional quality on the financial development. Findings show that institutional quality moderates financial inclusion and has a significant positive impact on financial development. Sawadogo and Semedo (2021) examines the impact of financial inclusion on income inequality and institutions in 28 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa to identify cross-country inequality regimes. The study applied finite mixture models on the panel data set covering 2004 to 2016. The results reveal that countries with high institutional quality were more likely to be in the class where financial inclusion reduces income inequality.

A study by Aracil, Bengoechea, and Moreno-de-Tejada (2021) reveals that institutional quality intensifies the beneficial effects and helps prioritize institutional reforms to reap the benefits of financial inclusion better. Results indicated that the influence of financial inclusion on poverty alleviation is related to the degree of institutional quality. The unbalanced panel data spans from 2004 to 2017 from a wide range of backgrounds, covering seventy-five developed and developing countries and leans on OLS and quintile regressions for its analysis. The study concludes that an inclusive institutional setting strengthens the effects of financial inclusion in reducing poverty rates. Ogbeide and Adeboje (2020) examined the effects of the financial liberalization strategy adopted in 22 Sub-Saharan African countries in promoting new business entry from 2006 to 2017. The dynamic GMM results from the study indicated that financial development through a financial liberalisation policy does not have a uniform effect on entrepreneurship.

Centrality of ECOWAS in Financial Inclusion

The ECOWAS region is characterized by diverse institutional arrangements and

varying levels of financial inclusion. Countries like Ghana and Nigeria have made strides in improving financial access, yet significant gaps remain. This analysis focuses on five representative ECOWAS countries to explore the institutional determinants of financial inclusion.

Gap in the literature

Based on the relevant literature reviewed, many studies focused on the impact of institutional quality on foreign direct investment (see Fukumia and Nishijima, 2010; Nondo, Kahsai, and Hailu, 2016; Jurčić, Lj., Franc, and Barišić, 2020; Kurul and Yalta, 2017; Peres, Ameer & Xu 2018, Buchanan, Le and Rishi, 2012) where they examined how the duo interact, how does institutional quality affect foreign direct investment and causal relationships to each. While other studies also focused on the impact of institutional quality on financial inclusion and the link between the two (see, Chinoda, and Kwenda, 2019; Kebede, Selvanathan and Narapanawa, 2021; Nkoa, and Song, 2020; Raji, R. O., 2021; Zulkhibri, and Ghazal, 2017; Ali, Nazir, Hashmi, & Ullah, 2021; Nguyen, & Ha, 2021). They also tried to examine the linkage between institutional quality and financial inclusion on one hand and how does each influence one another. Furthermore, it will also be noticed that in the literature reviewed, few studies were conducted to either examined the impact or relationship of institutional quality or financial inclusion on investment where they examined the two variables influence separately (see Lim, 2014; Lyulyov and Moskalenko, 2020; Nugraha, Tulung and Arie, 2021; Eslamloueyan and Jafari, 2018, Ayoola, and Omowunmi, 2018b; Ayoola & Omowunmi, 2018; Kimani and Kisaka, 2020).

Despite numerous studies on institutional quality, financial inclusion and investment, to the best of this research knowledge, there were no studies that jointly examine the impact of institutional quality and financial inclusion, on private sector investment in ECOWAS countries. Though there have been few studies on the either side linking financial inclusion with investment (Zubair, 2023) or financial inclusion with institutional quality (see Raji, 2021; Ali, Nazir, Hashmi, & Ullah, 2021). In addition, also, almost all the studies reviewed, none utilized the pool mean group (PMG) estimation procedure. Instead, they employed GMM (Tresierra and Reyes, 2017), ARDL (Ayoola and Omowunmi, 2018), FE and RE (Nondo, Kahsai, and Hailu, 2016), Herrera, Haar, & Benavides, 2013) OLS (Lyulyov and Moskalenko 2020) among others.

Considering the importance of institutional quality and financial inclusion, it could be said that the area of research has been given less attention, thus exist a gap of knowledge. The PMG estimation technique which has the capacity to accommodate heterogeneity effects was also not utilized by previous studies based on the knowledge of this research. It is against this, the study intends to fill these two research gaps by examining the impact of institutional quality and financial

inclusion, and see whether it may be a factor influencing investment in ECOWAS countries.

Methodology

Source of Data

It will be a very difficult task to use primary source of data in the context of the macroeconomic variables. This makes secondary data to be more suitable for the study. The secondary data covers Five ECOWAS countries which are selected for this study: Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso. These countries were chosen based on their varying degrees of institutional quality and financial inclusion levels. This will interestingly be sufficient for rigorous and robust econometric estimation. The choice of these countries is informed by the poor state of economy in the region (Draper et al., 2011), despite these countries' enormous natural and human resources which can have a significant impact on their economy. The choice of time frame also is informed by availability of data for the variables and may capture significant historical events, policy changes and economic trends that have shaped the trajectory of institutional quality and financial inclusion. This data will permit the dynamic evaluation of the impact of institutional quality and financial inclusion in ECOWAS. The data would be obtained from publicly acknowledged source(s),

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Table 1 presented the data and source(s), these variables were used in previous empirical literature (Olweny and Chiluwe, 2012; Ayeni, 2020; Peres, Ameer and Xu, (2018).

Table 1: Variable Codes and Data Sources

Variable Codes	Variable Name	Description of the Variable	Source
PIN	Private Sector Investment	Gross capital formation (i.e. Gross domestic investment) is the total change in the value of fixed assets plus change in stocks	WDI/World Bank 2023
INQ	Institutional Quality	The composite index of four out of the six government indicators (political stability, accountability and voice, control of corruption, and rule of law) constructed by average method. Consistence with D., Kraay, A., & Mastruzzi, M. (2011). .	WDI/World Bank 2023
PST	Political stability	The capacity of government in avoiding internal and external conflicts and ethnic tensions	WDI/World Bank (2023)
ACV	accountability and voice	View of the degree to which citizens can take an interest in selecting their government, the opportunity of free expression and association, and a free media.	WDI/World Bank (2023)
CTC	Control of corruption	Indicates the position of countries in fighting against corruption.	WDI/World Bank (2023)
ROL	Rule of law	Shows contract and property right protection and abilities of police and court to enhance private rights.	WDI/World Bank (2023)

FIN	Financial Inclusion	The composite index of the four indicators (accessibility, availability, affordability, and credit volume) by average method is in line with the works of <u>Demirgüç-Kunt, A., Klapper, L., Singer, D., Ansar, S., & Hess, J. (2018)</u> .	WDI/World Bank 2023
EXT	Exchange Rate	Real effective exchange rate that is the relative price of foreign goods in terms of domestic goods.	WDI/World Bank 2023
INT	Interest Rate	Interest rate spread (lending rate minus deposit rate, %)	WDI/World Bank 2023
INF	Inflation	Inflation (INF) as measured by the consumer price index, it shows the annual percentage change in the cost to the average consumer of acquiring a basket of goods and services that may be fixed or changed at specified intervals	WDI/World Bank 2023

Source: Author's compilation 2024

Data Collection

Secondary data was collected from various sources, including the World Bank Governance Indicators, Global index Database, and reports from national financial authorities. The period of analysis spans from 2015 to 2021.

Data Analysis

To properly answer the research questions and hypothesis raised and highlighted in section one, the study will employ panel data estimation techniques simply because it has advantage over cross-sectional and time series data sets. The techniques have a greater degree of freedom and less multi-collinearity leading to more efficient estimates, (Sul, 2019) and give greater flexibility in modeling differences in behavior across countries which enables us to control for unobserved heterogeneity. The standard procedure for any econometric estimation regardless the nature the data is to inspect the properties of the series in question.

Model Specification

The study employed the Poled Mean Group (PMG) estimate or proposed by Pesaran and Shin (2001). Standard models, based on prior research (Lyulyov and Moskalenko, 2020; Raji, 2021; Zulkhibri and Ghazal, 2017; Mehmood, Mohd-Rashid, and Tajuddin, 2021), serve as a foundation, with necessary modifications to address the study objectives and align with the theoretical framework. The functional relationship between independent and dependent variables is expressed as follows:

The PMG short run equation for the model is represented as:

$$\Delta pin_{i,t} = \varphi_0 + \sum_{i=1}^n \varphi_1 \Delta pi_{i,t-j} + \sum_{i=1}^n \varphi_2 \Delta pst_{1i,t-j} + \sum_{i=1}^n \varphi_3 \Delta acv_{2i,t-j} + \sum_i^n \varphi_4 \Delta ct c_{3i,t-j} + \sum_i^n \varphi_5 \Delta rol_{3i,t-j} + \varphi_8 \dots \dots \dots 1$$

$$PIN=f(INQ, FIN, X).....(2)$$

Where, PIN is private sector investment, INQ is institutional quality, FIN is financial inclusion and X represents other external or control variables in the model. These control variables according to literature could impact on private sector investment such as exchange rate, interest rate and inflation, which perform a unique role in influencing investment environment. This is grounded in their acknowledged significance in shaping economic dynamics, particularly within the context of private sector investment (Fringpong and Marbuah 2010).

For the objective of the study, a model that follows equation (1) is formulated. In addition, the model is modified to include the control variables and specified as;

$$PIN_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 INQ_{it} + \beta_2 FIN_{it} + \beta_3 EXR_{it} + \beta_4 INT_{it} + \beta_5 INF_{it} + \mu_{it}$$

The econometric model estimated specified in equation (2), is in consistence with (Borojo and Yushi 2020), where: β_1 to β_5 are the elasticity estimated. (parameters), PIN represents private sector investment and the dependent variable, INQ denotes institutional quality index, FIN refers to financial inclusion index, EXR as exchange rate, INT as interest rate, INF as inflation and μ is the error term which is expected to tend towards zero, while i stands for cross sectional element ($i=1, 2, 3, \dots, 16$); t stands for time period (that is $t=1995, 1996, \dots, 2022$).

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The PMG long run equation for the model depicting the impact of institutional quality, financial inclusion and the control variables on private sector investment in ECOWAS countries.

Findings and Discussion

Overview of Institutional Quality in the Selected Countries

Table 2: Summarizes the Institutional Quality Scores based on the World Bank Governance Indicators:

Country	Voice and Accountability	Political Stability	Government Effectiveness	Regulatory Quality	Rule of Law
Nigeria	0.15	-0.60	-0.50	-0.48	-0.36
Ghana	0.70	0.12	0.63	0.68	0.54
Senegal	0.55	0.05	0.49	0.40	0.41
Côte d'Ivoire	0.40	-0.18	0.32	0.40	0.30
Burkina Faso	0.35	-0.20	0.40	0.38	0.38

Financial Inclusion Levels

Table 3: Highlights the Financial Inclusion Levels in the Selected Countries:

Country	% Adults with Bank Accounts	% Adults Saving at a Financial Institution	% Adults Borrowing from Financial Institutions
Nigeria	39%	25%	15%
Ghana	58%	35%	21%
Senegal	51%	30%	19%
Côte d'Ivoire	48%	28%	18%
Burkina Faso	36%	27%	10%

Descriptive Statistics

The Table below shows the data characteristics, and it summarizes the data for the selected variables. This descriptive statistic shows the analytical test of the variables included in the model. They are institutional quality (INQ), financial inclusion (FIN), exchange rate (EXR), interest rate (INT) and inflation (INF).

Table 4: Result of the Summary Statistics of the Variables

	INQ	FIN	EXT	INT	INF
Mean	-2.396202	111.1362	602.4339	16.35106	8.825094
Median	-2.287384	23.49740	478.6337	16.23218	4.621392
Maximum	1.380464	1492.401	9565.082	71.36917	72.83550
Minimum	-7.302568	0.000000	0.119914	-32.26333	-3.502586
Std. Dev.	1.735702	195.7318	1337.873	12.61443	12.32901
Skewness	-0.320063	3.697945	4.822439	0.715466	2.412270
Kurtosis	2.404844	20.28022	27.25108	6.210990	9.091659
Jarque-Bera	14.26079	6595.031	12714.59	230.6831	1127.177
Probability	0.000800	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000
Observations	448	448	448	448	448

Source: Researcher computation using Eviews 11. 2024

The mean values provide insights into the average levels of these variables, with INQ at -2.40, FIN at 111.14, EXR at 602.43, INT at 16.35, and INF at 8.83. Medians reveal the central tendency, while maximum and minimum values demonstrate the range. Standard deviations highlight the variability, and skewness and kurtosis shed light on the distribution shapes. Additionally, the Jarque-Bera test indicates departures from normality, with associated probabilities close to zero, suggesting non-normal distributions. These statistics offer a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of the analyzed economic indicators.

Correlation Analysis

In Table 5 below the correlation matrix is utilized to examine the correlation among the variables in the model

Table 5: Correlation Matrix Result

	INQ	FIN	EXR	INT	INF
INQ	1.0000				
FIN	-0.0239	1.0000			
EXR	0.0845	-0.0372	1.0000		
INT	0.0636	-0.0977	0.1083	1.0000	
INF	-0.0756	-0.0704	0.0582	0.2544	1.0000

Source: Author's computation using Eviews version 11 (2024)

The result shows that financial inclusion is negatively correlated with institutional quality, exchange rate, interest rate and inflation rate with correlated coefficients of -0.0239, -0.0372, -0.0977 and 0.0704, respectively. On the other hand, the coefficient of institutional quality is positively related to private investment, exchange rate and interest rate with correlated coefficients of 0.0165, 0.0845 and 0.0636 except the coefficient of inflation rate which is negatively correlated with coefficients value of -0.0756. This implies that there is no presence of multicollinearity among the variables since none has coefficient of 1.000, which is perfect multicollinearity. It reveals that concentrating on financial inclusion and institutional quality to drive investment is crucial in ECOWAS countries since their coefficients are strongly correlated. Thus, according to the result of correlation coefficients of the models, there is no presence of multicollinearity between the variables under investigation and hence the variables are well fitted to be included in the models for analysis.

