International Conference on Bilateral Strategies for Achieving Africa's Sustainable Development Goals

WED. 20TH - THUR. 21ST MAY, 2026

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Theme:
Bilateral Strategies for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Africa

UNIVERSITY OF JOS, NIGERIA

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BILATERAL STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING AFRICA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

THEME: Bilateral Strategies for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Africa
DATE: Wednesday 20th – Thursday 21st May, 2026 | TIME: 10:00am
VENUE: University of Jos, Nigeria

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
BILATERAL STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING AFRICA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DAY ONE – Wednesday 20th May, 2026
Arrival of Guest/Conferees/Delegates

DAY TWO – Thursday 21st May, 2026

OPENING SESSION/AWARD/PLENARY

Conference Registration	-	9:00am – 10:00am
Opening Prayer/Welcome Remark	-	10:00am – 10:15am
Institutional Brief/Chairman's Opening Remark	-	10:15am – 10:30am
Plenary Session	-	10:30am – 12noon
Launch Break/Group Photograph	-	12noon – 1:00pm
Plenary Session 2	-	1:00pm – 4:00pm
Policy Review Session	-	4:00pm – 5:00pm

DAY THREE – Friday 22nd May, 2026
Departure of Guest/Conferee/Delegates

Welcome to

University of Jos

The University of Jos was established with the vision of being an innovative institution with great interaction between 'town and gown'. Today, the university still carries a high responsibility of fashioning tastes and attitudes of the future. We are committed to providing education that is globally competitive and relevant to the needs of today's employer and the developing challenges of Nigeria and beyond.

Brief History of the University

The University of Jos started as a Campus of the University of Ibadan in November, 1971, with the appointment of Professor E. A. Ayandele as its first Acting Principlal. Its first home was the present Township campus of the University which is located along Murtala Mohammed way, Jos. Its first students admitted in January, 1972 were pre-degree students. Degree courses in Arts were introduced in October 1973 and in Science and Education the following year. The same year, the Bauchi Road Campus which then accommodated only the Faculties of Natural, environmental, Medical Sciences and Education was acquired. In October 1975, the then Military Government announced the establishment of seven new Universities and University Colleges including the University of Jos. Professor Gilbert Onuaguluchi was appointed its first Vice- Chancellor and he was in office from October 1975 - 1978. He was succeeded by Professor Emmanuel U. Emovon from 1st October 1978 - 1985. Professor Ochapa C. Onazi succeeded Professor Emovon. Professor Onazi served from 1st October 1985 - 1989 as the 3rd substantive Vice Chancellor. The 4th substantive Vice Chancellor is Professor M. Para Mallum who was in office from 1st October 1989 - 1993. Since then, the University has made enormous progress. By 1993, a new system for appointment of Vice-Chancellor in Nigerian Universities was introduced. There was therefore a delay in the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor in 1993. In the interim, Prof. G. O. M. Tasie acted as Vice-Chancellor from October 1993 to March 1994. Eventually, Prof. N.E. Gomwalk was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University in April,1994. His tenure ended in 1999. Professor M. Y. Mangvwat was appointed Ag. Vice-Chancellor from January 2000 to May 4th 2001. He was later appointed substantive Vice-Chancellor with effect from 5th May 2001. After him, Professor Sonni Tyoden was Vice Chancellor from June 12, 2006 to June 11, 2011. He was the 7th substantive Vice- Chancellor of the university. The 8th substantive Vice-Chancellor of the University was Professor Hayward Babale Mafuyai from June 23, 2011 to June 22, 2016.The current and 9th substantive Vice-Chancellor is Professor Seddi Sebastian Maimako who assumed duty on the 23rd of June 2016.

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
BILATERAL STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING
AFRICA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Wednesday 20th – Thursday 21st May, 2026 | | University of Jos

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM STRATEGIES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract
A cross-sectional survey examines digitalization and automation, financial accountability, and capacity building and training as strategies for civil service reform in the public sector in Cross River State. A Governance Theory was adopted in the study, and a sample size of 312 administrative and professional staff from selected MDAs were adopted in the study. A structured questionnaire was used to facilitate data collection. Content and face validity, and Cronbach's alpha reliability were used to ascertain the reliability of the data. Descriptive statistics and multicollinearity with the variance inflation factor (VIF) were used to ascertain the accuracy of the data set. The hypotheses were tested using Multiple Regression Analysis, and findings revealed that digitalization and automation (Beta = 0.743, P<0.05), financial accountability (Beta = 0.672, P<0.05), and capacity building and training (Beta = 0.681, P<0.05) significantly affect the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State. The study concluded that the transformation of bureaucratic machinery into a professional and efficient system is influenced by civil service reform strategies to improve public service delivery and foster economic growth. It is recommended that the government commit to the reforms to ensure that civil service processes are driven by digitalization for efficiency, and tracking of audit decisions and file movement to reduce opportunities for corruption, to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. The government should prioritize financial accountability through the Treasury Single Account, IPPIS, etc., to ensure efficient use of resources, regular audits of financial performance, and ensure the accuracy of financial records for better ethical governance and policy decisions in the civil service.

The government should sustain capacity building and training to enhance competence and professionalism, improve skills, and handle complex tasks effectively through seminars, retreats, and workshops to improve the productivity and competence of public servants.

Keywords: *Digitalization and automation, financial accountability, and Capacity building and training*

Introduction

Rationalizing government agencies and reducing inefficiency have been strategic efforts by the government to adopt sustainable reforms in the 21st century. The continuous reforms of the government to restructure the bureaucracy for better efficiency, service delivery, and accountability for the sustainable growth of civil services in Nigeria. *Today, the strategic reforms in civil service are centered on accountability, transparency, and digital governance, which have replaced the colonial legacies in service with modernized administrative structures such as the* Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), the Treasury Single Account (TSA), and e-governance initiatives.

The sustainable development of the public sector is influenced by professional initiative to address weak productivity and corruption. Therefore, the success of sustainable development implies that the core operational models, such as finance, HR, and procurement, must be influenced by sustainability (Humphrey et al., 2024). The implementation of civil service reforms is through digitalization and automation, financial accountability, and capacity building and training, which enhance the sustainable development of the public sector. The benefits of automation to civil service reforms improve efficiency and speed. For instance, the reduction in turnaround time is influenced by digital systems for effective administrative processes in retirement and personnel management. Olayinka-Agboola et al. (2025). The modern civil service adopts TSA as a cornerstone for public financial management reforms. This has ensured that cash resources are consolidated for accountability in the public sector (Oguntimehin & Adewumi, 2021). The world-class public service is derived from performance-based training to modernize the civil service through the training initiatives for top-level officials, which increase leadership development (Okonkwo, 2022). In Cross River State, civil service reforms are strategic to reduce bureaucracy and inefficiency, and they help to overhaul the operational processes to ensure support for sustainable development goals. Therefore, service delivery through SERVICOM, TSA, IPPIS, GIFMIS etc have offered better service delivery to the citizens. With this recognition, this study is a resource to identify digitalization and automation, financial accountability, and capacity building and training as reforms in the public sector in Cross River State.

Statement of the Problem

Efforts to enhance sustainable development in the civil service are challenged by ineffective implementation of digital technologies, inadequate skills, and excessive bureaucracy, which lead to failed attempts to curb inefficiency and corruption. In Cross River State, the public sector is undermined by ineffective digitalization and automation, a lack of financial accountability, and poor capacity building and training on the sustainable development of

the public sector. The issues of ineffective digitalization and automation are linked to persistent inefficiency, which results in slow service delivery. While mismanagement of public funds, systemic corruption, and weak institutional oversight affect financial accountability, the poor capacity building in the civil service is affected by deficiencies caused by a lack of structured training policies. Though many studies on civil service reform have been carried out in various sectors in Nigeria, this study seeks to fill the gap in the public sector in Cross River State

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are:

i. To examine the effect of digitalization and automation on the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State
ii. To assess the effect of financial accountability on the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State
iii. To investigate the effect of capacity building and training on the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State

Theoretical Framework

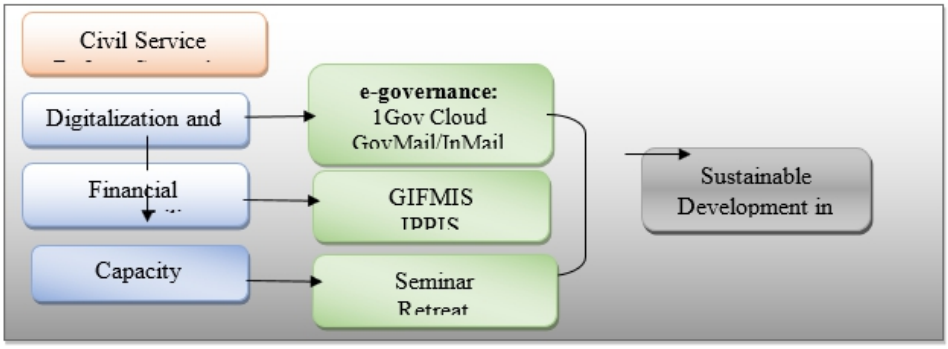
This study is anchored on Governance Theory developed by R. A. W. Rhodes 1in 1997. The theory stressed the interactions of the civil society, public, and private sectors in making decisions to solve problems through collaborative networks. In civil service reforms, the theory stressed the need for stakeholder participation and citizen engagement to overcome inefficiency. Therefore, institutional capacity and public service delivery if influenced by performance-based management and the adoption of digital transformation in civil service reforms (Grindle, 2004). The theory assumes that the policy formulation and implementation are no longer in the hands of the state actors, and effective administration is influenced by the collaboration of the private and public sectors. The theory assumes the need to create an institutional network for the government to facilitate and foster new public governance.

The justification of the theory for the study is that it supports the use of digitalization and automation, financial accountability, and capacity building and training to enhance the sustainable development of the public sector. This theory helps organizations to adopt accountability, transparency and citizen-centric service delivery to address systematic deficiencies in public administration.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study on civil service reform strategies and sustainable development covered digitalization and automation, financial accountability, capacity building, and training, and sustainable development as shown below:

Fig: Civil Service Reform Strategies in Cross River State



Concept of civil service reforms

Civil service reforms relate to administrative reforms aimed at improving administrative practices with behaviour to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery. It is an effort to apply the emerging ideas of administrative systems consciously to improve positive development in service delivery Civil service reforms are purposeful reforms that improve service delivery, professionalism,

efficiency, responsiveness, and accountability in public bureaucracy. It involves a change in personnel behaviour and structures to reduce corruption and meet the developmental needs of the society (Sukare & Abdullahi, 2025). A study by Eze and Oguonu (2019) identified the objectives of civil service reforms to include: one, improved efficiency in bureaucracy, which is transformed into effective policy implementation, enhancing civil service reforms. Two, accountability and transparency are enhanced by public financial management adoption through the Treasury Single Account and IPPIS. Three, streamlining processes through digitalization enhanced the effective delivery of services. Fourth, restructuring the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) helps to minimize operational cost and inefficiency in the workforce structure. The implementation of effective civil service reforms involves organizational restructuring through data gathering and analysis to improve HRM, workforce training etc, etc (Ajayi, 2019). This helps to ensure sustainability in combating corruption, strengthening transparency, and public participation.

Sustainable Development

In the public sector, the concept of sustainable development is the integration of economic, environmental, and social goals into the government programmes and policies for long-term growth with emphasis on strong accountability and efficiency. This involves commitment to sustainability and adoption of technology to strengthen public institutions for effective service delivery. According to Humphrey et al. (2024) the success of sustainable development implies that the core operational models, such as finance, HR, and procurement, must be influenced by sustainability. Reducing corruption will support successful implementation while also improving the capacity of officials and the organization's public financial management system. The success of the public sector in sustainable development requires citizen engagement, where stakeholders are involved in decision-making to promote social equity. The need to manage sustainability has been to achieve the short-term and long-term goals of stakeholders in organizations. Meeting the needs of the present generation without

compromising the future is the reason for sustainable development in the public sector (Kairouza et al. 2016). The success of sustainable development depends on social organization and state of technology, on the ability of the environment to meet the present and future needs. In sustainability, natural resource management has been an aspect of ensuring the future of society is effectively managed. This indicates that the availability of natural resources influences the quality of human life through transformed leadership, strategic innovation, and adequate tools to make informed decisions.

Digitalization and automation in civil service reforms

The central pillars of present civil service reforms are digitalization and automation, which have enhanced a digitally enabled system, transparency, and workflow efficiency from a paper-based workflow. From 2025 to 2026, reforms on digitalization and automation are accelerated to minimize costs and improve service delivery through a paperless workflow. For instance, 1Gov Cloud is a platform of government for digital document management, which ensures that electronic records replace the physical files for speedy approval for sustainable decision-making. The official government email systems (GovMail/InMail) are platforms that have been used as a secure communication channel with security. The virtual collaboration, such as digital transcription and GovConference, has enhanced real-time documentation and facilitated remote work effectively. The use of AI-driven governance (Service-Wise GPT) has been introduced in the civil service in Nigeria to improve decision-making and give access to institutional knowledge, rules, and regulations with speed.

The benefits of automation to civil service reforms improve efficiency and speed. For instance, the reduction in turnaround time is influenced by digital systems for effective administrative processes in retirement and personnel management. Olayinka-Agboola et al. (2025) stressed that automating workflow enhances transparency and reduces corruption. This makes governance processes auditable and void of human error. In addition, the benefits of data-driven decision-making is acquired through digitalization, which supports policy development on training and strategic decisions. This affirmed that in the 21st century, civil service processes require digitalization for efficiency and a responsive public service that meets the Sustainable Development Goals.

The efforts of the government today are geared towards adopting artificial intelligence in governance, with the unveiling of a reform agenda to boost service delivery based on efficiency and transparency in the civil service. For instance, civil servants have been offered Artificial Intelligence Literacy Training Programme by the European Union (EU) and UNESCO (Olugbode, 2026). This strategic reform has repositioned the civil service for effective governance that is technology-enabled. Across the globe, the function of government through AI has shaped service delivery and policy-making for institutional responsiveness to citizens.

Prioritizing digitalization for service delivery is an initiative for the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu, which ensured that coordination across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies is strengthened to enhance operational efficiency in financial regulations, public service rules, procurement, etc.

Financial accountability in civil service reforms

Improving public trust and curbing corruption drive the need for financial accountability reforms. The introduction of Government Integrated Financial and Management Information Systems (GIFMIS), Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information Systems (IPPIS), and Treasury Single Accounts (TSA) has increased trust in public expenditure (Mohammed et al., 2023). The importance of GIFMIS in civil service reforms is that it reduces fraudulent opportunities, strengthens the internal controls, and enables real-time monitoring of receipts and opportunities across MDAs. Also, governments can track expenditure and inefficient borrowing, which helps to facilitate appropriate cash planning with real-time reporting. The transformative tool of IPPIS is important in saving public funds and reducing fraud. It involves the need to centralize the HR data and payroll for financial transparency and improvement of staff records management.

The modern civil service adopts TSA as a cornerstone for public financial management reforms. This has ensured that cash resources are consolidated for accountability in the public sector (Oguntimehin & Adewumi, 2021). The IPPIS and GIFMIS are considered the source of data that enhances transparency, which helps in eliminating ghost workers in the government payroll, and improves the accuracy of staff records. Fostering internal auditing and compliance has enhanced accountability against sanctions for financial breaches. The importance of these reforms lies in oversight, as fragmented bank accounts are reduced, and government funds are consolidated through the treasury single account, which enhances effective financial management and increases accountability in public services. The importance of digital transformation ensures the improvement in digital tax administration against the paper-based system for effective revenue collection (Adegbite & Amaeshi, 2020).

Repositioning the public service is a renewed call to embrace professionalism and accountability for governance. Today, the government institutions' credibility is driven by their performance for continuity and governance stability. The increase in public expectations is achieved by aligning with prudent management and transparency through financial accountability (Mohammed et al., 2023). This is sustained by upholding the financial regulations and ensuring that the financial rules and public trust are not eroded. Financial accountability in civil service reforms has introduced a one-knowledge-system as an initiative for capacity building to modernize the civil service. This has optimized leadership development, knowledge sharing, and continuous learning, which aid to equip the public servant in a changing governance environment.

Capacity Building and Training

Enhancing staff skills and restructuring public institutions are the priorities of the government to improve professionalism, performance, and service delivery. Capacity building through human resource development is a reform in the civil service that involves training programmes to equip civil servants with the attitude, professionalism, and skills to implement policies in an effective manner. Today, the world-class public service is derived from performance management systems and performance-based training to modernize the civil service. For instance, accountability and excellence through the training initiatives for top-level officials increase leadership development (Okonkwo, 2022). A shift from complacency to a proactive training is influenced by a result-oriented culture, which promotes productivity, as modern governance demands technological adoption to be

digitally fluent. The drive for efficiency, excellence, productivity, and high performance involved capacity building in the civil service. This is influenced by commitment to manpower development to earned well trained workforce that is efficient and productive. This is anchored on the notion that a well-trained workforce is efficient and productive (Umar & Umar, 2020). Various training programmes exist to enhance capacity building and training. For instance, seminars, retreats, and workshops are designed to productivity and competence of public servants. The use of retreat is a deliberate effort to ensure that institutions are effective for service delivery. It must be stressed that in civil service, efficiency is a factor that goes beyond routine duties, or speed, but teamwork, prudent resource management, innovation, accountability, and strict adherence to ethics. The need to sustain periodic retreat has continuously contributed to workforce development and improvement. This implies that civil servant commitment and openness to retreat, workshops, and seminars improve learning and provide opportunities for best practices to unlearn unproductive habits that discourage productivity (Knezović & Greda, 2021). Hence, capacity building and training enable the strategic achievement in civil service with strategic results.

Methodology

The cross-sectional survey on the civil service reform strategies and sustainable development of the public sector covered administrative and professional staff in the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, and Cross River State Independent Electoral Commission in Calabar, with a total of 1435 civil servants. A Taro Yamane sampling formula was adopted to determine the sample size of 312. The survey research design was a descriptive design used in exploring the data. A stratified random sampling technique was used in the selection of the sample. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain relevant information. From the self-administered questionnaire, a total of 275 questionnaires were retrieved, with a response rate of 88 percent. Descriptive statistics and multicollinearity tests were used to ascertain the adequacy of the data, while the hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. Content and face validity were used to measure the research instrument on civil service reform strategies and sustainable development, while the reliability of the instrument was measured with the use of Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, which was found reliable and fit for the collection of data, as shown below:

Table 1: Coefficient reliability with Cronbach's Alpha

S/n	Variables	No. of items	Reliability
1	Digitalization and automation	5	0.723
2	Financial accountability	5	0.781
3	Capacity building and training	5	0.742
4	Sustainable development	5	0.711

Source: Author's analysis 2026

The hypotheses were tested with the use multiple regression analysis as shown below: The model for this study is specified as:

SD = f(CSRS).....(i)

SD = f(DA, FA, CBT) ..... (ii)

The econometric forms of the models are as follows:

TMP = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 DA + \beta_2 FA + \beta_3 CBT$..... .....(iii)

Where = ($\beta_1, \beta_2 - - - - \beta_4 \neq 0$) are regression coefficients.
SD = Sustainable development
DA_1 = Digitalization and automation
FA_2 = Financial accountability
CBT_3 = Capacity building and training
ε = error
β_0 = slope
α = Constant

Result and Discussion

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of civil service reform strategies and sustainable development of the public sector in Cross River State

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Digitalization and automation	275	3.83	.767	.537
Financial accountability	275	3.71	.618	.648
Capacity building and training	275	3.62	.841	.549
Sustainable development	275	4.62	.759	.749

Source: Author's analysis using SPSS, 2026

The above table provides descriptive statistics on civil service reform strategies and sustainable development of the public sector in Cross River State. The descriptive statistics of the study covered digitalization and automation, financial accountability, capacity building and training, and sustainable development, as shown below:

Descriptive analysis of digitalization and automation: Digitalization and automation as a construct were measured with a mean of 3.83, and this showed that all questions had a positive response. A standard deviation of less than 1 revealed that 69 percent of the variance was obtained from the mean. This affirmed the adequate spread of the data

Descriptive analysis of financial accountability: Financial accountability as a construct was measured with a mean of 3.71, and this showed that all questions had a positive response. A standard deviation of less than 1 revealed that 69 percent of the variance was obtained from the mean. This affirmed the adequate spread of the data

Descriptive analysis of capacity building and training: Capacity building and training as a construct was measured with a mean of 3.83, and this showed that all questions had a positive response. A standard deviation of less than 1 revealed that 69 percent of the variance was obtained from the mean. This affirmed the adequate spread of the data

Descriptive analysis of sustainable development

Sustainable development as a construct was measured with a mean of 4.62, and this showed that all questions had a positive response. A standard deviation of less than 1 revealed that 94 percent of the variance was obtained from the mean. This affirmed the adequate spread of the data

