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VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

Validity in social research means the extent to which the data is plausible, credible and trustworthy; and thus can be defended when challenged. Reliability and validity remain appropriate concepts for attaining rigor in both qualitative and quantitative research. Few or not many researchers in public administration always salvage responsibility for reliability and validity by implementing verification strategies integral and self-correcting during the conduct of inquiry which promote the attainment of rigor using strategies inherent within each quantitative and qualitative design, and moves the responsibility for incorporating and maintaining reliability and validity from external reviewers' judgments to the investigators themselves. This paper clarifies the meaning and use of reliability and validity in both quantitative and qualitative research paradigm in public administration. The paper also contributes to knowledge creation on how meeting validity and reliability demand of research affects its outcome and acceptability. In pursuit of this aim the paper relied on qualitative technique as its methodology. Threatening or risk factors that may affect validity and reliability of research outcomes were appraised. However, the research paper revealed that the trustworthiness, universality, acceptability of any research findings in public administration lies in the researcher's capacity to meet the validity and reliability need of the research exercise as any data collected with invalid or unreliable instrument eventually renders the research outcome unacceptable. The paper concludes by recommending some possible strategies to enhance validity and reliability in public administration (social research).

Keywords*:* Research instrument, Validity, Reliability, Quantitative research, Qualitative research

Introduction

Public Administration, in Dwight Waldo's terms, has become a profession. With that achievement, examining the methodological infrastructure of the profession is merited. Every profession rests on an infrastructure of research and research methods on which the profession's practitioners base their day-to-day activities. Contemporary public administration should be understood as a practical activity to achieve national and regional goals and objectives through state organizations and public participation. This definition allow to accumulate both domestic and foreign experience, as well as combine practice-oriented and research characteristics of the concept under study. The theoretical

basis of public administration is determined by two key methodological approaches: socio-engineering that is focused on the search for optimal management models for solving problems that arise in society in a way; and humanitarian, that is based on the need to overcome bureaucracy and inertia of the management system.

The subject of contemporary public administration consists of some problem areas, including: international, national, regional and local public administration systems; organization and implementation of sectoral policies, strategies, projects and programs; administrative processes and procedures; research of the state and municipal service; civil society; information support and digital transformation of administration.

In the subject field of Public Administration, knowledge is not only necessary for the understanding of government institutions and processes, but necessitates continuous research to create and manage new knowledge. Institutions of higher learning as custodians to generate new knowledge, transfer this knowledge and apply the knowledge to play a meaningful role in the enhancement of the knowledge society and the development of communities. However, research is a scientific knowledge creation process. Knowledge creation is the hub of every research effort in the field of public administration. This position was well articulated in Akuezuilo (1993) who posits that research is a systematic and objective search for new knowledge of the subject of study and for application of knowledge to the solution of a novel problem. Therefore research in the field of public administration is the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Research has a special role in a practitioner-orientated field such as public administration by serving not only to guide needed theory development but also to influence the practices and even the decisions of managers and policy-makers.

As an academic field, public administration is obligated to advance theoretical and pragmatic understanding of governmental institutions and processes. Such understanding, however, cannot be advanced solely by the explication of current knowledge through education and service; it also requires the generation of new knowledge through research (Liebman 1963). Research has a special role in a practitioner-orientated field such as public administration by serving not only to guide needed theory development but also to influence the practices and even the decisions of managers and policy-makers. Unfortunately, the research questions important to public administration do not lend themselves to scientific study in the same way found in the natural sciences. Rather, the important issues facing public administration and management are complex and involve phenomena not easily identified, isolated, manipulated, or even directly observed. Consequently, the generation of new knowledge in public administration is a difficult and tenuous process. A good question is not enough; good answers are needed (Wright *et al.* 2004).

To provide good answers, scholars must not only determine what should be the focus of research but also what data, instruments and methodology would be most helpful in answering the field's questions. At issue is not the respective legitimacy of qualitative or quantitative methods; rather, it should be about how valid and reliable to apply such methods in ways that build confidence in research findings.

Public administration differs from other fields and professions in that it lacks a set of core data sets that comprise the basic data infrastructure for the field. Political scientists have the National Election Studies, the Correlates of War, easily obtained congressional and state legislative data sets; economists have the Citicorp data set with its national time series, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; demographers and sociologists have the Panel Study on Income Dynamics. First, teaching research in public administration is more difficult simply because students do not have ready access to data sets concerned with management and administrative questions. In the social sciences, first semester graduate students can conduct actual research projects by just using data that can easily be accessed through the archives at the University or similar places. Second, students of public administration lack a common exposure to sets of data that would provide a notion of what core research questions might be. The result is less interaction among researchers and, thus, greater

difficulty in generating a cumulative body of research. Unlike other social scientists, public administration scholars are not trapped by data sets and funneled into studying only certain questions. How the National Election Studies have structured what is considered political science is a classic case of path dependence in this regard. The absence of core data sets means that public administration scholars expect to gather their own data and, thus, are more sensitive to issues of measurement of reliability and validity. The absence has also contributed to more eclectic use of data sets including government documents, elite interviews, archival research, and the merger of multiple data sources in addition to survey research.

Reliability and validity are related to each other. The relationship between these two is better understood with an example. We know that reliability refers to consistency while validity deals with measurement of the intended property. If a shopkeeper's weighing machine measures 950 grams of sugar every time customers buy 1 kg of sugar, then the weighing machine is said to be reliable. As the weighing machine weighs consistently in repeated operations, the machine is said to be reliable. However, there is a problem of error in measurement. Thus, what is important to note is that reliability tests consider the repeatability and consistency of a scale or an instrument. It does not tell whether there is an error in measurement. In other words, reliability tests don't test whether the instrument is measuring what it is intended to measure.

For the purpose of knowing whether the instrument (or it could be a scale, research design, research findings, etc.) is measuring what it is intended to measure, we use validity tests. It can be explained using the same example. If the shopkeeper's weighing machine weighs 1000 grams for every 1 kg then it is said to be valid. If the weighing machine weighs 1000 grams for 1 kg of sugar every time (repeatedly), then the weighing machine of the shop keeper is said to be valid and reliable. If the instruments used in data collection measure what is intended in repeated usage then the instrument is said to be reliable and valid.

The Nigerian civil service and other public organizations are confronted with diverse phenomenal problems which require systematically organized process of establishing a universal knowledge as to what causes those problems and how they could be deciphered. Example, effects of corrupt practice by public official on national development. The processes involve in arriving at germane and objective solution to societal problem requires rigorous mental and physical effort; empirical and theoretical frameworks needed to be established, undertaken a pilot survey as well as sampling opinion, analyzing data collected with a valid and reliable instrument with an eventual findings or conclusion.

The acceptability of any research outcome in the field of public administration is primarily dependent on the researcher's ability to fulfill the validity and reliability demand in the research enquiry. As social scientist, few and not many researchers are able to understand the usefulness of the data they collect: How accurate a pictureof social life they are getting; Whether or not the conclusions they draw are applicable to everyone or simply the group of people they have studied. Can our research be repeatedby others (a process known as replication and would they get similar results if they did repeat our research? One of the most important concerns of research in public administration has been the issue of reliability and validity. It has been a challenge to many researchers to claim the findings of their study as scientific as that of natural sciences.

Public administration, because of its very nature of object of study, i.e. social phenomena, which is dynamic, fluidic, and difficult to predict, suffers from the inability of developing instruments to help researchers to make precise, accurate claims of knowledge. It is known to us that knowledge claims in social research are the plausible explanations. Hence, a social science researcher faces the challenging task of arriving at reliable and valid data and conclusions. The most challenging questions in this paper are: What are validity and reliability tests in public administration research? What are the factors that determine the reliability and validity of a test in both qualitative and quantitative research? What is the relevance of validity and reliability tests in public administration research? How to enhance validity and reliability in qualitative and quantitative research in public administration?

It is against this background that this paper seeks toattuned researchers with multiple factors that pose risks to the validity of findings; plan and implement various tactics or strategies into each stage of the research project to avoid or weaken these threatening factors which affect the reliability and validity of data they collect. Hence, Validity and reliability are very important major aspects of every research exercise. Scrupulous concentration on these two aspects can make the difference between good research and poor research and can help to assure that fellow researchers accept findings as credible and trustworthy.

Conceptual Clarifications

When an instrument of data collection used by the researcher yields a particular set of data, another researcher should be able to derive similar data using the same instrument. Or, the same researcher should be able to derive similar data using the same instrument at another point of time. This refers to the notion called repeatability and consistency which is closely associated with reliability. Such repeatability and consistency may be possible with the instruments to a greatest extent in natural sciences. But, in social science research, there are inherent limitations and it is difficult to talk about reliability in the same sense we talk about it in natural sciences. However, over a period, there has been a steady advancement of tests which qualify the reliability of certain instruments like questionnaire or interview schedule used social research.

Reliability in general sense refers to consistency or repeatability of results with the instrument used in data collection, methodology adopted in the study and research design. 'Reliability is the degree to which a variable or test yields the same results when administered to the same people, under the same circumstances' (Weller 1998). Joppe (2000) defines reliability as the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is reliable. Reliability concerns the extent to which a measurement of a phenomenon provides stable and consist result (Carmines and Zeller, 1979). Reliability is also concerned with repeatability. For example, a scale or test is said to be reliable if repeat measurement made by it under constant conditions will give the same result (Moser and Kalton, 1989).

In the same vein, Reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability and repeatability of the informant's accounts as well as the investigators' ability to collect and record information accurately (Brink 1993). This, imply that, Reliability refers to the ability of a research method to yield consistently the same results over repeated testing periods. Gay (1987) opined that reliability is the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it measures.The term 'Reliability' is a concept used for testing or evaluating quantitative research, the idea is most often used in all kinds of research. The idea of testing in qualitative paradigm is viewed as a way of information elicitation. Therefore most important test of any qualitative study is its quality. A good qualitative study can help us to "understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing" (Eisner, 1991).