Discussion

The findings affirm that institutional quality is a critical determinant of financial inclusion in the ECOWAS region. As highlighted by Demirgüç-Kunt et al. (2018), effective institutions foster an environment conducive to the growth of financial services, ultimately enhancing access and usage.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explores how financial inclusion and institutional quality influence investment in the ECOWAS region. While demonstrating a clear link between institutional quality and financial inclusion in five ECOWAS countries. A higher quality of institutions fosters greater access to financial services, which is crucial for economic empowerment and growth.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. **Strengthen Institutional Frameworks:** ECOWAS countries should prioritize enhancing governance structures to create a conducive environment for financial inclusion.

- ii. **Regulatory Improvements:** Implement comprehensive regulatory reforms to simplify the process of accessing financial services.
- iii. **Promote Financial Literacy:** Develop targeted financial education programs to equip individuals with the knowledge needed to utilize financial services effectively.
- iv. These recommendations, when collectively implemented, can contribute to a more vibrant and attractive investment climate in ECOWAS countries. The study has contributed to the existing literatures on relevance of institutional quality and financial inclusion. It also contributes a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing investment in the ECOWAS region, offering valuable implications for policy formulation and future research in the field.
- v. Future research should include longitudinal studies to assess changes in institutional quality and financial inclusion over time, as well as case studies of successful financial inclusion initiatives in specific ECOWAS countries.

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CRIME, INSECURITY AND VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Crime, insecurity and violence have manifested themselves as agents of retardation to the country's socio-economic development and pose a threat to its unity. The paper thus undertakes an exploration of the multidimensional nature of these issues regarding the causes, manifestations, and impacts on Nigerian society. The paper points a nexus involving economic deprivation, frail governance, and social inequality which serve as the causative agents of crime and insecurity in the nation. The unemployment rates and poverty levels coupled with corruption and a weak justice system not only manifest criminal behavior like armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, and cybercrime but act as additional factors. Violent conflict is mainly driven by ethnic and religious antagonisms leading recurrence particularly in regions like the Middle Belt and Niger Delta. The study underscores systemic corruption and poor security infrastructures as perpetrators of insecurity. This arises even as scheduled government-led interventions take place, such as military deployment and community policing. However, these have previously proven to be largely futile because of poor coordination due to unavailability of adequate funds and the later created mistrust between the security agents and the citizens. Small arms and light weapons, and the fact that they were cross-border, double the violence and criminal activity, leaving rural and urban areas more vulnerable. Crime and insecurity have a harsh socio-economic impact. They scare off foreign investment and disrupt the local economy. It also leads to internal displacement as around 3.3 million people have been forced to leave their homes due to violence. Insecurity erodes the confidence in the state structures among the public, leading to a scenario of lawlessness and impunity. The psychological impacts, including trauma and fear, further weaken social cohesion, eroding the fabric of Nigerian

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communities. Combating crime and insecurity in Nigeria demands that immediate security measures be complemented by long-term socio-economic reforms. It requires efforts to strengthen the judiciary and law enforcement, promote an inclusive governance model, and curb unemployment and poverty. More long term is the role of education in the fight against extremism and the provision of training for youth employment. This paper employs the doctrinal as well as qualitative research methodology to understand the underlying principles, concepts, theories rationale that contributes to crime, insecurity and violence in Nigeria. The paper culminates that with huge challenges on crime, insecurity, and violence in Nigeria, concerted efforts by its government, civil society, and international partners can restore stability and initiate the process of sustainable development in the country. There should be a paradigm shift from ego-centric governance to people-centered governance through implementing effective policies to rebuild trust and address the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Crime, Insecurity and Violence*

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Background to the Study

Crime, violence, and insecurity are pressing global issues, with Nigeria being one of the nations significantly affected. Studies by Grote and Neubacher (2016), Ladan (2019), and Arisukwu et al. (2020) reveal that crime rates are disproportionately high in such regions. In Nigeria, insecurity manifests in various forms across the north and south. The northern region faces Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, and herder-farmer conflicts, while the south contends with armed robbery, cultism, kidnapping and vandalism (Chukwu, 2019). These issues exacerbate fear and instability, compounded by poverty, unemployment, and inadequate infrastructure. Crime, often defined as actions violating natural and divine laws, has reached unprecedented levels, becoming a full-time occupation for some. Heinous acts such as murder, rape, cultism, corruption, and political violence are rampant, highlighting Nigeria's crisis. Rural communities have also become increasingly vulnerable, undermining social cohesion, productivity, and sustainable development (Chukwu, 2019) (Omoyibo, & E. Akpomera, 2020).

Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has struggled with various forms of crime, violence, and insecurity as well as experiencing an escalation in violent activities, with groups like Boko Haram and Fulani herdsman posing significant threats to both national and international security (Arisukwu et al., 2020). These groups have expanded their operations beyond Nigeria, targeting neighboring

countries and carrying out attacks on security forces, civilians, religious institutions, and international organizations. The northeastern region has been particularly affected, compounding existing socio-economic challenges. Factors such as high unemployment and poverty rates contribute to the prevalence of crime and insecurity. Despite numerous strategies to tackle these problems, they persist as severe threats to the nation's development. Historically, peaceful environments are essential for progress, suggesting that crime and violence impede a nation's growth. Omoyibo and Akpomera (2020) argue that security is a fundamental principle for the existence of a state, which exists to uphold this concept. In line with Thomas Hobbes' philosophy, life in its natural state is harsh, cruel, and survival-driven; the state emerged to ensure peaceful coexistence, granting individuals the freedom to acquire property and live securely, while the state maintains order and safeguards national integrity (Thomas Hobbes 'n.d). Reflecting this, the 1999 Nigerian Constitution prioritizes the security and welfare of the people as the government's foremost responsibility.

However, the Nigerian government appears to have fallen short in creating a secure environment conducive to economic activities and the protection of lives and property. Since independence, crime rates have surged, and threats to security have intensified. The country faces numerous security challenges, including political and electoral conflicts, socio-economic unrest, ethno-religious crises, boundary disputes, cultism, and organized crime. These issues collectively undermine peace, security, and national development (Grote and Neubacher, 2016). The primary purpose of state formation is to ensure security, as Hobbes emphasized the brutal nature of life without governance. The state's responsibility is to maintain order and protect its citizens, as enshrined in Nigeria's 1999 Constitution. Yet, the rise in violence and crime since the nation's return to democracy highlights the state's inability to fulfill this obligation. Crimes such as armed robbery, banditry, terrorism, and attacks by herdsmen have escalated, resulting in significant casualties and hindering economic growth. Osawe (2015) notes that these issues have had devastating consequences for Nigerians and the nation's development.

Numerous studies have examined Nigeria's security challenges. Achumba (2013) analyzed their impact on business activities and sustainable development, while Effiong (2019) highlighted the need to prioritize human life in addressing insecurity. Similarly, Eme (2017) explored the thematic dimensions of Nigeria's security threats. These studies underscore the complexity of the country's security landscape and the need for comprehensive solutions.

To combat these challenges, the Nigerian government has implemented various measures, including the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2011 and increased funding for the Ministry of Defense in the 2017 and 2018 budgets. Notably, the National Assembly

approved a \$1 billion loan for counter-terrorism efforts. These funds were allocated for purchasing equipment and training security forces (Arisukwu et al. (2020). Additionally, the National Security Adviser has organized numerous training programs. Despite these efforts, the country remains plagued by high levels of violence, as reflected in Nigeria's low ranking on the Global Peace Index and its designation as a terrorist-prone nation by international bodies.

Efforts to address these issues have included counter-insurgency strategies and policy measures. Adagba et al. (2012) note that the Nigerian government has employed sanctions and deterrence policies to combat banditry and other crimes. However, these measures have yielded limited success, with Nigeria consistently ranking poorly in global security indices. Researchers like Edeko (2011) and Titilope (2018) argue that government initiatives are often undermined by religious extremism and external influences. Addressing Nigeria's crime, insecurity, and violence requires a multifaceted approach, tackling root causes such as poverty, unemployment, and poor governance. Collaborative efforts involving government, civil society, and international partners are essential to create a safer and more prosperous nation.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has been experiencing high waves of crime and insecurity, which manifests in the form of terrorism, armed robbery, kidnapping, banditry, and communal violence. This does not only affect the life and livelihood of citizens but also hinder economic growth, social cohesion, and trust in governance and public institutions. Many government policies security reforms and military interventions have not succeeded because the very threats continue to evolve and persist. It is often a combination of poor judicial systems, poverty, unemployment, corruption, and socio-political marginalization that fuel criminal activities and violence in this country. Coupled with the issues of arms proliferation and Nigeria's highly porous borders, these are security challenges. A proper understanding of these complex issues, including their patterns and impacts, is very much needed. Such insights are essential for formulating comprehensive and sustainable strategies to combat crime and restore peace and stability in the country.

Research Aim and Objectives

This study is generally aimed at critically ascertaining the root causes of crime and insecurity in Nigeria and the assessment of some viable strategies for its prevention and control. The specific objectives are:

- i. Identify the primary factors contributing to crime and insecurity in Nigeria.
- ii. Assess the impact of socio-economic variables such as poverty, unemployment, and education on crime rates.

- iii. Evaluate the effectiveness of current crime prevention and control measures implemented by Nigerian authorities.
- iv. Propose evidence-based recommendations to enhance security and reduce crime in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What are the main factors contributing to the prevalence of crime and insecurity in Nigeria?
- ii. How do socio-economic factors like poverty and unemployment influence crime rates in Nigeria?
- iii. What is the effectiveness of existing crime prevention and control strategies in Nigeria?
- iv. What strategies can be recommended to improve security and reduce crime in Nigeria

Research Methodology

This paper combines doctrinal and qualitative methodologies to examine the principles, concepts, and theoretical frameworks, as well as the rationale for the crimes, insecurity, and violence that take place in Nigeria. This serves the purpose of providing a key fact which explains why there is insecurity, crime, and violence in Nigeria. The qualitative methodology, however, will look into the socio-economic, political, and cultural dynamics that are responsible for the perpetuation of crime and violence. The study has gone further in contextualizing causes of insecurity and violence through reviewing journal articles, research reports, textbooks, and case studies. The work also drew on expert opinions, historical analysis, and the content analysis of materials for practical solutions.

Distinctiveness of the Study

This research differs from the earlier studies in that it is holistic, incorporating socio-economic, political, and cultural perspectives to give an in-depth understanding of the drivers of insecurity. It stresses the centrality of local communities in security efforts and recognizes that lasting solutions depend on grassroots participation. The study further provides policy-relevant recommendations that are targeted at shaping pragmatic, actionable strategies in a manner to be consistent with existing frameworks to ensure real-world applicability of the findings. This research offers timely insight into the current security challenges facing Nigeria within an evolving landscape and forms a relevant basis for effective interventions.

Conceptual Framework

Crime

Crime can be seen as an: illegal act (an action prohibited by Law or failure to act as required by law); illegal activity that involves breaking the Law; immoral activity that

is considered unacceptable act that is shameful, unwise or regrettable (Osawe, 2015). Crime by the Law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is defined as “An act or omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment under the criminal code, or any Act or Law” (Constitution, 1999). Crime is brought about by the violation of the law as established by the government at all levels. Crime is an infraction of both the basic principles of law and order and the norms of civilized behavior. Crime is an offence against the values system of a society. The cost and effects of crime vary among the various segments of the population and touch almost everyone by some degree and in general as the economic growth and development of countries increase, it would be expected that crime level reduces. This may not necessarily be (Abdulsalami, 2005). The various cost of crime to victims and the society or the economy include; loss of income, property losses, loss in community productivity etc. Some other cost of crime, which are less tangible; include psychological trauma on victims and their family and friends, pain and suffering and a lower quality of life. In all of these and other associated losses, the ultimate cost is loss of life (Douglasson, 2009).

Violence

Violence is the physical force destructive in nature capable of causing fear in the mind of people. Therefore, violent crimes are those criminal activities that employs the use of violence to intimidate or cause terror (fear) in the mind of people with intend to coerce an individual, group of people or the government in order to affect the conduct of the individual, group of people or influence the policy of the government. No society is immune from this knotty social problem but what differs is the frequency and magnitude of the situation and the response mechanisms to address it. But the most alarming and terrifying is the present escalation of violent crimes and the barbarity, lethality and trauma the perpetrators unleash on the hapless citizenry across the length and breadth of the country (Effiong, 2019). Notable in this regard are the rising incidents of armed robbery, assassination, ransom- driven kidnapping and terrorism which are now ravaging the Nigeria polity like a tsunami and spreading a climate of fears and anxieties about public safety with kidnappings for ransom and terrorism at the centre stage leading to bloodshed and economic set-backs. The high rate of violent crime has created an atmosphere of fear, anxiety and tension – a state of insecurity. Okechukwu (2012) argued that: violent crimes such as murder, armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorism are the most inhumane crimes that continue to plague Nigeria.... Lately, kidnappings for ransom and terrorism have taken the centre stage leading to bloodshed and economic set-backs.... The causes are not farfetched as studies have associated rising youth unemployment to the increase in violent crime. For the purpose of this paper, we define security as a state of reduced or contained threats and tension in which the stability of a state is not in an imminent danger of disruption from within and without (Chukwu and Anachunam, 2019). Stability is here viewed as the order,

regularity and pattern, which characterized the state's condition over an extended period.