The Multicollinearity Test

Table 3: Table showing Multicollinearity Test result

Variables	Tolerance	Collinearity Statistic VIF
Digitalization and automation	.855	1.538
Financial accountability	.772	1.461
Capacity building and training	.791	1.591

Source: SPSS Analysis 2026

The multicollinearity test of the study affirmed the existence of correlation among variables. The tolerance inflation factor was used to ascertain the variation that is unexplained. However, with the multicollinearity of 0, it shows the existence of overestimation of the regression coefficient. As a rule, the tolerance must not be lower than 0.1, and the VIF must not be higher than 5. With the above analysis, the tolerance value is higher than 0.1, while the permissive value is lower than 5 for VIF

Test of Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for the study are:

Ho_1: Digitalization and automation do not significantly affect the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State

Ho_2: Financial accountability does not significantly affect the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State

Ho_3: Capacity building and training do not significantly affect the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State

Table 4: Multiple regression results on civil service reform strategies and sustainable development of the public sector in the Cross River State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.798[a]	.636	.621	.342

a. Predictors: (Constant), DA, FA, CBT

b. Dependent Variable: SD

Table 5: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) on civil service reform strategies and sustainable development of the public sector in the Cross River State

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1937.330	3	32.733	176.541	.000[b]
	Residual	161.673	272	6.94		
	Total	1775.657	275			

a. Dependent Variable: SD
b. Predictors: (Constant), DA, FA, CBT

Source: SPSS output, 2026

Table 6: Coefficients on civil service reform strategies and sustainable development of the public sector in the Cross River State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-.957	.263		-3.583	.001
	DA	.637	.073	.743	18.648	.000
	FA	.575	.058	.672	13.638	.003
	CBT	.627	.062	.681	9.727	.000

a. Dependent Variable: TMP
b. Source: SPSS output, 2026

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed on civil service reform strategies and sustainable development of the public sector in the Cross-River State. Tables 4, 5, and 6. The regression results revealed an R-value of .798, an R-square of .636, and an adjusted R-square of .621, and this indicates a good fit of the data to the model. The value of adjusted R-square (.621) implies that the variables (digitalization and automation, financial accountability, and capacity building and training) account for 62.1 percent of civil service reform strategies in Cross River State, while 38.8 percent of sustainable development was not accounted for by the variables. The three variables-digitalization and automation, financial accountability, and capacity building and training affect sustainable development as seen from their p-value, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, digitalization and automation, financial accountability, and capacity building and training have a positive slope (β) respectively, indicating that they positive effect on sustainable development. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative was accepted. This implies that digitalization and automation, financial accountability, and capacity building and training positively affect the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State

Discussion of Findings

The finding on the first hypothesis reveals that digitalization and automation significantly affect the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State (Beta = 0.743, P<0.05). In support, Olayinka-Agboola et al. (2025) stressed that digitalization and automation are accelerated to minimize costs and improve service delivery through a paperless workflow. This is confirmed by the positive outcome of the descriptive statistics of 3.83 on digitalization and automation which affect the sustainable development. This is a fact

the benefits of automation to civil service reforms improve efficiency and speed. In Cross River State, the promotion and automation applications are automated to shorten task weeks to days; digital platforms help to track audit decisions and file movement, which reduces opportunities for corruption; government services like permit applications are easily accessed through digital platforms, with convenience for citizens; and the automation of repetitive tasks enables civil servants to engage in value-added duties for policy analysis and implementation. The finding implies that the 21st century civil service processes require digitalization for efficiency and a responsive public service that meets the Sustainable Development Goals. This aligns with the work of Olugbode (2026).

The finding on the second hypothesis reveals that financial accountability significantly affect the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State (Beta = 0.672, P<0.05). In line with the finding, Mohammed et al. (2023) stressed that improving public trust and curbing corruption drive the need for financial accountability reforms. This is confirmed by the positive outcome of the descriptive statistics of 3.71 on financial accountability and sustainable development of the public sector. In Cross River State, misappropriation and embezzlement are prevented through sanctions and strict compliance with internal audit review; financial excesses are curbed through procurement regulations and the Treasury Single Account to ensure efficient use of resources; the regular audits of financial performance ensure the accuracy of financial records for better ethical governance and policy decisions; and government losses are anomalies due to enforcing accountability measures through financial reporting. The finding implies that the IPPIS and GIFMIS are considered the source of data that enhances transparency, which helps in eliminating ghost workers in the government payroll, and improves the accuracy of staff records. This affirms the work of Oguntimehin and Adewumi (2021).

The finding on the third hypothesis revealed that capacity building and training significantly affect the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State (Beta = 0.681, P<0.05). In support of the finding, Umar and Umar (2020), capacity building through human resource development is a reform in the civil service that involves training programmes to equip civil servants with the attitude, professionalism, and skills to implement policies in an effective manner. This is confirmed by the positive outcome of the descriptive statistics on capacity building and training, and sustainable development of the public sectors. In Cross River State, efficiency in work performance through training leads to the implementation of government policies; competence and professionalism bridge the skills gaps for workers to improve their soft skills and handle complex tasks effectively; ongoing training in civil service reduces apathy and improves job satisfaction with a positive attitude; and the quality of service in civil service is impacted by capacity building for better governance. The finding implies that seminars, retreats, and workshops are designed for the productivity and competence of public servants. This justifies the work of Knezović and Greda (2021).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The transformation of bureaucratic machinery into a professional and efficient system is influenced by civil service reform strategies to improve public service delivery and foster economic growth. The study reviewed the need for digitalization and automation, financial accountability, and capacity building and training on the sustainable development of the public sectors in Cross River State. Civil service reforms are strategic to reduce bureaucracy

and inefficiency, and they help to overhaul the operational processes to ensure support for sustainable development goals. Therefore, service delivery through SERVICOM, TSA, IPPIS, GIFMIS etc have offered better service delivery to the citizens. Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

i. The government should commit to the reforms to ensure that civil service processes are driven by digitalization for efficiency, and tracking of audit decisions and file movement to reduce opportunities for corruption, to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.
ii. The government should prioritize financial accountability through the Treasury Single Account, IPPIS, etc., to ensure efficient use of resources, regular audits of financial performance, and ensure the accuracy of financial records for better ethical governance and policy decisions in the civil service
iii. The government should sustain capacity building and training to enhance competence and professionalism, improve skills, and handle complex tasks effectively through seminars, retreats, and workshops to improve the productivity and competence of public servants.

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ADULT EDUCATION AS A PATHWAY TO WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT, MIGRATION ADJUSTMENT, AND SOCIAL INTERACTION: EVIDENCE FROM THE WEST AFRICA MOBILITY CORRIDOR

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Abstract
Adult education has increasingly been recognized as a transformative instrument for enhancing women's socioeconomic outcomes, particularly within dynamic migration contexts. This paper examines adult education asa critical pathway to women's employment, migration, and social integration, with specific evidence drawn from West African mobility corridors. In the West Africa region, migration is deeply embedded by regional frameworks such as free movement protocols that enable cross-border mobility for trade, employment, and education. This study adopts a qualitative and analytical approach to explore how adult education programmes particularly literacy, vocational training, and digital skills development equip women with relevant competencies and navigating migration processes. The paper reveals that adult education strengthens women's human capital, improves their participation in both formal and informal labour market and enhances their capacity for self-reliance. It further highlights that education facilitates social integration by enabling migrant women to adapt to new cultural environments, access social services, and build supportive networks within host communities. Despite these benefits, challenges such as limited access to quality education, gender inequality and precarious employment conditions persist. The study concludes that promoting inclusive and gender-responsive adult education policies is essential for maximizing the developmental benefits of migration for women in West Africa. It recommends increased investment in adult education programmes tailored to the needs of migrant women to foster sustainable employment and social integration.

Keywords: *Adult education, Women Employment, Migration and, Social Integration.*

Introduction

Adult education has increasingly been recognized as a powerful instrument for promoting socioeconomic development, reducing poverty, and enhancing the quality of life of marginalized populations across the world. In contemporary societies characterized by rapid economic, social, and demographic changes, adult education provides individuals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies necessary to participate effectively in productive activities and community development. Beyond literacy acquisition, adult education encompasses a wide range of learning opportunities designed to empower adults economically, socially, and politically. Through vocational training, entrepreneurship education, life skills development, and civic education, adult education contributes significantly to employment generation, social inclusion, and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2022). In West Africa, migration has become a prominent phenomenon due to economic disparities, unemployment, poverty, insecurity, environmental challenges, and the search for better livelihood opportunities. The region is characterized by extensive cross-border movements facilitated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, which allows citizens of member states to travel, reside, and establish businesses within the region (ECOWAS, 1979). Women constitute a significant proportion of these migrants and increasingly migrate independently in search of employment, education, safety, and improved living conditions. Female migration has transformed from being largely dependent on family reunification to becoming an important strategy for economic survival and empowerment (Adepoju, 2021). Despite the opportunities associated with migration, women migrants often encounter numerous challenges that hinder their socioeconomic advancement and integration into host communities. These challenges include unemployment, underemployment, limited access to education and vocational skills, language barriers, discrimination, social exclusion, exploitation, and inadequate access to social services. Many women migrants are employed in informal sectors characterized by low wages, poor working conditions, and limited legal protection. Such vulnerabilities frequently undermine their ability to contribute effectively to economic development and social cohesion within host societies (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2023).

Employment remains one of the most important indicators of successful migration and social integration. Gainful employment enables women migrants to achieve financial independence, improve household welfare, contribute to local economies, and participate actively in community life. However, access to decent employment opportunities often depends on the possession of relevant knowledge, competencies, and employability skills. Adult education serves as a critical mechanism through which women migrants can acquire literacy, vocational, entrepreneurial, and digital skills required to compete effectively in contemporary labour markets. Through adult learning programmes, women migrants can improve their economic prospects and overcome barriers associated with social exclusion (Bhola, 2014). Furthermore, adult education contributes significantly to social integration by facilitating intercultural understanding, social participation, civic engagement, and community cohesion. Social integration refers to the process through which migrants become accepted members of host communities while maintaining aspects of their cultural identities. Educational programmes that promote language acquisition, civic awareness, cultural orientation, and interpersonal skills can enhance migrants' capacity to interact

positively with members of host societies. Consequently, adult education helps reduce prejudice, foster mutual understanding, and strengthen social solidarity among diverse populations (Ager & Strang, 2008).

The West African Mobility Corridor presents a unique context for examining the relationship between adult education, women's employment, migration, and social integration. Countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Benin, Togo, and Niger experience substantial cross-border movements of women seeking economic opportunities and improved living conditions. While migration has the potential to enhance women's empowerment and economic participation, its benefits are often constrained by inadequate educational opportunities and weak support systems. Strengthening adult education programmes within migration corridors can therefore play a vital role in improving employment outcomes and promoting social inclusion among women migrants. It is against this background that this paper examines adult education as a pathway to women's employment, migration, and social integration within the West African Mobility Corridor. The paper explores the conceptual foundations of adult education, migration, women's employment, and social integration, while highlighting the contributions of adult education to the socioeconomic empowerment and integration of women migrants in West Africa.

Conceptual Clarification

Concept of Adult Education

Adult education is a broad field of learning that focuses on providing educational opportunities for individuals who are considered adults by their societies. It encompasses all organized educational activities designed to help adults acquire knowledge, skills, values, and competencies needed for personal development, social participation, and economic productivity. Unlike formal education, which is primarily directed at children and youth, adult education addresses the unique learning needs, experiences, and circumstances of mature learners. It is often regarded as a lifelong process that enables individuals to continuously adapt to changing social, economic, technological, and cultural environments (UNESCO, 2022). According to UNESCO (2015), adult education refers to the entire body of organized educational processes, whether formal, non-formal, or informal, through which adults develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications, and bring about changes in their attitudes and behaviour for personal development and participation in social, economic, and cultural development. This definition highlights the multidimensional nature of adult education and its role in fostering lifelong learning. Similarly, Malcolm Knowles (1980), widely regarded as the father of modern adult education, defined adult education as a process through which adults engage in systematic and sustained learning activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values. Knowles emphasized that adult learners are self-directed, possess rich life experiences, and are motivated by practical needs and immediate applications of learning. His theory of andragogy has remained one of the most influential frameworks in adult education practice. According to Nwazuoke (2013), adult education is any educational activity deliberately organized for adults to improve their knowledge, skills, and competencies in order to enhance their effectiveness in personal, occupational, and community life. This definition underscores the developmental and transformative nature of adult education addressing societal challenges and improving individual wellbeing.

The objectives of adult education extend beyond literacy acquisition. Adult education seeks to promote personal growth, economic empowerment, social inclusion, civic participation, and lifelong learning. In developing countries, adult education is frequently utilized as a strategy for poverty reduction, women empowerment, workforce development, and social transformation (Bhola, 2014). Within the context of migration, adult education serves as a critical tool for enhancing the employability and integration of migrants. Through literacy programmes, language instruction, vocational skills training, entrepreneurship education, financial literacy, and digital literacy programmes, migrants acquire the competencies necessary to adapt to new social and economic environments. Adult education also promotes cultural understanding and social cohesion by helping migrants understand the norms, values, and institutional structures of host communities (Ager & Strang, 2008). Educational programmes enable women to acquire marketable skills, improve their access to employment opportunities, increase their income-generating capacity, and participate more actively in social and civic life. Adult education also strengthens women's confidence, decision-making abilities, and resilience in confronting challenges associated with migration and social exclusion.

Concept of Women Employment

Women employment refers to the participation of women in economic activities that generate income, wages, salaries, or other forms of livelihood. It encompasses women's involvement in both formal and informal sectors of the economy, including paid employment, self-employment, entrepreneurship, agricultural production, skilled occupations, and professional services. Women's employment is widely recognized as a critical component of economic development, gender equality, poverty reduction, and social inclusion. Through productive employment, women gain financial independence, improve their living standards, contribute to household welfare, and participate actively in national development (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2023). Employment is generally defined as the engagement of individuals in productive activities for remuneration or profit. According to the ILO (2023), employment includes all work performed by persons for pay, profit, or family gain within a specified period. In the context of women, employment extends beyond wage labour to include entrepreneurial activities, small-scale enterprises, and income-generating ventures that enhance women's economic empowerment and social status. Women's employment has gained significant attention in development discourse because of its direct relationship with economic growth and human development. According to the World Bank (2024), increasing women's participation in economic activities can substantially boost national productivity and accelerate sustainable development, particularly in developing countries where women constitute a large proportion of the population. The concept of women's employment is closely linked to women's economic empowerment. Economic empowerment refers to women's ability to access productive resources, secure decent work, control income, make economic decisions, and participate effectively in economic life. In West Africa, women play a vital role in economic activities, particularly in agriculture, trade, manufacturing, and service sectors. However, many women remain concentrated in low-paying and informal occupations characterized by limited job security, inadequate social protection, and poor working conditions. Structural barriers such as gender discrimination, limited educational opportunities, restricted access to credit, cultural norms, and inadequate vocational skills

often hinder women's access to decent employment opportunities (African Development Bank, 2023). For migrant women, employment serves as one of the primary motivations for migration. Nevertheless, migrant women frequently encounter challenges such as language barriers, limited recognition of qualifications, discrimination, exploitation, and restricted access to formal employment opportunities. These obstacles often push them into informal economic activities where earnings and job security are uncertain (IOM, 2024).

Adult education plays a crucial role in enhancing women's employment opportunities by equipping them with relevant knowledge, vocational competencies, entrepreneurial capabilities, financial literacy, and digital skills. Through adult learning programmes, women acquire the competencies required to secure employment, establish businesses, adapt to changing labour market demands, and improve workplace productivity. Vocational and entrepreneurial training programmes are particularly important in helping women migrants become economically self-reliant and competitive within host communities (UNESCO, 2022). Consequently, women's employment serves not only as an economic outcome but also as a mechanism for achieving successful migration and integration experiences. Within the framework of the West African Mobility Corridor, promoting women's employment through adult education programmes is essential for achieving sustainable development, gender equality, poverty reduction, and inclusive growth. Educational interventions that improve employability and entrepreneurial capacity can significantly enhance the socioeconomic wellbeing of women migrants and strengthen their contributions to both host and origin communities.

Concept of Migration

Migration refers to the movement of people from one geographical location to another for the purpose of temporary or permanent settlement. It may occur within a country (internal migration) or across international borders (international migration). Migration is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by economic, social, political, environmental, educational, and demographic factors. Throughout history, migration has played a significant role in shaping societies, economies, and cultures by facilitating the movement of labour, knowledge, skills, and resources across different regions (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2024). According to the International Organization for Migration (2024), migration is the movement of persons away from their usual place of residence, either across an international border or within a state, regardless of legal status, causes, or duration. Migration is often explained through the push-pull theory developed by Everett S. Lee (1966). According to this theory, migration occurs because individuals are pushed away from their places of origin by unfavorable conditions such as poverty, unemployment, conflict, insecurity, and environmental degradation, while they are simultaneously attracted by pull factors such as better employment opportunities, higher wages, quality education, improved living conditions, and political stability in destination areas. The interaction of these push and pull factors significantly influences migration decisions. In West Africa, migration has become an integral component of socioeconomic life due to the region's long history of mobility and cross-border interactions. The establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the adoption of the Protocol on Free Movement of

Persons, Residence, and Establishment have further encouraged the movement of people across member states. As a result, countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Benin, Togo, Niger, and Burkina Faso experience substantial migration flows driven by trade, employment, education, and family-related reasons (Adepoju, 2021).

Adult education serves as one of the most effective mechanisms for addressing the challenges associated with migration. Through literacy education, vocational training, entrepreneurship development, language acquisition programmes, digital literacy, and civic education, adult education equips migrants with the knowledge and competencies required to adapt successfully to new environments. Educational programmes also promote awareness of rights, responsibilities, and opportunities available within host communities, thereby facilitating smoother integration processes (UNESCO, 2022). Furthermore, migration contributes significantly to economic development through remittances, labour force participation, skills transfer, and entrepreneurship. Women migrants often support their families and communities through financial remittances and investments in education, health, and small businesses. Within the West African Mobility Corridor, migration remains a central strategy for livelihood improvement and economic advancement. However, the extent to which migration translates into positive outcomes depends largely on migrants' access to education, skills development opportunities, and social support systems. Adult education therefore plays a critical role in ensuring that migration contributes effectively to women's employment, empowerment, and social integration.

Concept of Social Integration

Social integration refers to the process through which individuals or groups become accepted and actively participate in the social, cultural, economic, and political life of a community or society. It involves creating opportunities for all members of society, regardless of their background, ethnicity, nationality, gender, or social status, to enjoy equal rights, access resources, contribute meaningfully to development, and develop a sense of belonging. Social integration promotes social cohesion, mutual respect, inclusion, and harmonious relationships among diverse groups within society (United Nations, 2020). According to the United Nations (2020), social integration is the process of promoting stable, safe, and just societies where all individuals have equal opportunities and are empowered to participate fully in social, economic, cultural, and political activities. Ager A. and Strang A. (2008) define social integration as the process through which migrants establish social connections, gain access to employment, education, housing, healthcare, and civic participation, and develop a sense of belonging within host societies. Their framework identifies employment, housing, education, health, social connections, language proficiency, and rights as key indicators of successful integration. The concept of social integration encompasses several dimensions. The economic dimension relates to access to employment, income-generating opportunities, and financial stability. The social dimension involves the development of interpersonal relationships, social networks, and community participation. The cultural dimension refers to the ability to understand and interact effectively within the cultural environment of the host society while maintaining one's cultural identity. The political dimension concerns participation in civic activities, awareness of rights and responsibilities, and engagement in decision-making processes (United Nations, 2020). Many migrant women face barriers associated with limited education, restricted employment

opportunities, cultural discrimination, language difficulties, and unequal access to social services. These challenges can reduce their ability to participate fully in community life and achieve socioeconomic independence. Consequently, interventions that promote education, skills acquisition, and social inclusion are essential for improving the integration experiences of women migrants (UN Women, 2023).

Adult education plays a central role in promoting social integration among migrants. Through literacy programmes, language education, civic education, vocational training, digital literacy, and community learning initiatives, adult education helps migrants acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively in host societies. Language acquisition is one of the most important contributions of adult education to social integration. Proficiency in the language of the host community enhances communication, facilitates access to employment and public services, and strengthens social relationships. Adult education programmes that include language instruction enable migrants to overcome communication barriers and participate more actively in community activities and economic life (Ager & Strang, 2008). Civic education empowers migrants to engage in community development initiatives, participate in local governance processes, and contribute positively to social transformation. Such participation strengthens social cohesion and reduces the likelihood of exclusion and discrimination. Within the West African Mobility Corridor, social integration is particularly important because migration often involves movement across diverse linguistic, cultural, and social environments. Women migrants who possess adequate educational qualifications, vocational skills, and social competencies are more likely to secure employment, build supportive social networks, and achieve successful integration into host communities. Adult education therefore serves as a critical pathway through which migration can lead to positive social and economic outcomes.