Stenbacka, (2001) viewed reliability as purpose of explaining in quantitative approach and generating understanding in qualitative approach to research. The difference in purposes of evaluating the quality of studies in quantitative and qualitative research is one of the reasons that the concept of reliability is irrelevant in qualitative research. According to Stenbacka, (2001) the concept of reliability is even misleading in qualitative research, if a qualitative study is discussed with reliability as a criterion; the consequence is rather that the study is no good. Meanwhile, Patton (2001) puts three questions for the credibility (validity and reliability) of the qualitative research: What techniques and methods were used to ensure the integrity, validity and accuracy of the findings? What does the researcher bring to the study in terms of experience and qualification? And What assumptions undergirds the study? These questions may be used as guide for writing up narrative.
The most suitable terms in qualitative paradigms are Credibility, Neutrality or Conformability, Consistency or Dependability and Applicability or Transferability (Lincoln &Guba, 1985). To be more specific with the term of reliability in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) used

"dependability", in qualitative research which closely corresponds to the notion of "reliability" in quantitative research. They further emphasize "inquiry audit" as one measure which might enhance the dependability of qualitative research.

In the same layer, Clont (1992) and Seale (1999) endorse the concept of dependability with the concept of consistency or reliability in qualitative research. The consistency of data will be achieved when the steps of the research are verified through examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes (Campbell, 1996).

From these multiple definitions, we can opine that Data reliability, therefore, is concerned with ideas such as: The consistency of the data collected. Will, for example, the same question asked of the same person in similarcircumstances, produce the same answer?; The precision (or lack of same) with which it is collected, for example, how systematic is a form of data collection that relies upon asking people questions about something about what they may have little direct knowledge; The repeatability of the data collection method, for example, if another researcher attempted to repeat my research "down the public, would similar results be achieved?

In the same direction, validity is the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. The question of validity is raised in the context of the three points made bellow: the form of the test, the purpose of the test and the population for whom it is intended. Therefore, we cannot ask the general question "Is this a valid test? The question to ask is "how valid is this test for the decision that I need to make?" or "how valid is the interpretation I propose for the test?" We can divide the types of validity into logical and empirical.

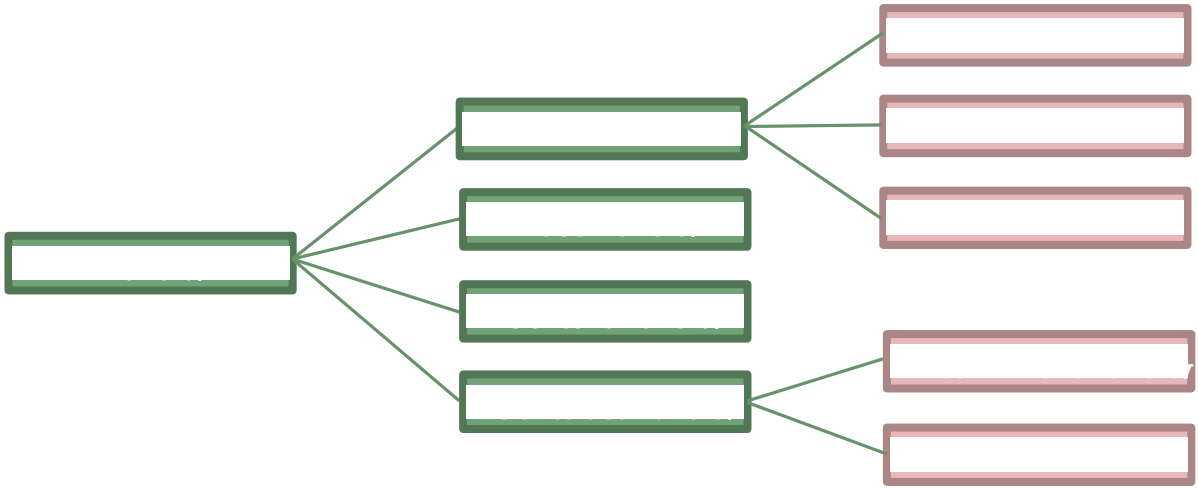
Validity of the findings, data collected, the instrument used in data collection and the research design is of important concern in social research. like reliability, the issue of validity transcends methodological boundaries. In quantitative research validity refers to the ability of the instrument to measure what it is supposed to measure, whereas in qualitative research the issue of validity goes beyond data extending to the research design adopted, the techniques (for example, observation, ethnography, interviews and narratives) used in data collection and the findings discussed in the research study. Validity explains how well the collected data covers the actual area of investigation (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005).

According to Roberta and Alison (2015), validity refers to the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study. For instance, a survey designed and instrument to explore organizational survival but which measures organizational growth would not be considered valid.Validity in research is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings (Le Comple and Goetz 1982). In view of the definition, it is clear to observe that, a valid study should demonstrate what exists and a valid instrument or measure should actually measure what it is supposed to measure.

Roberta and Allison identified three categories on which every good research work must validate its instrument or tools for data gathering:

i. **Content validity**: the extent to which a research instrument accurately measures all aspects of a construct. In other words, this category looks at whether the instrument adequately covers all the content that it should with respect to the variable.
ii. **Construct validity**: The extent to which a research instrument (or tool) measures the intended construct.
iii. **Criterion validity**: The extent to which a research instrument is related to other instruments that measure the same variables.

Fig: Showing subtype of validity instruments of research.



Source:(HamedTaherdoost. 2020)

Research Method

The method adopted in this paper is content analysis using mainly secondary data. The secondary data consist of existing literature on topic such as books, journals, conference papers, and other related documents. Rossman (1989) cited in Kums, Simon Nankap (2019), opined that collection of data and analysis in qualitative research is a simultaneous process. The choice of this method of data collection and analysis was however informed by the focus of the study; that is: Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument in Public Administration.

Reliability in quantitative research

In quantitative research reliability of the instrument used in data collection is the most important concern. It is not just that the instrument should measure what it is supposed to measure but it should measure similarly across space and time. Thus, stability of the instrument for its repeatability and consistency becomes central. The degree to which the instrument, when repeated, produces similar results over a period reflects the extent of reliability of the instrument. Social science research aims at understanding phenomena in a naturally occurring setting. It deals with the social actors who are part of the phenomena to be understood. These social actors are dynamic agents who create and recreate social setting in their everyday life. Observing these activities to measure and explain is a challenging task. Given these challenges and constraints, social science researchers have to make their data, findings and conclusions reliable and valid. As the aim of every research is to contribute to the existing pool of knowledge, conclusions drawn based on unreliable and invalid techniques or procedures is of no use. It is important to note that social phenomena can be studied using quantitative and qualitative research techniques. Quantitative research engages standardised instruments of research whose reliability and validity can be easily assessed. However, the most challenging part is dealing with the issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research. By adhering to certain established practices, a qualitative researcher can enhance consistency and validity of data, and the research findings.

Types of Reliability Tests in Quantitative Research

Reliability of an instrument used in measuring the properties of objects can be tested. However, we can only estimate the reliability of an instrument but cannot calculate. There are different types of reliability tests developed to estimate the extent of reliability of the instrument used in data collection (please note that the most used instruments in data collection in quantitative research are questionnaire or interview schedule or sometimes attitudinal scales. So, in our discussion, the term instrument refers to questionnaire or interview schedule). Reliability can be estimated by the correlation between the two sets of scores.

Test-retest Method: In the test-retest method, the instrument is administered twice, at two different points of time. Important points to remember are: a) the instrument (questionnaire or interview schedule, or a scale) remains same in two occasions, and b) the instrument is administered to the same set of respondents. If the correlation values show consistency between the two tests, then the instrument is said to be reliable. However, what becomes critical in this method is the time interval between the two tests. If the gap between the two tests is short, there is a problem of cueing, i.e. the respondents may remember the earlier test and answer in the same manner leading to higher correlation. If the gap is too large, then there is the problem of maturation, which means that respondents may change their opinion or understanding of a question in the questionnaire or interview schedule as time progresses.

Parallel Forms Method: As the name suggests, in this method two sets of instrument are prepared. The two sets contain questions which provide same meaning. The researcher has to generate multiple questions aimed at measuring the same variable. So, in parallel forms reliability test, instead of generating questions for one set of questionnaires, sufficient number of questions are generated so that they can be divided into two sets of questionnaires. Multiple questions which address same construct are randomly divided into two sets. These two sets of questionnaires are administered to the same set of respondents. The correlation between these two sets is estimated. The two sets of questionnaires are equivalent measures. Hence, this test is called parallel forms method. This method is advantageous when compared to test-retest method as there is less cueing effect. However, this method is demanding as the researcher must evolve multiple questions which are equivalent.

The Split-Halves Method: In this method, the instrument is administered once to the respondents. However, the responses are tested for consistency by splitting the instrument (questionnaire) into two halves. Each half consists of questions which are like the other half. Then, the correlation between the two halves is calculated. This method is dissimilar to the earlier methods as only one questionnaire is administered at one point of time. It overcomes the problems of cueing and generating multiple questions. Moreover, it is administered only once. The difficult aspect of this method is splitting the questions into two equal halves without compromising the validity of the questions.

Internal consistency method: In this method, reliability is estimated by grouping questions in the questionnaire that measure the same concept. Instead of generating one question to measure the concept, researcher must evolve two groups of questions, each group consisting of three or more questions that measure the concept. The questions in the two groups aim at measuring the same concept. The instrument is administered only once. The responses to the questions under two groups are correlated. This method enables the researcher to measure the reliability of the instrument by checking the consistency between two groups of questions. Point to be noted is that, it is not just two groups of questions, but the researcher can generate as many questions as possible and group them so that correlation between them is calculated. It is also possible to measure correlation between different questions by calculating interitem correlation method. Internal consistency is also assessed using *Cronbach's Alpha.* This statistic measures the consistency between the items (questions) used in the questionnaire. There are different types of reliability tests developed to estimate the extent of reliability of the instrument used in quantitative data collection. They are test-retest method, parallel forms method, the split-halves method and internal consistency method. Reliability of an instrument used in measuring the properties of objects can be tested. Higher the reliability of an instrument greater is the credibility of the research study. However, we can only estimate the reliability of an instrument but cannot calculate.

Reliability in Qualitative Research

In qualitative research the findings of the study are based on direct or indirect observation of social phenomena that occur naturally and do not rely on statistical procedures or other means of quantification in drawing inferences. The emphasis in qualitative research is on understanding phenomena in an intense manner. Golafshani (2003) observes that 'the terms reliability and validity are essential criterion for quality in quantitative paradigms, in qualitative paradigms the terms

credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability are the essential criteria for quality'. Quantitative research is guided by the objectives of verifying causal relationships, prediction, and generalization. Thus, the instruments used for data collection differ greatly. Quantitative researchers use instruments such as questionnaire or scales in order to measure the property and quantify.