Insecurity

Security has traditionally been conceived as mainly a protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state from external military threats, which is the rationale behind national security with emphasis on the capability of the military. It should be noted that there are divergent approaches to conceptualizing security which is the antithesis of insecurity (Chukwu and Udem, 2024). This paper therefore seeks to examine the concept of security to facilitate a good understanding of the concept of insecurity. Security need was the basis of the social contract between the people and the state, in which people willingly surrendered their rights to an organ (government) who oversees the survival of all. In this light security embodies the mechanism put in place to avoid, prevent, reduce, or resolve violent conflicts, and threats that originate from other states, non-state actors, or structural socio-political and economic conditions (Stan, 2004). For decades, issues relating to security were on the front burner in the development discourse. According to Chukwu and Udem (2024), what constitutes security in modern times is a question that has never been answered satisfactorily by scholars. Several attempts have been made since the cold war ended to redefine the concept of security from a state-centric perspective to a broader view that places premium on individuals, in which human security that embodies elements of national security, human rights and national development remain major barometer for explaining the concept (Krahman, 2003). At the heart of this debate there have been attempts to deepen and widen the concept of security from the level of the states to societies and individuals, and from military to non-military issues.

According to Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) the divergent approaches to the conceptualization of human security in the theoretical literature can be categorized into two major strands. One is a neo-realist theoretical strand that conceptualizes security as primary responsibilities of the state. The second strand, a postmodernist or plural view, conceptualizes security as the responsibilities of non-state actors and displaces the state as a major provider of security. Proponents of this approach argue that the concept of security goes beyond a military determination of threats. They are of the view that government should be more concern with the economic security of individual than the security of the state because the root causes of insecurity are economic in nature. Igbuzor (2011) in conceptualizing security placed emphasis on the absence of threats to peace, stability, national cohesion, political and socio-economic objectives of a country. Thus, there is a general consensus in the contemporary literature that security is vital for national cohesion, peace and sustainable development. It is therefore apparent that national security is a desideratum, sine qua non for economic growth and development of any country

(Oladeji and Folorunso, 2007). In the intelligence community there is a consensus that security is not the absence of threats or security issues, but the existence of a robust mechanism to respond proactively to the challenges posed by these threats with expediency, expertise, and in real time.

The concept of insecurity connotes different meanings such as: absence of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety. Beland (2005) is of the view that insecurity is a state of fear or anxiety due to absence or lack of protection. Achumba et al (2013) defines insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune (Achumba et al., 2013). These definitions of insecurity underscore a major point that those affected by insecurity are not only uncertain or unaware of what would happen but they are also vulnerable to the threats and dangers when they occur. In the context of this paper insecurity is defined as a breach of peace and security, whether historical, religious, ethno-regional, civil, social, economic, and political that contributes to recurring conflicts, and leads to wanton destruction of lives and property.

Theoretical Framework

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Relative Deprivation Theory

Stouffer (1960) developed the Relative Deprivation Theory to explain why individuals feel relatively deprived when they perceive an unreal gap between their expected socio-economic conditions and present reality. Such feelings of disenfranchisement, inequality, and injustice are often leading to frustration which can manifest into crime, violence, and other forms of social unrest (Runciman, 1966). In a similar manner, this theory will assist the current study in understanding how unmet expectations, economic disparity, and social inequality in Nigeria are escalating security challenges to the country. Focusing on the socio-economic grievances, this study, within this framework, seeks to understand how poverty, unemployment, and the unequal distribution of resources can provoke criminal behavior and insurgency if not attended to among certain marginalized groups. This finding is consistent with prior research that notes relative deprivation as a crucial factor in the emergence of violent conduct and civil disturbance in many parts of the world (Gurr, 1970). The application of this theoretical model will aid in expanding knowledge regarding the psychological and socio-economic factors that underlie insecurity in Nigeria; thus, providing information on how reducing inequality would probably result in a decrease of crime and violence.

Factors Contributing to Crime and Insecurity in Nigeria

Economic Factors

- a. Poverty and Unemployment; Poverty remains one of the current pervasive

drivers of crime or insecurity in Nigeria because its great population lives below par. Accessibility to core needs of livelihood, like food housing, healthcare, and means to other needs, is considered to be highly limited (Adebayo, 2013). Again, economic needs will bring back a sense of hopefulness among mostly young people joining criminal activities to include armored robbery, kidnappings alongside cybercrime (Arisukwu et al., 2020; Adebayo, 2013). The high rate of unemployment among Nigeria's youth has left many of these able people in a state of idleness. They often resort to illicit means of survival due to a lack of formal employment and opportunities for entrepreneurship, thus fueling rising crime rates.

- b. **Economic Inequality:** Economic disparity between the elite and the poor fuels resentment and social unrest. Whereas a few Nigerians amass an immense fortune, the majority barely manage to meet their basic needs (Edeko, 2011). This disparity makes for a fertile ground for criminal activities and mistrust in government institutions. Perceived injustice in the distribution of wealth often results in violent agitations and organized resistance against the state.

Political Factors

1. **Corruption and Poor Governance:** Corruption has been so deeply situated in Nigeria's political and administrative life that it even made efforts toward insecurity hard. Corruption and embezzlement of public resources weaken the capacity of the government to provide important services, including security. The after-effect of this is that the law enforcement agencies are very underfunded, poorly trained, and ill-equipped against crime (Achumba and Akpan-Robaro, 2013). Inadequate policies, inconsistent implementation, and lack of accountability create an environment where criminal activities thrive.
2. **Electoral Violence:** Nigerian elections are commonly associated with violence, as politicians hire armed groups to intimidate opponents and rig outcomes. These groups then engage in criminal activities, such as banditry and kidnapping, after the elections, thus perpetuating cycles of violence and insecurity. Electoral violence also deepens political instability by weakening the legitimacy of democratic institutions.

Social Factors

1. **Ethnic and Religious Tensions:** The fact that Nigeria is the most ethnically and religiously diverse country in the world makes it strong, yet divisive in nature. Most politicians, as well as other major actors, have tended to exploit such divisions for their personal or group ends, often resulting in conflict situations and insecurity (Adagba et al., 2012). Examples of this are the Boko Haram insurgency because of religious extremism and the communal clashes based on ethnic rivalries. These things weaken the national unity and create an environment prone to violence.

2. **Breakdown of Family and Community Structures:** The erosion of traditional family and community systems has also contributed to insecurity. Families, the always-upheld primary units of moral and social guidance, have increasingly turned dysfunctional due to economic pressures and social change (Titilope, 2018). This has resulted in increased juvenile delinquency and the recruitment of the youth into criminal gangs and extremist groups.

Other Contributing Factors

1. **Proliferation of Small Arms** Proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria has led to increased violence and crime. Smuggling across porous borders arms criminal groups and increases the lethality of conflicts ((Ali, 2013). The ready availability of firearms abets armed robbery, kidnapping, and banditry.
2. **Impact of Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking:** There are several contributions to the insecurity in Nigeria: organized crime networks and drug trafficking. Such networks are sophisticated in nature, fuel corruption, undermine law enforcement, and perpetuate violence. The trade in drugs, especially, finances other forms of crime and also exacerbates instability in affected regions.

Impacts of Crime, Insecurity, and Violence in Nigeria

The consequences of crime, insecurity, and violence are widely felt, reverberating even in the economic stability, social fabric, and political landscape of Nigeria. Such impact not only arrests development but also threatens the sovereignty and long-term survival of the nation. Below is an examination of these multidimensional impacts:

1. **Deterrence to Foreign Investment:** Crime and insecurity discourage foreign investors who consider Nigeria as a high-risk environment for business. Businesses are unwilling to invest in areas characterized by armed conflict, kidnapping, and terrorism because of the loss of property and personnel that might be incurred therein (Achumba and Akpan-Robaro, 2013). For instance, the insurgency of Boko Haram in the northeast and the wide banditry in the northwest have alienated investments from these states.
2. **Rise in Operation Costs:** Insecurity has translated into the rising cost of doing business. Companies have to spend a lot on private security, insurance, and strategies for mitigating risks in order to protect their workers and assets. In addition, infrastructure destruction-such as roads, telecommunications, and power lines-further raise the level of logistical challenges and operational expenses due to violent activities (Ali, 2013)
3. **Loss of Life and Displacement:** The humanity cost from crime and violence in Nigeria is devastating. Hundreds of lives are lost each year due to terrorism, communal clashes, and all forms of violence. Sometimes survivors have to be relocated, with millions displaced out of their homes into Internally

Displaced Persons IDP camps (Chukwu and Udem 2024). This crisis of displacement causes separation of families and worsens the poverty conditions, thus elongating the socio-economic challenges for long.

4. **Erosion of Social Cohesion:** Insecurity undermines trust and solidarity within communities. Ethnic and religious conflicts, propelled by violent conflict, lead to divisions that tear societies apart. A lack of coexistence disrupts daily life, impeding the coming together of people in mutual activities that can help the communities develop (Achumba et al., 2013). Kidnappings and armed robbery produce widespread fear and mistrust in society, leading people not to like interacting with others.
5. **Weakening of State Authority:** Prolonging the crime and violence places in question the state's capability to maintain law and order, hence undermining that state's legitimacy. Whichever is the case, in cases of lack or weakness of government presence or authority, non-state actors—who could be insurgents, criminal organizations, or militias—are seen to seek out such power vacuums and fill them (Abdulsalami, 2005). It does not just weaken state authorities but also threatens sovereignty as well. In instances where armed groups, like Boko Haram or bandit gangs, take control, that region effectively exists outside the circle of government influence (Chukwu, 2019).
6. **Threat to Democracy and National Unity:** Insecurity does have a grave effect on democratic processes in Nigeria. Electoral violence, perpetuated by armed groups and political thugs, demolishes the legitimacy of any election and suppresses participation by the people. If no free and fair election is possible, then at a minimum, the lack of such an election weakening democratization's foundation instills political instability (Chandler, 2007). Insecurity also threatens the state's unity through rising ethnic and regional divisions. This has been compounded by the perceived inequities and the inability of the government to address the security challenges; the call for secession by groups in the southeast and the agitation for resource control in the Niger Delta.

Efforts to Address Crime and Insecurity in Nigeria

The fight against crime and insecurity in Nigeria has been a multi-dimensional one, with the complexity of the issues involved. The government, over these years, has formulated policies, built capacity for security agencies, engaged in partnerships, and encouraged community-based initiatives as a way of bringing back peace to ensure sustainable development. Some of the key strategies include addressing the root causes of insecurity and increasing security agencies' capacity. For instance, the National Security Strategy has expounded on the general framework through which challenges of terrorism and organized crime are tackled, while the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2011 criminalizes terrorist activities (Igbuzor, 2011). Some programs entail rehabilitating insurgents by giving them skills to help them reintegrate into society and deter recidivism, such as Operation Safe Corridor. Other programs, considering

the relationship between poverty and crime, seek to reduce unemployment through economic opportunities, including N-Power.

Security agencies have been strengthened with increased training, tools, and reforms, including community policing. Military action has also been crucial against the operations of Boko Haram and other threats (Chukwu and Anachunam, 2019). The country engages in various initiatives at the international level in cooperation with organizations like the UN and partners such as the U.S. and the U.K., while on a regional level, cross-border insurgencies are fought with the Multinational Joint Task Force (Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013; Igbuzor, 2011). Community-based programs and NGOs have also contributed tremendously to the cause, with significant grassroots safety and empowerment efforts for youth.

Challenges in Combating Crime and Insecurity

Addressing incidences of crime and insecurity is replete with a number of prickly issues that seriously undermine governmental and communal efforts at their overcoming. A weak functionality of law enforcement stands among the critical issues facing addressing crime within the context of Nigeria's legal frameworks for combating these crimes are put in place, enforcement capacities are always limited; then there's political interference (Ewetan and Urhie, 2014). This means that usually, criminals get away with it amidst a culture of impunity. The inability to address offenders makes criminal activities more viable but also denies the justice system adequate public trust.

Another critical barrier is corruption in the security and judicial systems. The bribery, favoritism, and abuse of power on the part of law enforcement and judicial officials have weakened efforts to fight crime. These corrupt practices culminate in the release of offenders, delayed justice, and selective law enforcement, further weakening the rule of law and enabling criminal networks to flourish (Briscoe and Ginkel, 2013). Inadequate funding and training for security agencies also heighten these problems. While the budgets for defense and security are huge in most cases, mismanagement and corruption usually act as a barrier to such funds reaching appropriate targets. As such, security personnel lack equipment, technology, and training in dealing with modern threats posed by terrorism and organized crime. Socio-economic conditions also create insecurity. Widespread poverty, unemployment, and inequality are pushing people, especially youth, to criminal activities as a survival strategy. These issues also contribute to insurgencies and violent behavior as the grievances of the disinherited people are expressed through illicit means (Ali, 2013; Ewetan and Urhie, 2014).

Conclusion

The roots of crime, insecurity, and violence in Nigeria are complex and multivariate: economic hardship, weak governance, corruption, and social inequalities. Indeed,

such multidimensional problems do require a multidimensional approach: integrating economic reforms, effective policing, active community involvement, and judicial strengthening. In this respect, building trust and cooperation among the government, security agencies, community stakeholders, and international partners is very important to achieve an environment that is secure and stable, which will spur national growth and development (Chukwu, 2019). Sustainable progress in grappling with insecurity also requires unshakeable political will and participation by an active citizenship. Meaningful partnership from the perspective of both the government and the public is called for, which addresses root causes, including prevention and accountability (Omoyibo, & E. Akpomera, 2020). To persevere on these fronts with determination and resolve is basic to realizing lasting peace, concord, and security—a foundation so essential on which only Nigeria can begin building a truly resilient prosperous future. This integrated approach will transform the whole nation into a more flourishing and resilient one.