Adult Education and Women's Employment in the West African Mobility Corridor

Adult education plays a crucial role in promoting women's employment within the West African Mobility Corridor by equipping women with the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes required to participate effectively in economic activities. In a region characterized by high rates of unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and labour mobility, adult education serves as an important mechanism for enhancing employability, improving productivity, and fostering economic empowerment among women migrants. Through literacy programmes, vocational training, entrepreneurship education, digital literacy, and continuing education initiatives, adult education enables women to overcome barriers to employment and achieve greater socioeconomic independence (UNESCO, 2022). The West African Mobility Corridor, facilitated by the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Residence, and Establishment, has created opportunities for millions of individuals to move across national borders in search of employment, education, and improved livelihoods. Women constitute a growing proportion of these migrants and are increasingly participating in labour migration independently rather than as dependents accompanying family members. This trend reflects the changing economic roles of women and their growing contributions to regional development (Adepoju, 2021). Despite these opportunities, many women migrants face significant employment-related challenges. These include low educational attainment, inadequate vocational skills, limited access to

formal employment, gender discrimination, language barriers, lack of professional certifications, and restricted access to financial resources. Consequently, many migrant women are concentrated in informal economic activities such as petty trading, domestic work, small-scale agriculture, food processing, and other low-income occupations. These sectors often provide limited job security, poor working conditions, and inadequate social protection (ILO, 2023). Adult education addresses these challenges by enhancing women's human capital. Literacy education, for instance, improves women's ability to read, write, communicate effectively, and access information necessary for employment and entrepreneurship. Women who acquire literacy skills through adult education are better positioned to access employment opportunities and engage in productive economic activities than those who remain illiterate (Bhola, 2014). Vocational education and skills training represent another important contribution of adult education to women's employment. Vocational programmes provide practical competencies in areas such as tailoring, fashion design, catering, information and communication technology, cosmetology, agriculture, handicrafts, and small-scale manufacturing. These skills enable women to secure wage employment or establish self-employment ventures. (UNESCO, 2022). Entrepreneurship education also contributes significantly to women's employment and economic empowerment. Many women migrants operate small businesses and informal enterprises as a means of livelihood. Adult education programmes that incorporate entrepreneurship training equip women with knowledge of business planning, marketing, customer relations, financial management, innovation, and enterprise development. .In recent years, digital literacy has emerged as an essential component of adult education and employment development. The rapid expansion of digital technologies and electronic commerce has transformed labour markets across West Africa. Adult education programmes that provide digital skills training enable women migrants to access online employment opportunities, engage in digital entrepreneurship, utilize financial technologies, and participate effectively in the digital economy.

Adult education further promotes women's employment by enhancing financial literacy. Financial literacy programmes help women develop skills in budgeting, savings, investment, credit management, and business finance. Such knowledge is essential for entrepreneurial success and long-term economic stability. Financially literate women are more likely to manage resources effectively, expand business operations, and improve household welfare. Consequently, financial literacy serves as a critical pathway through which adult education contributes to employment sustainability and poverty reduction among migrant women. Beyond economic benefits, employment facilitated by adult education contributes to women's empowerment and social status. Employment also enhances women's ability to support dependents, invest in education and healthcare, and contribute to local economic development. These outcomes align with broader goals of gender equality and women's empowerment promoted under the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2023). Governments, non-governmental organizations, adult education institutions, and development partners should expand access to literacy programmes, vocational training, entrepreneurship education, digital literacy initiatives, and financial inclusion programmes targeted at women migrants. Such interventions can enhance employability, promote economic empowerment, and support inclusive regional development.

Adult Education, Migration, and Social Integration in the West African Mobility Corridor

Adult education plays a fundamental role in facilitating successful migration experiences and promoting social integration among women migrants within the West African Mobility Corridor. While migration provides opportunities for improved livelihoods, employment, and socioeconomic advancement, migrants often encounter numerous challenges that hinder their full participation in host communities. Through literacy education, language acquisition, vocational training, civic education, and community learning programmes, adult education promotes inclusion, participation, and social cohesion among migrant populations (UNESCO, 2022). Migration within West Africa has intensified over the years due to economic disparities, unemployment, political instability, environmental challenges, and the search for better opportunities. The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons has facilitated mobility across member states, enabling individuals to seek employment and establish businesses in neighboring countries. While this mobility has contributed to regional integration and economic growth, it has also created challenges related to cultural adaptation, language differences, social acceptance, and access to essential services. These challenges are often more pronounced among women migrants due to gender-specific vulnerabilities and socioeconomic inequalities (Adepoju, 2021). One of the most significant ways adult education promotes social integration is through literacy development. Literacy enables migrants to communicate effectively, access information, understand public policies, complete official documentation, and engage more actively in community life. Women migrants who possess literacy skills are better equipped to navigate social institutions, access healthcare and educational services, and participate in economic activities within host communities. Literacy therefore serves as a foundation for both social and economic integration (Bhola, 2014).

Language education represents another critical aspect of adult education that facilitates social integration. West Africa is characterized by extensive linguistic diversity, with numerous indigenous and official languages spoken across the region. Migrants who are unable to communicate effectively in the language of their host communities often experience social isolation, limited employment opportunities, and difficulties accessing public services. Adult education programmes that provide language instruction help women migrants overcome communication barriers, build social relationships, and participate more effectively in community activities. Language proficiency enhances confidence and fosters a stronger sense of belonging within host societies (Ager & Strang, 2008. Adult education additionally promotes intercultural understanding and social cohesion. Educational programmes often bring together individuals from diverse cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds, creating opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and mutual learning. Such interactions help reduce stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination while fostering tolerance and respect for cultural diversity. Through community-based learning initiatives, women migrants can establish meaningful relationships with host populations and develop supportive social networks that facilitate integration (United Nations, 2020). Access to digital technologies enables migrants to obtain information, communicate with family members, access online services, participate in virtual learning opportunities, and engage in economic activities. Adult education programmes that incorporate digital literacy training empower women migrants to participate effectively in the digital society and expand

their opportunities for employment, learning, and social engagement (UNESCO, 2022). For women migrants, social integration is closely linked to empowerment. Adult education enhances self-confidence, leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and social participation. Women who are educated and economically empowered are more likely to engage in community development initiatives, advocate for their rights, and contribute to social transformation. Consequently, adult education not only supports integration but also promotes gender equality and women's empowerment within migration contexts (UN Women, 2023. In the West African Mobility Corridor, strengthening adult education programmes can significantly enhance the integration experiences of women migrants. By providing literacy, language, vocational, entrepreneurial, civic, and digital skills, adult education enables migrants to adapt successfully to new environments, participate actively in society, and contribute meaningfully to regional development. Thus, adult education serves as a vital bridge connecting migration with social inclusion, economic empowerment, and sustainable development.

Challenges Confronting Women Migrants in Accessing Adult Education, Employment, and Social Integration in the West African Mobility Corridor

Despite the significant contributions of adult education to women's employment, migration, and social integration, many women migrants in the West African Mobility Corridor continue to face numerous challenges that limit their ability to benefit fully from educational opportunities and socioeconomic participation.

i. Limited access to adult education programmes.
ii. Low literacy levels and limited educational backgrounds.
iii. Language barriers constitute obstacle to education, employment,
iv. Gender discrimination and cultural constraints that affect their participation in education and employment.
v. Unemployment and underemployment remain persistent challenges among women migrants.
vi. Limited access to financial resources and credit facilities.

Strategies for Strengthening Adult Education for Women Migrants in West Africa

The following strategies are essential for strengthening adult education for women migrants in West Africa. Expanding Access to Adult Education Programmes. Promoting Vocational and Technical Skills Development, Enhancing Entrepreneurship Education, Promoting Digital Literacy and Technological Competencies, Providing Language Education Programmes, Strengthening Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy, Adopting Gender-Sensitive Educational Approaches, Strengthening Policy Support and Regional Collaboration, Encouraging Community Participation and Partnerships, Expanding Psychosocial Support Services, and. Improving Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Conclusion

Adult education remains a powerful instrument for promoting women's employment, facilitating migration outcomes, and enhancing social integration within the West African Mobility Corridor. As migration continues to shape the socioeconomic landscape of the region, women increasingly migrate across borders in search of employment opportunities, improved livelihoods, and better living conditions. However, their ability to achieve these

aspirations is often constrained by limited educational opportunities, inadequate vocational skills, language barriers, financial exclusion, discrimination, and social marginalization. This paper has demonstrated that adult education serves as a critical pathway through which women migrants can acquire the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes required for successful economic and social participation. Through literacy programmes, vocational education, entrepreneurship training, digital literacy, language education, and civic learning initiatives, adult education enhances employability, promotes self-reliance, and strengthens social inclusion. These educational opportunities enable women migrants to secure decent employment, establish sustainable businesses, participate actively in community affairs, and contribute meaningfully to regional development.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions in this paper, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Governments in West African countries should increase investment in adult education programmes to expand access to literacy, vocational, entrepreneurial, digital, and civic education opportunities for women migrants.
ii. Adult education providers should establish flexible and community-based learning centres that accommodate the unique needs of women migrants, particularly those living in rural and underserved communities.
iii. Vocational and entrepreneurship education programmes should be strengthened and aligned with labour market demands to enhance employability and self-employment opportunities among women migrants.
iv. Digital literacy training should be integrated into adult education programmes to equip women migrants with the technological competencies required in contemporary labour markets and digital economies.

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THE IMPACT OF FORCED MIGRATION AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DUTSIN-MA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

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Abstract
This study examined the impact of forced migration and internal displacement on women and children in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria. Internal displacement remains a major humanitarian concern in Nigeria, particularly in conflict-affected northern communities, where women and children constitute the most vulnerable populations. The study sought to assess the socioeconomic and welfare conditions of displaced women and children, identify the major challenges and vulnerabilities they face, and analyze the coping strategies and community responses that shape their resilience. A mixed-methods research design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The study sampled 200 displaced women and 150 displaced children aged 6–17 years using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions, while quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and qualitative data through thematic content analysis. Findings revealed that internal displacement significantly undermines the wellbeing of women and children in Dutsin-Ma. Among women, 70% reported loss of livelihood, 65% experienced limited access to healthcare, 55% faced social marginalization, and 45% reported exposure to gender-based violence. Among children, 60% experienced disruption in schooling, 48% reported psychosocial stress, 45% experienced reduced social and recreational participation, and 33% suffered from malnutrition. Qualitative findings further highlighted the lived realities of economic hardship, insecurity, limited healthcare access, educational disruption, and psychosocial distress. Despite these challenges, displaced populations demonstrated resilience through community support networks, informal

trading, peer assistance, and localized educational initiatives. The study concludes that internal displacement in Dutsin-Ma presents multidimensional challenges requiring integrated humanitarian and policy responses that address economic recovery, healthcare access, child education, psychosocial support, and protection for vulnerable groups.

Keywords: *Forced migration, internal displacement, women, children, resilience, humanitarian crisis*

Introduction

Forced migration and internal displacement have emerged as significant humanitarian concerns that affect millions of people worldwide, often with disproportionately severe consequences for women and children. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are individuals or groups compelled to flee their homes due to armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, or disasters, without crossing an internationally recognized border (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). In Nigeria, persistent insecurity driven by insurgency, rural banditry, and communal conflicts has resulted in sustained internal displacement across multiple states, particularly in the northern region. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), an estimated 1,134,828 internally displaced persons were recorded across seven states, with over 50 percent of this population comprising minors under 18 years (NBS, 2023). Complementary displacement monitoring estimates suggest that 3.4 million Nigerians were internally displaced by the end of 2023, reflecting ongoing volatility and limited prospects for return in some areas (International Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC], 2024).

Women and children constitute a significant proportion of Nigeria's IDP population and are particularly vulnerable to the socioeconomic and protection challenges associated with displacement. Displaced women frequently encounter constrained access to livelihood opportunities, healthcare services, and social support networks, while being at heightened risk of gender-based violence and reproductive health challenges (Oluwayomi, 2024). Similarly, displaced children commonly face interrupted schooling, psychosocial stress, malnutrition, and limited access to essential services, undermining their growth and development (Anyogu, 2023). The psychosocial impacts of internal displacement on family structures further intensify these vulnerabilities, as the breakdown of traditional support systems exacerbates stress and reduces adaptive capacity (Adeyemi & Bamidele, 2022). Despite extensive national-level data and broad regional studies, there remains a dearth of localized empirical research that captures the lived experiences of internally displaced women and children within specific host communities, particularly in semi-urban contexts such as Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State. Much of the existing literature focuses on large displacement camps or conflict zones, leaving micro-level dynamics in semi-urban host communities understudied. This gap inhibits the formulation of context-responsive policies and interventions tailored to the distinctive social, economic, and cultural conditions of these settings.

Although Nigeria's internal displacement crisis is well documented at the national level, there is limited empirical evidence on how forced migration specifically affects the socioeconomic wellbeing, access to essential services, educational continuity, and protection needs of women and children in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. Without localized evidence, policymakers and humanitarian actors risk adopting generalized responses that overlook critical gendered and age-specific vulnerabilities. To address this gap, this study examines the impact of forced migration and internal displacement on women and children in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. The study is guided by the following objectives:

i. Assess the socioeconomic and welfare conditions of internally displaced women and children in Dutsin-Ma.
ii. Identify the primary challenges and vulnerabilities confronting displaced women and children, including barriers to education, health services, and protection.
iii. Analyze coping strategies and community responses that facilitate or constrain resilience among displaced households.

Hypothesis

H_0: There is no significant relationship between loss of livelihood and limited access to healthcare among displaced women.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between loss of livelihood and limited access to healthcare among displaced women.

By situating the lived experiences of women and children at the centre of analysis, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of forced migration's localized impacts and informs evidence-based humanitarian action, social policy development, and sustainable reintegration approaches.

Literature Review

Forced migration and internal displacement have become defining features of contemporary humanitarian crises, exposing millions to profound vulnerabilities. Forced migration refers to the involuntary movement of individuals fleeing conflict, violence, persecution, or disasters (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014), while internal displacement occurs when these individuals remain within their national borders yet experience similar risks to refugees, including loss of shelter, livelihoods, and social networks (UNHCR, 2020). Unlike refugees, IDPs primarily rely on their governments for protection, which is often limited or inconsistent in conflict-affected or fragile states (Kälin & Schrepfer, 2012). Scholars argue that displacement should be approached not only as a humanitarian emergency but also as a multidimensional development challenge shaped by structural inequality, weak governance, and social exclusion (Bakewell, 2014; Black et al., 2013). Despite these insights, most literature remains focused on macro-level analyses, leaving semi-urban host communities where displaced populations often integrate informally largely under examined. This gap obscures the lived experiences of women and children navigating survival, access to resources, and social cohesion in such contexts.

Globally, internal displacement has risen sharply over the past decade, driven by intrastate conflicts, environmental shocks, and political instability. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2024) estimated that over 70 million people were internally

displaced in 2023, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for a significant share. In Nigeria, the situation is particularly severe. The Boko Haram insurgency, farmer–herder conflicts, and widespread banditry have displaced millions, with the National Bureau of Statistics (2023) reporting over 1.1 million IDPs across seven states. While these figures illuminate the scale of displacement, they often mask local variations in vulnerability. Most research focuses on large camps and formal settlements, providing limited insight into the challenges faced by displaced populations living in semi-urban host communities, where support structures are weaker, and competition for resources is high (Agbiboa, 2019; International Crisis Group, 2023).

Women and children bear the brunt of displacement's social and economic consequences. Displaced women often shoulder dual responsibilities as caregivers and household providers under conditions of insecurity, loss of livelihoods, and constrained mobility (Black & Sykes, 2013; Mendleson & Crane, 2021). Empirical studies in Nigeria highlight heightened risks of gender-based violence, limited access to reproductive healthcare, and diminished participation in decision-making (Onyinyechi, 2022; Oluwayomi, 2024). Traditional support networks, such as extended kinship systems, are frequently weakened, reducing protective mechanisms (Murray, 2016). Similarly, children experience severe disruptions to education, psychosocial development, and overall wellbeing. Research has documented interrupted schooling, malnutrition, and increased exposure to exploitation in Nigerian displacement contexts (Anyogu, 2023; Nwankwo & Nnamdi, 2021). Yet much of this evidence comes from large camps or conflict epicenters, leaving the realities of children and women in semi-urban host communities largely underexplored. This lack of localized understanding underscores the need to examine how displacement interacts with everyday life, gender roles, and child development outside formal humanitarian settings.

The social and economic strategies that displaced populations adopt reveal both resilience and vulnerability. Social networks through family, religious institutions and community associations often provide critical support, facilitating access to housing, food, income, and emotional assistance (Ager & Strang, 2008; Lévêque & Pantuliano, 2019). In Nigeria, extended family ties and community solidarity have historically acted as buffers against displacement shocks (Kalu, 2021). Nevertheless, these systems are not limitless. When host communities face their own economic and infrastructural pressures, informal support may become overstretched, leaving women and children particularly exposed (Betts, Bloom, & Weaver, 2017). Moreover, resilience literature often overlooks gendered differences in coping strategies, as well as the roles children play in supporting household adaptation, highlighting a critical area for localized inquiry.

Despite the growing body of research on displacement, several gaps remain. First, there is limited micro-level evidence capturing the lived experiences of internally displaced women and children in semi-urban host communities such as Dutsin-Ma. Second, studies rarely apply intersectional analyses that account for how gender, age, and household status interact to shape vulnerability and resilience (Mendleson & Crane, 2021). Third, while coping strategies have been examined at a general level, little is known about how these strategies function in semi-urban settings with limited infrastructure and social services. Addressing these gaps is crucial for developing humanitarian interventions and policies that are context-specific, inclusive, and sensitive to the needs of women and children. In synthesis,

internal displacement is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that profoundly affects social structures, livelihoods, and wellbeing. National and global studies provide useful frameworks and data, but they do not sufficiently capture localized experiences, particularly in semi-urban areas where IDPs integrate with host populations. Women and children remain the most vulnerable groups, facing compounded risks in health, education, protection, and economic survival. By focusing on Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, the study seeks to illuminate these realities, filling gaps in empirical evidence and informing targeted, context-sensitive humanitarian policies. Aligning with Human Security Theory, this study emphasizes the protection, welfare, and empowerment of individuals, shifting attention from abstract policy to lived human experiences.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to capture both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the impact of internal displacement on women and children in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria. The area was selected due to its semi-urban character and significant population of internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in informal settlements, which remain underrepresented in research. The study population comprised displaced women aged 18 and above and children aged 6–17 years who had been displaced for at least six months, with purposive and snowball sampling techniques employed to identify 200 women and 150 children with relevant displacement experiences. Data were collected through structured questionnaires assessing demographics, socioeconomic status, and access to health and education services, complemented by semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with women, children, and community stakeholders to explore lived experiences, coping strategies, and psychosocial challenges. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS, including frequencies, means, standard deviations, and chi-square tests to examine associations between displacement-related factors and wellbeing outcomes, while qualitative data were examined using thematic content analysis, coding transcripts to identify recurring patterns and integrating them with quantitative findings for triangulation. Ethical considerations were rigorously observed: informed consent was obtained from adults, assent with parental consent for children, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and participants were provided with referrals to local support services for sensitive issues. This integrated methodology ensured a comprehensive, ethically sound, and context-sensitive understanding of the multidimensional impacts of displacement on women and children in a semi-urban Nigerian setting.

Results

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative analysis revealed substantial multidimensional impacts of internal displacement on women and children in Dutsin-Ma LGA. Among the 200 women surveyed, 70% reported loss of livelihoods, 65% reported limited access to healthcare, and 45% reported experiences of gender-based violence (GBV) (Table 1). Among 150 children surveyed, 60% experienced interruption of schooling, while 45% reported reduced participation in social and recreational activities (Table 2). These findings indicate that displacement significantly compromises economic, health, and educational dimensions of human security, aligning with the Human Security Theory framework.

Table 1: Socioeconomic and Health Impacts on Women (N = 200)

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Loss of livelihood	140	70%
Limited access to healthcare	130	65%
Exposure to gender-based violence	90	45%
Social marginalization	110	55%

Table2: Educational and Social Impacts on Children (N = 150)

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Interruption of schooling	90	60%
Reduced social/recreational participation	68	45%
Malnutrition	50	33%
Psychosocial stress	72	48%

Table 3: Chi-Square Analysis of Livelihood Loss and Healthcare Access (N = 200)

Livelihood Status	Limited Healthcare Access (Yes)	Limited Healthcare Access (No)	Total
Lost livelihood	105	35	140
Did not lose livelihood	25	35	60
Total	**130**	**70**	**200**

Inferential analysis using chi-square revealed a significant relationship between livelihood loss and healthcare access among displaced women ($\chi^2 = 19.78$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that economic hardship significantly worsens healthcare vulnerability. This result indicates that women who lost their livelihoods were significantly more likely to experience limited access to healthcare than those who retained some source of income. Specifically, 75% of women who lost their livelihoods also reported poor healthcare access, compared to 41.7% among those who did not lose livelihoods. This suggests that economic displacement intensifies health vulnerability, as reduced income limits the ability of displaced women to afford transportation, consultation fees, medication, and other healthcare-related costs.