However, qualitative researchers use techniques such as observation (participant or non-participant), ethnography, interview, etc. In fact, it is said that the researcher himself/herself is the instrument of data collection. *While the credibility in quantitative research depends on instrument construction, in qualitative research, "the researcher is the instrument"* (Golafshani 2003).

Some argue that reliability issue concerns with quantitative research as it is overwhelmingly dependent on instruments to measure the properties of objects. Since qualitative research doesn't lay emphasis on measurement, the issue of reliability is of no relevance (Stenbacka 2001). However, the issue of reliability in qualitative research is never ignored. In fact, reliability in qualitative research stands for consistency. Qualitative research is considered reliable if the research findings can be replicated by another researcher. Thus, the qualitative researchers face the challenge of reliability of greater magnitude when compared to quantitative researchers.

Sjoberg and Nett (1992) observe that 'reliability is a function of the scientist's theoretical system, the social order being studied, and the use to which the instrument is to be put'. Other notion, 'trustworthiness' of a research report is also talked about in the same sense of reliability in quantitative research. The researcher is expected to provide accurate observation notes or records. At the same time, the notes or records should not be oversimplified or misinterpreted. If multiple observers are engaged in research, they must be trained to record the same observations in the similar manner.

Some important Considerations to Enhance Reliability of Data in qualitative research

i. If more than one researcher is working on the project, it is imperative that all are trained to observe events, record, and conduct interviews in an identical manner. (Lewis 2009),
ii. Discussing the issues concerning reliability of observations, suggests that researcher must keep changing the time and place of observations. This technique of changing place and time of observations is like that of test-retest method used in quantitative research.
iii. The researcher can also seek information again from the same respondent on the previously gathered information at different points of time. This can establish the accuracy of information provided by the respondent. Researcher can also increase reliability of the research process by seeking information from respondents on the same question but posed in different ways. If the response is similar then the information may be considered as realizable.
iv. To overcome the problems of information gathering in participant observation, M N Srinivas (2009) suggests that the researcher must focus on rapport building with the members of the community or group before embarking on data collection. We can still opine that, data collected in the first few weeks, that is, before the establishment of rapport, should be discarded as it is usually not very reliable. The fieldworker must make himself (/herself) liked and trusted by the people, for only when will they part with true information'. Srinivas (2009) also urges the researchers to know the people and their practices better.
v. Qualitative research marked by intensive fieldwork faces the problems of ensuring reliability to the findings. Emerson (1981) quoting Becker suggests two considerations for assessing the reliability of field data. First, the presence of observer should not constrain the actions of the observed. Second, the observations must be about interactions between members of the group rather than between the researcher and the researched. He also favours the argument that multiple observers enhance reliability of field data.
vi. Replication or repeatability, the hallmark of reliability in quantitative research, is possible in qualitative research only in a loose way (*Emerson, 1981*). He suggests that two researchers' observations on the same setting may differ because of the theoretical and conceptual

understanding of the phenomena or actions. He recommends for 'identifying explicitly the procedures, analytic assumptions, and interpretive devices used to collect, make sense of, and communicate field reports' to make repeatability possible to some extent in field work-based research.

Validity in Quantitative Research

Numerical data obtained using instruments is the subject of scrutiny in quantitative research. This is because the instrument used to measure a particular concept or construct must measure what it is devised for. If not, data obtained using such instrument becomes irrelevant or inappropriate. In other words, the instrument used to measure the property should enable the researcher to measure it. For example, the instrument used to measure empowerment, if measures development, then it may be considered as not valid, because empowerment and development are two different concepts.

The Following are some of the tests developed to check the validity of instruments used in quantitative research.

1. **Face validity:** The most used validity test is face validity test. The instrument (for example, questionnaire or a scale) is accepted as valid if it appears valid for the researcher. Here researcher, as a professional, makes a judgment about the validity of the instrument. It is a casual review of the questions or items incorporated in the instrument. Sometimes, face validity is conducted by individuals who may not have any professional training or formal knowledge. It is the simplest and easiest method of checking the validity of a scale or a questionnaire.
2. **Content validity:** Instruments such as scales are developed to make predictions. For example, the entrance test conducted to select candidates for admission into IITs is an instrument used to make predictions about the academic ability of the candidates. The items (questions) incorporated in the instrument must reflect the larger goal of the instrument. Hence, in content validity, the items are subjected to review by those who are formally trained and have expertise in the subject under study. Usually individuals with considerable domain knowledge are asked to review whether the items used, measure the intended property or not. Consensus opinion is considered in finalizing the instrument. This type of validity test is mostly used by the researchers.
3. **Criterion validity:** It is conducted to measure the validity of the instrument against the criteria set in the study. Two types of tests are considered in criterion validity test. They are concurrent validity test and predictive validity test. Concurrent validity test is conducted to measure the extent to which the items of the instrument correlate with the 'gold standard' available. Generally, standardized, established instruments are used as references to check the validity of the instrument being tested. The predictive validity test measures the extent to which the instrument predicts the expected future observation. For example, instrument developed to measure IQ must help in making the predictions of IQ levels of the respondents.
4. **Construct validity**: Construct validity involves relating one's measuring instrument to the overall theoretical structure in order to determine whether the instrument is logically tied to the concepts and theoretical assumptions that are employed'(Sjoberg and Nett 1992: 303). Thus, this test refers to the theoretical assumptions and the way concepts are operational in the research process. The items (questions) placed in the scale or questionnaire reflects the definition adopted for a concept and the theoretical standpoint of the research study. For example, the concept of family may be defined differently by a functionalist scholar and a feminist scholar. It may be said that construct validity is closely linked to the theoretical assumptions of the study. Thus, we find that construct validity is conducted to test the concepts and their relationships with the empirical reality. This is done at different levels. At one level the causal relationship between the concept and the questions used to measure the concept is tested. At another level, the causal relationship between the theoretical definition of the concept and its operational definition are tested.

Validity in Qualitative research

Issues of validity in qualitative research are complex and varied. Thus, the concept of validity is understood differently by different scholars. A wide range of terms are used to define validity in qualitative studies. Validity is not a single, fixed or universal concept in qualitative research. Rather it is a contingent construct influenced by the research methodology, theoretical assumptions, and the research design of the study.

Validity in qualitative research is affected by the factors related to the researcher. It is observed that validity of the study is contingent upon how observations are described, how they are interpreted, and how the researcher attempts to manipulate (knowingly or unknowingly) data to fit theory. The most important factor that can influence validity is researcher's inherent bias. The other most important issue of validity in qualitative research is the presence of the researcher. As the researcher's presence can affect the nature of interaction among members of the group being studied validity of qualitative study becomes critical.

Challenges to validity in qualitative research in Public Administration

Followings are some of the potential sources of threats to validity as cited in Lewis's (2009).

Descriptive validity: It concerns with the recording of observations by the researcher. It is often noted that researchers don't provide detail description of the observation setting. Accurate description of the site of observation, process of interaction in appropriate words is of great importance in enhancing the validity of the research.

Interpretation validity: This occurs when the researcher tries to interpret the actions or event from her/his own perspective without paying much attention to how actors perceive it. To overcome the problem of wrong or invalid interpretations, researcher must collect elaborate information.

Theory validity: Researcher enters the field site with a theoretical framework. In most cases it is found that researchers attempt at fitting the data into the theory adopted for the study. Or in some cases researchers ignore data that doesn't fit the theory or that goes against the theoretical convictions of the researchers. Researchers are suggested to record and collect data without discarding it from theoretical point of view.

Researcher bias: This is the biggest threat in qualitative research. As mentioned earlier, in qualitative research when the researcher becomes the instrument of data collection, the potential for bias in recording the observation is enormous. Researcher's personal factors (religious, economic, cultural, gender, etc.), theoretical assumptions, political affiliations, etc. influence the collection of data and interpretation of data.

Reactivity: As suggested, researcher's presence in the field site sometimes affects the situation. Researchers, as outsiders, knowingly or unknowingly influence the site of observation. To overcome this problem, the researchers must be conscious of the influence of their presence.

List of Strategies to Increase Validity in Qualitative Research Paradigm

S/N	Strategy	Description
1	Prolonged and persistent field work	Allows interim data analysis and corroboration to ensure match between findings and participants reality
2	Multi-method strategies	Allows triangulation in data collection and data analysis
3	Participant language verbatim accounts	Obtain literal statements of participants and quotations from documents
4	Low-inference descriptors	Record precise, almost literal, and detailed descriptions of people and situations
5	Multiple researchers	Agreement on the descriptive data collected by the research team
6		Mechanically recoded data Use of tape recorders, photographs, and videotapes
7	Participant researcher	Use of participants recorded perceptions in diaries or anecdotal records for corroboration
8	Member checking	Check informally with participants for accuracy during data collection frequently done in participant observation studies
9	Participant review	Ask participants to review researcher's synthesis of interviews with person for accuracy of representation frequently done in interview studies
10	Negative or discrepant data	Actively search for record, analyze, and report negative or discrepant data that are an exception to patterns or that modify patterns found in data

Source: (Researchers Design 2023)

Factors Affecting Validity & Reliability of Data in Public AdministrationResearch

There are many factors that prevent measurements from being exactly repeatable or replicable. These factors depend on the nature of the test and how the test is used (Nunnally, 1978). These factors cannot ignore errors associated with test instruments.

i. Complementarily, Brink (1993) noted that one of the key factors affecting validity and reliability is error. Error is inherent in all investigations and is inversely related to validity and reliability. The greater the degree of error, the less accurate and truthful the results of the exercise.

ii. However, Brink categorized factors threatening validity and reliability of research outcome to include: The researcher; The subjects participating in the project (despondence); The situation or social context; The methods of data collection and analysis. He avers that in a qualitative study the data-gathering instrument is frequently the researcher himself. Thus questions of researcher bias and researcher competency, if unchecked, may influence the trustworthiness of data considerably.

iii. The very presence of the researcher may affect the validity of the data provided by subjects. When a new member is introduced into an interaction, reactive effect can be expected. On the other hand Participants may behave abnormally (Argyris 1952). They may seek to reveal themselves in the best possible light or withhold or distort certain information; in other words the researcher has created social behaviours in others that would normally not have occurred which eventually affects their response.

iv. Testing for reliability is important as it refers to the consistency across the parts of a measuring instrument (Huck, 2007). A scale is said to have high internal consistency reliability if the items of a scale "hang together" and measure the same construct (Huck, 2007, Robinson, 2009). The most used internal consistency measure is the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. It is viewed as the most appropriate measure of reliability when making use of Likert scales (Whitley, 2002, Robinson, 2009). No absolute rules exist for internal consistencies, however most agree on a minimum internal consistency coefficient of .70 (Whitley, 2002, Robinson, 2009).