Recommendations

- i. **Strengthen Security Agencies:** In this regard, governments must allocate more funds to all security agencies, thereby equipping them with modern tools, gadgets, and equipment such as surveillance systems, communications facilities, and weapons so as to make them at par with other developed jurisdictions in their mode of operations. Equally important is streamlining coordination among agencies to ensure that there is a clear division of labor or merit devoid of redundancies.
- ii. **Community Involvement:** Community involvement in crime prevention instills confidence and also aids in intelligence gathering. Establishing a legal framework for vigilante groups ensures accountability to prevent abuse of power.
- iii. **Addressing Root Causes:** In addressing the root causes, there is a need to reduce the incentives for crime by addressing socioeconomic factors such as poverty and unemployment. Empowerment through expanding opportunities for quality education among youth will help in mitigating the tendency toward criminal activities.
- iv. **Judicial Efficiency:** Speedy trials and severe sentences for violent crimes deter criminals. Dialogue platforms and traditional leaders can resolve disputes and decrease tensions in flashpoints.
- v. **Border and International Cooperation:** Enhancement in border surveillance, international cooperation, and awareness among the general public would go a long way to fight crimes across the border and extremism with the help of education and de-radicalization.
- vi. **Anti-Corruption Measures:** Fighting corruption, ensuring transparency, and promoting equitable resource allocation foster trust in governance and reduce systemic vulnerabilities that criminals exploit.

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10TH INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

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'GREEN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (GHRM) PRACTICE ADVOCACY IN ORGANIZATIONS: A STRATEGIC NECESSITY FOR A NEW GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract

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Organizations over the centuries have continuously explored and annexed natural resources and the attendant unsustainable utility of same for the wellbeing of humanity has posed a fast-growing threat of climate change and other divergent environmental challenges which has taken its toll on all stakeholders. Consequently, there is global clamor and intentional activism to mitigate the rather endemic threat ravaging the world leading to respective ecological awareness and advocacies for environmental sustainability. This has culminated into various strategic responses and today given rise to Green Human Resources Management Practice Advocacy by scholars across the globe in various fields as a strategic necessity for the new global climate change management and environmental sustainability approach. It was found out that the intentional practice by organizations to contribute to global environmental sustainability is rather skeletal. In an effort to vent this advocacy, this paper adopted green economic theory and the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) theory after exploring extent literatures on the aforementioned topical issues(secondary data), discuss and suggested future pathway of some HRMP to further strengthen the current global drive to combating climate change and

environmental degradation through a conscious integration of environmentally friendly activities into all organizational functions and office practices to make the world a better place for generations to come.

Keywords: *Green Human Resource Management Practice (GHRMP); Climate change; Climate change management; environmental sustainability; green economic theory; Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) theory.*

Background to the Study

Organizations operate within the confines of an environment especially on the earth realm. These operations are geared towards annexing the natural resources embedded by nature for the supposed wellbeing of humanity. These activities over the years has impacted the ecosystem hence the lives of those who dwell in it. It is imperative to bring to the fore that the operational activities of organizations are predicted on the knowledge and orientation at the disposal of the human resource factor per time. And this overtime becomes the inherent regular practices that frames and shapes the behavioral dispositions of employees as they regularly interact with the environment and other organizational constituencies.

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The regular interaction between human and environment by extension the organization and the environment has been adjudged parasitic in literature. Humans through the barrels of human resource practices in the organizations has continually exploited the environment leading to the unsustainable utilization of resources. The resultant outcomes are the various environmental challenges we face today and prominent among them is climate change. This has snowballed into divergent ecological predicaments. However, this dynamism has also triggered various advocacies in various fields of study to create this balance between organizational activities and environmental impact.

With the rising awareness and advocacies on the environment, organizations are formulating and designing regulations, environmentally friendly strategies, green policies etc. to transform their modus operandi in a rather environmentally friendly manner (Pr Hossari Hosna & Elfahli Kaoutar, 2022). This has risen to Green Human Resource Management as a proactive measure to managing the environmental system (Pr Hossari & Kaoutar, 2022; Jahan & Mamin Ullah, 2016; Jabbour & Santos, 2008). Ren & AI (2018) posits that GHRM captures the formulation and execution of Human Resource Management Practices, Philosophies and Policies to foster targeted organizational objectives as it relates to the environment, enhancing attitudinal disposition of employees for a behavioural change to improve environmental performance.

Irrespective of the fact that researchers on GHRM is becoming prominent (Young et al., 2019), the level of attention given to GHRMP and its effectiveness in environmental management has been infinitesimal, but until 2008 when it as given the categorization of environmental management (Tamunomiebi & Mezeh, 2022; Renwick et al., 2008; Delaney & Huselid, 2006). It is on this premise that this paper deals with Green Human Resource Practice Advocacy in Organizations as a strategic necessity for managing global climate crisis and environmental sustainability. In this paper, some scholarly details on the lexical complexities was discussed bringing to the fore the significance green practices in organizations to make the interface between the organization and the environment a symbiotic and a balanced one.

Objective of the Study

The major objective of this paper is to place Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) Practice advocacy in organizations, a strategic necessity for a new global climate change management and environmental sustainability. This paper is set out to drive the following specific objective.

- i. To understand the concept of Green Human Resource Management Practice, Environmental Sustainability and another attendant concept like climate change, climate management etc.
- ii. To enhance literature on the heightened advocacy of GHRM Practices to mitigate climate change and other environmental challenges.
- iii. To recommend the strategy to develop an effective advocacy of GHRM Practices in organizations to improve climate management and mitigate environmental challenges.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Green Economic Theory

The coinage of the terminology “Green Economy” was first brought to bear in 1989 by the British government which encompasses an integration of ecological concern, economies and the market as a social system that should imbibe environmental and social goals (Tamunomiebi & Mezeh, 2022). From literary dispositions, theory of green economy covers a wide range of areas involving the matrimony between the environment and the human factor. Economists in the sphere of greening contend that decisions bothering on the economy should be predicated in some sort on the environment as ecological services and natural capital have some monetary gains. This goes to explain the fact that the theory of green economy is geared towards reducing environmental challenges and ecological bottlenecks while chasing far reaching developmental strides that does not endanger the ecosystem. This is in line with the advocacy of GHRM practices that can mitigate environmental challenges and cubing or managing climate change.

The AMO Theory

This is otherwise known as Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory. This makes this theory to stand on a tripod. Hassari & Elfahli (2022) say that AMO is a model that advocates the enhancement of employee skills through green training and development (Ability), encourage and propel employees to embrace green behavioural tendencies through green rewards and performance appraisal (Motivation) and on the last leg of the tripod get the involvement of employees in the process of environment management which gives them the avenue to contribute and partake in green activities in the organization (Opportunity).

Statement of the Problem

Biodiversity issues and ecological imbalances are taking the center stage of today's world (Aggarwal & Sharma, 2015). Consequently, the topical issues for discussion in recent times has been on climate change, Carbon credit, global warming, and pollutions of all sorts which is an outcome of the excessive utilization of resources from the environment by organic atoms has mounting an undue pressure on the earth endangering the survival of current and future generations. This has skyrocketed the awareness quotients of organizations more socially responsive to the society especially where they get their resources from. This has given rise to the HR department of organizations today to imbibe the integration of green practices driven by policies that contributes in the development of a culture of sustainability. Tamunomiebi & Mezeh (2022) posits that organizations lay emphasis on the encouragement of employee eco-friendliness with respect to more usage of LED lights, keeping minimum lighting when it is not in use switching off appliances and online distribution and sharing of training /self-learning materials.

This goes to explain the fact that the issue of greening the organization for sustainability is the absolute responsibility of all. Researchers and scholars have argued that the main driver of environmental sustainability in an organization is the HR department whose function should be in tandem with policies and practices of sustainable goals. On the contrary, if it goes the flipside of the coin, the goals of environmental sustainability will not be achieved. This gives the premise for this advocacy as presented on this paper.

Conceptual Review

The section reviewed the following: Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), Green Human Resource Management Practices (GHRMP), Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change, and Climate Management.

Green

According to Aggarwal & Sharma (2015), the colour “green” reflects life, happiness, growth, friendliness and in recent time fashion. According to the Thesaurus (New

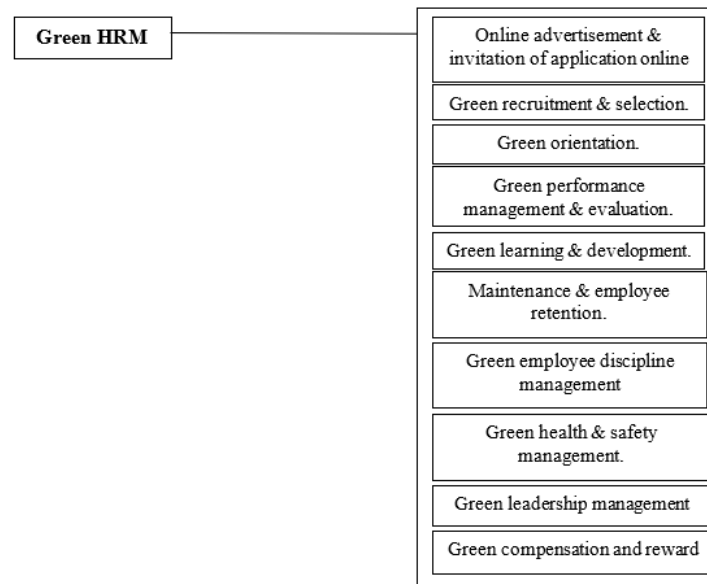
Oxford) 2000 it stands for several meanings like eco-friendliness, verdant, unripe, unseasoned, naïve and inexperienced. With respect to organizational policy formulation and strategies, they are increasingly understanding the necessity and reason to go green. That is the reason Aggarwal and Sharma (2015) posits that organizational greening has to do with protecting the natural resources, nurturing the natural ecosystem, detracting the contamination of the atmosphere that stands to engender greenery.

Green HRM

Hossari & Elfahli (2022) carried out an extensive chronicle of scholarly definition of Green HRM as shown on the adopted table below. Aggarwal & Sharma (2015) in addressing what “Green or greening” means gave four meanings in the context of employee management in the workplace and Human Resource Management. These four meanings they stipulated are: Preservation of the natural environment, conservation of the natural environment, avoidance or minimization of environmental pollution and generation of gardens and looking like natural places. They further elucidate that employees are expected to perform four roles so as become a green employee, these are being a preservationist, conservationist, non-polluter and maker.

Aggarwal & Sharma (2015) posits that GHRM can be seen from the spectacle of all responsibilities that are associated with the evolution, propagation, pursuit and prolongation of a system that is focused at making the human resource of an organization activated towards environmental awareness in both their private and professional dispositions. They went further to elucidate that GHRM has to do with spelling out awareness strategies of green practices so as to propagate and heighten sustainable commercial activities which goes a long way to helping organizational ecofriendly disposition. Green HRM includes facets: environment conducive HR practices and nurturing of knowledge capital (Aggarwal & Sharma, 2015:64).

Shreevamshi et al. (2022) gave the following GHRM frame work as adopted from Ren et al. (2020).



Source: Shreevamshi et al., 2022 as adopted from Ren et al., 2020.

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The Necessity for Green HRM

According to Arulrajah & Opatha (2016) after reviewing the need for GHRM by organizations from over fifteen scholarly works concluded that organizations engage in the practice of GHRM which makes employees green fostering the reduction or elimination of waste and a reduction of cost. Also, they tend to innovate environmentally, friendly goods or services” (Arulrajah & Opatha, 2016:155). Looking at the need so reviewed they further posits that organization will enjoy increases in productivity, reputation, talent acquisition, employee retention, customer loyalty and market expansion which they shall be consequential effects will reflect on enhancing competitiveness of organizations.

Green Human Resources Management Practices (GHRMP)

GHRMP can be defined as the utilization of HR rules to strengthen the sustainable utility resources to ascertain environmental sustainability (Sobaih, 2020). GHRMP is the process of utilizing employees in the organization so as to actualize the goals of the organization, with intentional efforts of making that process add values to the sustenance of the environment.

Mwita, (2019) and Uddi & Islam (2015), in their perspective, opine that GHRMP is HRM policies and practices that is geared towards environmental friendliness that helps organizations to actualize monetary goals through the barrel of environmental

branding and on the flip side of the coin shield the environment from adverse impacts that may arise from the said policies and practices. Mowaiye et al. (2022) in their study measured GHRMP with green employee performance management, green disciplinary management and green employee relations. Hossari & Elfahli (2022) highlighted thirteen GHRMP that can be attributed to environmental friendliness after reviewing 120 articles which are: Green recruitment and selection, green induction, green training and development, green compensation and rewards, green empowerment and involvement, green performance appraisal, green job analysis, green discipline management, green culture management, green health and safety management, green HRM procedures, green human resource planning and the role of green unions.

Neeraja & Dhananjara (2018) in their study on GHRMP with respect to present day advocacy posits that GHRMP has the following scenario: a) Paperless office (b) Turnoff lights, and other work equipment and appliances not in use especially on weekends (c) Communication via mail (d) Electronic filing (e) Encourage the use of lap tops in place of desktops (f) waste management (g) online recruitment (h) video conference meeting (i) paperless training (j) green performance management (k) carpooling (l) job sharing.

Environmental Sustainability

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The physical environment is greatly affected and impacted by innovative and emerging system – ecological systems, economic and societies (Tamunomiebi & Mezeh, 2022). They went ahead to elucidate the fact that there is a wide range of activities associated with environmental sustainability such as waste management, water conservation, recycling, energy conservation etc. Adjei-Bamfo et al. (2019) posits that resource depletion, such as water, energy and other nonrenewable resource beckons for environmental attention. Environmental sustainability therefore has to do with concerted efforts by all stakeholders in the organization, the society to ensure that activities and operations does not negatively impact on the environment. This will help to have an enduring place for future generations.