Qualitative Findings

The thematic analysis of interviews and focus group discussions revealed four major themes: economic vulnerability, health and protection challenges, educational disruption, and resilience strategies.

Economic Vulnerability: Women described the challenges of sustaining households with lost livelihoods: a woman during FGD retorted thus;

> "*Since leaving our village, I have had no stable source of income. I sell small goods in the market, but it barely covers food for my children. Sometimes, I skip meals to feed the younger ones. Life has become very stressful, and I feel helpless at times.*"

Health and Protection Challenges: Women and children emphasized the limited access to healthcare and exposure to violence: another woman corroborated as follows;

> "*When my daughter fell sick, the nearest clinic was too far, and we could not afford treatment. At night, some men threaten us in the settlement. We feel unsafe, and it is exhausting to always watch over the children.*"

Educational Disruption: Children reported difficulties in continuing their education: a good number of children reported that they no longer attended school due to the disruption. A child corroborated that;

> "*I used to go to school every day in my hometown, but here there is no space for me in the local school. I try to study at home, but it is hard without teachers. I miss my friends and learning new things.*"

Resilience and Coping Strategies: Despite challenges, respondents showed remarkable agency: in response to coping strategies, a woman had this to say;

> "*We rely on each other in the community. Sometimes we share food, and women help each other with small trades. I also teach younger children in the neighborhood while others work, so at least they do not forget their lessons.*"

Triangulating quantitative and qualitative data illustrates that displacement in semi-urban settings like Dutsin-Ma is multidimensional, affecting economic, health, educational, and psychosocial wellbeing. While tables 1 and 2 quantify the extent of these impacts, qualitative narratives provide depth, revealing how women and children navigate daily survival, cope with insecurity, and utilize community networks to mitigate risks. Notably, the resilience strategies reported that there is high amount of peer support, informal teaching and, small-scale trade, these highlight the agency of displaced populations even under persistent vulnerabilities. The findings of this study support the Human Security Theory perspective, showing that interventions must address multiple interrelated domains rather than isolated challenges.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that internal displacement in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area profoundly affects the lives of women and children, exposing them to a range of interconnected vulnerabilities. Many women reported the loss of livelihoods, limited access to healthcare, and constant worries about their families' wellbeing, echoing global and national trends showing that displaced populations in Nigeria face severe multidimensional challenges (IDMC, 2024; National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Children, too, experience disrupted schooling, reduced social engagement, and heightened emotional stress, which mirrors evidence from previous studies on the psychosocial and educational impacts of displacement in semi-urban settings (Anyogu, 2023; Nwankwo & Nnamdi, 2021).

These experiences illustrate the interwoven nature of displacement challenges, for example, when women lose their sources of income, it limits their ability to afford healthcare or nutritious food, which then affects the health and development of their children. Similarly, disrupted schooling and reduced social interaction compound children's stress and sense of instability. These findings reflect the Human Security Theory perspective, emphasizing that human wellbeing is multidimensional, and threats in one area often spill over into others (UNDP, 1994). Despite these challenges, the study also highlights the remarkable resilience and agency of displaced women and children. Women reported turning to small-scale trading, relying on informal community support, and organizing peer networks to help one another meet daily needs. Children described helping their siblings with schoolwork or teaching younger children in the neighborhood, ensuring some continuity in learning despite limited access to formal schools. These coping strategies, while not solving structural

problems, demonstrate the resourcefulness and determination of displaced families to survive and adapt (Ager & Strang, 2008; Kalu, 2021).

The findings further emphasize the gendered and age-specific dimensions of displacement, women are often burdened with both caregiving and household responsibilities, exposing them to exhaustion, stress, and potential exploitation. Children, meanwhile, face the dual pressures of interrupted education and psychosocial insecurity. This underscores the need for intersectional approaches in humanitarian programming, recognizing how age, gender, and family status shape the experience of displacement and resilience (Mendleson & Crane, 2021). From a practical perspective, these results point to the importance of holistic, human-centered interventions. Semi-urban host communities like Dutsin-Ma require support that addresses economic, health, education, and psychosocial needs simultaneously. Programs that build on existing community networks, involve women and children in planning and decision-making, and provide safe spaces for learning and psychosocial recovery are likely to be most effective. In this way, humanitarian efforts can not only address immediate vulnerabilities but also empower displaced populations to rebuild their lives with dignity. It is therefore deduced, that displacement in Dutsin-Ma is more than a physical relocation, it is a complex human experience affecting every aspect of daily life. While women and children face substantial challenges, their resilience, agency, and reliance on social networks reveal the potential for adaptive solutions. Effective interventions must therefore be context-specific, comprehensive, and centered on the lived realities of those most affected, bridging gaps across economic, educational, health, and psychosocial domains to promote long-term human security.

Conclusion

Internal displacement in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area significantly affects women and children, creating intertwined economic, health, educational, and psychosocial challenges. Women struggle to provide for their families amid insecurity and limited access to essential services, while children face disrupted schooling, emotional stress, and reduced social interaction. Despite these hardships, displaced populations demonstrate remarkable resilience, relying on informal community networks, small-scale trade, and peer support to survive and adapt. Guided by Human Security Theory, this study emphasizes that effective interventions must be holistic, human-centered, and context-specific, addressing multiple dimensions of wellbeing.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, four key recommendations are drawn for the study as follows:

i. Implement integrated support programs that simultaneously address healthcare, education, psychosocial needs, and economic empowerment.
ii. Strengthen and leverage community and peer support networks to enhance resilience.
iii. Actively involve displaced women and children in program design and decision-making to ensure interventions are responsive and empowering.
iv. Develop sustainable strategies that bridge immediate humanitarian assistance with long-term development goals, fostering social cohesion and stability within semi-urban host communities.

By adopting these approaches, policymakers and humanitarian agencies can transform vulnerability into opportunity, improving the safety, wellbeing, and long-term resilience of displaced populations in Dutsin-Ma and similar contexts.

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THE ROLE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN PROMOTING TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND INDUSTRIALIZATION FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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Abstract
Trade, investment, and industrialization are essential drivers of sustainable economic development in Africa. However, the success of these economic activities largely depends on the availability of skilled and knowledgeable individuals who can participate effectively in productive economic sectors. Adult education plays a significant role in building human capacity by equipping adult learners with relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies needed for economic empowerment. This paper examines the role of adult education in promoting trade, investment, and industrialization for sustainable economic development in Africa. The study adopts a conceptual approach by analyzing existing literature on adult education and economic development. It highlights how adult education programmes such as vocational training, entrepreneurship education, financial literacy, and digital skills development contribute to enhancing economic participation and productivity among adult learners. The paper also discusses challenges affecting the effective utilization of adult education for economic transformation, including inadequate funding, poor training infrastructure, and limited policy implementation. The paper concludes that strengthening adult education programmes and integrating economic skill development into adult learning systems are essential for promoting trade, attracting investment, and supporting industrial growth in Africa.

Keywords*: Adult education, Trade Development, Investment Promotion, Industrialization, Economic Development*

Introduction

Sustainable economic development remains a major goal for nations across the world, especially in developing economies where unemployment, poverty, and low industrial productivity persist. Countries like Nigeria continue to face structural challenges such as weak industrial bases, low participation in global trade, and insufficient investment inflows. These challenges are largely linked to inadequate human capital development and limited access to functional education among the adult population. Adult education has been identified as a critical strategy for addressing these challenges by equipping individuals with relevant knowledge, vocational skills, and entrepreneurial competencies. According to UNESCO (2016), adult learning and education are essential for empowering individuals and promoting inclusive economic growth. Similarly, World Bank (2022) emphasizes that skills development is a key driver of productivity and global competitiveness. From a theoretical perspective, Schultz (1961) and Gary (1993) argue that investment in education improves workers' productivity, thereby enhancing economic performance. In line with this, adult education contributes to economic transformation by upgrading the skills of the labour force and promoting innovation. Furthermore, the role of education in facilitating trade, attracting investment, and promoting industrialization has gained increasing attention in global development discourse. UNCTAD (2021), notes that human capital development significantly influences foreign direct investment inflows, while international Labour Organization (2020) highlights the importance of skills development in driving industrial growth.

Conceptual framework or Conceptual Clarification

Trade plays a fundamental role in economic development by facilitating the exchange of goods and services across local and international markets. In contemporary economies, trade has expanded to include digital trade, services trade, and participation in global value chains. The World Trade Organization (2023) emphasizes that global trade competitiveness increasingly depends on innovation, skills, and productivity. The Central Bank of Nigeria (2023) reports that Nigeria's trade performance is heavily dependent on non-oil exports, which require improved skills and productivity. Similarly, the World Bank (2020) notes that trade enhance economic efficiency, promote specialization, and increases national income. The National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria (2022) highlights that weak industrial capacity and low skill levels continue to limit Nigeria's competitiveness in international trade. Aremu and Ogunyemi (2021) argue that expansion in developing economies is largely dependents on human capital development and entrepreneurship skills. Furthermore, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2022) highlights that countries with strong human capital and technological capabilities are better positioned to benefit from international trade. In addition, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2022) asserts that trade integration contributes to economic diversification and industrial competitiveness, particularly in developing economies. Economically, trade contributes to development through several channels. It promotes market expansion, enabling producers to access larger market beyond their domestic economic. It also facilities technology transfer and innovation, as countries are exposed to new ideas, production techniques, and technologies through international exchange. Furthermore, trades stimulate investment flows, as investors are attracted to economics with open and competitive market. In addition,

Olorunfemi (2022) notes that digital literacy and vocational competencies significantly enhance small business participation in both domestic and international markets. These findings

Investment, particularly foreign direct investment (FDI), is a key driver of economic growth an structural transformation. it provides capital, technology, managerial expertise, and access to global markets. According to the UNCTAD (2023), global investment flows are significantly influenced by the availability of skilled labour and institutional quality. The International Monetary Fund (2022) emphasizes that investment enhances productivity and supports long-term economic stability. Similarly, the World Bank (2021) notes that sustained investment in human capital and infrastructure are essential for economic competitiveness. Olayiwola and Adeleke (2021) found that investment growth is strongly linked t workforce skills and educational attainment. Furthermore, Okeke and Eze (2022) argue that weak technical and vocational education systems in Nigeria limit the country's ability to attract industrial and technological investment. This reforces the importance of adult education in improving investment attractiveness through skills development. Recent empirical studies (Almamary & Alraja, 2022; Alferach, 2022) further indicate that economies with strong educational systems attract more stable and innovation-driven investments. This underscores the importance of human capital development in shaping investment patterns.

Industrialization is a critical process of economic transformation involving the shift from agrarian-based production to manufacturing and technology driven systems. In the modern era. Industrialization is increasingly characterized by digitalization, automation, and innovation. the United Nations industrial Development Organization (2022) states that industrial development is essential for job creation, economic diversification, and technological advancement. Similarly, the World Bank (2023) emphasizes that industrial growth depends on skills development, innovation, and infrastructure. in addition, the international Labour Organization (2020) highlights that industrialization requires a skilled workforce capable of adapting to technological changes. The National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria (2022) shows that manufacturing contributes less than expected to GDP due to inadequate skills and weak infrastructure. Akinwale (2021) argues that industrialization in Nigeria requires a skilled workforce capable of operating modern technologies. Furthermore, Bello and Yusuf (2023) found that technical and vocation education significantly improves industrial productivity and employment generation in Nigeria. This confirms that industrialization is strongly dependent on continuous skills development. Furthermore, Alhalbul (2023) also show that technological competence and continuous learning are key determinants of industrial productivity.

Sustainable Economic Development

Sustainable economic development refers to the pattern of economic growth that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations, to meet their own needs. It integrates economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development. The United Nations, (2015), emphasizes that sustainable development involves inclusive growth, poverty reduction, environmental protection, and social equity. According to United Nations Development Programme (2021) sustainable economic development requires investment in human capital innovation, and institutional capacity. It also involves creating

opportunities for all individuals to participate in economic activities. Adult education plays a significant role in achieving sustainable economic development by promoting lifelong learning enhancing employability, and empowering individuals with skills needed for economic participation. It supports inclusive growth by targeting marginalized populations, including women and rural communities (UNESCO, 2022; Unterhalter, 2019)

Role of Adult Education in Promoting Trade

Adult education plays a crucial role in strengthening trade performance by developing the skills, knowledge, and competencies and individuals and enterprises need to participate effectively in local and global markets. In contemporary economies, trade is no longer limited to physical exchange of goods, it increasingly depends on skills, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and innovation, all of which are strongly influenced by adult learning systems. Development of Entrepreneurial and Business Skills: Adult education equips learners with practical business competencies such as marketing, bookkeeping, negotiation, and customer relations. These skills enable adults to establish and manage small and medium enterprises which are key drivers of domestic and international trade. According to World Bank (2020), entrepreneurship skills significantly improve participation in market activities and enhance trade competitiveness in developing economies.

Enhancement of Financial Literacy: Trade activities require sound financial decision-making, including pricing cost control, and investment planning. Adult education improves financial literacy, enabling individuals to manage resources effectively and make informed business decisions. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020) emphasizes that financially literate individuals are more likely to engage successfully in business and trade activities. Promotion of Digital and E-Commerce Skills: in the digital economy, trade increasingly occurs through online platforms and electronic commerce systems. Adult education provides training in ICT and digital tools, enabling individuals to access wider markets beyond their immediate environment. The International Telecommunication Union (2022) notes that digital skills are essential for participation in modern trade systems, especially in emerging economies. Olawale and Ojo (2022) found that digital skills training significantly improves the ability of Nigerian small-scale entrepreneurs to engage in online trade and expand their customer base.

Improvement of Product Quality and Market Competitiveness: Adult education enhances technical and vocational skills, which improve the quality of goods and services produced. Higher product quality increases competitiveness in both domestic and international markets the UNESCO (2021) highlights that vocational education contribute significantly to productivity and market readiness. According to Bello and Yusuf (2023) technical skills acquired through adult education programmes enhance productivity and enable traders and producers to meet market standards, thereby increasingly competitiveness in both domestic and international. Finally, Adult education promotes innovation and adaptability, enabling trader to respond effectively to changing market conditions. Ezeani (2022) argues that continuous learning is essential for small business survival and expansion in competitive market such as Nigeria.

Role of Adult Education in Promoting Investment

Adult education plays a strategic role in promoting investment by developing the human capital, entrepreneurial capacity, and technical competencies required to attract and sustain both domestic and foreign investment. In developing economies such as Nigeria, investment growth id strongly influenced by the availability of skilled labour, innovation capacity, and business competence all of which are enhanced through adult education. Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Business Development: Adult education foster entrepreneurship by providing training in business planning, financial management, and enterprise development. These competencies enable individuals to establish viable businesses that attract both local and foreign investors. According to Oduran (2020), adult education is a key instrument for economic empowerment in Africa because it transforms individuals into productive entrepreneurs capable of mobilizing resources for investment. Similarly, Akinwale (2021) argues that entrepreneurship education in Nigeria significantly improves business survival rates and encourages private sector investment participation.

Improvement of Financial Literacy and Investment Decision-Making: Investment decisions require strong financial literacy, including knowledge of savings, budgeting, risk management, and capital allocation. Adult education enhances these competencies, enabling individuals and business owners to make informed investment choices. The Central Bank of Nigeria (2022) reports that improved financial literacy increases participation in formal financial systems and encourages investment in productive ventures. likewise, Olawale and Ojo (2022) found that financially literate adults are more likely to engage in business expansion ad investment activities in Nigeria. Development of Technical and Vocational Skills for Industrial Investment: Investment in industrial sectors depends heavily on the availability of skilled technical workers. Adult education provides vocational and technical training that supports industrial development and attracts investment in manufacturing and production sectors. The International Labour Organization (2020) also emphasizes that skills development is a key factor in attracting productive investment in emerging economies.

Enhancement of Human Capital and Investment Attractiveness: Adult education improves the quality of human capital by equipping individuals with relevant skills, knowledge, and competencies needed in the labour market. A skilled workforce is a major determinant of investment decisions, particularly foreign direct investment FDI). The UNCTAD (2023) emphasizes that countries with strong human capital development attract higer and more sustainable investment inflows. In Nigeria, the Central Bank of Nigeria (2023) notes that weak skill levels remain a major constraint to investment growth. This suggests that improving adult education systems can significantly enhance Nigeria's investment climate.

Role of Adult Education in Promoting Industrialization

Adult education plays a fundamental role in promoting industrialization by developing the technical skills, vocational competencies, and innovative capacities required for modern industrial growth. In developing economies such as Nigeria, industrialization is largely constrained by skill shortages, low technological capacity, and inadequate workforce development. Adult education provides a strategic pathway for addressing these challenges by equipping adults with industry-relevant skills and competencies.

Development of Technical and Vocational Skills: One of the most significant contributions of adult education to industrialization is the provision of technical and vocational skills required for manufacturing and production processes. Through adult learning programmes, individuals acquire competencies I areas such as engineering, fabrication, ICT, and production management. According to the International Labour Organization (2020), industrial development depends heavily on the availability of a skilled workforce capable of operating modern technologies. Similarly, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (2022) emphasizes that vocational training is essential for building industrial capacity in developing countries. In Nigeria, Bello and Yusuf (2023) found that technical and vocational education significantly improves productivity in manufacturing sector and enhances industrial output.

Enhancement of Workforce Productivity and Efficiency: industrialization requires a productive and efficient workforce capable of meeting production demands. Adult education improves workforce efficiency by updating workforces' skills and introducing them to modern industrial practices. The World Bank (2022), notes that low productivity remains a major barrier to industrial growth in Nigeria, largely due to inadequate skills development. Similarly, Akinwale (2021) argues that continuous adult learning is essential for improving labour productivity in Nigeria's industrial sector. Promotion of Technological adaptation and innovation**:** Modern industrialization is driven by technology, automation, and innovation. Adult education supports industrialization by equipping individuals with digital literacy and technological competences required in modern production system. According to UNIDE (2022), countries that invest in skills development are better positioned to adopt advanced industrial technologist. In Nigeria, Ezeani (2022), observes that adult education enhances innovation capacity and enable workers to adapt to technological change in the industrial sector.

Support for entrepreneurship and industrial enterprises: Adult education promotes entrepreneurship, which is a key driver of industrial development through training in business management, production techniques, and enterprises development, adult are empowered to establish small and medium scale industries. The National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria (2023) indicates that SMEs contributes significantly to Nigerians industrial base but are limited by inadequate skills. Similarly, Aremu & Adeyemi (2021) argued that entrepreneurship education enhances industrial participation and business sustainability in Nigeria.

Creation of employment opportunity: Industrialization driven by skilled labor leads to job creation and poverty reduction. Adult education equips individual with employable skills that enable them to participate in industrial activities or establish their own enterprises. The international labor organization (2020) confirms that skills development is essential for employment generation in industrial economics. In Nigeria, Bello & Yusuf (2023) found that vocational training significantly reduce un employment by increasing access to industrial job.

Challenges in Adult Education for Trade, Investment, and Industrialization

i. Despite the significant role adult education can play in supporting economic development in Africa; several challenges limit its effectiveness in promoting trade, investment, and industrialization. One of the major challenges is inadequate funding of adult education programmes. Many African governments allocate limited financial resources to adult and non-formal education compared to other sectors of the education programmes often lack adequate learning materials, infrastructure, and skilled facilitators needed to effectively deliver economic and entrepreneurial training.
ii. Another challenge is limited access to adult education opportunities, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Many adults who could benefit from programmes related to entrepreneurship, vocational training, and business development are unable to participate due to geographical barriers, poor learning facilities, and lack of awareness about available programmes. This limitation reduces the potential contribution of adult education to economic participation and productivity.
iii. Inadequate integration of modern economic skills into adult education curricula also presents a challenge. In many cases, adult education programmes focus primarily on basic literacy and numeracy without incorporating essential skills related to modern trade practices, digital entrepreneurship, financial management, and industrial production. Consequently, learners may not acquire the competencies needed to effectively participate in contemporary economic activities. Another significant challenge is low digital literacy among adults which restricts their ability to participate in global trade and digital markets. In today's globalized economy, trade investment opportunities are increasingly facilitated through digital platforms. Adults who lack digital skills may therefore be excluded from emerging economic opportunities.
iv. Low Motivation and Awareness many adults are unaware of available educational opportunities or the benefits of participating in programmes. Studies shows low enrollment in financial literacy programmes in perceived in relevance.