How to Enhance Validity and reliability of Data in Public administration Research

To enhance the validity, researchers must use certain checklists. 'A validity checklist assists the researcher in establishing techniques that will be used to strengthen validity issues' (Lewis 2009). Some of the validity checks are discussed below:

Triangulation: The most important technique adopted by researchers in qualitative and quantitative research is triangulation. It involves collection of data from multiple sources. Interviews with key informants and members of the groups observed must be supplemented by data from other sources like non-group members and other informants. Secondary sources like reports, government documents, and earlier research studies may be used to supplement the information gathered first hand. This effort strengthens the validity of the research observations and findings. Similarly, data collected through interview schedule or questionnaire, may be supplemented by focused group discussion/observation/case study.

Negative cases, discrepant data, or disconfirming evidence: One technique recommended to strengthen validity is to focus on negative cases, discrepant data or disconfirming evidence. It is often observed that researchers tend to collect data that proves their theory or hypothesis. In the process they avoid negative cases, or sources of data which are felt inconvenient to the researcher.

Bias or researcher reflexivity: It is the most obvious threat to validity in qualitative research. Hence, researcher must state the assumptions, beliefs, values, etc. in the study outcome. Researcher also must state how he/she had identified these threats and methods employed to overcome such threats.

Member checking: It refers to the process of involving those who were the sources of data. The recordings of observations, interpretations, and conclusions by the researcher are to be tested by sharing it with the people who were observed. The members of the group or community are shown these for their opinions, reactions, and suggestions. This exercise provides the researcher an opportunity to correct errors, misinterpretations, lacunae, etc. This also establishes credibility of the research and strengthens its validity.

Prolonged engagement in the field: One of the means to overcome bias or personal factors influencing the research process is to stay put up in the field site for a long time. Prolonged stay enhances researcher's ability to observe the setting as it unfolds naturally. The researcher learns the norms, language, and habits of those being studied and can better predict and interpret the meaning of events. The researcher also can build trust that can lead to identifying different sources for information and who has access to certain information, both of which would enhance the research and the triangulation of data (Lewis 2009).

Thick, rich description: Unlike quantitative researcher who confines to reporting facts, a qualitative researcher has the responsibility of providing the description of research setting, the participants, etc. in detail. While providing the description the researcher must take efforts to transcend the reader to the research situation. The researcher should not just confine to providing the description of the setting and people involved but also describe their emotions, feelings, and experiences.It may be said that validity of qualitative research is challenging, but not impossible. The techniques described so far can enhance the validity of the research. Using a combination of the just discussed techniques, researcher can definitely enhance the validity of the research.

Conclusion

Qualitative research seeks to understand, as completely as possible, the phenomena under study. Ethnographic research has qualitative goals of complete understanding, but interacts with research subjects, in their own setting, to come to that understanding. There are a variety of methods qualitative researchers' uses: they collect data through observation, interviews, and records investigation. However,

while many in the hard sciences view qualitative research as "easy," or not rigorous enough, qualitative researchers do in fact strive for reliability and validity in their findings.

It is concluded that the claim of validity rests on data collection and analysis techniques and instrument, the researcher in qualitative paradigm. In this paper we have tried to explain the concept of validity and reliability in qualitative paradigm in association with quantitative paradigm so that the reader can easily grasps the concepts. A more meticulous approach is need to ensure the so far called validity of the qualitative research, any combination of the suggested strategies can serve the purpose still the selection of the combinations need care and attention.

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INTERROGATING THE PERFORMANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Local government is one of the oldest forms of governance in Nigeria, evolving under various names and administrations. It is fundamentally designed to enhance governance at the grassroots level and drive local development. Despite its long history and numerous reforms, local government has not succeeded in bringing the anticipated development to rural communities. This paper examines the administration of local government and explores ways to reposition it for sustainable grassroots development. It emphasizes the legal framework, performance, challenges, and prospects of the local government system, relying on secondary data for analysis. The findings reveal that inadequate financing, undue interference, lack of resident participation in policy-making and development programs, corruption, and other related issues have hindered local governments from being effective instruments of positive change. The paper concludes that genuine reforms and repositioning of local governments are essential to enhance their capacity as reliable agents of transformational development.

Keywords: Development, Grassroots, Governance, Local government, Rural Development

Introduction

The need for effective governance at the grassroots level in any modern society cannot be overstated. Central governments alone cannot adequately manage the affairs of an entire country, particularly in remote areas. This necessity led to the creation of local governments in Nigeria as the third tier of government. Nigeria, with its vast size, population exceeding 200 million, and over 250 ethnic groups, requires decentralized governance to address local needs effectively.

In 1976, the official handbook on the reformed system of local government in Nigeria defined local government as "government at the local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should provide substantial control over local affairs, including staffing, institutional, and financial powers to initiate and direct service provision, determine and implement projects, complement state and federal government activities, and ensure active participation of people and their traditional institutions to maximize local initiative and response to local needs" (FRN, 1976). Similarly, the United Nations Office for Public Administration views local government as "a political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) state,

constituted by law with substantial control over local affairs, including the power to impose taxes or exact labor for prescribed purposes, governed by an elected or locally selected body."

These definitions underscore that local government is designed to serve the interests of local inhabitants in various dimensions. Bamidele (1986) noted that local government is essential because it brings governance to the doorstep of the people, providing opportunities for self-governance and the utilization of local talents. Local government plays a crucial role in delivering essential services such as markets, dispensaries, roads, and community projects that the central government cannot provide alone. Additionally, local governments serve as training grounds for political education and leadership development (Ola and Tonwe, 2009).

Suleiman (2012) emphasized that local government should promote rural development by improving the living conditions in rural communities. This includes providing or assisting communities in acquiring adequate food supply, decent shelter, health facilities, mass education, water supply, electrification, roads, and industries. The basic objective is to organize, develop, and utilize available resources (both human and material) to meet the basic needs of people, such as food, clothing, shelter, utilities, and healthcare.

To be effective, local governments must meet these objectives. However, in Nigeria, local governments have largely failed in their fundamental responsibility of ensuring rural development. Many rural areas still suffer from infrastructure deficits, poverty, hunger, and lack of essential services despite numerous reforms and resources dedicated to improving the system. This paradox forms the basis of this paper, which aims to examine the challenges facing local governments and explore how they can be repositioned for effective and sustainable rural service delivery.

Theoretical Underpinning: Bottom-up Model

The bottom-up model gained prominence due to the shortcomings of the top-down model, which often fails to recognize the potential and needs of local and rural residents in their own development (Gurria, 2015). Centralized development decision-making, typically involving city-based experts, is often detached from local realities. This approach is frequently marked by planning arrogance, where technocrats assume they know best what the grassroots level needs (Parnwell, 2008).

In contrast, the bottom-up model emphasizes local actors' participation in decision-making about strategies and the selection of priorities for their area (Bon, 2013). This model represents a significant shift towards grassroots development, empowering local communities to take charge of their future. It allows local community members and stakeholders to express their views, expectations, and plans.

The bottom-up approach is a rural service delivery model that encourages transparency and participation at every stage, from definition to implementation, evaluation, and revision of programmes. This involvement can be direct or through bodies representing collective interests, such as professional organizations, women's groups, and other community-based entities. This local participation encourages local actors to be involved in all stages of decision-making and implementation. This enriches democracy at the grassroots level. This approach also ensures that development strategies are tailored to the specific needs and realities of the local area, as well as promotes openness in processes, fostering trust and accountability. By this broader level of participation and involvement, the approach harps on opportunities available to local communities to influence their own development trajectory. In addition, by involving local stakeholders, projects are more likely to be sustainable and have long-term benefits.

The bottom-up model is particularly relevant to the discussion of local government in Nigeria. It emphasizes effective service delivery from the rural segment of society and the active participation of community residents. However, in Nigeria, many rural development policies and programmes are designed and imposed by higher levels of government in a top-down manner. This centralized

approach often fails to meet local needs and leads to the underperformance of local governments in fostering rural development.

The failure of the top-down approach in Nigeria highlights the importance of adopting a bottom-up model for rural development. Local governments need to shift towards a more inclusive and participatory approach where residents have a say in the planning and execution of development projects. By doing so, development initiatives will be more aligned with the actual needs of the communities, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes. The bottom-up model offers a viable framework for repositioning local governments in Nigeria to achieve sustainable grassroots development. By prioritizing local participation and tailoring development initiatives to the unique needs of rural communities, local governments can become more effective in delivering services and improving the quality of life for their residents.

Local Government System in Nigeria

The local government system in Nigeria has roots that date back to the creation of the country. Following the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914, the Native Authority Ordinance of 1916 empowered Governor General Sir Fredrick Lugard to establish Native Authorities for local administration (Ibrahim, 2003). During the colonial period, efforts were made to develop a national policy for local governance. By 1946, the Richards Constitution restructured Nigeria into three regions, transferring control of native authorities to these regions, which then assumed responsibility for reforming the Native Authority System (Adeyemi, 2019; Etibom, 2022).

With the advent of military rule in 1966 and subsequent state creation, numerous reforms were introduced. A significant reform occurred in 1976 when the federal military government established guidelines for local government reform, creating a national system with a standardized structure, revenue sources, and personnel management system. This reform also introduced democratic elections for local governments and positioned them as the third tier of government, enabling them to play a more effective role in local development (FRN, 1976). The reform was incorporated into the 1979 Constitution, which mandated democratically elected local councils and ensured revenue allocation from the federation account, giving local governments' constitutional recognition for the first time.

Between 1979 and 1999, local governments underwent a series of reforms, which placed them under the control of federal and state governments. This centralization hindered the development and progress of local governments. Currently, Section 7, Subsection 1 of the 1999 Constitution states: "the system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed, and accordingly, the government of every state shall, subject to Section 8 of this Constitution, ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, and function of such councils."

This constitutional directive authorizes states to enact laws establishing local governments, detailing their structure, composition, and functions. However, Eze-Michael (2021) noted that the 1999 Constitution did not effectively create a third tier of government, as it left the establishment and regulation of local governments to the states. Consequently, local governments in Nigeria often function as extensions of state governments and exist at their discretion.