Climate Change

The climate as a system is an embodiment of air, sea, land, atmosphere, cryosphere, land surface elements and ocean and all these get involve in an interaction (Alkintas, 2023). Houghton et al. (1997) argue that this interaction of the elements brings about energy exchange which provides about the formation of the climate system of the earth. Aksay et al. (2005) in examining the concept of climate change generally defined climate change as the creation of a greenhouse effect occasioned by radiation from the sun wave impacting the earth and the greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere hitting the earth. However, in 1992 in a convention on climate change by the United nation, climate change was arguably defined from the perspective of change in

climate from the activities of human beings that directly or indirectly erode or disrupt the constituents of the global atmosphere. Gidden (2013) opine that scientific studies and analysis is a rise in global temperature as the glacier layers has eroded by 3% since 1900s compared to studies conducted in 1970s.

Bosoglu (2014) additionally elucidate that environment pollution from climate change is caused by insufficiency of resources, increasing energy consumption, the rate of population growth and speedy growth strategies of countries globally. Altintas (2023) further posits that the concentration on constant growth of business activities for profitability affects climate change. This goes to say that “commercial activities have a great impact on climate change” (Kaya, 2023:65). Hence the advocacy on GHRMP. Lean & Rind (2008) unraveled the fact that climate change is driven by two main effects – manmade and naturally induced climate change. Kadioglu (2019) attributes the change in energy level overtime, the earth orbital differentiation, the impact of continental drifts, the evolution of the plates and volcanic eruptions to natural induced climate change. On the other hand, Kabatt & White (2007) attributes increase in the use of fossil fuels with the graduating industrial revolutions as human induced emits six types of greenhouse gasses that impacts on climate change. Sen (2022) reintrate that technological innovation developed by humans indirectly affect climate change.

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Altintas (2023) posits that although natural origin of climate change is not predictable that of human which has been known can be prevented. Akbulut and Kaya (2020) reinforce that the solution of climate change is within the reach of man. They went further to enforce the fact that the challenge of climate change has to be accepted as a disaster and be treated with such urgency to avoid future disaster. Arulrajah (2014) opine that climate change occasioned by global warming has posed and raised a red flag to organizations, institutions, the public and even governments across the world. The big question is, what is the way forward and how can the environment be better managed by contribution from organization, since they also contribute to the degradation of the environment?

Climate Change Management

Stoddard et al. (2021) as sited in McPherson & Clarke (2024) on the issue of climate management made it explicit that there is an elusive disposition on the tangible impact in sphere of climate change mitigation by the general leaderships across the board. In the past decades, the continuous lack of appreciable advancement in mitigating climate change and management has further threatened climate related predicaments putting dominant risk to lives on earth (Stoddard et al., 2021; Kinley et al., 2021; Calvin et al., 2023). Harker et al. (2017) looks at climate management as the conscious action which comprises efforts geared towards alleviation and acclimating to the effects of anthropogenic global warming, with the focus on ameliorating

disturbances occasioned by climate change. McPherson et al. (2024) in citing Calvin et al., posits that abysmal decarbonization to curb the emission greenhouse gas is aimed at preventing global warming that may exceed 1.5-2 degrees in the future. McPherson further advocates the fact that climate change management has to focus on empowering leadership so as foster the drive-in policies and implementation on climate change.

Relationship between GHRMP, Climate Change Management and Environmental Sustainability

Altintas (2023) posits that organizations and businesses engaging in practices in line with green management philosophy has a significant impact on climate change. Hawken (1993) expressed the prominence of environmental awareness as the third way for sustainability. Altintas (2023) in considering the relationship between green management practices, greenhouse gasses which impact on climate change can be reduced through green management practices. These practices can only be enforced by GHR in the organization.

Conclusion

GHRMP in organizations is geared towards minimizing the negative impact on the environment in a sustainable way through her green policies and functions.

Although climate change is endangering the world partly caused by man which has accumulated greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, it can be reduced by man. It is obviously shown from the various reviews on GHRMP that, it has all it takes to manage the global climate and curb environmental challenges.

Findings

After exploring literature, it was found out that the advocacy on GHRM practice to contribute in curbing climate change and environmental sustainability is rather skeletal especially in Africa which forms the primacy of this paper.

Recommendations

- i. GHRMP in all organizations should be given prominence as it will go a long way to contributing a substantial quota to fighting climate change and environmental sustainability.
- ii. A synergy between businesses and the environment should be fostered through approaches such as investment in renewable energy sources, energy saving, waste minimization, training and enlightenment on environmental issues.
- iii. While organization seek to carry out their business activities, the green management approach to the environment should be strengthen like promoting the sustainable use of natural resources, efficient use of forest and water resources, recycling practices which reduces the negative impact on climate change.

- iv. Environmental consciousness on innovative technologies on green practices should be encouraged in the organization to effectively manage climate change.
- v. Government should embrace and formulate policies that are geared toward greening the environment of businesses like compulsory planting trees and discourage cutting down trees.

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ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CLASHES AND THE RISE OF ORGANIZED CRIME IN WUKARI: EXAMINING THE SOCIOECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract

*E*thno-religious conflicts and organized crime have become significant issues in Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. These conflicts, rooted in historical grievances, political marginalization, and economic disparities, have escalated in recent years, fostering a climate of lawlessness and violence. The proliferation of organized crime, including arms trafficking, kidnapping, and illicit trade, has further deepened the crisis, exacerbating insecurity and disrupting social order. Adopting documentary method, this paper examines the interconnection between ethno-religious conflicts and organized crime, assessing their far-reaching socioeconomic consequences. Drawing from conflict theory, the study explores how structural inequalities, economic deprivation, and social fragmentation contribute to persistent violence and the entrenchment of criminal networks. The findings indicate that these conflicts have led to economic downturns, mass displacement, the destruction of critical infrastructure, and weakened governance structures, ultimately perpetuating cycles of poverty and instability. Additionally, the lack of effective policy responses and weak law enforcement mechanisms have allowed criminal organizations to thrive in the region. This paper argues that addressing the crisis in Wukari requires a multi-faceted approach that integrates economic revitalization, security sector reforms, and social cohesion strategies. Policy recommendations include the promotion of inclusive governance, economic

empowerment programs, community-driven security initiatives, and educational reforms to counteract the long-term effects of violence. By addressing both the immediate and root causes of the conflict, sustainable peace and development can be achieved in Wukari and similar conflict-prone regions.

Keywords: *Ethno-religious conflict, Ethno-religious clashes, organized crime, socioeconomic consequences*

Background to the Study

Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have long been a source of instability, particularly in regions where ethnic and religious identities intersect with political and economic struggles (Adebayo, 2020). Wukari, a historical town in Taraba State, has witnessed recurrent clashes between the Jukun and Tiv ethnic groups, often fueled by competition over land, political representation, and religious differences. These conflicts have escalated over the years, leading to large-scale displacement, destruction of property, and loss of lives (Ameh, Nnorom, Haruna & Okpamen, 2019; Olayemi & Musa, 2019; Yusuf, 2019).

The recurrence of ethno-religious conflicts in Wukari has not only disrupted the social fabric but has also contributed to an environment conducive to organized crime. As tensions persist, armed groups and criminal networks exploit the instability to engage in illicit activities, including arms trafficking, cattle rustling, and kidnapping (Ibrahim, 2021). The breakdown of law and order in conflict-prone areas creates power vacuums, allowing these criminal enterprises to flourish with little resistance from weakened security forces (Eze, 2022). Consequently, the lines between ethnic militancy and organized crime become increasingly blurred, complicating efforts to restore peace and stability in the region.

One of the key consequences of this conflict-crime nexus is the economic downturn experienced in Wukari and its surrounding areas. Agricultural activities, which form the backbone of the local economy, have been severely affected due to the displacement of farmers and the destruction of farmlands (Okonkwo & Bello, 2020). The disruption of trade routes and marketplaces further exacerbates economic hardships, leaving many residents vulnerable to poverty and increasing their susceptibility to criminal recruitment (Ameh, Nnorom, Haruna, & Okpemen, 2019; Adamu, 2018). Moreover, the flight of investors and business owners due to insecurity has stifled economic development, leading to long-term stagnation in the region.

Beyond economic repercussions, the social implications of the previous violence are profound. The conflict has fueled deep-seated animosities between communities, eroding traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution and social cohesion (Ibrahim & Sulaiman, 2019). Many families have been displaced, leading to overcrowded internally displaced persons (IDP) camps with inadequate resources. Additionally, the loss of access to education and healthcare services has further marginalized affected populations, perpetuating cycles of poverty and instability (Adeyemi, 2021). The psychological toll of continuous violence has also contributed to rising cases of trauma and post-conflict stress disorders among residents. Given the complex interrelationship between ethno-religious conflict and organized crime in Wukari, it is imperative to explore sustainable solutions that address both the root causes and consequences of these issues. This paper aims to examine the interplay between these conflicts and criminal activities, highlighting their socioeconomic consequences and proposing policy-driven interventions. By analyzing the dynamics of this crisis through conflict theory and strain theory, the study will provide insights into effective governance strategies, economic empowerment initiatives, and peace-building efforts that can foster long-term stability in Wukari and similar conflict-affected regions in Nigeria.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Conceptualizing Ethno-Religious Conflict and Organized Crime

Ethno-religious conflicts refer to violent confrontations driven by ethnic and religious differences, often exacerbated by historical grievances, political marginalization, and economic disparities (Ameh & Shipurut, 2024; Okwudiba, 2018). These conflicts are not just expressions of religious differences but are frequently intertwined with competition over resources, political power, and social identity (Ake, 2021). Wukari, like many other conflict-prone regions in Nigeria, has experienced sustained clashes due to these underlying issues, leading to recurrent cycles of violence and instability (Oluwaseun, 2020).

Organized crime, in contrast, involves structured criminal enterprises engaging in illegal activities such as arms smuggling, human trafficking, drug trade, and kidnapping for ransom (Rotimi, 2020). In conflict-ridden areas like Wukari, criminal groups exploit weakened law enforcement mechanisms and social disarray to expand their operations (Adebayo, 2019). The persistence of ethno-religious clashes provides a fertile ground for these criminal networks to thrive, as displaced individuals and marginalized youth become susceptible to recruitment into criminal enterprises (Okeke, 2022).

The intersection between ethno-religious conflict and organized crime is a significant concern, as both phenomena reinforce each other. In many cases, criminal groups align themselves with warring factions, supplying arms and logistics

in exchange for protection and access to resources (Eze & Adeyemi, 2021). As a result, what begins as an ethnic or religious dispute often transforms into a criminal enterprise, making conflict resolution even more challenging (Musa, 2021). Understanding this interplay is crucial for developing holistic interventions that address not only the symptoms but also the root causes of both conflict and organized crime (Ogunleye, 2020).

A critical aspect of this conceptualization is the impact of weak governance structures on both conflict and crime. When state institutions fail to provide security, basic services, and economic opportunities, communities turn to alternative governance structures, including militias and criminal syndicates (Balogun, 2021). This phenomenon is evident in Wukari, where vigilante groups have emerged both as community defenders and as actors involved in illicit activities (Ibrahim & Sulaiman, 2019). Addressing this requires strengthening institutional capacity and implementing policies that promote social cohesion and economic resilience (Oche, 2018). Ultimately, conceptualizing ethno-religious conflict and organized crime as interconnected crises allows for a more nuanced approach to policy interventions. Rather than treating them as separate challenges, an integrated strategy focusing on economic development, security sector reforms, and community reconciliation is necessary (Ajayi, 2022). A multi-sectoral approach that involves government agencies, civil society, religious leaders, and international organizations can help dismantle the structures that sustain both conflict and organized crime (Uche, 2020). This paper, therefore, builds upon this conceptual framework to analyze the socioeconomic consequences of these interrelated issues and propose viable solutions.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Conflict Theory as its primary theoretical framework to understand the interconnection between ethno-religious clashes and the rise of organized crime in Wukari. Conflict theory, originally developed by Karl Marx (1867/1976), posits that societal conflicts arise from competition over scarce resources and power imbalances (Ake, 2021). In Wukari, the struggle for political control, economic dominance, and religious supremacy has fueled persistent violence, creating an enabling environment for organized crime (Eze & Adeyemi, 2021). Conflict theory explains how the systematic marginalization of specific groups within society leads to social unrest and crime. Ethnic and religious groups in Wukari perceive themselves as being in a constant struggle for survival and dominance, particularly over land and governance structures (Okwudiba, 2018). As these tensions escalate into violent clashes, security structures weaken, allowing criminal enterprises to emerge and exploit the disorder. The proliferation of arms and the formation of militia groups further exacerbate the cycle of violence and crime, making conflict resolution increasingly difficult (Ibrahim & Sulaiman, 2019).

Moreover, conflict theory highlights the role of socioeconomic inequalities in fueling both violence and organized crime. Wukari's economy has suffered from persistent instability, with agricultural disruptions and loss of businesses creating widespread unemployment (Adamu, 2018). As economic opportunities diminish, many young people are drawn into criminal activities, including kidnapping and armed robbery, as alternative means of survival (Okeke, 2022). This aligns with Marx's assertion that economic deprivation often forces marginalized individuals into rebellion or criminal behavior as a means of redress (Balogun, 2021).

The erosion of legal and institutional structures further supports the application of conflict theory in understanding crime proliferation in Wukari. The failure of governance to effectively mediate conflicts has led to the militarization of ethnic groups and the rise of vigilante justice, which often evolves into organized crime syndicates (Oche, 2018). As the government struggles to maintain control, criminal actors take advantage of the chaos, establishing parallel power structures that control local economies through illicit activities such as smuggling and extortion (Ajayi, 2022). In essence, conflict theory provides a robust framework for analyzing the intersection of ethno-religious violence and organized crime in Wukari. By focusing on resource struggles, socioeconomic inequalities, and institutional breakdowns, this theory helps explain why conflict persists and how it serves as a breeding ground for criminal enterprises. Addressing these fundamental issues through conflict resolution mechanisms, economic empowerment programs, and institutional reforms is essential for breaking the cycle of violence and crime in the region.