Strategies for Strengthening Adult Education for Trade, Investment, and Industrialization in Africa

To enhance the contribution of adult education to economic development in Africa, several strategic measures should be implemented.

i. Government should increase funding and policy support for adult education programmes. Adequate financial investment will help improve infrastructure provide modern learning recourses, and train competent adult educators capable of delivering relevant economic and entrepreneurial education.
ii. Adult education curricular should be restructured to include practical economic skills such as entrepreneurship development, vocational training financial literacy digital literacy and business management. Integrating these competencies into adult learning programmes will enable learners to actively participate in trade activities, Attract investment opportunities and contribute to industrial productivity.
iii. Another important strategy is the strengthening of partnership between adult education institutions and economic sectors, including industries, trade

organization, financial institution, and development agencies. Such collaborations can facilitate skill development programmes, industrial apprenticeship, and entrepreneurship training that aligns with labour market demand.

iv. Additionally, the integration of digital technologies into adult education programmes is essential. Digital learning platform, online training programmes, and mobile learning technologies can expand access to economic education and equip adult with the digital skill needed to participate in global training and e-commerce activities.

Implication for Adult Education Policy and Practice in Africa

The discussion on the role of adult education in promoting trade, investment, and industrialization has several important. Implication for educational policy and practice in Africa.

i. There is a need for policy reform that recognizes adult education as a strategic tool for economic development. Government in African countries should integrate adult education programmes into National development policies. Particularly those related to trade promotion, Investment attraction, and industrial growth. By doing so, adult education will receive the institutional support required to contribute effectively to economic transformation.

ii. Another important implication is the need to reorient adult education curricular towards economic empowerment and productivity. Adult learning programmes should be moved beyond basic literacy to including entrepreneurship education, vocational training, financial literacy, digital skills, and trade related competencies. Such curriculum reforms will enable adult learners to acquire practical skills that support participation in trade activities, business creation, and industrial production.

iii. Furthermore, the findings highlight the important of strengthening collaboration between adult education institution and economic sectors, such as industries, financial institution, trade organization, development agencies. Such partnerships can enhance the practical relevance of adult education programmes by providing learners with opportunies for vocational training industrial attachment. Entrepreneurship mentorship, and assess to investment opportunities.

iv. Finally, the integration of digital technologies into adult education practice is essentials. As trade and investment activities increasingly rely on digital platform, adult learners must development competencies that enable them to participate effectively in modern economic system. Incorporating digital learning tools and online training platform into adult education programmes will therefore enhance the capacity of adult learners to engage in digital trade, e-commerce, and innovation driving industries.

Conclusion

Adult education is a critical driver of sustainable economic development in Africa, directly influencing trade, investment, and industrialization. Through literacy, vocational training, entrepreneurship, and digital skills programmes. Adult education equips individuals with the knowledge and competencies required to participate effectively in economic activities Trade benefits from adult education through enhanced market literacy, financial

management skills, and access o modern trading platforms Investment is strengthened as adults acquire financial literacy, risk assessment, and entrepreneurial competencies Industrialization is facilitated by technical and vocational education, producing a workforce capable of engaging with modern manufacturing and service industries . Despite its benefits, adult education in Africa faces significant challenges, including limited access, inadequate resources, low awareness, and weak policy implementation (Selwyn, 2016; UNESCO, 2022). Addressing these challenges is essential to fully harness adult education as a tool for economic transformation. Adult education is not merely a social service but a strategic economic imperative. By investing in adult learning programmes. African countries can build human capital, stimulate trade, encourage investment, and support industrial growth. Consequently, adult education contributes directly to achieving the sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to decent work, economic growth, industry, innovation, and quality education

Recommendation

To maximize the impact of adult education on trade, investment, and industrialization, the following recommendations are proposed;

i. Expand Access to adult Education Programmes: Government and stakeholders should establish adult education centers rural and underdeserve communities while leveraging digital platform to reach remote learners (Salmon, 2019; Ajadi & Salawu, 2020).
ii. Increasing Funding and Resource Allocation: Adequate financial support, modern equipment, and skilled instructors are essential to deliver - quality adult education programmes that meet market and industrial demands (Lawal, 2018)
iii. Enhance Awareness and Motivation: Awareness campaigns should highlight th economic benefits of adult education, emphasizing how literacy, vocational skills, and entrepreneurship directly support trade, investment, and industrial participation.
iv. Strengthen Policy Implementation and Institutional Support: Government should ensure that adult education policies are well-coordinated, regularly monitored and aligned with national economic development strategies (Adeyanju, 2022; UNIDO 2019).

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THE SLAVERY PARADOX: FOREIGN DEBT AND NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY

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Abstract
This article investigates the "Slavery Paradox" in Nigeria—a structural condition where political independence is undermined by chronic foreign loan dependence. With Nigeria's external debt exceeding $45 billion by 2025 and debt servicing consuming the vast majority of retained revenue, the nation faces a fiscal trap that prioritises external creditors over essential social investments. The study argues that Nigeria's reliance on foreign loans, governed by stringent international conditionalities, functions as a mechanism of neocolonial control that systematically erodes economic sovereignty and hollows out post-colonial autonomy. Adopting a qualitative research design with systematic document analysis, the article synthesises historical fiscal data, policy surveillance reports, and conceptual reviews from 1960 to 2025. It utilises neocolonialism theory to explain the macro-level power dynamics of international lending and structural adjustment theory to analyse the technical mechanisms through which sovereignty is diminished. Findings reveal a "revolving door" of capital flight, where borrowed funds are frequently diverted to offshore accounts, further depleting national wealth, while domestic debt has simultaneously ballooned to ₦76.59 trillion, creating a "dual debt trap." The article concludes that reclaiming sovereignty requires a strategy of "strategic decoupling." It recommends that fiscal measures must be restructured to prioritise domestic welfare and industrialisation over creditor-mandated revenue extraction. By critically examining developmental experiences from Botswana, Rwanda, and Vietnam—while acknowledging their distinct political economies—Nigeria can chart a context-sensitive path from debt-induced subservience toward a self-reliant developmental state.

Keywords: *Slavery Paradox, Economic Sovereignty, Foreign Loan Dependence, Neocolonialism, Structural Adjustment, Domestic Debt*

Introduction

In January 2025, Nigeria's federal government debt-servicing costs reached ₦696.27 billion, exceeding its retained revenue of ₦483.47 billion by 144 percent and resulting in zero allocation for capital projects (Punch, 2025; BusinessDay, 2025). This occurred amid a crippling economic downturn marked by 34 percent inflation (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2025) and widespread food insecurity (Ukwe, 2025)—a stark reminder that the nation's fiscal chains, forged in the fires of foreign lending, continue to bind its post-colonial aspirations. This scenario, where external creditors dictate budgetary priorities, exemplifies the "slavery paradox": a modern bondage in which political independence coexists with economic subjugation, as debt repayments eclipse investments in infrastructure, education, and health.

Nigeria's post-colonial trajectory has been inextricably linked to foreign loan dependence, with external debt ballooning to $45.98 billion by the first quarter of 2025, representing a 6.9 percent increase from the previous quarter and surpassing the $43 billion peak of September 2024 (Debt Management Office [DMO], 2025). This reliance, often facilitated through International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank facilities, imposes stringent conditionalities—privatisation mandates, subsidy removals, and fiscal austerity—that erode economic sovereignty by constraining policy autonomy and perpetuating neocolonial control (Dreher, Sturm, & Vreeland, 2015). Empirical analyses reveal that such loans, while ostensibly for development, triggered structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s and beyond, leading to deindustrialisation, currency devaluation, and heightened inequality. This is supported by fiscal data showing debt servicing consuming as much as 97 percent of federal revenues in recent periods (World Bank, 2023), diverting critical resources from domestic priorities.

Critically, the debt challenge extends beyond external obligations. By mid-2025, Nigeria's total public debt had reached ₦152.4 trillion, representing a 348.6 percent increase since President Bola Tinubu assumed office in 2023, with domestic debt alone standing at ₦76.59 trillion (Udunze, 2025; Leadership, 2025). The IMF has warned that Nigeria's growing reliance on domestic borrowing—with interest payments exceeding 30 percent of government revenues—has deepened the "bank-sovereign nexus," exposing the financial system to sovereign risk and crowding out private-sector credit (IMF, 2025; Leadership, 2025). This "dual debt trap" means Nigeria faces simultaneous pressure from external creditors and domestic financial markets, each imposing distinct constraint on fiscal policy.

In the current era, the slavery paradox manifests in Nigeria's vulnerability to global financial shocks, where multilateral creditors hold a significant portion of the external debt portfolio (DMO, 2025), enforcing reforms that prioritise creditor interests over national self-determination. This was clearly evidenced by the doubled local cost of a $3.4 billion IMF loan repayment in April 2025, a direct consequence of the severe depreciation of the naira (Financial Times, 2025). Yet paradoxically, recent IMF assessments acknowledge that Nigeria's reforms—including fuel-subsidy removal and exchange-rate unification—have improved macroeconomic stability, with growth accelerating to 3.4 percent in 2024 and inflation moderating to 23.7 percent by April 2025 (IMF, 2025). This tension between

stabilisation gains and continued social hardship lies at the heart of the slavery paradox: reforms demanded by creditors may produce macroeconomic indicators that satisfy international markets while failing to translate into improved living conditions for citizens.

This article argues that Nigeria's chronic dependence on foreign loans embodies the "slavery paradox," perpetuating neocolonial dependencies through conditionalities and fiscal entrapment that systematically erode economic sovereignty, thereby hindering sustainable development and reinforcing imperial economic structures in the post-colonial era. However, the article moves beyond simplistic external-exploitation narratives to examine how domestic political and economic elites—the "comprador bourgeoisie"—actively participate in and benefit from this arrangement, creating a symbiotic relationship between global creditors and local power holders (Fanon, 1963; Osoba, 1978). The article will utilise neocolonialism and structural adjustment theories. While neocolonialism explains the broader political and economic power relationship and answers "why" this is happening, structural adjustment theory explains the specific, technical mechanisms through which this control is enforced, answering "how" it happens. Together, this combination adeptly moves from the macro-level of international power dynamics down to the micro-level of national budget cuts and privatisation, offering a comprehensive explanation for the erosion of Nigerian economic sovereignty.

Methodology

A qualitative, critical interpretive design synthesises multi-sectoral data with critical theory to map Nigeria's diminished policy autonomy from 1960 through the 2025 fiscal crises. Systematic document analysis integrates fiscal records, policy documents, media reports, and theoretical literature (Bowen, 2009). Purposive stratified sampling captured the macro-logic of international finance and micro-mechanisms of domestic implementation (Patton, 2015). Primary quantitative data on debt stocks, debt-service-to-revenue ratios, and creditor composition came from the DMO and CBN (1960–2025), cross-validated with World Bank and IMF Article IV Consultations (2022–2025). Surveillance reports from the NBS and authoritative media (Punch, BusinessDay, Financial Times, Premium Times, Leadership) covered the 2023–2025 period, enabling triangulation (Denzin, 1978). Botswana, Rwanda, and Vietnam were selected as post-colonial states that managed debt while achieving sustained growth; they offer contextualised insights, not direct models. Theoretical sampling identified foundational and contemporary literature on neocolonialism, structural adjustment, and economic sovereignty.

Critical Thematic Analysis (CTA) identifies patterns while attending to power and ideology (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Fairclough, 2013). Stage 1 coded documents into four themes: Policy Autonomy Erosion, Fiscal Entrapment, Elite Agency (Compradorism), and Institutional Reshaping, with investigator triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Stage 2 applied neocolonialism to explain external control and structural adjustment theory to map the technical surrender of the national budget. Stage 3 used framing analysis to determine how domestic policy narratives align with creditor expectations (Entman, 1993). Credibility was enhanced by tethering arguments to fiscal data, such as the 144 percent debt-service-to-revenue ratio. Dependability and confirmability were addressed through clear documentation and reflexive attention to normative commitments (Guba &

Lincoln, 1989). Limitations include the qualitative, discourse-based design and reliance on documented capital flight rather than elite interviews. Future research could use quantitative longitudinal studies and elite interviews.

Conceptual Framework

Economic Sovereignty

Economic sovereignty is the unencumbered right to self-determination in fiscal policy including the ultimate authority to formulate and execute policies regarding taxation structures and government spending (public-expenditure allocations), monetary policy including independent control over tools such as interest rates and money supply, trade regulation covering the authority over strategic trade policies, and development policy such as the right to undertake national development planning that fosters self-reliant growth (Guobadia, 1998). Economic sovereignty represents a foundational pillar of a nation's autonomy in the post-colonial era. In the African context, however, this sovereignty has been systematically undermined since political independence. Colonial legacies deliberately left economies structurally oriented toward the extraction and export of raw materials, which rendered them vulnerable to global market fluctuations and consistent external interventions (Ukponu, Okaruefe, Sulayman, Afonne, & Odusola, 2022). This structural dependency continues to pose a significant challenge to achieving true economic independence.

Contemporary scholarship has refined the concept to distinguish between juridical sovereignty—the formal legal independence recognised in international law—and empirical sovereignty—the substantive capacity to exercise autonomous control over national affairs (Jackson, 1990). The slavery paradox, as developed in this article, captures precisely the disjuncture between these two forms: Nigeria possesses juridical sovereignty as an independent nation-state, yet its empirical sovereignty is systematically constrained by debt obligations and creditor conditionalities. Foreign Loan Dependence. Foreign loan dependence refers to a structural economic condition in which a country relies persistently and substantially on external borrowing to finance its development expenditures, cover fiscal deficits, maintain balance-of-payments equilibrium, or sustain basic economic functions (Checherita-Westphal & Rother, 2012; Ajayi, 1991). This dependence is characterised by a continuous need for foreign capital inflows through bilateral loans, multilateral lending institutions, or international capital markets. Crucially, this persistent reliance often results in escalating debt-service obligations that inevitably constrain domestic policy autonomy and erode economic sovereignty (Checherita-Westphal & Rother, 2012).

The condition manifests when a nation's domestic savings and revenue-generation capacity prove insufficient to meet investment requirements and government expenditures, necessitating recurrent external financing (Ajayi, 1991). Foreign loan dependence typically exhibits path-dependent characteristics—a self-reinforcing mechanism whereby initial borrowing creates conditions, such as heavy debt-service burdens and weakened domestic resource mobilisation, that perpetuate the need for additional external financing (Krugman, 1988). The accumulation of debt compels fresh loans merely to service existing obligations, draining scarce foreign-exchange reserves and leading to further indebtedness. In post-colonial economies, foreign loan dependence emerges as an entrenched structural

vulnerability, characterised by recurrent reliance on external borrowing to bridge fiscal deficits, stabilise balance-of-payments imbalances, and fund ostensibly developmental initiatives. In Nigeria, this dependence intensified following the post-1970s oil-boom bust. External debt ballooned from approximately $5 billion in 1980 to over $42.1 billion by March 2024, driven largely by loans from multilateral lenders such as the IMF and the World Bank (DMO, 2024). These obligations compel significant expenditures, with debt-service payments accounting for a substantial portion of the nation's foreign-exchange earnings.

However, an exclusive focus on external debt obscures the growing significance of domestic borrowing. By mid-2025, Nigeria's domestic debt had reached ₦76.59 trillion, with Federal Government bonds accounting for ₦60.65 trillion and Treasury Bills ₦12.76 trillion (Leadership, 2025). The IMF has cautioned that this growing reliance on domestic borrowing, with interest rates between 13 and 18 percent, creates distinct but equally binding constraints on fiscal space. Domestic debt servicing now consumes over 30 percent of government revenues, among the highest ratios in Sub-Saharan Africa, and has deepened the "bank-sovereign nexus" wherein local banks' balance sheets become tightly coupled with government fiscal performance (IMF, 2025; Leadership, 2025). Any comprehensive analysis of the slavery paradox must therefore attend to both external and domestic debt dynamics, recognising that sovereignty is constrained from multiple directions simultaneously.

The Slavery Paradox

The "Slavery Paradox" represents a profound historical irony in the trajectory of post-colonial nations. It is the phenomenon whereby nations that achieved political independence through anti-colonial struggles subsequently enter into ostensibly voluntary economic relationships that reproduce structural dependencies reminiscent of colonial subordination (Rodney, 1972). This paradox manifests when sovereign states, in pursuing development objectives, contract foreign loans under conditions that progressively erode their economic autonomy, constrain policy sovereignty, and bind future national resources to external creditors' claims (Ake, 1981). The core contradiction lies in the transformation of juridical independence into substantive dependence through the mechanism of debt. This situation creates what Nkrumah (1965) termed "neo-colonialism"—the worst form of imperialism because "for those who practice it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress." Neo-colonialism operates not through direct political control but through economic mechanisms—debt, conditionalities, terms of trade, and investment agreements—that perpetuate dependency while maintaining the fiction of sovereignty.

Nigeria exemplifies the Slavery Paradox with particular acuity. Upon achieving independence in 1960, the nation possessed minimal external debt and substantial foreign-exchange reserves derived from agricultural exports (Ake, 1996). However, the oil boom of the 1970s, rather than consolidating economic independence, initiated a trajectory toward profound foreign loan dependence (Lewis, 2007). As Watts (2004) observes, "the oil economy proved to be less an instrument of national development than a new form of resource curse, perpetuating dependency and generating novel forms of accumulation and dispossession." The transition from oil prosperity to debt crisis illuminates the paradox's mechanisms. The slavery paradox is maintained through what this article terms institutional

capture—the progressive alignment of domestic institutions with creditor interests rather than citizen welfare. This occurs through multiple channels: the creation of debt-management agencies that prioritise external creditworthiness over domestic accountability; the embedding of IMF and World Bank personnel in finance ministries; the adoption of legal frameworks that enshrine creditor protections; and the formation of elite coalitions—the "comprador bourgeoisie"—whose interests align with continued financial integration rather than autonomous development (Fanon, 1963; Osoba, 1978; Ndikumana & Boyce, 2011).

The concept of the comprador bourgeoisie, derived from Fanon's (1963) analysis of post-colonial elites, describes a domestic capitalist class that serves as an intermediary for foreign capital, extracting rents from its position at the intersection of global and local economies rather than building autonomous productive capacity. In the Nigerian context, this class benefits from debt-financed contracts, currency speculation, capital-flight opportunities, and the privatisation of state assets—all dynamics intensified by the conditionalities accompanying foreign loans. The slavery paradox is thus not simply imposed from without but is actively reproduced from within by domestic actors whose material interests align with continued dependency.

Theoretical Framework

Neocolonialism Theory

Following Nkrumah (1965) and Fanon (1963), neocolonialism provides a powerful lens for understanding why Nigeria's political sovereignty feels like an "empty shell." The theory effectively captures the "why" behind persistent subordination, highlighting how global capitalist structures use economic mechanisms—debt, trade, investment, conditionalities—to maintain control over formally independent states. Nkrumah (1965, p. ix) articulated this with characteristic clarity: "The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside."

Neocolonialism theory illuminates several dimensions of the slavery paradox. First, it explains the structural asymmetry in North–South economic relations, wherein international financial institutions, credit-rating agencies, and bilateral creditors exercise disproportionate influence over domestic policy in borrowing countries (Sinclair, 2005). Second, it highlights how "relief" programmes—such as the 2005 Paris Club deal that required Nigeria to pay $12.4 billion to cancel $18 billion in debt—often function as extractive mechanisms requiring massive upfront payments while ensuring ongoing policy subordination disguised as aid (Okonjo-Iweala & Osafo-Kwaako, 2007; Moyo, 2009). Third, the theory exposes how newer entrants into African finance, including China, while rhetorically distinct from Western creditors, increasingly employ opaque, collateralised loans that mortgage future resource revenues (Brautigam, 2009; Gelpern, Horn, Morris, Parks, & Trebesch, 2022).

However, critics argue that neocolonialism theory overemphasises external agency while underestimating domestic dynamics. Collier (2007) and Lewis (2007) contend that by framing African states as passive victims, the theory fails to sufficiently account for catastrophic internal policy errors, corruption, and the role of domestic elites who actively collaborate in arrangements that undermine national sovereignty. This critique points to a significant limitation: neocolonialism theory, in its classical formulation, offers limited analytical tools for understanding the internal class dynamics that sustain dependency.

Structural Adjustment Theory

Conversely, the Structural Adjustment framework, rooted in neoclassical economics, posits that Nigeria's crises stem from internal distortions—particularly over-reliance on oil, state-led market inefficiencies, and fiscal indiscipline (World Bank, 1981; Krueger, 1974). The theory identifies the "how" of sovereignty erosion through specific policy mechanisms. It correctly diagnosed the unsustainable fiscal imbalances of the 1980s and provided a framework for macroeconomic stabilisation (Udeogu, 2016). It highlights how "soft" influence through IMF Article IV consultations signals creditworthiness to global markets, essentially disciplining the Nigerian state to prioritise fiscal prudence (Sinclair, 2005). The policy toolkit associated with structural adjustment includes: currency devaluation to correct overvalued exchange rates; trade liberalisation to enhance competition; privatisation of state-owned enterprises to improve efficiency; fiscal austerity to reduce deficits; and deregulation to remove price distortions (Mosley, Harrigan, & Toye, 1991). These measures are presented as technocratic corrections to policy failures, but their distributional consequences and political implications are profound.