The local governments in Nigeria have evolved, and this evolution included colonial era (1914-1946), when the system of Native Authorities was introduced. This system allows to authorities to manage local affairs under the supervision of the colonial administration; regional control (1946-1966), when the Richards Constitution restructured Nigeria into regions, transferring local governance responsibilities to regional authorities; military reforms (1966-1976), when multiple reforms aimed at centralizing control and creating a uniform system for local government administration were emplaced; 1976 reforms established a national local government system with democratic elections, standardized structures, and revenue sources, incorporated into the 1979 Constitution; post-1979 reforms continued adjustments to local government structures, often leading to increased state and

federal control; 1999 constitution reaffirmed democratically elected local councils but with significant state control over their establishment and functions.

However, it must be pointed out that the 1999 constitution which places local government under the respective state government limits local autonomy and often results in underfunded and poorly managed local councils. Despite constitutional guarantees, local governments struggle to fulfill their roles in local development effectively. The lack of clear delineation of powers and responsibilities between federal, state, and local governments exacerbates these issues, leading to inefficiencies and stagnation in local governance.

Overview of Local Government Performance in Nigeria

Local governments in Nigeria are designed to serve as crucial instruments of rural development, addressing the unique needs of local residents, particularly in rural areas. The Fourth Schedule of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution outlines the primary functions of local government councils. These functions include economic development, the construction and maintenance of infrastructure such as roads, street lighting, drains, public highways, parks, gardens, and other public facilities as prescribed by the State House of Assembly. Additionally, local governments are responsible for the provision and maintenance of primary, adult, and vocational education, the development of agriculture and natural resources (excluding mineral exploitation), and the provision and maintenance of health services (FRN, 1999).

Despite these clearly defined roles and the various reforms introduced by successive administrations to enhance the capacity of local governments, their performance has consistently fallen short of expectations. Local governments across Nigeria have largely failed to meet their developmental objectives, serving more as welfare laggards than effective engines of grassroots development. Isa (2015) encapsulates this sentiment, noting that despite efforts by past administrations to transform local communities, local governments have not justified their establishment. Olaiya (2016) also describes local government performance as significantly below expectations, with local governments lagging in providing basic infrastructure such as water and sanitation, rural road access, and electricity (Lawal, 2014; Teniola, 2023).

The underperformance of local governments can be seen in the pathetic state of many rural areas in Nigeria. Local roads often remain unrepaired, rural electricity projects are incomplete, and rural health centers are dilapidated, lacking essential drugs and medical personnel. Rural boreholes and water pumps frequently lack water, and many rural water schemes and projects are deserted. The only visible remnants of these initiatives are signposts indicating their locations, but the projects themselves are often non-functional due to prolonged neglect, poor maintenance, vandalism, and a lack of community ownership (Edet, 2020).

The ineffectiveness of local governments in Nigeria can be attributed to several interrelated factors. Limited competence and capacity among local government officials hinder effective service delivery, compounded by insufficient training and resources. Widespread corruption and mismanagement of funds further undermine local government operations, with financial resources intended for development projects frequently diverted for personal gain. Excessive political interference from higher levels of government stifles the autonomy of local governments, making it difficult for them to implement projects that reflect local needs. Additionally, a lack of community engagement in the planning and execution of development projects compromises the sustainability and effectiveness of these initiatives. When local residents are not involved, projects often fail to address their actual needs, leading to wasted resources and unrealized potential.

Inadequate funding also significantly limits the ability of local governments to carry out essential functions. Dependence on federal and state allocations constrains their financial independence and operational efficiency, leaving them ill-equipped to meet the needs of their communities. This persistent failure to meet developmental objectives has profound implications for grassroots

development in Nigeria. Rural areas remain underdeveloped, with poor access to essential services and infrastructure, exacerbating poverty, limiting economic opportunities, and hindering overall national development.

Challenges of Local Government in Nigeria

Corruption stands as one of the most significant challenges facing local governments in Nigeria. It has become entrenched within the system, with high levels of embezzlement and theft of public funds meant for developmental projects. Ovisuyi, Idada, and Isiraojie (2017) point out that this norm of corruption severely undermines local government efficacy. Edet (2020) further highlights the absence of accountability and transparency in council administration, along with general indiscipline and a lack of commitment to work. These factors collectively impede the progress of local governments, making it difficult to provide the basic facilities necessary for sustainable progress and rural transformation.

The constitutional framework poses another major obstacle to local government performance. The 1999 Nigerian Constitution places local governments under the control of state governments, stripping them of the autonomy needed to initiate policies and programs independently. Anayochukwu and Anayochukwu (2021) argue that this lack of freedom prevents local governments from transforming the economic status of their communities. Despite being recognized as the third tier of government, local governments are unable to operate without interference from higher authorities, creating a political paradox.

The top-down approach to rural development further exacerbates the ineffectiveness of local governments. Policies and programs designed to facilitate grassroots development are often initiated by policymakers at the federal and state levels, who typically reside in urban areas and lack an understanding of rural needs. Etebom (2022) and Edet (2020) note that this disconnect results in the imposition of unsuitable policies on local communities, thereby denying them the opportunity to participate in the development process. Oviasuyi et al. (2017) identify undue interference from higher levels of government and politicians as a significant barrier to local government performance. Local government officials, especially chairpersons, are subjected to external control and influence, limiting their ability to act independently.

A critical shortage of professional and skilled manpower also plagues the local government system. Essential personnel such as engineers, doctors, architects, lawyers, builders, and town planners are often unwilling to work in local government areas due to a lack of basic amenities, poor welfare packages, and high levels of insecurity. Adeyemi (2019) emphasizes that the absence of these key professionals, who are crucial for driving sustainable development, hampers the capacity of local governments to implement effective development projects.

Furthermore, inadequate funding severely limits the operational capacity of local governments. Financial dependence on higher levels of government, particularly the monthly allocations from the federal government, results in chronic underfunding. Eze-Micheal (2021) notes that these allocations are often insufficient to cover salaries and execute development projects. Many local governments lack alternative sources of revenue and rely entirely on these allocations for survival. Teniola (2023) observes that in some instances, monthly allocations are controlled by state governments, further complicating local government financial planning and reducing their ability to manage funds effectively.

These multifaceted challenges, ranging from systemic corruption and constitutional constraints to the top-down approach, shortage of skilled manpower, and inadequate funding, collectively impede the ability of local governments in Nigeria to fulfill their developmental roles. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, increasing autonomy, engaging local communities in the development process, attracting skilled professionals, and ensuring adequate

funding for local government operations. Only through such measures can local governments become effective engines of grassroots development and contribute meaningfully to national progress.

Repositioning Local Government for Sustainable Development

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are put forth:

Local governments must be genuinely insulated from corruption to deliver effectively. Corruption undermines the efficiency and effectiveness of any institution. This process of insulation should start with local government staffers since they are the core of the institution. Regular training, workshops, and seminars should be organized to sensitize staff about the negative and destructive effects of corruption on individuals, groups, institutions, and society at large. Attitudinal change towards corruption is crucial because many Nigerians perceive corruption as a normal behavior or a golden opportunity to amass wealth. Therefore, people must gradually realize the high destructive tendencies posed by corruption. Disciplines such as accountability, transparency, openness, and diligence should be encouraged and promoted at all times. Financial recklessness must be strictly avoided, and corruption must be severely punished to serve as a deterrent. Anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria should regularly visit local governments for monitoring and surveillance, which will psychologically and practically instill fear and caution in the minds of the staffers.

Another way to reposition local governments for sustainable rural development is to review and amend parts of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution to address the issue of autonomy for local governments. Local governments need relative autonomy for optimum performance. Currently, local governments are created as the third tier of government, but the same constitution makes them an appendage of state governments. Subsection 1 of Section 7 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution places local governments under the control of state governments. This lack of autonomy hinders their ability to determine their developmental directions freely. Limited autonomy, if not full, should be constitutionally provided to local governments for efficient operation. This can be supported with rules, procedures, and guidelines to enable local governments to genuinely play the role of the third tier of government.

The imposition of projects from higher authorities, resulting from the adoption of a top-down approach to development, must be discouraged and sanctioned within the local government system. Local governments, being the closest to the people, should serve as training grounds for future leaders and providers of local needs. Therefore, people must be allowed to participate in the decision-making process at the grassroots level. Local governments are more familiar with the problems and needs of rural residents than any other level of government. Any programs or policies designed to ensure rural development must reflect the actual problems and needs of local residents.

A bottom-up approach to development is advocated for effective community development activities. This approach allows for the participation and involvement of residents, ensuring that decisions emanate from the people and that residents participate from the first to the last stage of projects. This fosters a sense of ownership and belonging among community residents, leading to project sustainability and local transformation. When residents are part of the projects, they are motivated to protect and maintain them.

To attract and retain professional and skilled manpower in the local government system, it is essential to review local government welfare packages favorably for the professional class. This will serve as an inducement and attract skilled professionals to local government jobs. Additionally, rural areas should be equipped with minimal social infrastructure that can improve the quality of living, along with adequate security measures.

The issue of inadequate funding must be effectively addressed to enable local governments to participate adequately in development programs. The financial and fiscal relationship between states and local governments must be reviewed to free local governments from perpetual financial

dependency. The state-local joint account should be abolished to prevent financial abuse by state governments. Local governments should receive their allocations directly from the federation account, not through the state, as is currently practiced. Moreover, state governments must be compelled to pay local governments 10% of the state's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), a provision that has long been ignored by states. Local governments are also advised to engage in profitable ventures capable of increasing their IGR.

In addition, it is crucial to enhance the capacity of local government officials through targeted training and development programs. Strengthening accountability mechanisms can help combat corruption and ensure that funds are used for their intended purposes. Promoting active community participation in the planning and implementation of development projects fosters ownership and sustainability, ensuring that initiatives are more likely to meet local needs. Ensuring adequate funding for local governments is also essential, providing them with the financial resources needed to carry out their functions effectively. Reducing political interference can protect the autonomy of local governments, allowing them to address local needs without undue external influence.

By addressing these challenges, local governments can be repositioned to play a more effective role in sustainable rural development, ensuring that they meet the needs of local residents and contribute to the overall progress of the nation.