Methodology

This study adopts the documentary method as a qualitative research approach to analyze ethno-religious conflicts and the rise of organized crime in Wukari. The documentary method involves the systematic collection, examination, and interpretation of existing secondary data sources, including government reports, academic publications, media reports, and archival records (Bowen, 2009). By utilizing a range of documentary sources, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the historical, economic, and political dynamics that shape the interplay between ethno-religious conflicts and organized crime. The selection of documentary sources was guided by relevance, credibility, and authenticity. Government reports and policy documents from agencies such as the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) provided empirical insights into conflict trends, crime rates, and socioeconomic impacts. Academic literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles and books, offered theoretical and conceptual frameworks for analyzing the conflict-crime nexus. News reports from reputable media outlets helped capture real-time developments, narratives, and local perspectives on the crisis in Wukari (Bryman, 2016).

Data analysis was conducted through thematic coding, where key themes such as Historical Overview of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Wukari, Socioeconomic Consequences of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Wukari and Policy Recommendations were identified and analyzed. This method facilitated a structured examination of how ethno-religious tensions fuel organized crime, and how these dynamics, in-turn; contribute to socioeconomic instability. Furthermore, triangulation was employed to validate findings by cross-referencing data from multiple sources, thereby enhancing the study's reliability and objectivity (Flick, 2018).

Literature Review

Historical Overview of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Wukari

Conflict theory provides a compelling lens for understanding the historical trajectory of ethno-religious conflicts in Wukari. The region has long been characterized by competition for land, political representation, and religious dominance, factors that Marxist conflict theorists argue are central to social struggles (Ake, 2021). The Jukun and Tiv ethnic groups have clashed for decades over these critical resources, with each group perceiving the other as a threat to its socio-political and economic survival (Eze & Adeyemi, 2021). These tensions, fueled by historical grievances and economic disparities, have escalated into violent confrontations, leading to repeated cycles of conflict.

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During colonial rule, the British administration exacerbated these divisions through indirect rule policies that favored certain ethnic groups over others (Okonkwo, 2019). This historical marginalization laid the groundwork for post-independence ethnic struggles, as political and economic power became concentrated in the hands of elites from dominant ethnic groups (Ibrahim & Sulaiman, 2019). As Marxist theory suggests, structural inequalities create inherent tensions that manifest as violent struggles when disadvantaged groups seek to challenge the status quo (Balogun, 2021). Wukari's history of conflict is deeply tied to these systemic inequalities, which have continued to shape intergroup relations in the present day. The economic downturn in Wukari, particularly in agriculture, has further intensified conflicts between ethnic groups. As access to arable land decreases due to climate change and demographic pressures, competition over farmland has led to violent confrontations (Adamu, 2018). According to conflict theory, when resources become increasingly scarce, groups in society engage in direct confrontations to secure their livelihoods (Okwudiba, 2018). In Wukari, these confrontations have been further aggravated by the proliferation of small arms, making violent clashes deadlier and more difficult to resolve. The absence of effective conflict mediation mechanisms has resulted in prolonged hostilities, undermining efforts at peaceful coexistence (Eze, 2022).

Moreover, the manipulation of ethnic and religious identities by political elites has played a crucial role in sustaining conflicts in Wukari. Politicians have often exploited historical grievances to mobilize support, using ethno-religious narratives to maintain power (Ajayi, 2022). This aligns with conflict theory's assertion that ruling elites often use divisive strategies to maintain control over resources and political authority (Uche, 2020). By perpetuating ethnic hostilities, political actors have hindered peacebuilding initiatives and created an environment where organized crime groups can thrive, capitalizing on the instability for economic gain (Okeke, 2022). The historical patterns of ethno-religious conflicts in Wukari can be understood through the principles of conflict theory, which highlight the roles of resource competition, structural inequalities, and elite manipulation in fueling violence. The persistence of these conflicts has not only shaped intergroup relations but has also facilitated the rise of organized crime in the region. Addressing these historical grievances through inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, and conflict resolution mechanisms is essential for breaking the cycle of violence and promoting sustainable peace in Wukari. The next section will explore the socioeconomic consequences of these conflicts in greater depth.

Socioeconomic Consequences of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Wukari

Conflict theory provides a critical lens for analyzing the socioeconomic consequences of ethno-religious conflicts in Wukari. The persistent clashes have devastated economic activities, particularly in the agricultural sector, which serves as the primary livelihood for many residents. The destruction of farmlands, forced displacement of farmers, and disruption of trade routes have led to severe food insecurity and economic stagnation (Ameh & Shipurut, 2024). Conflict theorists argue that economic deprivation fuels further violence, as marginalized groups may resort to criminal activities such as banditry and kidnapping to survive (Marx, 1971; Adamu, 2018). The labor market in Wukari has also suffered from prolonged conflicts. Many businesses have shut down due to insecurity, leading to high unemployment rates among youth (Okonkwo & Bello, 2020). Conflict theory posits that economic disparity and social inequality generate grievances that manifest as violence and criminality (Dahrendorf, 1959). With limited employment opportunities, disenfranchised youth are often recruited into armed groups and criminal syndicates, further exacerbating instability in the region (Ameh, Nnorom, Haruna, & Okpemen, 2019). The cyclical nature of poverty and crime underscores the need for economic interventions to break the cycle of violence. Another major consequence is the deterioration of social services and infrastructure. Schools and healthcare facilities have been destroyed or abandoned, depriving residents of essential services (Adeyemi, 2021). The collapse of these institutions aligns with conflict theory's assertion that systemic violence erodes state structures, leaving vulnerable populations without support (Galtung, 1969). As a result, educational attainment levels have declined, limiting future economic prospects and perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty (Ibrahim & Sulaiman, 2019).

Furthermore, the psychological and social impact of the conflict cannot be overlooked. Constant exposure to violence has led to widespread trauma, affecting mental health and community relationships (Eze, 2022). Displaced populations experience prolonged instability in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, where they face poor living conditions and inadequate resources (Ajayi, 2022). According to conflict theory, such conditions reinforce social divisions and create an environment where resentment and radicalization can thrive (Uche, 2020). Without adequate psychological support and reconciliation programs, the deep-seated animosities between ethnic groups in Wukari may persist for generations. The socioeconomic consequences of ethno-religious conflicts in Wukari are deeply interconnected with systemic inequalities, economic deprivation, and institutional failure. Conflict theory provides a valuable framework for understanding these dynamics, highlighting the urgent need for policies that promote economic empowerment, infrastructural development, and social cohesion. Addressing these challenges through inclusive governance and targeted interventions is crucial for fostering long-term peace and stability in the region. The next section will explore potential policy recommendations for mitigating these conflicts and their associated socioeconomic impacts.

Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

Policy Recommendation

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Given the persistent nature of ethno-religious conflicts in Wukari and their role in fostering organized crime, it is imperative to implement comprehensive policy measures that address both the immediate and structural causes of these crises. Conflict theory suggests that inequalities and economic deprivation are primary drivers of violence and criminality (Dahrendorf, 1959). Therefore, policy interventions should focus on equitable economic development, social cohesion, and improved governance structures to break the cycle of violence. Sustainable economic policies should prioritize the revitalization of the agricultural sector, infrastructure development, and investment incentives to restore livelihoods and reduce unemployment (Ameh & Shipurut, 2024).

Security sector reforms are also critical to addressing the proliferation of criminal networks in Wukari. Strengthening law enforcement agencies and ensuring their neutrality in mediating conflicts can help restore public trust (Eze, 2022). The government must invest in community policing strategies that integrate local stakeholders in security initiatives, thereby improving intelligence gathering and response mechanisms (Ibrahim, 2021). Additionally, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs targeting armed groups can provide alternative economic opportunities for individuals involved in violence (Okonkwo & Bello, 2020).

Educational and social interventions must be prioritized to counter the long-term consequences of ethno-religious conflicts. Schools that have been destroyed should be rebuilt, and psychological support programs should be implemented to assist trauma victims (Adeyemi, 2021). Conflict resolution training and interfaith dialogue programs can also help mend fractured relationships between ethnic and religious groups, thereby reducing hostility and fostering reconciliation (Ibrahim & Sulaiman, 2019). Furthermore, job creation initiatives that target vulnerable youth populations can mitigate the risks of criminal recruitment (Ameh, Nnorom, Haruna, & Okpemen, 2019). At the policy level, there is a need for stronger institutional frameworks that promote inclusive governance and equitable resource distribution. The exclusion of certain ethnic and religious groups from political representation has historically contributed to conflict escalation in Wukari (Olayemi & Musa, 2019). Conflict theory emphasizes the importance of addressing systemic inequalities to prevent societal breakdown (Galtung, 1969). Policies aimed at decentralizing governance structures, enhancing participatory democracy, and implementing equitable land tenure systems can mitigate grievances and promote sustainable peace (Adamu, 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, resolving the ethno-religious conflicts in Wukari requires a multi-dimensional approach that integrates economic, security, social, and governance reforms. Conflict theory underscores that addressing structural inequalities and economic deprivation is essential to curbing violence and organized crime. By implementing targeted interventions that address both immediate and root causes, policymakers can create an environment conducive to sustainable peace and development. A holistic strategy that combines economic empowerment, security sector reforms, education, and governance restructuring is vital in breaking the cycle of conflict and crime in Wukari. The findings of this paper provide valuable insights for stakeholders seeking long-term solutions to the crisis in Taraba State and beyond.

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10TH INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

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YOUTH MIGRATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract

Youth migration from rural to urban areas has become a widespread phenomenon affecting socio-economic development in many Nigerian rural communities. In the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, the migration of young people poses critical challenges to agricultural productivity, labour availability, and overall rural development. This study investigates the effects of youth migration on rural development in the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected through questionnaires administered to 150 rural households across the district. The study assesses how youth out-migration influences agricultural productivity, community participation, and infrastructure development. Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were used to analyse the data. Results reveal that youth migration has significant negative effects on agricultural labour availability and local economic activities but a mixed impact on remittance inflows and community engagement. The study recommends policy interventions to create local employment opportunities and enhance rural amenities to curb youth exodus and foster sustainable rural development.

Keywords: Youth, Migration, Rural Development, Agriculture, Community Participation

Background to the Study

Youth migration, defined as the movement of young individuals from rural to urban areas or abroad, is a significant demographic and socio-economic phenomenon affecting many developing countries, including Nigeria (Adepoju, 2005). In rural communities, young people often migrate in search of better employment opportunities, education, and improved living standards, driven by limited economic prospects and infrastructural deficiencies in their home areas (Awumbila, 2014; Ikwuka et al., 2019). While migration can provide individual migrants with access to higher incomes and social mobility, it has considerable implications for the rural communities they leave behind.

In the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, youth migration has increasingly become a pressing issue. The district, largely rural and reliant on agriculture and subsistence farming, depends heavily on the active participation of its youthful population to sustain agricultural productivity and promote rural development. However, the outflow of young people to urban centres threatens to deplete the labour force essential for farming and other rural economic activities (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). This demographic shift contributes to ageing rural populations and diminishes the social capital required for collective community action, thereby impeding sustainable rural development (Ekeocha & Okeke, 2020).

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Moreover, the loss of youth affects not only economic activities but also the social fabric and governance structures within rural areas. Young people are often key drivers of community-based development initiatives and informal social networks; their absence weakens these vital elements of rural life (Adepoju, 2005). Although remittances sent by migrant youth can provide financial support for rural households and investments in local infrastructure, this inflow of income may not fully compensate for the loss of labour and active participation (Mberu, 2006).

Despite growing concern over youth migration, empirical studies focusing specifically on the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State are scarce. Understanding the extent and nature of youth migration and its effects on rural development is crucial for policymakers aiming to design interventions that retain young people and promote sustainable development. This study therefore aims to investigate the impact of youth migration on key rural development indicators such as agricultural productivity, infrastructure development, and community participation in the Central Senatorial District.

Literature Review

Youth migration is defined as the movement of young people, typically aged 15–35, from rural to urban centres or abroad in search of better opportunities (Adepoju, 2005). This demographic shift can have both positive and negative effects on rural

areas. On the positive side, remittances sent by migrants can contribute to rural livelihoods and investments in social infrastructure (Mberu, 2006). However, a significant loss of young labour can reduce agricultural productivity and community dynamism, leading to rural decline (Awumbila et al., 2014).

Several studies underscore the link between youth migration and rural underdevelopment. For instance, Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) argue that rural youth migration in Nigeria results from limited local opportunities and contributes to declining agricultural output. Similarly, Ikwuka et al. (2019) found that youth migration reduced farm labour availability and participation in rural development programmes in Southeast Nigeria.

In Cross River State, research on youth migration remains limited. However, related studies in neighbouring states confirm that youth migration leads to ageing rural populations and declining social capital, which hamper community-driven development projects (Ekeocha & Okeke, 2020). This study seeks to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence on the effects of youth migration on rural development in the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Nigeria has witnessed significant rural-to-urban migration over the decades, with young people constituting the majority of migrants (Oluwasusi & Adebayo, 2017). Cross River State, with its largely agrarian rural communities, exemplifies this trend, where youth migration is driven by declining agricultural viability and underdeveloped rural infrastructure (Ekeocha & Okeke, 2020). Studies have shown that the Central Senatorial District, being predominantly rural and resource-dependent, experiences considerable youth outmigration, particularly to Calabar and other major Nigerian cities (Edet, 2018).