The theory's "one-size-fits-all" approach, however, has drawn sustained criticism. Rapid trade liberalisation under the 1986 SAP devastated domestic manufacturing in Nigeria without fostering diversification, as local industries could not compete with subsidised imports (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999; Adenikinju, 2005). Furthermore, the theory assumes unregulated markets produce optimal social outcomes—an assumption contradicted by the sharp rise in Nigerian poverty and infant mortality during adjustment periods (Cornia, Jolly, & Stewart, 1987; Forster, Kentikelenis, Reinsberg, Stubbs, & King, 2020). The framework's inattention to power asymmetries, institutional capacity, and social protection means that its prescriptions, while perhaps technically sound in abstract terms, often produce devastating social consequences in practice.

Integrating Macro and Micro Analysis

Current scholarship remains underdeveloped in its synthesis of these two poles. Literature often fails to explain how technical adjustments (structural adjustment) are the specific instruments used to achieve neocolonial objectives (neocolonialism). There is a "missing link" in understanding how domestic mismanagement is not merely a failure of governance but often a prerequisite for external control—a condition that creates openings for creditors to demand policy concessions.

This study addresses this gap through an integrated framework that:

First, integrates macro and micro analysis by using neocolonialism to explain the power relationship while using structural adjustment to map the technical surrender of the national

budget. This dual lens reveals that conditionalities are not merely technical corrections but mechanisms that redistribute decision-making authority from domestic to external institutions.

Second, exposes the elite linkage by moving beyond the binary of "External Exploiter vs. Internal Failure" to analyse how the comprador bourgeoisie benefits from debt accumulation while the state's fiscal capacity is paralysed. Drawing on Fanon (1963) and Osoba's (1978) analysis of the Nigerian bourgeoisie, the framework examines how domestic elites—politicians, bureaucrats, contractors, and financial intermediaries—extract rents from debt-financed projects, currency arbitrage, and privatisation processes, creating material stakes in continued dependency.

Third, updates the paradox by extending the analysis to the 2025 fiscal crisis, incorporating modern debt instruments such as Eurobonds, domestic securities, and "climate colonialism" (Hickel, 2020) that traditional 20th-century critiques did not envision. The framework also addresses the growing significance of domestic debt and the bank-sovereign nexus, recognising that contemporary fiscal entrapment operates through multiple channels simultaneously.

The "Slavery Paradox" is thus understood as a contemporary institutional reality where the sovereign nation implements unpopular, creditor-mandated policies (such as the 2023–2025 subsidy removals and exchange-rate unification) that undermine democratic legitimacy and reinforce imperial economic structures, even as these policies are implemented by domestic actors who benefit from them (Olukoshi, 1998; Toussaint, 2008). The paradox is sustained not by external imposition alone but by the active participation of domestic elites whose interests align with continued integration into global financial circuits.

Historical Trajectory of External Debt (1960–2025)

Nigeria's transition from a virtually debt-free nation at independence in 1960 to one of Africa's most indebted countries illustrates a progressive loss of economic sovereignty driven by oil-revenue volatility, poor governance, elite enrichment, and structural dependence on external financing (Lewis, 2007; Ndikumana & Boyce, 2011). The historical evolution of Nigeria's external debt accumulation from 1960 to the present demonstrates that borrowing repeatedly financed consumption, prestige projects, and capital flight rather than productive investment, while imposing creditor-driven conditionalities that eroded policy autonomy.

1960–1970: The Post-Independence Era

At independence, Nigeria's external debt was negligible (less than 1 percent of GDP) with strong foreign reserves and a diversified agricultural export base grounded in cocoa, palm oil, groundnuts, and rubber (Ayida & Onitiri, 1971; Helleiner, 1966). The 1962–1968 Development Plan relied mainly on domestic resources (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1962). Even the 1967–1970 civil war was financed largely domestically, leaving debt modest at approximately 7 percent of GDP by 1970 (Ayida, 1987). This period represented the high-water mark of Nigerian economic autonomy, characterised by fiscal discipline and diversified productive capacity.

1970–1980: The Oil Boom and the Seeds of Dependency

The 1973–1974 oil boom paradoxically initiated debt accumulation by encouraging over-spending and prestige projects that could not be sustained when oil prices fell (Lewis, 2007). Only 31 percent of 1970–1978 borrowing financed productive sectors; the rest supported administration, defence, and low-return social services (Adeniyi, Oyinlola, & Omisakin, 2011). By 1980 external debt reached $4.3 billion (Central Bank of Nigeria, 1981). The oil boom created what economists term the "Dutch disease"—an overvalued currency, neglect of agriculture, and growing import dependence—that would prove devastating when oil prices collapsed.

1980–1985: The Debt Crisis Emerges

The 1979–1985 period saw rapid escalation amid falling oil prices and fiscal indiscipline, with debt rising from $8.9 billion in 1980 to $18.9 billion by 1985 and debt-service ratios becoming unsustainable (Okonjo-Iweala & Osafo-Kwaako, 2007; Central Bank of Nigeria, 1986). Borrowing largely financed consumption rather than investment, with debt-service obligations consuming an increasing share of foreign-exchange earnings (Iyoha, 1999). By 1985, Nigeria was caught in a classic debt trap: new borrowing was required simply to service existing obligations.

1986–1993: Structural Adjustment and Deepened Dependency

The 1986 Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), imposed by the IMF and World Bank, deepened dependence through devaluation, liberalisation, and privatisation conditionalities that devastated domestic industry and increased the naira cost of debt (Mosley et al., 1991; Udeogu, 2016; Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999). External debt rose 76 percent between 1986 and 1993 despite economic contraction (Debt Management Office, 2004). The programme's policy conditionalities—including trade liberalisation that exposed local industries to subsidised imports, currency devaluation that increased the domestic cost of external obligations, and privatisation that transferred state assets to foreign and domestic capital—systematically dismantled the productive base while deepening financial dependency.

1994–1999: Isolation and Accumulation

Isolation under the Abacha regime (1994–1999) forced reliance on expensive commercial and oil-backed loans, while embezzlement and capital flight exceeded borrowed amounts (Ndikumana & Boyce, 2011; Effiom, Achu, & Edet, 2019). This period demonstrated the symbiotic relationship between external debt and internal corruption: borrowed funds were frequently diverted to private accounts, creating personal fortunes while leaving the public with obligations. Ndikumana and Boyce (2011) document that for every dollar borrowed by African countries during this period, approximately 80 cents left as capital flight—a pattern Nigeria exemplified.

2000–2007: The Paris Club "Relief"

The 2005 Paris Club deal required Nigeria to pay $12.4 billion to cancel $18 billion—effectively buying its own relief after having already repaid the original principal multiple times (Moss & Majerowicz, 2016). While celebrated as a breakthrough, the deal's terms revealed the asymmetry of power in debt negotiations: Nigeria had to mobilise substantial foreign

reserves to secure relief, depleting buffers that could have supported development. Relief proved temporary, as new borrowing resumed rapidly, especially from China and via domestic bonds (Brautigam & Hwang, 2016).

2015–2025: Explosive Debt Growth

From 2015 onward, collapsing oil prices and persistent revenue weakness triggered explosive debt growth. Total public debt reached $103.1 billion (₦77.1 trillion) by mid-2023, with debt service absorbing 96.3 percent of federal revenue in 2022 (Debt Management Office, 2023; Budget Office, 2023). Contemporary borrowing includes collateralised Chinese loans for infrastructure projects (railways, airports, highways) and multilateral facilities with policy conditionalities (Hurley, Morris, & Portelance, 2019; Gelpern et al., 2022). By mid-2025, total public debt had escalated to ₦152.4 trillion, representing a 348.6 percent increase since President Tinubu assumed office in 2023 (Udunze, 2025).

The Dual Debt Trap: External and Domestic Dimensions

While the preceding analysis focuses on external debt, a comprehensive understanding of Nigeria's fiscal entrapment requires attention to the domestic debt dimension. As of June 2025, Nigeria's domestic debt stood at ₦76.59 trillion, accounting for the largest share of total public debt (Leadership, 2025). Federal Government bonds valued at ₦60.65 trillion constitute the bulk of domestic obligations, with Treasury Bills adding ₦12.76 trillion.

The IMF's October 2025 Regional Economic Outlook for Sub-Saharan Africa issued a stark warning about Nigeria's growing reliance on domestic borrowing (Leadership, 2025). Key findings include:

i. **Deepening Bank-Sovereign Nexus:** Nigerian banks hold substantial quantities of government securities, creating a vicious cycle where sovereign credit weakness directly threatens banking-sector stability, which in turn constrains private-sector credit and economic growth.
ii. **Crowding Out:** With domestic interest rates between 13 and 18 percent, government borrowing absorbs available credit that might otherwise finance private investment. This "crowding out" effect undermines the productive capacity necessary for sustainable growth and debt repayment.
iii. **Interest Burden:** Interest payments now exceed 30 percent of government revenues, among the highest ratios in Sub-Saharan Africa, leaving minimal fiscal space for development spending.
iv. **Cost Inversion:** The cost of new domestic borrowing now exceeds external borrowing costs, a significant reversal from historical patterns. Yet external borrowing introduces currency risk, as demonstrated by the doubling of naira costs for foreign-currency obligations following exchange-rate adjustments.

The interaction between external and domestic debt creates a "dual debt trap" with compounding effects. External debt obligations require foreign exchange, pressuring the naira and increasing the domestic-currency cost of servicing. Domestic debt obligations require high interest rates to attract buyers, increasing fiscal pressure and crowding out investment. Together, they create a fiscal environment where debt service consumes the overwhelming majority of revenue, leaving minimal resources for the developmental functions that might generate future capacity to repay.

Debt Composition and Creditor Dynamics
Understanding contemporary debt dynamics requires disaggregating Nigeria's external portfolio by creditor type, as each category imposes distinct constraints on sovereignty.

Multilateral Creditors: Multilateral institutions (World Bank, African Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank) hold a significant portion of Nigeria's external debt. While these loans offer relatively concessional rates (1.5–3.5 percent), they come with extensive policy conditionalities. Reinsberg, Stubbs, Kentikelenis, and King (2020) demonstrate that IMF and World Bank conditions significantly reduce independent policy adjustment. The 2023 removal of fuel subsidies, linked to a $1.5 billion World Bank financing programme, exemplifies this dynamic (World Bank, 2023). Multilateral debt also enjoys "preferred creditor status," meaning it cannot be restructured, forcing Nigeria to prioritise these payments even during fiscal crises (Schlegl, Trebesch, & Wright, 2019).

Bilateral Creditors: Bilateral debt, with China accounting for over 80 percent of this category, involves unique structural risks. Chinese loans are typically tied to procurement requirements mandating the use of Chinese firms, which can inflate project costs by 30–50 percent (Morris, Parks, & Gardner, 2020). Many agreements, such as railway loans, stipulate that debt service is deducted directly from crude-oil proceeds, effectively "mortgaging" national resources (Gelpern et al., 2022). This resource-collateralised lending creates a direct pipeline from Nigerian oil extraction to Chinese creditors, bypassing the national budget entirely.

Commercial Creditors: Commercial borrowing through Eurobonds represents Nigeria's most expensive debt category, with yields historically reaching 9.25 percent or higher. Nigeria suffers from "original sin"—the inability to borrow internationally in its own currency (Eichengreen & Hausmann, 1999). Consequently, naira depreciation has dramatically increased the domestic cost of servicing Eurobonds. The return to Eurobond markets in late 2024, while signalling improved investor confidence, also exposes Nigeria to global financial volatility (IMF, 2025; NAN, 2025).

International Financial Institutions and Policy Conditionalities
International financial institutions (IFIs) such as the IMF and the World Bank have played a significant role in influencing economic policies in Nigeria, primarily through lending programmes, policy advice, and conditionality. Nigeria's engagement with these institutions spans decades, marked by periods of direct borrowing with attached conditions and more recent non-borrowing surveillance via Article IV consultations. Nigeria's most direct exposure to IFI conditionality occurred in 1986 with the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), influenced heavily by the IMF and World Bank amid a debt crisis and falling oil prices. SAP required market liberalisation, currency devaluation, privatisation, trade deregulation, and reduction of public spending in exchange for loans and debt-restructuring support. These policies aligned with the "Washington Consensus" promoted by both institutions.

Empirical assessments remain contested. An IMF occasional paper concluded that vigorous market reforms and tight financial policies under SAP led to initial economic growth and

employment expansion, but benefits were not sustained due to premature abandonment and inconsistent implementation (International Monetary Fund, 1997). Conversely, academic critiques argue that SAP exacerbated poverty, deindustrialisation, and inequality. Currency devaluation and subsidy cuts increased import costs and inflation, leading to factory closures and unemployment, while privatisation favoured foreign interests over local development (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999). One study described IMF loan conditionality as a "crux impediment" to Nigeria's progress, perpetuating economic backwardness through dependency (Olukoshi, 1993).

After repaying major debts in the 2000s, Nigeria avoided new IMF borrowing programmes, relying instead on Policy Support Instruments (2005–2007) and annual Article IV consultations. The World Bank continued project-based lending focused on infrastructure, poverty reduction, and governance. Without formal conditionality from borrowing, influence shifted to advisory and signalling roles. IMF Article IV reports routinely recommended fiscal consolidation, subsidy reforms, exchange-rate flexibility, and revenue mobilisation (IMF, 2022, 2025). World Bank Development Policy Financing supported similar priorities, such as tax reforms and social safety nets (World Bank, 2024a, 2025a). This "soft" influence preserves formal autonomy while creating indirect pressure. Aligning with IFI advice signals credibility to investors and donors, while divergence risks market penalties or withheld support. The IMF's July 2025 Article IV mission concluded that Nigerian authorities "have implemented major reforms over the past two years which have improved macroeconomic stability and enhanced resilience," while noting that "poverty and food insecurity have risen" (IMF, 2025).

Under President Bola Tinubu, Nigeria implemented major reforms in 2023 including full removal of fuel subsidies and unification/floating of the naira exchange rate. These mirrored long-standing IMF and World Bank recommendations to eliminate distortions, fiscal drains, and arbitrage opportunities (IMF, 2024, 2025; World Bank, 2024b). The outcomes have been mixed. Macroeconomic indicators show improvement: reserves rose, inflation began moderating from peaks (declining to 23.7 percent by April 2025), and Nigeria successfully accessed Eurobond markets with improved credit ratings (IMF, 2025; World Bank, 2025b; NAN, 2025). The IMF praised these as "bold" steps enhancing resilience and investor confidence (IMF, 2025). World Bank financing ($2.25 billion in 2024) supported revenue mobilisation and social protection tied to these reforms (World Bank, 2024c). However, short-term costs have been severe: fuel prices tripled, the naira depreciated sharply, inflation surged (peaking near 35 percent before moderating), and poverty and food insecurity worsened (World Bank, 2025c; IMF, 2025). Critics argue these measures echo SAP failures, disproportionately harming the poor without adequate safety nets (Borgen Magazine, 2025; ROAPE, 2025). The critical question for the slavery-paradox framework is whether these reforms represent autonomous policy choice or "anticipatory alignment"—domestic actors implementing externally-preferred policies in hopes of attracting investment and avoiding market punishment (Foreign Policy, 2023; Parthian Partners, 2025).

Fiscal Entrapment and Social Consequences

The empirical evidence regarding Nigeria's fiscal trajectory suggests that the pursuit of development finance has resulted in substantive erosion of economic sovereignty. As

established by Ajayi and Ndikumana (2015), economic sovereignty is fundamentally defined by a nation's capacity to autonomously implement policies for national development; yet, the Nigerian experience reveals systematic erosion of this capacity. This erosion originated with the adoption of the 1986 Structural Adjustment Programme, a foundational surrender where Nigeria accepted over 100 policy conditions to address a $3.2 billion crisis, effectively transferring policy control to the IMF and World Bank (Udeogu, 2016; Mosley, Subasat, & Weeks, 1995). The quantitative reality of this decline is stark, with Nigeria's policy-autonomy index score dropping substantially during the SAP era, a trend that culminated by 2022 in a catastrophic debt-service-to-revenue ratio of 96.3 percent, effectively paralysing discretionary fiscal capacity (Dreher et al., 2015; Budget Office, 2023). By 2025, despite improvements in some macroeconomic indicators, the fundamental constraint remains: debt servicing consumes revenue that might otherwise fund development.

This fiscal entrapment has precipitated a "crowding out" of critical social investments. Although the UNESCO Education 2030 Framework recommends allocating up to 20 percent of public expenditure to education, Nigeria's funding averaged a mere 5 to 8 percent between 2023 and 2025, while debt obligations consumed over 32 percent of the total budget (UNESCO, 2015; Brookings Institution, 2023; Guardian Nigeria, 2025). This pattern of underfunding extends to the healthcare sector, where annual allocations hover around 5.7 percent, failing to meet the 15 percent threshold pledged in the Abuja Declaration (Archibong, Ogana, Edet, & Enamhe, 2023). The resulting "debt overhang" transcends balance sheets to impact human outcomes directly; as Traoré (2021) suggests, the diversion of productive funds away from health infrastructure correlates with Nigeria's alarmingly high maternal-mortality ratio of 512 per 100,000 live births, far exceeding the Sustainable Development Goal target of 70 (Ajegbile, 2023; Oweibia, Elemuwa, Egberipou, Timighe, Sylvanus, & Wilson, 2025).

The 2026 Appropriation Bill, presented at ₦58.18 trillion, epitomises the fiscal contradictions identified throughout this analysis. As Udunze (2025) observes, the budget promises "consolidation, renewed resilience, and shared prosperity" while being built on a deficit of ₦23.85 trillion (4.28 percent of GDP) financed largely through borrowing. Debt servicing alone will consume ₦15.52 trillion—nearly half of projected revenue. The fundamental question posed by the slavery paradox is starkly illustrated: "How sustainable is a fiscal model where debt service crowds out development spending year after year?" (Udunze, 2025). Furthermore, the "Slavery Paradox" is institutionalised through a profound asymmetry in resource flows and the reshaping of domestic governance. Institutional sovereignty has been reconfigured by creditor mandates, exemplified by the creation of the Debt Management Office, which often prioritises external creditworthiness over domestic accountability (Ndikumana & Boyce, 2011). This institutional framework facilitates a "revolving door" of capital, where every dollar of external borrowing is empirically associated with $0.83 of capital flight (Ndikumana & Boyce, 2011). Between 1970 and 2018, capital flight totalled $182.6 billion, a figure that surpasses the nation's total external debt of $154.8 billion, suggesting that the modern Nigerian state functions more as a debt-collection and capital-evacuation agency than as a sovereign provider of public goods (Ndikumana, Boyce, & Dunaway, 2020).

The concept of the comprador bourgeoisie, developed by Fanon (1963) and applied to Nigeria by Osoba (1978), illuminates this dynamic. The comprador class does not simply mismanage the economy through incompetence or corruption; rather, its members actively benefit from arrangements that facilitate capital outflow. Debt-financed infrastructure contracts generate kickbacks; currency volatility creates arbitrage opportunities; privatisation enables asset acquisition at below-market values. The interests of this class align not with autonomous national development but with continued integration into global financial circuits that enable private accumulation at public expense.

These findings complicate the classic neocolonial arguments of Rodney (1972) by highlighting the role of domestic agency in the surrender of sovereignty. The fact that debt servicing creates a "first-line charge" on national resources implies that the paradox is maintained by a symbiotic relationship between global creditors and a local comprador bourgeoisie (Adedeji, 1969; Okonjo-Iweala, 2018). This study therefore extends existing scholarship by moving beyond the binary of "external exploitation vs. Internal failure" to show that Nigeria's economic sovereignty is eroded through a symbiotic relationship between global creditors and local compradors. This supports the thesis that the "Slavery Paradox" is maintained by a domestic institutional framework designed to facilitate the outflow of capital under the guise of developmental borrowing.

Comparative Perspectives: Botswana, Rwanda, and Vietnam

The selection of Botswana, Rwanda, and Vietnam for comparative analysis follows explicit theoretical sampling criteria: each represents a post-colonial state that has achieved sustained economic growth while managing debt constraints, yet each follows a distinct development trajectory offering different lessons for Nigeria.

Botswana: **Resource Management and Institutional Capacity**

Botswana's trajectory from one of the world's poorest countries at independence in 1966 to an upper-middle-income country offers important lessons in sovereign resource management. Diamond revenues, rather than becoming a "resource curse" as in Nigeria, were channelled into development through several institutional mechanisms.

First, Botswana established the Pula Fund in 1994, a sovereign wealth fund that buffers against commodity-price volatility and provides fiscal space during downturns. The fund's disciplined management ensures that resource extraction benefits future generations rather than financing immediate consumption (World Bank, 2024). Second, Botswana maintained fiscal discipline through consensus-based policy-making involving traditional authorities, elected officials, and civil servants. Third, the country preserved policy autonomy by avoiding IMF programmes and associated conditionalities, instead financing development through domestic revenue and carefully negotiated mineral agreements.