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ATTRIBUTES OF TRADITIONAL METHOD OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN IGBO LAND: A CASE STUDY OF ABOH-MBAISE

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Abstract

This study examined the attributes of traditional conflict resolution methods in Aboh-Mbaise Local Government Area, Imo State. Data were collected using focus group discussions and questionnaires distributed to 240 indigenes. Analyzed using frequency distribution, mean, and percentage, the study compared traditional and modern conflict resolution methods in terms of attendance, listenership, training duration, sitting time, and language use. Traditional conflict resolution in Aboh-Mbaise is characterized by performance stance, resolvability, convenience, demonstration of customs and norms, trust in peace facilitators, public appeal, transparency, accessibility, collective responsibility, truth, non-partiality, and community communication. The community prefers this model due to its effective time management, resource maximization, simplicity in facilitator education, justice integrity, and truth emphasis. The paper recommends integrating functional aspects of traditional conflict resolution into modern methods without undermining indigenous culture

Keywords: Traditional Method, Reconciliation, Attribute, Conflict Resolution, Aboh-Mbaise

Introduction

Issues of conflict resolution have not been easily determined in Aboh-Mbaise Local Government Area these modern times because deciding on what method to adopt to elicit truth and reconciliation has not been all that easy. Aboh-Mbaise people have established norms and customs which have progressively engineered good institutions with effective network of relationship. This had been quite productive in their social and economic development. For instance, today, individuals still adhere to burial rites befitting aged parents. Their physical separation from their families still draws out concern, sympathy, fear and friction. Properties left behind have frequently caused rift between their

children and this has caused conflict. However, the words handed down while on earth have become reference points for resolving whatever conflicts that were triggered by their departure.

Researching the attributes of conflict reconciliation in traditional society has not been so easy for scholars. There has been paucity of data to assist scholarly writings. Agents of conflict reconciliation are no longer easy to come by and where available. They have been largely rigid in dishing out vibrant data for scholarly documentation. The documentation of pre-colonial conflict reconciliation Method would have facilitated sufficient understanding of the knowledge associated with them and thereby enabled reconcilers to design articulated process of adapting the Method in contemporary cultural setting. Zacharys (2012) rightly observed that the system of thought underpinning colonialism in Africa promoted the idea that "civilization" in the colonies could only come from the west, as a result of this, all African knowledge systems were attacked, denigrated, ridiculed, and systematically undermined.

The understanding of the attributes of traditional method of conflict in Aboh Mbaise has not been properly captured in the literature using the rates of attendance; listenership of both traditional and modern conflict resolutions; the suitability of duration of training, and timing of both reconciliation models; and the languages of both Method of conflict resolution to discover the *attributions* people make of the traditional conflict resolution, even in this modern Aboh-Mbaise society.

No doubt, a lot of works been written on Igbo traditional method of conflict resolution, but none has been able to identify particular attributes of traditional conflict resolution in specific Igbo clans. Thus, the attributes of the indigenous conflict reconciliation in Aboh-Mbaise are significantly emphasized in this work because the knowledge accruing from understanding its uniqueness and popularity amongst the indigenes will facilitate peace, and encourage enhancement of harmonious relationship contemporary Aboh-Mbaise society.

Most researchers on traditional conflict resolution have attempted to cluster Africa as though it were a people having same traditional method of conflict resolution, thereby undermining the uniqueness and diversity of the peoples, cultures and customs of Africa. African method of conflict resolution might be similar but obviously not the same, because her culture is rich and diverse as it keeps changing from country to country in the continent. Africa is one individual continent within which many cultures and traditions can be found. Its cultures centre on ethnic groups and their family traditions. In the same vein, most researchers of traditional conflict resolution have presented the Igbo as though it were a strictly homogenous community of people and have failed to study them clan by clan.

For instance, Umezurike (2016) in his study of pre-colonial Igbo rightly pointed out that Igbo society was not at all times peaceful; hence, it had well-structured social-political institution that enhanced conflict resolution. But, his work was neither a field work nor a case study as he obliged to have dwelled more on secondary sources of data gathering. Similarly Tasie (2014), in his work drew attention to the existence of well-articulated social control mechanisms in traditional Africa that can be used for conflict resolution, but was not specific in the part of Igbo he actually studied. Similarly, Olowolafe & Olonade (2020) did a contextual analysis of three major tribes' traditional conflict resolution mechanism in pre-literate Nigerian society. They agreed that conflicts took place in Igbo land in the South Eastern part of Nigeria, but were unable to do an ethnographic description of any Igbo society. Their research interest was to re-capture those social organs that made living harmonious in Pre-colonial Igbo society. In doing this, they carried a descriptive study but placed more emphasis on secondary sources and eye witness experiences. These gaps necessitated the search for the attributes of traditional conflict resolution that is particular with people of Aboh-Mbaise.

Theoretical Framework

This research work adopts Kelley's Co-variation model. This theory suggests that when we focus on how people behave, we make or place attributions on them as observers. In all social interactions

there are actors and observers, and we can assume any role as we interact. The Co-variation model believes that once we have the knowledge of how the actors behave in different situations, and how others also behave in those or similar situations, then we can attribute or characterize the causes of their present behaviours based on consensus, consistency and distinctiveness of the observed information.

Consensus is the extent to which our respondents agree in similar ways with the actors in a present situation. If an actor's present behaviour agrees with other peoples' behaviour, then we can say that there is a high consensus. High consensus leads to attributing causes to behaviours in question. Consistency focuses on how stable the actor's behaviour is across time or situations, while distinctiveness tells us how actors' (ie, Aboh-Mbaise) present behaviour stand out from others' (ie, non-Aboh-Mbaise Igbo) behaviours in similar situations.

If we found that a particular attribute is associated with conflict resolution in Aboh-Mbaise, then there is high distinctiveness. This theory was successfully used to test level of exposure to traditional conflict reconciliation at the village square, attendance to traditional reconciliation arena, group and individual listenership to traditional conflict reconciliation, timing of training and sitting of both modern and traditional Method of conflict reconciliation and relevance of the indigenous language during reconciliation. In all the theory helped to make attributions about the traditional conflict resolution method in Aboh-Mbaise based on the different combinations of contributory information from the respondents.

Methodology

This work is an ethnographic study and therefore, both questionnaire and focal group discussion were adopted to elicit data. The research design is based on quantitative method. Unstructured or open-ended questions were used on the respondents. This was used because it provided flexibility in the manner, order and language of the questions. It is also useful especially in this preliminary study where the results can lead to more structured questions for other studies.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, means and percentage. The objective was analyzed with any of the statistical techniques mentioned using frequency distribution, means and percentage where appropriate since our concern is with answering of research questions subsumed in the objectives.

The study area of this research is Aboh-Mbaise Local Government Area in Imo state of Nigeria. According to Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, Aboh-Mbaise is head quartered at Aboh. The towns and villages which are now called autonomous communities are: Nguru Ahiato, Nguru-Nweke,Nguru-nwenkwo, Okwuato, Enyiogugu, Lorji, Amuzu, Uvuru (*Nigeria Media,2024*) and Mbutu. The Local government has an area of 184km2 (71sq mi), with the total population 195,652 (according to 2006 census). According to Agulanna, E.C. (2008) it has an area of 184 km^2 and a population of 194,779 at the 2006 census.

From 1999 to date, many other autonomous communities have been created when President Obansanjo took over power from the military government. Many of them are still having issues of non-recognition either by the people or subsequent governments and therefore only one of the newer ones are included in this study, in addition to the older 9 communities. This addition made it a total of 10 communities for study. The reason for adding only one community is because the people of Amuzu requested for division of the old one and there are no trait of conflict or misgiving in the division of Amuzu into Amuzu-Nwe-Afor and Amuzu-Nweke.

The population of the study included men and women from thirty years and above. The choice of this population is predicated on the belief that people of this age bracket have received training in either modern or traditional conflict reconciliation mechanisms since it is assumed that in this age bracket, average Aboh-Mbaise person has either travelled or received enough education to be able to compare

traditional and modern conflict reconciliation Method. They may have also participated in or observed adequate aspects of traditional conflict reconciliation and prevention.

Twenty-four (24) respondents were randomly selected from each of these ten (10) autonomous communities. In all, two hundred and forty 240 persons representing 240 households/families were selected for interview and questionnaire.

In each of the selected villages the list of possible households were obtained through the help of the village heads. These households were listed alphabetically and numbered serially and randomly selected. In our unstructured interviews and participant observations, we selected 10 communities through stratified random sampling technique. This means that 10 communities were sampled. This does not mean that these 10 communities are more important than the rest, but because the total population of 10 communities will sufficiently represent the entire population of 195,652. In our study, out of 10 communities listed, 240 people were stratified randomly for interview for increased homogeneity of the sampled strata, because Igbo people of Aboh-Mbaise origin are alike on the selected variables. The table below shows the breakdown of the communities and their population.

Table 1: Ten Communities in The L.G.A That Were Stratified For Interview / Participant Observation.

S/no	Name	Popul. "000	No. Of pers. Interv. Obs
1	Nguru-Ahiato	20,302	28
2	Nguru-Nweke	16,650	28
3	Nguru-Nwenkwo	19,952	28
4	Okwuato	18,890	28
5	Enyiogugu	21,602	28
6	Lorji	18,854	28
7	Amuzu-Nwe-Afor	12,100	28
8	Uvuru	30,100	28
9	Amuzu-Nweke	11,102	28
10	Mbutu	26,100	28
	TOTAL	195,652	240

Source: Authors' compilation, 2023

Table 2-: Distribution of Respondents According to Level of Exposure to Traditional Conflict Reconciliation at Village Square-

In table 2 below, respondents are distributed according to exposure to traditional conflict reconciliation at village square showing that 27.5% had between 1-20 exposures in a year, 41.6% of the respondents had between 21-40 times exposures per year, 13.8% had between 41-60 exposures to the reconciliation programmes. 11.3% people had exposure of between 61-80 exposures yearly, as 3.3% had 81-90 exposures per year while 2.5% had 91-above exposures per year.

No of times per year	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1-20	66	27.5
21-40	100	41.6
41-60	33	13.8
61-80	27	11.3
81-90	08	3.3
91-Above	06	2.5
Total	240	100

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 2 shows that every Aboh-Mbaise adult indigene has attended several conflict reconciliations held at the village squares. The mean exposure of conflict reconciliation at village squares is 40 times.