Empirical evidence from Nigeria and other developing countries highlights the mixed impacts of youth migration. In Southeast Nigeria, Ikwuka et al. (2019) found that youth migration contributed to declining agricultural output but increased household incomes through remittances. Similarly, Ekeocha and Okeke (2020) documented reduced social participation and leadership in rural communities due to youth absence, adversely affecting rural development initiatives. On the other hand, Adepoju (2010) noted that well-managed migration, with reinvestment of remittances, can stimulate rural economies and infrastructure development.

In Cross River State, however, specific studies remain limited. Edet (2018) emphasised that youth migration from the Central Senatorial District led to labour shortages and poor service delivery, suggesting an urgent need for policies that create rural employment and engage young people in development activities. While there is substantial literature on youth migration and rural development broadly,

few studies focus explicitly on the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. Moreover, existing research often emphasises either economic or social impacts but rarely integrates these dimensions comprehensively. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how youth migration affects multiple aspects of rural development within the district, providing data-driven insights to inform policy.

Youth Migration and Its Multifaceted Effects on Rural Development

Youth migration has multifaceted effects on rural development, impacting economic, social, and demographic dimensions.

Economic Effects

Youth migration often results in labour shortages in agriculture and related rural enterprises, reducing productivity and income generation in rural areas (Ikwuka et al., 2019). The departure of the most economically active segment of the population undermines the sustainability of rural livelihoods (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). However, remittances sent by migrant youth can provide essential financial resources that support household consumption, education, and local investments, partially mitigating the negative impact of outmigration (Mberu, 2006; Adepoju, 2010).

Social and Demographic Effects

Social consequences include disruption of family structures, erosion of social capital, and weakening of community cohesion, as young people are often key participants in local governance and social initiatives (Adepoju, 2005). The ageing rural population left behind faces increased vulnerability due to diminished support systems and labour force depletion (Ekeocha & Okeke, 2020). This demographic shift alters the social fabric and may reduce the community's capacity for collective action, which is critical for rural development projects (Arowolo, 2018).

Infrastructure and Service Delivery

Youth migration can affect demand for rural infrastructure and public services. While some argue that migration reduces pressure on rural services, others contend that it hampers rural development as the human capital necessary for utilizing and maintaining infrastructure declines (Effiom & Eyo, 2021). In the Central Senatorial District, the loss of youth has been linked to poor maintenance of roads, schools, and healthcare facilities, thereby further discouraging investment and development (Edet, 2018).

Theoretical Perspectives

Several theories provide frameworks for understanding the dynamics of youth migration and its effects on rural development. The Push-Pull Theory by Lee (1966) explains migration as a result of factors pushing young people out of rural areas and

pulling them towards urban centres. Additionally, Human Capital Theory posits that migration is an investment by youth to improve their skills and income prospects, with potential returns in the form of remittances and knowledge transfer (Becker, 1964). However, Structuralist Theories emphasise the role of systemic inequalities and governance failures in perpetuating rural underdevelopment and forced migration (Todaro, 1976).

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey design using quantitative methods.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of rural households in the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. A sample of 150 households was selected using stratified random sampling across five local government areas (LGAs): Abi, Yakurr, Obubra, Ikom, and Boki.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to household heads. The questionnaire covered demographic characteristics, migration status of youth members, agricultural productivity, infrastructure access, and community participation.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) and inferential statistics (Chi-square test) to determine the association between youth migration and rural development indicators.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between youth migration and agricultural productivity in the Central Senatorial District.

H₀₂: Youth migration has no significant effect on rural infrastructure development.

H₀₃: There is no significant association between youth migration and community participation in rural development activities.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	90	60
Female	60	40
Age Group (years)		
25-34	45	30
35-44	50	33.3
45 and above	55	36.7
Education Level		
No formal education	20	13.3
Primary	50	33.3
Secondary	55	36.7
Tertiary	25	16.7

Table 2: Youth Migration Status

Migration Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Household with migrant youth	98	65.3
Household without migrant youth	52	34.7

Effects of Youth Migration on Agricultural Productivity

Impact Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Youth migration has reduced farm labour availability	72	28
Agricultural output has declined due to migration	68	32
Remittances from migrant youth support farming	54	46

Table 3: Effects on Infrastructure and Community Participation

Indicator	Positive Effect (%)	Negative Effect (%)
Maintenance of rural roads	30	70
Participation in community development	40	60
Investment in local social amenities	45	55

Data Analysis

Table 4: Chi- Square Test for Youth Migration and Agricultural Productivity

Variable	χ^2	df	p-value	Decision
Youth migration vs. agricultural productivity	15.48	1	0.0001	Reject H_{01}

Table 5: Chi-Square Test for Youth Migration and Infrastructure Development

Variable	χ^2	df	p-value	Decision
Youth migration vs. infrastructure development	9.37	1	0.0022	Reject H_{02}

Table 6: Chi -Square Test for Youth Migration and Community Participation

Variable	χ^2	df	p-value	Decision
Youth migration vs. community participation	6.85	1	0.0088	Reject H_{03}

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that youth migration significantly affects rural development in the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. The rejection of H_{01} demonstrates that youth migration reduces the availability of agricultural labour and negatively impacts agricultural productivity, corroborating studies by Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008).

Similarly, the rejection of H_{02} reveals that youth migration adversely affects the maintenance and development of rural infrastructure. This may be attributed to the loss of energetic young people who would otherwise contribute labour and skills towards infrastructure upkeep. Furthermore, the rejection of H_{03} shows that youth migration diminishes community participation in local development activities, thereby weakening social cohesion and the collective action needed for rural progress.

Nonetheless, over half of the respondents acknowledged that remittances from migrant youth provide some financial support for farming and community amenities, highlighting a partial positive impact. Overall, these findings align with the literature suggesting that while youth migration brings some economic benefits through remittances, the loss of young labour and civic engagement poses serious challenges to sustainable rural development.

Conclusion This study concludes that youth migration has significant adverse effects on agricultural productivity, infrastructure development, and community participation in the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. While

remittances partially mitigate these effects, policy measures are required to address the root causes of youth migration.

Recommendations

Recommendations include:

- i. **Creating Local Employment:** Development of agro-based industries and small enterprises to provide jobs and reduce rural out-migration.
- ii. **Improving Rural Infrastructure:** Investment in roads, electricity, and social amenities to enhance living conditions.
- iii. **Youth Engagement Programmes:** Encouraging youth participation in rural development initiatives through training and empowerment schemes.
- iv. **Strengthening Agricultural Support:** Providing mechanization and credit facilities to compensate for labour shortages.

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WORK ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATORS' JOB PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to determine the influence of work environment on Social Studies educators' job performance in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. To give the study its direction, two research questions were formulated and transformed into hypotheses. The study adopted a survey research design. A total of three hundred and four (304) copies of questionnaire were administered to Social Studies educators in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. Out of three hundred and four (304) copies administered, two hundred and ninety five (295) copies were correctly filled and returned representing 89.0 percent as the acceptable size. While nine (9) copies representing 11 percent were not correctly filled and thus expunged. So, the sample size used for data analysis was 295. Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which ranges from 0.68 to 0.87. The frequency counts as well as percentages were used to answer the research questions. The hypotheses were analyzing using analysis of variance (ANOVA). Hypotheses were subjected to test at .05 level of significant. The result of the analysis revealed that there was significant influence of the extent of ICT and working condition on Social Studies educators' job performance in the study area. Base on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that the school administrators should ensure that the school climate is the one that promote job performance

of Social Studies educators; ICT support services should be provided to Social Studies educators in the study area; school physical environment should be provided as well as conducive to Social Studies educators in the study area to aid their job performance.

Keywords: *Work environment, Studies educators' and Job performance*

Introduction

The achievement of progress by any society is dependent on education of its members. In the developing societies, education is expected to infuse varied knowledge and skills (Gollapalli, 2020). Education can be inculcating modern values. It is largely believed that the spread of education will play a very vital role in the social, economic, cultural and political modernization of the society because it inculcates modern values. Education is the most potent weapon to fight illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and under-development of any individual or society. Education helps in building the capacity of an individual to acquire appropriate information, skills and competencies for personal survival, development and national transformation (Njoku, Osang & Ntamu, 2020). It is by this understanding that governments all over the world are trying to ensure that their citizens are provided educational opportunities irrespective of gender, age or disabilities. One cannot imagine education without schools as it plays a major role in moulding the basic ideas, habits and attitudes of the children, with a view to producing well balanced individuals which Social Studies education is one.

An ICT driven learning environment is important for the Nigerian child as well as the teachers. Over the years what dominated the classroom in Nigeria was principally the chalkboard and textbooks. Integration of ICTs in secondary school will definitely improve Nigerian education system there by giving students a better education that can enable them to compete favorably with products of other education systems all over the world (Okute, 2021). This will lead to the creation of a technologically advanced work force with the potential to improve military technology, telecommunication, media communication and skilled ICT professionals who was well-equipped to solve ICT related problems where ever they find themselves. The Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2014) opined that quality learning outcome depends on the quality of teaching and learning inputs and the qualitative processing of the inputs, which among others include the use of ICT facilities for teaching and learning. Ukah and Atah (2021) identified Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as an essential teaching and learning facility, which has become a natural part of man's daily life. Thus, ICT use in education by staff (academic and non-academic) and students has become a necessity. The essence of ICT utilization is to ensure that individuals participate fully in

contemporary life and educational process to effectively accomplish their daily tasks. Effective Social Studies education programme would ensure competencies in skills, knowledge of information and communication technology and proficiency in the world of work (Okute, 2020). With proper integration of ICT in Social Studies education program, it will help to improve the academic training of Social Studies educators and holds out the opportunity to revolutionize office automation, pedagogical methods and expand access to quality education (Okute, 2014). There is the need to embrace the challenges through the development and use of ICT in Social Studies education.

Still on, humans are influenced by activities around their working environment which could be positive or negative. A work environment can be identified as the place that one works, which means the surrounding of a person. It is the social and professional environment in which a person is supposed to interact with people. Bello (2015) explained that work environment includes a friendly, well-designed, safe physical space, good equipment and effective communication, which can improve workers' productivity. Well-designed and organized environment makes significant differences on how people feel about their work (Chandrasekar, 2011). A satisfied, happy and hardworking Staff is the most valuable asset of any organization. Good work environment encourages the employee with their job that ultimately influences the growth of an organization. One of the challenges in Management is to form an environment that attracts, retain and motivate its workforce, the responsibility lies with managers and supervisors at all levels of the organization (Ajuluchukwu & Okute, 2020). Work environment affects employee morale, productivity and engagement, both positively and negatively (Chandraseker, 2011).

Furthermore, the work environment plays a crucial role in shaping the job performance of Social Studies Educators in public Universities. However, many Social Studies Educators face challenges related to work environment including inadequate ICT facilities and inadequate physical environment facilities. In order to arouse Social Studies educators and their interest in performing their task, there should be provision of ICT facilities; there should be cordial relationship between staffs and their superiors like 'head of departments', deans, provosts, supervisors, among others. It is against this backdrop that the present study seeks to examine work environment and job performance of Social Studies Educators in public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Improving Social Studies education academic staff professional practices and effective job performances through the availability of ICT facilities and cordial relationship between staff and their superiors has become an important factors and worrisome for quality education to triumph in Social Studies education in South-

South, Nigeria. The situation of poor availability of these variables which has great negative consequences on the attainment of quality assurance is usually showcased in lecturers' poor job performances in Social Studies education at the universities as well as lecturers' poor attitude and commitment to work, too much focus on theoretical teaching without practical knowledge, among others.

The state of the Academic Staff physical environment is a matter of concern. The environment has relatively brought low performance by the staff. In most cases the physical work environment as observed in the majority of the universities is bad and little has been done to arrest the situation. This is supported by the fact that, most of the building in the universities have; poorly designed offices; poor ventilation system; unsuitable furniture; inappropriate lighting; insufficient safety measures in fire emergencies; and lack of personal protective equipment for staff, among others. Academic staffs working in such environment are prone to occupational hazards. A poor school environment does not only affect the output of the school system but as well as the teachers who are the facilitators of teaching-learning activities. Situations where there is no job security, irregularity in salary payment, poor working condition, lack of promotion as at when due, and non—recognition among others could have been sources of poor job satisfaction and performance of teachers in public universities.

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Social Studies educators in tertiary institutions are expected to prepare lecture notes, teach students, and evaluate students' performance before, during and at the end of semester among other functions. However, it has been observed that most academic staff, Social Studies educators inclusive, lack healthy work environment such as conducive office space, functional working facilities among others. In spite of the various roles played by government and other stakeholders to improve the welfare of teachers in tertiary institutions in South-South Nigeria through training, workshops, seminars, conferences, payment of remuneration, provision of classroom, staff offices, research grant and other fringe benefits to curb these many issues, the problems seems to have been unresolved; the exodus of Social Studies educators from tertiary institutions to other sectors of the economy still persists.

Observation shows that it has been difficult for lecturers in public Universities in South-South, Nigeria to effectively actualize educational goals and objectives because of the poor school working condition. This situation has been worrisome for quite a long time now has created a gap for the present study to fill, calling for the need for improvement in good school working condition for Social Studies educators. Despite the importance of the work environment on job performance, there is a need for further research on the specific challenges faced by Social Studies educators in public universities and impacts of these challenges on their job performance. Hence, this study aims to investigate whether work environment

influences Social Studies educators' job performance in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the influence of work environment on Social Studies educators' job performance in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to find out whether:

- i. Extent of Information Communication facilities influence Social Studies educators' job performance;
- ii. Extent of working condition influence Social Studies educators' job performance;

Statement of hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to direct the study;

- i. Extent of Information communication facilities does not significantly influence Social Studies educators' job performance.
- ii. There is no significant influence of working condition on Social Studies educators' job performance.