However, Botswana's model rests on specific conditions not replicable in Nigeria: a small, relatively homogeneous population; diamonds as a high-value, easily taxable resource; and institutional continuity unusual in post-colonial Africa. The lesson for Nigeria is not direct emulation but the demonstration that resource wealth need not produce dependency when accompanied by strong institutions and elite commitment to national development.

Rwanda: Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Strategic Vision. Rwanda's post-1994 reconstruction demonstrates the possibility of rapid development under visionary leadership, even from a devastated base. The Rwandan model includes several elements relevant to Nigeria.

First, Rwanda has pursued strategic integration into global markets while maintaining policy space—attracting investment on terms that build domestic capacity rather than simply extracting resources. Second, the country invested heavily in institutional capacity, creating efficient public administration that implements policy effectively. Third, Rwanda prioritised social development—health, education, gender equality—as foundations for productive transformation. Fourth, the government-maintained policy coherence across sectors, ensuring that trade, investment, fiscal, and social policies reinforced rather than contradicted each other.

Critics note that Rwanda's model depends on strong state capacity and political centralisation that may not be transferable to Nigeria's federal, pluralistic context. Moreover, Rwanda's debt levels have risen significantly, raising questions about long-term sustainability (IMF, 2025). The lesson is not institutional replication but the demonstration that strategic vision and implementation capacity can transform development trajectories.

Vietnam: Developmental State and Strategic Decoupling
Vietnam's transformation from war-torn poverty to lower-middle-income status offers perhaps the most relevant lessons for Nigeria. Vietnam has achieved what Nigeria has not: sustained, diversified growth that has dramatically reduced poverty while building productive capacity.

Key elements of the Vietnamese model include:
Strategic state capitalism: State-owned enterprises operate in strategic sectors, building domestic capacity before gradual liberalisation
Local content requirements: Foreign direct investment is channelled into joint ventures and subject to local-content rules that build domestic supply chains
Managed integration: Vietnam integrated into global markets on terms that protected domestic industries during their development phase
Agricultural transformation: Land reform and investment raised agricultural productivity, releasing labour for industrialisation
Export diversification: From rice to electronics, Vietnam steadily moved up the value chain. Vietnam's approach to foreign capital has been particularly strategic. The country welcomes foreign investment but on terms that ensure technology transfer, local employment, and domestic-linkage development. This contrasts sharply with Nigeria's extractive model, where foreign capital operates in enclaves with minimal domestic integration (IMF, 2025).

Vietnam has also managed debt strategically, borrowing for productive investment rather than consumption, and maintaining policy autonomy through diversified partnerships that prevent excessive dependence on any single creditor or donor.

These cases yield several lessons for Nigeria, none suggesting simple replication but each illuminating principles that might inform Nigerian policy:

i. Institutional capacity matters more than resource endowment: Botswana's success rests on institutions that manage resources for development; Nigeria's oil wealth has produced dependency because institutions channel it toward private accumulation rather than public investment.
ii. Strategic integration, not isolation or passive opening: Vietnam's managed integration into global markets contrasts with Nigeria's liberalisation without industrial preparation. Strategic decoupling—temporarily shielding strategic sectors while building capacity—may be necessary before competitive integration is possible.
iii. Domestic elite commitment to national development: In all three cases, domestic elites prioritised national development over personal enrichment. This "developmentalist" orientation, absent in Nigeria's comprador dynamics, is essential for sovereignty.
iv. Policy coherence and continuity: Each case demonstrates consistent policy orientation over decades, enabling private-sector confidence and cumulative capacity-building. Nigeria's policy volatility undermines long-term investment.
v. Diversification as sovereignty strategy: All three cases diversified economies and export structures, reducing vulnerability to commodity-price shocks and creditor pressure.

Toward Strategic Decoupling: Policy Recommendations

To reclaim its economic sovereignty, Nigeria must move beyond broad developmental platitudes and implement a strategy of targeted institutional and structural defiance. The path forward begins with a fundamental overhaul of the nation's fiscal integrity, specifically by addressing the "bleeding" of national wealth through capital flight, which historically outpaces the country's total external debt. This requires a shift in revenue mobilisation; instead of viewing taxation as a desperate "revenue drive" to satisfy foreign creditors, the state must anchor its fiscal policy in the domestic social contract. By implementing progressive taxation and scrutinising tax expenditures, the government can ensure that the fiscal burden shifts away from the poor and toward the "comprador" class that has long benefited from the status quo. Crucially, this quest for integrity requires a sceptical approach to international technical partnerships. Recent collaborations with foreign entities, such as the 2025 tax partnerships with France, must be handled with extreme caution to ensure they do not become modern conduits for external surveillance or the further erosion of domestic policy control (Premium Times, 2025). Reclaiming sovereignty also demands that the Debt Management Office be stripped of its role as a mere creditor liaison and restructured as an institution of domestic accountability, subject to rigorous parliamentary oversight and public audits.

Furthermore, the study argues that Nigeria must embrace a process of "strategic decoupling" to foster genuine industrial diversification. This does not imply economic isolation, but rather a Vietnam-inspired "selective integration" where the state protects infant industries through tariff structures and mandatory local-content requirements. By utilising tools such as sovereign wealth funds to buffer against commodity volatility and leveraging the AfCFTA

to build regional value chains (AfCFTA Secretariat, 2023), Nigeria can create a South–South shield against the austerity-driven mandates of Western-led institutions. This regionalism serves as a critical pillar for reducing exposure to global shocks and "weaponised" currency fluctuations.

Ultimately, however, no technical reform will suffice without a frontal assault on the "comprador dynamic" that sustains the slavery paradox. Reclaiming sovereignty is as much a political project as an economic one; it requires transforming the incentives of the domestic elite, shifting them away from rent-seeking and toward productive national investment. This transformation must be underpinned by democratic mobilisation, where a vigilant civil society demands that the state's primary allegiance be to its citizens rather than its creditors. Only through this combination of fiscal discipline, industrial protectionism, and elite accountability can Nigeria reconcile its political independence with substantive economic self-determination. By prioritising these pro-industrial policies over creditor-friendly "stabilisation" measures, Nigeria can finally reconcile its juridical independence with substantive economic sovereignty. This transition from debt-induced subservience toward a self-reliant developmental trajectory requires a phased approach: immediate debt-service suspension and restructuring to create fiscal oxygen; short-term curbs on capital flight through progressive taxation; medium-term industrial diversification; and a long-term democratic deepening that aligns policy with citizen welfare. The path is difficult, requiring both technical competence and political courage. But the alternative—continued entrapment in the slavery paradox—offers only deepening dependency and the hollowing out of sovereignty. The choice facing Nigeria is not between reform and stasis, but between reform that serves citizens and reform that serves creditors. This study has documented the mechanisms through which the latter has dominated; it now points toward the urgent possibility of the former.

Conclusion

In exploring the "Slavery Paradox," this study finds that Nigeria's economic sovereignty has become more of a legal fiction than a functional reality. By 2025, the nation's fiscal landscape reached a breaking point where debt-servicing costs fundamentally decoupled from national revenue, creating a scenario where the state exists primarily to satisfy external creditors. This is not merely a failure of accounting; it is a structural entrapment. The research illustrates that while the outward symbols of independence remain, the inward levers of power—specifically the ability to prioritise education, health, and infrastructure—have been surrendered to the conditionalities of international finance. The persistence of this paradox suggests that Nigeria is caught in a "dual-trap" where neocolonial pressures and internal elite interests converge. The findings argue that "home-grown" reforms are often less about domestic innovation and more about "anticipatory alignment" with global markets to maintain creditworthiness. This creates a cycle where borrowing for development paradoxically leads to the de-development of the social sector. However, the comparative analysis of states such as Vietnam and Botswana offers a glimmer of hope, suggesting that when a nation strategically decouples its industrial policy from creditor mandates and strengthens its domestic institutions, it can reclaim its policy space. Ultimately, the study concludes that for Nigeria to break these "fiscal chains," it must move beyond the role of a passive borrower. Reclaiming sovereignty demands a transition toward strategic

autonomy—a shift where the domestic social contract is given precedence over international credit ratings. Escaping the slavery paradox will require more than just debt restructuring; it will require the political courage to prioritise self-reliant industrialisation and regional integration over the extractive logic of foreign loan dependence.

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WORLD BANK INTERVENTIONS AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA, 2015-2024

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Abstract
The World Bank plays a vital role in reducing global poverty by funding essential development projects. However, its interventions in Southeast Nigeria have produced mixed results, which inform the essence of this study. This research was guided by one objective: analyze how World Bank-supported policy initiatives under the State Action on Business Enabling Reform (SABER) have significantly influenced regional poverty reduction strategies and evaluate the significant effect of World Bank-funded Social Safety Net programs on reducing the poverty gap in Southeast Nigeria between 2015 and 2024. The study used Oscar Lewis's Culture of Poverty theory as its framework and anchored on a mixed-methods approach. The study population included 22,012,828 residents of Southeast Nigeria. A sample of 384 was used. Interviews were conducted. Quantitative data were analyzed using regression analysis, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. The main findings are: World Bank interventions between 2015 and 2024 delivered significant and visible socio-economic benefits in South-East Nigeria, albeit with varying levels of impact across the energy sector, education sector, governance and institutional reforms, and social protection systems. Recommendations include intensifying sensitization campaigns to overcome cultural resistance, scaling up program coverage to reach excluded vulnerable groups, institutionalizing integrated approaches that combine infrastructure development and human resources, and strengthening enforcement mechanisms for consistent implementation and accountability.

Keywords: *Poverty reduction; World Bank interventions; Sustainable Development Goals; Mixed-methods research*

Introduction

World War II stands as one of the most catastrophic events in human history. As Showalter, Kim, and Mensah (2025) note, it was "one of the deadliest and most transformative conflicts in human history," with total casualties — military and civilian — running into the tens of millions. Some Eastern European countries lost nearly 20 percent of their prewar populations (Britannica, n.d.). By 1945, continental economies were in near-total paralysis. In Germany alone, 39 percent of dwelling units in the 49 largest cities were seriously damaged, and roughly 20 percent of industrial capacity was destroyed (Britannica, n.d.; D-Day Center, n.d.). In Japan, 40 percent of urban built-up areas were destroyed across 66 major cities, leaving close to 30 percent of the urban population homeless (Britannica, n.d.). Across Asia and Africa, the war disrupted colonial economies, diverted manpower, and imposed severe socioeconomic strain. In response to this devastation, global leaders convened the Bretton Woods Conference in July 1944, where 44 nations established a framework for international economic cooperation. This produced the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) — now the World Bank — initially tasked with financing postwar reconstruction in Europe. Its mandate has since expanded to combating extreme poverty, promoting shared prosperity, and addressing climate change across every continent.

Nigeria formally joined the World Bank on March 30, 1961, though the institution had been supporting the country through the IDA and IBRD since 1958. Today, Nigeria accounts for 19 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's poverty share (Alli, 2025). The World Bank's Africa Pulse report warns that poverty in resource-rich, fragile countries like Nigeria is projected to rise by 3.6 percentage points between 2022 and 2027.

As Africa's largest economy by GDP, Nigeria has long grappled with oil dependency, a narrow tax base, currency misalignment, and fiscal inefficiencies — vulnerabilities deepened by COVID-19, the Russia–Ukraine conflict, and oil price shocks. The World Bank's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) 2021–2025 outlined priorities including governance reform, digital infrastructure, education, agriculture, financial inclusion, and macroeconomic stability (World Bank, 2021). In June 2024, the World Bank approved a $2.25 billion support package comprising the ARMOR Program ($750 million for tax, customs, and oil revenue reforms) and the RESET Development Policy Financing ($1.5 billion for fiscal space creation and inclusive growth) (World Bank, 2024). While early macroeconomic indicators showed progress, structural inflation, unemployment, and inequality remained persistent challenges (World Bank, 2024; AP News, 2024).

Despite these efforts, over 63 percent of Nigerians remain multidimensionally poor, with higher rates in rural areas (NBS, 2023). Critics argue that governance weaknesses and elite capture often limit the impact of such interventions (Okonjo-Iweala, 2018), raising questions about their sustainability and alignment with local realities. The Southeast geopolitical zone — comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States — is known for high literacy and entrepreneurial activity, yet continues to suffer from poor infrastructure, youth unemployment, and income inequality (NBS, 2023). World Bank–supported programmes in the region have included NG-CARES, SEPIP, BESDA, EEP, NEP, SEEFOR, CSDP, and YESSO, targeting education, energy access, employment, and social protection. However, a persistent gap exists between reported outputs and actual welfare improvements. Electricity

connectivity is relatively high in the Southeast, yet supply remains unreliable. School enrolment has grown, but learning outcomes and employment prospects have not kept pace. Social protection programmes face targeting inefficiencies and limited coverage. Most existing studies focus on national aggregates, leaving sub-national dynamics poorly understood (World Bank, 2021).

This study addresses that gap by assessing the impact of World Bank interventions on poverty reduction in Southeast Nigeria between 2015 and 2024, with particular attention to energy, education, governance, and social protection — guided by the following research question:

i. How did the World Bank-supported policy initiatives under the State Action on Business Enabling Reform (SABRE) shape Nigeria's regional poverty reduction strategies in Southeast Nigeria between 2015 and 2024?

Addressing this research question yields several key contributions: it illuminates the World Bank's role in poverty reduction, macroeconomic stability, and living standards in emerging nations; informs policy discussions on aligning poverty efforts with structural and domestic priorities; and helps Nigerian policymakers strengthen partnerships with development agencies. The World Bank, it offers practical guidance on program design and implementation. More broadly, the study enriches scholarship on governance, economic stability, and international aid in sub-Saharan Africa.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Poverty Reduction and the World Bank

Economic growth and poverty reduction are closely linked in development economics. Growth, typically measured by rising GDP, is essential for improving living standards and creating employment. Poverty reduction, on the other hand, encompasses strategies and policies aimed at raising income, expanding access to services, and enhancing social participation. Crucially, it extends beyond income gains to include improvements in literacy, child mortality, and access to clean water (UNDP, 2022).

The World Bank has been central to advancing both objectives in developing countries. Effective poverty reduction demands resources, adaptability, and performance accountability, alongside meaningful participation from the poor themselves (Ndiyo, 2008). This necessitates collaboration and partnership among diverse stakeholders to implement sustainable programmes (Ndiyo, 2008).

Originally established to finance Europe's post-World War II reconstruction, the World Bank expanded its mandate to support developing nations across Africa, Asia, South America, Eastern Europe, and the Caribbean. Loans were typically tied to Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) conditionalities, requiring governments to liberalize and privatize public utilities. Later, through institutions like the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and MIGA, the Bank extended financing to corporate bodies, including multinationals in extractive industries. In 2013, the World Bank President announced the goal of ending global poverty by 2030. In fiscal year 2016, the Bank approved $9.3 billion for 109 projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, covering agriculture, energy, climate resilience, education, and fragile states (World Bank Annual Report, 2016). High population growth, estimated at 1.341 billion in Sub-

Saharan Africa by 2020 (Worldometers, 2019), was identified as a key factor sustaining poverty levels in the region.

The Multidimensional Nature of Poverty

Poverty is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon encompassing not only low income but also poor health, limited education, inadequate living standards, social exclusion, and vulnerability (World Bank, 2020). While income-based measures such as the $1.90-per-day threshold have historically dominated poverty assessments, more comprehensive frameworks like the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) now account for deprivations across health, education, and living standards (Alkire & Santos, 2014). The selection of deprivation indicators often remains context-dependent and may not fully capture unmet basic needs across varying socioeconomic conditions, which is why terms like poverty, social exclusion, and vulnerability are frequently used interchangeably (World Food Programme, 2019; USAID, 2020). Multidimensional poverty includes:

i. **Educational deprivation:** limited schooling or low literacy
ii. **Health deprivation:** poor nutrition, inadequate healthcare, and high infant/maternal mortality
iii. **Living standards:** insufficient housing, water, sanitation, and electricity
iv. **Social exclusion:** restricted participation in social, cultural, and political life (Sen, 1999; UNDP, 2023)

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach underpins this framework, defining poverty as the deprivation of real freedoms people need to live fulfilling lives (Sen, 1999). As of 2020, approximately 690 million people, 9.2% of the global population, lived below the $1.90-per-day threshold (UNDP, 2020), with that benchmark later revised to $2.15 per day (World Bank, 2023).

Global and Regional Responses

Major international responses include the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000), which improved healthcare access and reduced child mortality (IMF, 2019), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015), which set a target of reducing extreme poverty below 3% by 2030. The World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), established in 1960, has committed over $130 billion in concessional loans and grants to the world's poorest nations. The UNDP supports poverty reduction through technical assistance, policy guidance, and financing, while NGOs such as Oxfam, Save the Children, and CARE implement grassroots programmes in developing countries (UNDP, 2020).

Regional initiatives have also emerged across Latin America, Asia, and Africa, including programmes by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Union's Agenda 2063, and NEPAD. In Nigeria, successive governments launched multiple poverty alleviation programmes from the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and Green Revolution to the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) and Peoples Bank, all of which largely failed due to poor implementation, corruption, and mismanagement rather than flawed design. The FEAP, for instance, yielded negligible poverty impact despite substantial investment, while the People's Bank's microcredit scheme was exploited by elites rather than reaching the rural and urban poor it targeted.

Measurement

The MPI, developed by UNDP and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), evaluates poverty across three dimensions — health, education, and living standards — classifying households as multidimensionally poor when deprived in at least one-third of weighted indicators (Alkire & Foster, 2011). The UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) similarly combines income, education, and health data for a broader poverty assessment. Poverty is broadly categorized as either absolute (lacking life's necessities) or relative (defined against a society's prevailing living standards), with causes ranging from unemployment and low wages to conflict, weak institutions, and environmental degradation.

Theoretical Framework: Culture of Poverty

Oscar Lewis, an American anthropologist, developed the Culture of Poverty theory in the late 1950s through ethnographic research in impoverished communities in Mexico and Puerto Rico. Published in *Five Families* (1959) and *La Vida* (1966), his theory argued that poverty extends beyond material deprivation to encompass distinct cultural attitudes and behavioural patterns transmitted across generations, perpetuating poverty over time.

Key Tenets

Lewis identified the culture of poverty as a subculture with its own values and ways of life, shaped by marginalization. Its core features include:

i. **Subcultural Nature:** Rather than a distinct poverty "culture," scholars like Shafir (2025) argue that scarcity creates cognitive constraints that lead to consequential decision-making errors among the poor.
ii. **Intergenerational Transmission:** Poverty-sustaining behaviours are passed down through socialization, not structural constraints alone (Lewis, 1959).
iii. **Marginality and Helplessness:** Individuals develop feelings of inferiority, dependency, and exclusion from mainstream society (Lewis, 1966).
iv. **Present Orientation:** Limited future planning, low educational investment, and preference for immediate gratification characterize affected communities.
v. **Weak Family Structures:** Instability manifests through female-headed households, limited paternal involvement, and early sexual initiation (Lewis, 1961).
vi. **Low Political Consciousness:** Despite marginalization, affected individuals lack class solidarity, hindering collective action for change (Lewis, 1966).

Application to This Study

Despite economic interventions, including World Bank assistance and government programs, Nigeria continued to experience high multidimensional poverty between 2015 and 2024. Lewis's framework provides a lens to examine whether Nigeria's persistent poverty stems solely from structural factors such as inflation and recession, or whether cultural and behavioural dimensions also play a contributing role.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively assess the World Bank's contribution to poverty reduction in

Southeast Nigeria (2015–2024). The qualitative component captured stakeholder and beneficiary perspectives through focus group discussions, participatory assessments, and key informant interviews, while the quantitative component measured changes in indicators such as energy access, school enrolment, governance scores, and the poverty gap. Triangulation of both approaches enhanced the validity and reliability of findings.

Study Population

The study was conducted across Southeast Nigeria's five states — Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo — selected for their significant exposure to World Bank poverty reduction interventions. Based on NPC (2006) Census projections, the region's estimated 2020 population stands at 22,012,828.

Table 1: Southeast Nigeria Population by State

State	NPC 2006 Census	Projected Population (2020)
Abia	2,845,380	3,841,943
Anambra	4,177,828	5,599,910
Ebonyi	2,176,947	3,007,155
Enugu	3,267,837	4,396,098
Imo	3,927,563	5,167,722
Total	**22,012,828**	**22,012,828**

Source: National Population Commission (2006)

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula:

$$s = \frac{X^2 . N . P . (1 - P)}{d^2 . (N - 1) + X^2 . P . (1 - P)}$$

where:

s = required sample size

x^2 = chi-square value for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841 for 95%) = population size (232,679,478)

P = population proportion (assumed to be 0.5 for maximum sample size), d = degree of accuracy (0.05)

Thus;

$$s = \frac{3.841 . 22{,}012{,}828 . 0.5 . 0.5}{0.05^2 . (22{,}012{,}828 - 1) + 3.841 . 0.5 . 0.5}$$

$$s = \frac{3.841 . 22{,}012{,}828 . 0.25}{0.0025 . 179{,}999{,}999 + 0.96025}$$

$$s = \frac{21137818.087}{55033.03025}$$

$$s = 384$$

An additional 15 key informants (three per state) were selected for qualitative interviews. The population was stratified by state, and proportional allocation determined each state's share of the 384-respondent sample. A two-stage procedure was followed: purposive sampling for key informants (programme officers, community leaders, and beneficiaries), and stratified random sampling for the broader beneficiary sample.