Table 3-: Distribution of Respondents According To Attendance to Traditional Reconciliation Arena-

In Table 3, data collected according to attendance to reconciliation arena shows that 93.7% attended traditional conflict reconciliation arena while only a negligible 6.3% shows apathy to attendance to traditional reconciliation arena. Hence, majority of peace arena attendants has access to traditional peace information from the arena.

Attendance to reconciliation meeting	Frequency	Percentage
Attended	225	93.7
Don't attend	15	6.3
Total	240	100

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 4-: Distribution of Respondents According To Group and Individual Listenership to Traditional Conflict Reconciliation.

Listenership Status	Frequency	Percentage
Group listenership	74	30.8
Individual listenership	166	69.2
Total	240	100

Source: Field Survey 2023

This shows that everybody is individually committed to reconciliation of conflict and anyone found guilty will not hide under family affiliation to seek for exoneration. Listenership to peace reconciliation in traditional arena is better when the community is not subdivided by interest groups who may wish their own to win the case as it happens in modern court system where people group themselves together in support of one party to the litigation.

Table 5-: Distribution Of Timing Of Training And Sitting Of Both Modern And Traditional Method Of Conflict Reconciliation-

Timing Of Training And Sitting	Frequency Yes	Frequency No	Percentage Acceptance
Training of practitioners and timing and language of reconciliation in traditional method is better	225	15	93.7
Training of practitioners and timing and language of reconciliation in modern method is better	15	225	6.3
Total	240		100

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 6-: Perception of relevance of Language of Reconciliation

Language	Frequency	Percentage
Igbo alone	190	79.1
Igbo & English	30	12.5
English alone	20	8.4
Total	240	100

Source: Field Survey 2023

In table 6, data on language of the reconciliation shows 79.1% used Igbo alone as suitable for traditional reconciliation. Combination of Igbo and English languages is supported by 12.5% of respondents as 8.4% said English language alone is suitable for traditional reconciliation, showing

how foreign culture has fairly affected contemporary Aboh-Mbaise culture. It is also important to deduce that almost all respondents are at home with the traditional method in terms of and language of reconciliation.

Discussion of Findings

Kelley's Co-variation model was successfully used to test level of exposure to traditional conflict reconciliation at the village square, attendance to traditional reconciliation arena, group and individual listenership to traditional conflict reconciliation, timing of training and sitting of both modern and traditional Method of conflict reconciliation and relevance of the indigenous language during reconciliation. The research paper adopted the model to gather peoples' placement of attributions on the practice of the traditional conflict resolution method in Aboh-Mbaise. The researchers interacted both as actors and observers in finding how the respondents characterize the traditional conflict resolution in Aboh-Mbaise; and the following are the findings:

Distribution of Respondents According to Level of Exposure to Traditional Conflict Reconciliation at Village Squares-

From focus group discussions and analysis of data collected through questionnaires, traditional conflict resolution in Aboh-Mbaise has the attributes of performance stance, resolvability, convenient venues, demonstration of the customs and norms, deification of the ethical framework and trust of conflict for the facilitation of peace and enhancement of harmony.

In table 2 above, respondents are distributed according to their exposure to traditional conflict reconciliation at village squares. This shows that all the respondents whose responses formed the data for characterizing traditional conflict resolution in Aboh-Mbaise have attended several conflict reconciliations held at the village squares and therefore have enough experience of same. The mean exposure of conflict reconciliation at village squares is 40 times. Peace and harmony, one way or another reigned supreme at village squares which somehow produced unique atmosphere for peace to thrive; and community development became dynamic. It is important that the features of indigenous conflict reconciliation included performance stance, resolvability of conflict due to the adopted Method and venues, demonstration of the customs and norms, deification of the ethical framework of the society and the trust of conflict reconciliation for the facilitation of peace and the enhancement of harmony. Only a few people observe modern peace facilitation either directly or through any other means. There is apathy for court system as utilizers are seen as wasters of money and time; and those who are afraid of nemesis of the ancestors who show fierce wrath on deliberate liars. The end of conflict ceremony was no doubt ritual-based and ancestor-focused, to the extent that such a ceremony concluded the conflict reconciliation business and restored peace and normalcy to the society. Umezurike (2016) observed that the people are exposed to such institutions as council of village elders (Umunna), title men (Ndi Nze na Ozo), traditional rulers (Ndi Eze), daughters of the land (Umuada), married women (Ndi Inyom), youths/age grade (Umu na eto eto) or (Ndi Ntorobia), priests (Ndi Eze mmuo),the Oracle (Arusi), and the earth goddess (Ala).

Distribution of Respondents According To Attendance to Traditional Reconciliation Arena-

From focus group discussions and analysis of data collected through questionnaires, traditional conflict resolution in Aboh-Mbaise has the attributes of public appeal, time convenience, transparence and accessibility**.**

In Table 3, data collected according to attendance to reconciliation arena shows a negligible 6.3% apathy to attendance to traditional reconciliation arena. Hence, majority of Aboh-Mbaise people has access to traditional peace information from the traditional peace arena than from the modern court system or mass media. Umezurike (2016) agrees that the system of pre-colonial government of Igbo people gave everyone, old and young, titled and ordinary men and women roles to play in the society. The traditional method of resolving conflict, he observed, includes (but not limited to) mediation, oath taking, covenant, adjudication, reconciliation, cross examination, negotiation, sanction, and are more

result oriented in conflict resolution than the modern/ western culture of litigation settlement in law court.

This attributed to the advantage of being present in community gathering as absenteeism is a hindrance to traditional peace initiative. Illiteracy is not a barrier to attendance and understanding of the procedure and proceedings of the peace forum. Neither distance nor language could be hindrances since everybody lives closer to each other and speaks same Igbo dialect. The reconcilers are to exhibit transparent concern for the parties to the conflict on one hand and the society on the other. Lamidi (2021) agrees that the traditional method of resolving conflict is quick, in intervention, cross examination, negotiation and mediation of differences.

Distribution of Respondents According To Group or Individual Listenership to Traditional Conflict Reconciliation.

From focus group discussions and analysis of data collected through questionnaires, traditional conflict resolution in Aboh-Mbaise has the attributes of collective responsibility, truth, non-partiality, enlarged individual listenership and community communication.

Table 4 agrees with the principle of collective responsibility which exists in traditional Aboh-Mbaise society. Properly ascertained grievances needed collective action to surmount. This was also akin to the practice of being ones brother's keeper in times of crisis. Truth, which is associated with the positive conduct of life, was quite at home (and in place) with conflict reconciliation mode in Aboh-Mbaise society. This shows that everybody is committed to reconciliation of conflict and anyone found guilty will not hide under family affiliation to seek for exoneration. This is contrary to *theintactone.com 2019*, document which erroneously accused the traditional method of expecting the aggrieved to keep silent over grievances; but the reverse is rather the case. The modern method expects the aggrieved to keep quiet as the lawyers, who may not have known them before, and whose interest is to make profit, debate the matter with complex intrigues. Listenership to peace reconciliation in traditional arena is better when the community is not subdivided by interest groups who may wish their own to win the case as it happens in modern court system where people group themselves together in support of one party to the litigation. Professional modern information media do not subscribe to non-professional sources of peace information such as friends, village heads, guilds and cooperative organizations as worthy of being listened to. Nonetheless, we can deduce that face-to-face communication medium is the best way to disseminate peace information to peace facilitators and participants in Igbo communities. From the data, it can be said that Aboh-Mbaise people cannot replace community communication with modern mass communication.

Distribution of Respondent According to Timing of Training and Sitting of both Modern and Traditional Method of Conflict Reconciliation

From focus group discussions and analysis of data collected through questionnaires, traditional conflict resolution in Aboh-Mbaise has the attributes of non-wastage of time, maximization of available resources, and simplicity of education and non-miscarriage of justice.

Table 5 agrees that Aboh-Mbaise people are at home with the traditional method in terms of time and language. In addition to accepting the time of sitting, the time for training people into the modalities of traditional conflict resolution is acceptable to the people. For Aboh-Mbaise people, spending five to six years of formal education at a stretch, just to train somebody in the art of reconciliation, is waste of time that could have been invested in farm produce or viable trade. Data collected on timing shows that Aboh-Mbaise people are more comfortable with the traditional method of conflict resolution since its timing agrees with their life schedule. Again, they appreciate its simplicity which is devoid of unnecessary bottlenecks that characterize the modern judicial system where justice is easily miscarried. Number of years spent in education was used in measuring the level and degree of wasteful formal training in conflict reconciliation. It will be a wrong and hasty conclusion to say that Aboh-Mbaise indigenes are educationally backward. The reason for non-inclusion of highly educated

people in this study as respondents is the frequent and usual migration with which the Igbo elite is known for. This no doubt has impacted positively on the popularity of the traditional conflict reconciliation Method in Aboh-Mbaise. The number of years spent in peace operations was used to ascertain degree of experience in traditional method of resolving conflicts. The mean year for an Aboh-Mbaise indigene to have informal training in traditional peace education is 14 irregular or alternate years.

Data analyzed show that Aboh-Mbaise people are more eager to learn the traditional method of conflict reconciliation than the modern method and are therefore willing to spend longer time doing so, but not at the expense family responsibility of care-giving. This training is done as a past time and on part-time basis. The timeliness of attending to conflict situation is very significant here. There is no occasion for time wastage rather time is both conserved and preserved for greater development of cultural events and activities. The time to be supposedly wasted on resolving conflict and mending fences is judiciously spent on agricultural activities, industrial works and social connections. Even at the escalation of conflict, the peace facilitators maximized time by dissemination of useful information, and identifying with the supernatural being towards comprehending the divine order of social control. Thus, at the venue of conflict reconciliation, many other significant activities are packaged along with the issues which bordered on the conflict in question. This is to justify the fact that time must not only be bound and bonded with events and activities, but also for developmental process.

The people are not in support of the unproductive years of training and practice; and by extension, timing of modern conflict reconciliation, because it runs contrary to their seasonal farming activities. This might be as a result of delay in modern litigation, arbitration or mediation since the rural farmer believes that a delay in resolving a conflict may lead to a denial of time for farming activities and introduction of hunger in the family.