Literature review

Integration of ICTs in secondary school will definitely improve Nigerian education system thereby giving students a better education that can enable them to compete favorably with products of other education systems all over the world. This will lead to the creation of a technologically advanced work force with the potential to improve military technology, telecommunication, media communication and skilled ICT professionals who was well-equipped to solve ICT related problems where ever they find themselves.

Several researches have been conducted on the influence of ICTs on workers' job performance. Haruna and Yahuza (2018) carried out a study to examine the contribution of the technology (internet technology) toward the enhancement of job performance amongst secondary school teachers in central senatorial district of Kaduna State. The research was conceptual in nature and survey research design was used for the study. For the purpose of the study, six (6) secondary schools were selected and the selection was based on the secondary schools that have internet facility in the senatorial zone. Both primary and secondary data sources were used by the researchers in the course of the study. The population of the study was 6000 in which the research applied the require sample size of Mark Saunder2009. The respondents were teachers, and 300 of them were involved as the sampling size. The instrument used in this study was one evaluation forms of questionnaire with two sections, the first section of the questionnaire was based on teacher Perceive Internet Usage and the second segment was on measure Teacher's Job Performance. The

result of the research certainly showed the importance of internet in secondary school and the ICT would help the teachers in their various disciplines to boasting their knowledge and there is the need for encouraging teachers to utilize the bounty that in ICT.

What is more, Aimiuwu and Bosah (2020) conducted a study to examine the use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) surveillance cameras for ensuring quality learning and internal policing in early years centers in Delta State. The study was piloted by three research questions which were answered and two hypotheses which were tested at a level of significance of 0.05. The study was a descriptive survey had a population of six hundred and eighty-eight (688) Private Early Childhood Care Centers spread across the 25 Local Government Areas of Delta State. A total of 79 Caregivers and 60 Attendants were selected and used for the study through a purposive random sampling method. The structured questionnaire for data collection titled; 'Impact of Closed Circuit Television Surveillance Camera in Monitoring and Ensuring Quality Caregiving' (ICCTSCMEQCG) was validated prior to its use by two Chief Lecturers in Measurement and Evaluation, College of Education, Agbor and another Chief Lecturer from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka. The study questionnaire had its reliability determined at a coefficient of 0.84, using Cronbach Alpha reliability test and was personally administered to the sample with 95% retrieval rate. The mean and standard deviation statistical techniques were used to answer the two research questions, while t-test was used to test the stated null hypotheses. Study results revealed that there is great impact if Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) surveillance camera is used for ensuring quality learning and internal policing in early years centers, amongst others, Care giving was done at the best when caregivers and attendants are aware of being watched by the installed closed circuit television cameras. Also pupils learning activities are easily monitored on playback from the recorded tape of the camera system. This review is relevant to the present study. The study made use of survey design as well as simple random sampling technique in sampling respondents and questionnaire used in collecting data.

Physical work environment does not focus on individual employee or job characteristics but, instead, is a concept that encompasses the physical aspects, psycho-social and organizational surroundings of work. A physical work environment can result in an employee's fit or misfit to the environment of the workplace. Numerous studies have been carried out on effect of working conditions on workers' job performance. Maghanoy (2021) carried out a study to determine which domain of working conditions best influences the performance of tertiary teachers. The quantitative non-experimental design utilizing correlation technique was used in the study. The respondents of the study were the 45 tertiary teachers of

UM Panabo College. Mean, Pearson-r and Regression Analysis were the statistical tools employed to interpret the data gathered. The findings of the study revealed a high level of working conditions of tertiary teachers at UM Panabo College. It was also revealed that the level of performance at UM Panabo College was very high. The test of relationship between variables confirmed significant relationship between working conditions and performance of tertiary teachers at UM Panabo College.

Ukah and Atah (2021) conducted a study to examine workplace variables and Social Studies educators' job performance in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. To achieve the purpose of the study, two research questions were posed and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted a survey research design. The population for the study was 89 Social Studies educators' from tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. Census population was used. A 40 item validated researcher-made four points rating scale questionnaire titled "Workplace Variables and Social Studies Educators' Job Performance Questionnaire" (WVBEJPQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was face and content validated by four research experts. A reliability estimate ranging from .76 to .84 was achieved for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient after a pilot test. The data were analyzed using simple linear regression. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. Findings revealed that physical work environment and career progression significantly influenced Social Studies educators' job performance in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended amongst others that, owners of tertiary institutions-federal, state, and private proprietors should ensure that they provide the right quality of furniture and equipment, conducive working environment and an illuminated work area for Social Studies educators to operate

Faislat and Rasheed (2013) carried out a study on school climate and teacher job performance in Lagos State Nigeria. Correlational survey research design was adopted for the study and a multi-stage cluster sampling technique which divided Lagos State into six educational districts yielded a sample of 1804 students, 238 teachers and 18 Principals. Information was extracted from the respondents using the instruments, named: Teacher Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPAQ); Organisational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) and the Teacher, these instruments were validated by five specialists and were found reliable with an index of .75. A log-linear model was fitted to show the interaction between the various variables and it shows that teacher job performance is affected by the following variables: availability of facilities-an aspect of physical work environment; class size; leadership style; motivational strategies and teacher morale.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design. Survey design is deemed appropriate

because the study utilized a questionnaire to determine the influence of workplace variables on Social Studies educators' job performance in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria. This study applies the simple random sampling and the stratified sampling technique. This technique gives each of the universities in the study area an equal opportunity to be represented and or selected for the study. Also, stratification is to consider the gender of the Social Studies educators.

The population of the study consists of all Social Studies educators in Federal, State and Private owned tertiary institutions in South-South, Nigeria. It comprised all the six hundred and three (603) Social Studies educators in universities in South-South, Nigeria. The sample size was three hundred and four (304) Social Studies educators selected from 17 tertiary institution in South-South using 80% of the target population. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher entitled: Work Environment on Social Studies Educators' Job Performance in Universities Questionnaire (WEBEJPUQ). This was responded to by Social Studies educators in the selected universities in the study area. WEBEJPUQ is divided into two parts. Part A elicited information on the respondents' (Social Studies educators) demographic information, such as name of institution, while Part B on the other hand, sought information on the workplace variables, such as: ICTS and Working condition.

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A trial test of the instrument was carried out on 20 Social Studies Education lecturers who were not part of the research sample to ascertain the reliability and clarity of the items on the instrument. Cronbach-Alpha procedure was used for the questionnaire (WEBEJPUQ). The result obtained from the statistical analysis of data collected revealed Cronbach Coefficients Alpha ranging between 0.68 and 0.87 for the different sub-sections. To facilitate the administration of the instrument as well as ensuring its efficient retrieval, the researcher met the Heads of Social Studies education Departments/Units of each university in South-South, Nigeria. Explain her mission to them and obtain permission from them, after clarifying them on how the questionnaire was responded to. All these were done with the help of the departmental admin officers of each school as research assistant (s). The researchers administered the questionnaires to the 304 Social Studies educators, this exercise lasted for 2 weeks. After administering of the instruments, out of the 304 copies, only 295 copies were valid for data analysis. Nine (9) copies were mutilated; so, only 295 copies were used for data analysis. The data collected was analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The research questions were answered using frequency count and simple percentages. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for testing hypotheses at .05 significance level. ANOVA was used because the sub-variables have been categorized in more than two (2) groups to show influence of independent variables on the dependent variable.

Results

The results of the data analyses from which the findings are drawn are presented according to the stated hypotheses. All the hypotheses were tested with respect to data collected on the variables in the study at .05 level of significance using simple linear regression statistical analysis.

Hypothesis one:

The first null hypothesis stated that information communication technologies do not significantly influence Social Studies educators' job performance in universities in South-South, Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) research design. The result in Table 1 showed that 77 respondents in the study area out of 295 answer 'Very great influence' to the statement "extent of ICT influence", 77 respondents as well answer 'great influence' to the statement "extent of ICT influence", 73 of the respondents responded "little influence" to the statement "extent of ICT influence", and 68 of the respondents answered "very little influence" to the statement. The Means and standard deviation of extent of ICT influence on Social Studies educators' job performance were computed and statistically compared using one way analysis of variance. The analysis shows that the calculated F-ratio of 9.107 was greater than the critical F-value of 2.41 at 0.05 level of significance at 4 and 291 degrees of freedom. This implied that the result was significant. This revealed that there was significant influence of the extent of ICT on Social Studies educators' job performance in the study area.

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and summary of One way analysis of variance of the extent of ICT influence on Social Studies educators' job performance in universities in South-South, Nigeria (N = 295)

Extent of ICT influence	N	x	Sd	Std. Error
Very great influence	77	22.04	3.50	.662
Great influence	77	24.68	3.61	.207
Little influence	73	25.91	5.77	.700
Very little influence	68			
Total	295	24.71	4.31	.209

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Means squares	F-ratio	Sig.
Between group	298.706	4	149.35	9.107*	0.000
Within group	6510.484	291	16.40		
Total	6809.400	295			

*Significant at 0.05: df (4,295), critical F = 2.41

Hypothesis two

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of working condition on Social Studies educators' job performance in universities in South-South, Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

The data in table 2 revealed that 85 respondents in the study area out of 295 answer 'Very great influence' to the statement “extent of working condition influence”, 77 of the respondents answer 'great influence' to the statement “extent of working condition influence”, 70 respondents answer 'little influence' to the statement, and 63 respondents answer 'very little influence' to the statement. The means and standard deviation of extent of working condition influence on Social Studies educators' job performance in the study area were computed and statistically compared using one-way analysis of variance. The analysis showed that the calculated F-value of 2.220 was found to be greater than the p-value ($p = 0.11$) at 0.05 level of significance at 4 and 291 degrees of freedom. This means that the result was significant, indicating that there was significant influence of working condition on Social Studies educators' job performance in the study area. The data also showed that average extent of working condition had most influence on Social Studies educators' job performance with the highest mean of ($\bar{x} = 24.83$)

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and summary of One way analysis of variance of the influence of working condition on Social Studies educators' job performance in universities in South-South, Nigeria (N = 295)

Extent of working condition influence	N	\bar{x}	VLI	Std. Error		
Very great influence	85	21.67	2.08	1.202		
Great influence	77	24.83	3.45	.188		
Little influence	70	24.18	2.84	.363		
Very little influence	63					
Total	295	24.71	3.37	.168		
Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Means square	F-ratio	Sig.	
Between group	50.010	4	25.005	2.220	0.110	
Within group	4472.350	291	11.265			
Total	4522.360	295				

*Significant at 0.05; $df(4, 291)$, critical $F = 2.41$

Discussion of findings

This section is concerned with the discussion of findings that emerged from the results of the analysis. The discussion is presented in accordance to the variables of the study. Extent of Influence of information communication technology on Social Studies educators' job performance:

From Table 1 above, the respondents' responses to extent of influence of information communication technology on Social Studies educators' job performance in universities in South-South, Nigeria is of very great influence. This implies that information communication technology influences Social Studies educators' job performance in the study area.

Also, the first null hypothesis stated that information communication technologies do not significantly influence Social Studies educators' job performance in universities in South-South, Nigeria. The analysis shows that the calculated F-ratio of 9.107 was greater than the critical F-value of 2.41 at 0.05 level of significance at 4 and 291 degrees of freedom. This implied that the result was significant. This revealed that there was significant influence of the extent of ICT on Social Studies educators' job performance in the study area.

This result of hypothesis one agrees with the earlier findings of Haruna and Yahuza (2018) that carried out a study to examine the contribution of the technology (internet technology) toward the enhancement of job performance amongst secondary school teachers in central senatorial district of Kaduna State. The result of the research certainly showed the importance of internet in secondary school and the ICT would help the teachers in their various disciplines to boasting their knowledge and there is the need for encouraging teachers to utilize the bounty that in ICT. Similarly, the finding conform to Aimiwu and Bosah (2020) who conducted a study to examine the use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) surveillance cameras for ensuring quality learning and internal policing in early years centers in Delta State. Study results revealed that there is great impact if Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) surveillance camera is used for ensuring quality learning and internal policing in early years centers, amongst others.

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Working condition influence on Social Studies educators' job performance:

From Table 7 above, the respondents' responses to extent of influence of working conditions on Social Studies educators' job performance in universities in South-South, Nigeria is of very great influence. This implies that working conditions influences Social Studies educators' job performance in the study area.

Similarly, the second null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of working condition on Social Studies educators' job performance in universities in South-South, Nigeria. The analysis showed that the calculated F-value of 2.220 was found to be greater than the p-value ($p = 0.11$) at 0.05 level of significance at 4 and 291 degrees of freedom. This means that the result was significant, indicating that there was significant influence of working condition on Social Studies educators' job performance in the study area.

The findings of the second hypothesis agree with the earlier findings of Maghanoy (2021) who carried out a study to determine which domain of working conditions best influences the performance of tertiary teachers. The findings of the study revealed a high level of working conditions of tertiary teachers at UM Panabo College. It was also revealed that the level of performance at UM Panabo College was very high. The test of relationship between variables confirmed significant

relationship between working conditions and performance of tertiary teachers at UM Panabo College.

In the same view, the study agree with the earlier position of Ukah and Atah (2021) who conducted a study to examine workplace variables and Social Studies educators' job performance in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Findings revealed that physical work environment and career progression significantly influenced Social Studies educators' job performance in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the statistical analysis of the hypothesis that direct the study it was concluded that work environment significantly influence Social Studies educators' job performance in the study area. Good work environment has proved to be a good strategy that is effective in enhancing Social Studies educators' job performance in universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Further, the researcher concluded that; there was significant influence of the extent of ICT and working condition on Social Studies educators' job performance in the study area. Base on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the school administrators should ensure that the school climate is the one that promote job performance of Social Studies educators; and ICT support services should be provided to Social Studies educators in the study area.

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