Table 2: Proportional Sample Allocation by State

State	Projected Population (2020)	Share (%)	Final Sample
Abia	3,841,943	17.45	67
Anambra	5,599,910	25.44	98
Ebonyi	3,007,155	13.66	52
Enugu	4,396,098	19.97	77
Imo	5,167,722	23.48	90
Total	**22,012,828**	**100%**	**384**

Source: Researcher's compilation
Questionnaires were self-administered with the assistance of eight research assistants.

Sources and Methods of Data Collection
Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized. Primary data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered to intervention beneficiaries and semi-structured interviews with key informants. Secondary data were drawn from World Bank project databases, the Nigeria Living Standards Survey (NLSS), National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reports, including the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), and World Governance Indicators (WGI).

Reliability and Validity
Instruments were reviewed by three academics from the Department of Public Administration and Local Government at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, for face and predictive validity. Issues identified, including leading questions, poor sequencing, double-barreled items, and technical jargon, were systematically corrected. Reliability was assessed through a pilot test with 20 participants, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.80, indicating high internal consistency.

Data Presentation and Analysis
Quantitative data were presented in tables, charts, and percentages, and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, percentages) and inferential statistics (regression analysis) via SPSS version 25.0. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically — transcribed, coded, and organized around the study's research questions. Findings from both strands were integrated through triangulation to strengthen the study's overall validity and comprehensiveness.

Results and Discussion of the Findings

Results

H_1: The World Bank-supported policy initiative on State Action on Business Enabling Reform (SABER) has significantly shaped regional poverty reduction strategies in South-East Nigeria between 2015 and 2024.

Table 3: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviation and Regression Analysis on how the World Bank-supported policy initiative on State Action on Business Enabling Reform (SABER) has significantly shaped regional poverty reduction strategies in South-East Nigeria between 2015 and 2024 (N=377).

S/N	Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Criteria	Mean	Std. Dev.	Dec
9	Governance programs enhanced Transparency	140	130	50	35	22	+3.0	3.81	1.19	A
10	Poverty-reduction strategies improved since 2015	150	120	55	30	22	+3.0	3.84	1.20	A
11	Local leaders/residents more Involved	130	140	50	35	22	+3.0	3.78	1.18	A
13	Policies are clearer and result-Focused	140	130	50	35	22	+3.0	3.81	1.19	A
	Grand Mean						**+3.0**	**3.81**	**1.19**	**A**

As shown in Table 3, the first indicator, "Governance programmes enhanced transparency recorded 140 Strongly Agree and 130 *Agree* responses, with a mean score of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 1.19. This indicates that respondents widely perceive SABRE as having strengthened transparency in local governance, a key driver of effective poverty reduction. The second indicator, "Poverty-reduction strategies improved since 2015," achieved a mean of 3.84, suggesting that respondents observed tangible improvements in both the design and implementation of poverty-reduction policies since the introduction of SABRE. The third indicator, "Local leaders/residents more involved recorded a mean of 3.78, reflecting that SABRE has promoted participatory governance by encouraging the inclusion of local stakeholders in planning and decision-making processes. Similarly, the fourth indicator "Policies clearer and result-focused"—yielded a mean of 3.81, signifying that respondents perceive greater clarity in policy formulation and stronger alignment of initiatives with measurable outcomes. This finding suggests that SABRE has contributed to the development of more targeted and results-oriented poverty reduction strategies, thereby improving the efficiency and accountability of governance processes.

Overall, the grand mean of 3.81 with a standard deviation of 1.19 indicates a strong consensus that SABRE has positively influenced poverty reduction strategies in the region, surpassing the decision benchmark of +3.0. Nevertheless, the modest variations in mean scores and standard deviations point to differences in perception across communities likely attributable to uneven programme implementation, disparities in community engagement, or varying levels of exposure to governance initiatives. Despite these nuances, the findings provide compelling evidence that SABRE has exerted a significant and measurable impact on governance practices and poverty reduction efforts across the South-East.

Table 4: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.877[a]	.768	.655	.87851

a. **Predictors:** (Constant): World Bank influenced policy initiatives
b. **Dependent Variable**: Regional Poverty Reduction Strategies

As presented in Table 4, the correlation coefficient (R = 0.877) indicates a strong positive relationship between World Bank–influenced policy initiatives and regional poverty reduction strategies. The R^2 value of 0.768 demonstrates that approximately 76.8% of the variance in regional poverty reduction strategies is explained by these initiatives, underscoring the model's substantial explanatory power. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.655, which accounts for both the number of predictors and the sample size, further confirms a strong model fit, albeit slightly reduced to correct for potential overfitting. The standard error of the estimate is 0.87851, reflecting the average distance between observed and predicted values. Its relatively low magnitude suggests that the model's predictions are reasonably precise and closely aligned with actual outcomes.

Taken together, these results provide compelling evidence that the SABRE policy initiative, shaped by World Bank support, has made a significant contribution to regional poverty-reduction strategies. By explaining a large share of the variance in poverty-reduction outcomes, the model highlights SABRE's role in strengthening governance, enhancing transparency, and promoting more effective anti-poverty interventions across the South-East.

Table 5: Regression ANOVA test of significance of how World Bank supported initiative in SABER have significantly influenced the formulation and implementation of regional strategies in the Southeast states of Nigeria, 2015-2024

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	897.200	4	1048.330	1234.000	.000[b]
	Residual	183.252	373	.822		
	Total	1098.582	377			

a. **Predictors:** (Constant): World Bank influenced policy initiatives
b. **Dependent Variable**: Regional Poverty Reduction Strategies

As presented in Table 5, the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) results confirm the statistical significance of the regression model examining whether World Bank–influenced policy initiatives significantly shaped regional poverty reduction strategies in South-East Nigeria between 2015 and 2024. The regression sum of squares is 897.200, representing the proportion of the total variance in regional poverty reduction strategies explained by the model. In contrast, the residual (error) sum of squares is 183.252, with a total sum of squares

of 1,098.582, capturing the overall observed variance in the dependent variable. The mean square for the regression is 1,048.330, while the mean square for the residuals is 0.822. The resulting F-statistic of 1,234.000 is exceptionally high, demonstrating a strong model fit. Importantly, the significance level (Sig. = .000) is well below the 0.05 threshold, confirming that the model is statistically significant.

These findings provide robust evidence that World Bank–influenced policy initiatives, particularly under the SABRE framework, explain a substantial portion of the variation in regional poverty reduction strategies. This underscores the critical role of such interventions in shaping governance reforms, transparency, and more effective poverty reduction outcomes across the South-East.

Table 6: Coefficients
Regional Poverty Reduction Strategies

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.558	.400		1.762	.017
	World Bank influenced policy initiatives	.298	.045	.455	5.346	.000

As shown in Table 6, the regression model was used to test Hypothesis 3 (H_3): that World Bank–supported SABRE policy initiatives have not significantly shaped regional poverty reduction strategies in South-East Nigeria between 2015 and 2024. The constant (intercept) has an unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.558, with a standard error of 0.400 and a t-value of 1.762. The corresponding p-value of 0.017 is below the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the intercept is statistically significant. This suggests that even in the absence of SABRE interventions, there exists a modest baseline level of institutional or policy action toward poverty reduction. The key predictor, World Bank–influenced policy initiatives, has an unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.298, with a standard error of 0.045 and a t-value of 5.346. The associated p-value of 0.000 confirms that this relationship is highly statistically significant. Substantively, this means that for every one-unit increase in World Bank–influenced policy initiatives, the effectiveness of regional poverty reduction strategies increases by 0.298 units.

The standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.455$) demonstrates a moderate to strong positive effect of SABRE initiatives on the dependent variable. This finding underscores the role of SABRE as a critical enabler of institutional and policy reform, fostering state-level planning, budget alignment, and business-enabling reforms that translate into more coherent and effective poverty reduction strategies. Although domestic and political dynamics also contributed to shaping outcomes (as reflected in the adjusted $R^2 = 0.655$ reported in earlier tables), the significant beta weight (0.455) highlights that SABRE was an independent and substantive driver of change in regional poverty reduction efforts. Additionally, the qualitative evidence corroborated these quantitative findings, showing that stakeholders perceived SABRE as instrumental in institutional strengthening, improved governance, and policy coherence.

Governance Reforms and Poverty Reduction Strategies

Governance improvements under the State Action on Business Enabling Reforms (SABER) and related initiatives emerged as a recurring theme across respondent narratives. A beneficiary observed that local government offices have become more responsive, with clearer communication channels and faster service delivery. She noted that citizen forums now incorporate broader participation, giving communities a stronger voice in policymaking. Reflecting on this shift, she remarked:

> *"At first, when I saw this act, it looked strange until I heard that the initiative was birthed by the World Bank and realized that truly two is better than one. Who would not be happy when something we once achieved in three months through government channels can now be secured within days? This is indeed a step that has greatly increased community trust and accountability" (Enebechi Stephanie, personal communication, August 12, 2025).*

Programme officers attributed such improvements to technical reforms, including the adoption of digital budgeting platforms, open contracting mechanisms, and the development of social registers. These innovations have reduced opportunities for manipulation, thereby strengthening accountability and transparency. The Enugu State programme officer highlighted the specific role of SABER, explaining:

> "*Enugu is specifically listed in the SABER PAD as a participating state. The program aims to improve the business environment and promote economic growth by enhancing land administration, creating a more enabling regulatory environment for private investment in fiber optic infrastructure, strengthening investment promotion agencies and public-private partnership units, and improving tax administration. During the period under review, this initiative has been implemented in collaboration with the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC), the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), and state governments. Since its implementation in Enugu State in December 2023, several key milestones have been achieved. First, sensitization workshops were organized through the Enugu State Investment Development Authority (ESIDA) for the organized private sector and professional bodies. Second, by September 2024, the state had made progress in implementing reforms, including the introduction of a consolidated demand notice system for payments, streamlining land administration, and simplifying tax processes" (Okeke Ekene Francis, personal communication, August 28, 2025).*

At the same time, challenges were consistently acknowledged. Community leaders cautioned that transparency remains uneven across Local Government Areas (LGAs), often hinging on the strength of political will. Political interference and coordination gaps continue to weaken reform effectiveness. While respondents agreed that reforms have improved accountability and informed poverty reduction strategies, they stressed that sustainability depends on the consistent application of these measures across regions. Statistical analysis further reinforces these qualitative findings. Since the predictor variable was found to be statistically significant, we accept the alternative hypothesis (H_3) and conclude that World Bank–influenced SABER policy initiatives have had a significant impact on shaping regional poverty reduction strategies in South-East Nigeria between 2015 and 2024.

Findings: World Bank-influenced SABRE policy initiatives have significantly shaped regional poverty reduction strategies in South-East Nigeria between 2015 and 2024.

Discussion of the Findings:

The study discovered that there were remarkable improvements in fiscal transparency, participatory budgeting, and service responsiveness. These findings suggest that governance- focused interventions (SABRE) were critical in institutionalizing reforms that enhanced the coherence of poverty reduction strategies. The β value (0.455) confirms a substantive impact, though not as large as that of direct service delivery interventions like education or energy. This is consistent with World Bank (2020) findings that governance reforms often yield incremental but durable outcomes. Qualitative evidence from this study illustrates that SABRE's influence was felt through policy coherence, improved transparency, and accountability, reinforcing poverty reduction through stronger institutions. This result confirms Amah and Bello's (2022) claim that governance mediates donor effectiveness. In Nsukka, for example, citizens witnessed expenditure disclosures for the first time, a direct link to SABRE reforms. Similarly, Chukwu and Obi (2023) found that weak continuity and political interference reduced the sustainability of projects in Anambra, which aligns with respondents' concerns about uneven transparency across LGAs. This study therefore contributes to evidence that governance is not merely a context but an active determinant of poverty reduction outcomes (Hashim, 2002; Herbert & Odeniyi, 2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that World Bank interventions between 2015 and 2024 delivered significant and visible socio-economic benefits in South-East Nigeria, albeit with varying levels of impact across sectors. Households benefited from improved access to reliable energy, better educational opportunities, stronger participatory governance, and critical financial support through safety nets. These interventions disrupted entrenched cycles of deprivation and demonstrated the transformative potential of targeted external assistance. Nonetheless, the persistence of affordability gaps, teacher shortages, cultural resistance, political interference, and weak institutional capacity reveals the fragility of these gains. Poverty in South-East Nigeria cannot be adequately explained by cultural factors alone but is shaped decisively by structural inequalities, exclusion, and governance weaknesses. Ensuring sustainability therefore requires both consolidating current achievements and addressing these systemic challenges. The study recommends:

i. Introduce flexible, income-sensitive tariff structures to enhance affordability.
ii. Provide targeted subsidies or incentives for LPG adoption among low-income households.
iii. Expand electrification initiatives equitably to underserved communities.

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EFFECTS OF URBAN PUBLIC HOUSING CONTEXTUAL DIMENSIONS ON PROJECT SUCCESS IN KADUNA STATE

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Abstract
Urban public housing delivery in developing countries is shaped by complex contextual conditions that extend beyond conventional project management concerns. This study examines the effects of urban public housing contextual dimensions on project success in Kaduna State, Nigeria, focusing specifically on Contextual dimensions, which are conceptualised as project context and partner context, while project success is measured using multidimensional indicators including project efficiency, organisational benefits, project impact, future potential, and stakeholder satisfaction. A mixed-methods research design was adopted, with quantitative data analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that both project context and partner context exert statistically significant and positive direct effects on project success, with project context demonstrating a stronger explanatory power. The study highlights the importance of contextual assessment in public housing planning and provides evidence-based insights for improving housing delivery outcomes in Nigeria and similar developing country contexts.

Keywords*: Urban public housing; contextual dimensions; project success; project context; partner context; Kaduna State*

Introduction

Rapid urbanisation continues to exert pressure on public housing systems across developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria's urban population has expanded faster than the provision of affordable housing, resulting in housing deficits, informal settlements, and declining urban living conditions (UN-Habitat, 2020; National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022). In response, successive Nigerian governments have implemented public housing programmes aimed at increasing housing supply and improving social welfare. Despite these efforts, the performance of many public housing projects remains mixed, with frequent delays, cost overruns and limited socio-economic impact (Ibem & Aduwo, 2015; Windapo & Cattell, 2013).

Existing explanations for poor project outcomes often focus on institutional capacity gaps, policy inconsistency, and financing constraints (Akinmoladun & Oluwoye, 2007; Olatubara, 2008). While these factors are important, they do not fully explain why projects operating under similar policy and institutional environments record different levels of success. This observation has led to growing scholarly interest in the role of contextual dimensions as critical determinants of project performance (Turner, 2014; Biesenthal *et al.,* 2018).

Urban public housing projects operate within complex technical, organisational and relational settings. These contextual conditions shape governance arrangements, risk allocation, stakeholder coordination and decision-making processes throughout the project life cycle (Aaltonen & Kujala, 2016). However, much of the housing literature treats context as a background variable rather than an explicit analytical construct. This study addresses this gap by empirically examining how project context and partner context influence multidimensional measures of project success in urban public housing delivery in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Project Success in Public Housing

Traditional project management literature defined success narrowly in terms of the "iron triangle" of cost, time, and quality (Atkinson, 1999). While these criteria remain relevant, they are insufficient for evaluating public-sector and housing projects, which pursue broader social, institutional, and developmental objectives (Müller & Jugdev, 2012). Public housing projects are expected to improve living standards, promote social inclusion and contribute to long-term urban development outcomes (UN-Habitat, 2016).

Consequently, contemporary scholarship conceptualises project success as a multidimensional construct incorporating efficiency, organisational benefits, stakeholder satisfaction, project impact and future potential (Shenhar *et al.,* 2001; Ika, 2009). In developing country contexts, this expanded perspective is particularly important given the role of housing projects as instruments of social policy and urban governance (Ibem & Amole, 2013).

Contextual Dimensions of Housing Projects

Contextual dimensions refer to the internal and external conditions within which projects are conceived and implemented (Bakker *et al.,* 2016). This study distinguishes between project context and partner context. Project context relates to intrinsic project characteristics

such as size, duration, task complexity, uncertainty, interdependencies, information availability and risk–reward arrangements (Turner, 2014). High levels of complexity and uncertainty increase coordination demands and managerial challenges, particularly in environments characterised by weak institutional support (Flyvbjerg, 2014). Partner context captures the relational and organisational characteristics of actors involved in project delivery. Key elements include trust, collaboration history, decision-making autonomy, partner diversity and the involvement of local firms (Aaltonen & Kujala, 2016; Eriksson *et al.,* 2017). Strong partner relationships can reduce transaction costs, enhance information sharing, and improve collective problem-solving capacity.

Contextual Dimensions and Project Success

Empirical studies in construction and infrastructure delivery demonstrate that contextual factors significantly influence project outcomes. Complex project environments are associated with higher risks of delay and cost overruns, while collaborative governance structures improve performance and stakeholder satisfaction (Flyvbjerg, 2017; Derakhshan *et al.,* 2019). However, empirical evidence on the direct effects of contextual dimensions in public housing delivery in sub-Saharan Africa remains limited. This study contributes to closing this gap by providing context-specific evidence from Nigeria.

Methodology

A mixed-methods research design was adopted to allow for robust empirical testing while accounting for the contextual realities of public housing delivery (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The study focused on public housing projects implemented in Kaduna Metropolis between 2001 and 2022. Data were collected from housing agency officials, consultants, contractors and beneficiaries using a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale. Project context and partner context were operationalised using established indicators from prior project management studies (Shenhar *et al.,* 2001; Turner, 2014). Project success was measured across five dimensions: project efficiency, organisational benefits, project impact, future potential and stakeholder satisfaction. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed due to its suitability for complex models and exploratory research in developing country settings (Hair et al., 2019).

Results

The structural model results indicate that both project context and partner context exert statistically significant and positive effects on project success. Project context demonstrates a stronger explanatory power, suggesting that intrinsic project characteristics play a critical role in determining housing project outcomes. The model explains 62 per cent of the variance in project success, indicating substantial explanatory strength (Hair *et al.,* 2019).

Descriptive Statistics of Contextual Dimensions

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the indicators measuring project context and partner context across the sampled urban public housing projects in Kaduna State. The results indicate moderate to high levels of task complexity and task interdependence, suggesting that most housing projects involved technically demanding and highly coordinated activities. Information clarity recorded comparatively lower mean values, reflecting gaps in documentation, communication and data availability during project execution.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Contextual Dimensions

Variable	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Task Complexity	3.72	0.81
Information Clarity	3.21	0.94
Project Uncertainty	3.65	0.88
Task Interdependence	3.78	0.76
Risk–Reward Structure	3.54	0.83
Trust among Partners	3.69	0.79
Decision-making Autonomy	3.47	0.86
Collaboration History	3.62	0.82

Structural Model Results

The structural model was used to assess the direct effects of project context and partner context on project success. The results, presented in Table 2, show that both paths are statistically significant at the 1 per cent level. Project context exhibits a stronger effect on project success compared to partner context, indicating that intrinsic project characteristics play a more dominant role in shaping housing project outcomes.

Table 2: Structural Model Results

Path	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
Project Context → Project Success	0.53	8.41	< 0.001	Significant
Partner Context → Project Success	0.31	4.96	< 0.001	Significant

4.3 Explained Variance of Project Success

The combined influence of project context and partner context explains a substantial proportion of the variance in project success. As shown in Table 3, the coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that contextual dimensions account for 62 per cent of the observed variation in the success of urban public housing projects.

Table 3: Coefficient of Determination

Endogenous Variable	R^2
Project Success	0.62

Discussion

The findings confirm that contextual dimensions are significant determinants of urban public housing project success in Kaduna State. The strong influence of project context highlights the importance of managing task complexity, uncertainty, and information flows at the planning stage. This supports prior studies emphasising the role of project design characteristics in public-sector project performance (Flyvbjerg, 2014; Turner, 2014). The positive effect of partner context underscores the importance of trust, collaboration and decision-making autonomy among project actors. In line with relational contracting and governance literature, cooperative partnerships appear to mitigate coordination challenges inherent in complex housing projects (Eriksson *et al.,* 2017; Aaltonen & Kujala, 2016).

Conclusion and Policy Implications

This study demonstrates that contextual dimensions significantly influence the success of urban public housing projects in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Both project context and partner context have positive effects on project outcomes, with project context emerging as the more influential factor. Policy-wise, housing authorities should integrate systematic contextual assessments into project planning, procurement, and approval processes. Strengthening information clarity, managing task interdependencies, and fostering collaborative partner relationships can improve public housing delivery outcomes. The study contributes empirical evidence from Nigeria and advances understanding of context-sensitive approaches to public housing project management in developing countries.

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