Again, dissemination of court summons can be hampered by bureaucratic bottlenecks so much so that the defendants may not be aware of a case instituted against them on time for proper and adequate legal representation. Ninety-one percent of the respondents agree that divination, a medium of traditional religion is more preferred to modern courts; and that the family's stand on an issue of conflict is more relevant to them, and therefore should be relied upon than the court. The family is the bedrock of relationships and development; the unit of political culture, and as such the foundation of conflict reconciliation. The family plans the art of conflict reconciliation as championed by the family head. They therefore have the capacity of resolving conflicts of marriage, between children and parents as well as quarrels arising from property inheritance.

Perception of relevance of Language of Reconciliation

From focus group discussions and analysis of data collected through questionnaires, traditional conflict resolution in Aboh-Mbaise has the attributes of clarity of indigenous language based on knowledge and experience, traditional communication of persuasive proverbs and folklores, and elimination of falsehood by inclusion of the divine.

In table 6, data on language of the reconciliation shows Igbo language alone is more suitable for traditional reconciliation. This means that English language has no significant influence on traditional conflict resolution in contemporary Aboh-Mbaise. It is also important to deduce that the people had an existing conflict reconciliation language before western influence came, and so, the saying that first impressions die hard could apply here. The living elders, therefore, are the instruments of evolution of language based on knowledge and experience of conflict reconciliation. This enables them to acquire the tradition of communication through proverbs and folktales with which they persuade parties to the conflict and the crowd of listeners at the venue of reconciliation to reason. It is, however, not easy to acquire and master, as well as apply them at an impromptu manner while addressing issues of conflict. This suggests that the mental alertness and versatility of the living elders are commensurate to that found in other climes. To have been persuaded by the elders in a given

conflict situation suggests the manifestation of their experience and capacity in the art of communication. The elders, therefore, are seen to have the wherewithal of the power of persuasion and language of conviction derivable from their age long wisdom.

Parties to the conflict, witnesses, and the listening or participating audience could have been made possible by the serene spiritual essence of the ancestors surrounding the scene of conflict reconciliation. This agrees with Mbakwe (2017) who noted that Mbaise people believe in the great God (*chukwu*). Such divine mood is charged with maximum attention, intention and commitment geared towards eliminating lies and falsehood but articulating and hammering on the truth. It is important to know that truth is the only language and the instrument for facilitating peace and harmony in Aboh-Mbaise. The language of pacification and persuasion must be a soothing balm and must saturate the conscience of the parties to the conflict. This explains the reason proverbs and idioms are instruments of communicating truth and ascertaining of facts in the issues of conflicts in Aboh-Mbaise.

Conclusion

The research paper used Kelley's Co-variation model to gather peoples' placement of attributions on the practice of the traditional conflict resolution model in Aboh-Mbaise. The researchers interacted both as actors and observers in finding how the respondents characterize the traditional conflict resolution in Aboh-Mbaise. The following attributes were discovered: performance stance, resolvability; convenience of training, sitting time and venue; demonstration of the customs and norms; trust on peace facilitators; public appeal; transparency and accessibility. There are also, the attributes of collective responsibility, truth, non-partiality, enlarged individual listenership and community communication. Aboh-Mbaise people are at home with the traditional conflict resolution model because of its attributes of time management, maximization of available resources, simplicity of education of facilitators, non-miscarriage of justice and elimination of falsehood by inclusion of the divine. These attributes stimulate the people to exhibit maximum attention, intention and commitment geared towards eliminating lies and falsehood but articulating and hammering on the truth, because truth is the galvanizing instrument for facilitating peace and harmony in Aboh-Mbaise. This research work finally concurs with Mbakwe (2017) who argued that the negative narrative about the pre-colonial African societies is now no longer worthy of intellectual attention.

Recommendation

This paper recommends that:

- **i.** The functional aspects of the traditional conflict resolution model should be adopted in Aboh-Mbaise judicial system without casting aspersion on any aspect of the indigenous culture.
- ii. There should be an official employment of extrajudicial method in the process of instituting peace and restoring social harmony since it has yielded positive results both in the past and in the present.
- **iii.** Since the traditional reconcilers are versatile in Igbo language for the purpose of pacification and persuasion, the modern legal system should insist that their legal practitioners must show dexterity in the use and application of local language relaxing and healing the bleeding conflicting souls.
- **iv.** The reconcilers should continue to exhibit transparent concern for the parties to the conflict on one hand and the society on the other so as to alleviate injured feelings, to restore peace, to reach a compromise acceptable to both disputants and to satisfy the insatiable desires of the people for social justice.

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EFFICACY OF NEW PUBLIC GOVERNANCE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (SAQIP) IN GOMBE STATE

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Abstract

The New Public Governance (NPG) model has emerged as a contemporary approach to enhancing service delivery in public institutions. Building on the strengths of its precursor, the New Public Management (NPM) model, NPG incorporates principles such as collaboration, participation, and engagement, ensuring community commitment and public official accountability. This study examines the efficacy of the State Accountability and Quality Improvement Project (SAQIP) in Gombe State's healthcare delivery system, comparing it with traditional public service delivery methods in the state. The research utilizes qualitative data from official reports by Pact and other institutions. The findings reveal that SAQIP significantly transformed maternal and neonatal healthcare delivery in Gombe State due to specific factors within its implementation framework. Key elements included the collaboration between the Gombe State Primary Healthcare and Development Agency (GSPHCDA), Primary Health Care (PHC), Ward Development Committees (WDC), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs); community participation in supporting PHC; and the engagement of mothers through the formation of Mothers Groups (MGs). The paper argues that without proactive measures by the State Government, the successes achieved under SAQIP may not be sustained in maternal and neonatal healthcare. Recommended measures include regular elections for Ward Development Committees, capacity building for staff to facilitate knowledge transfer, and replication of the SAQIP model in other critical sectors such as education, housing, and water.

Keywords: New Public Governance (NPG); SAQIP; Gombe State; Ward Development Committees (WDC); New Public Management (NPM); Service Delivery.

Introduction

New Public Governance has received much attention within the fields of public administration and policy in recent years, but surprisingly few books and publications are designed specifically to help students, researchers, and practitioners examine key concepts, synthesize the growing body of literature into reliable frameworks, and to bridge the theory-practice gap by exploring network applications. Although, various reforms packages in the history of public administration abound, the recent and current wind of change in the administrative reform is the New Public Governance (NPG). The predominant focus of the model is on the increasing significance of governance through networks as an alternative to markets and hierarchy. The state, it is argued, can no longer assume a monopoly of expertise or resources necessary to govern, and must look to a plurality or interdependent institutions

drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors (Newman, 2004). A key goal of modern management of public organizations is to mobilize and use effectively all kinds of institutional and external environmental resources and opportunities in order to implement changes which would ensure reaching strategic state and regional goals and objectives as well as meeting the legitimate expectations, needs and interests of society.

Pact, an international non-profit organisation appears to have demonstrated the efficacy of the ethos of new public governance in service delivery. In collaboration with the Bill & Mellinda Gates foundation developed and implemented The State Accountability and Quality of Improvement Project (SAQIP). SAQIP aims to achieve quality improvement in Maternal Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) in Gombe State over a six year period (2014-2019). The modalities for the implementation of SAQIP include working with State agencies in the health sector such as State Primary Health Care Development Agency (SPHCDAS), Local Government Area Health Teams, Primary Health Centres (PHC), Ward Development Committees (WDC), and Local Mothers groups. The question therefore are:

i. How effective is the new Public Governance model represented by SAQIP in enhancing service delivery in the areas of Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) in Gombe State?
ii. Which of the implementation modalities distinguishes SAQIP from the established traditions of public sector policy implementation processes?
iii. How can the principles of SAQIP be adopted by other public sectors in the State for improved service delivery?

Methodology adopted

Data for this study were obtained through a combination of both primary and secondary methods. Primary method of data collection adopted for this study was the interview carried out with key staff of Gombe State Primary Healthcare Development Agency (GSPHDA). Secondary data were obtained through published materials such as a compendium SAQIP by Pact and a publication of the GSPHDA. Analytical approach was used in analysing the data of the study.

Conceptual Explanation

New Public Governance (NPG)

In late 1990s, the decay of the New Public Management and the consequent need for its renewal called for its progressive replacement by the New Public Governance (NPG), signaling the transition to a new era (Andrikopoulos and Ifanti, 2020). Some scholars, however, contend that this paradigmatic change has never been or taken place, arguing that New Public Governance emerges as a result of the New Public Management reconstruction process. Thus, it is pointed out that it is not a systematic change but rather a breach of the narrow limits of this approach by expanding its scope, while at the same time keeping the central core of its ideas, principles and methods in place and in any case dominant in public administration both institutionally and practically (Osborne, 2006; Christensen and Laegreid, 2012). New public governance as a new paradigm has a set of doctrines and approaches aimed at promoting "common good" by incorporating "public values" across the political system. New Public Management (NPM) approach that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, focused on improving efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery through market-like mechanisms such as performance measurement, competition, and contracting out.

The New public Governance (NPG) model emphasizes collaboration, participation and engagement between public organizations and citizens in the design and delivery of public services. It is characterized by a shift from hierarchical structures to networked governance arrangements that are more flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances. According to Kjaer, (2004); and Newman, (2004) is mainly concerned with the idea of a change from the realist perception of old government and the Westphalian system, whereby the world is organized into territorially exclusive, sovereign nation-states, each with an internal monopoly of legitimate violence, to new governance. The former is characterized as having a governing administration which is regarded as the key dominant actor in

the policy arena. Internally there exists a clear hierarchy of authority, and governing is seen as a top-down, hierarchical process, with the nation-state taking centre stage. However, with the change from government to governance, the governing administration is now only one player amongst many others in the policy arena. Thus, the policy arena has become visibly more crowded and contested, there are more actors involved, the boundaries between the public and the private spheres are less precise, and the government's command over the policy process is said to have been transformed. Thus, as Koenig-Archibugi, (2003) explains, within governance systems "problem solving is not the preserve of a central authority able to impose solutions on subordinate agencies and individuals, but the result of the interaction of a plurality of actors, who often have different interests, values, cognitive orientations, and power resources." The major assumptions of the model are as follows:

i. From the perspective of NPG model, governance consists of self-organizing, inter-organizational networks.
ii. These networks are characterized, first, by interdependence between organizations.
iii. Changes in the role of the state mean the boundaries between the public, private and voluntary sectors are shifting and opaque.
iv. There are continuing interactions between network members, caused by the need to exchange resources and to negotiate purposes.
v. These interactions resemble a game with actors' behaviour rooted in trust and regulated by rules that are negotiated and agreed by network participants.
vi. The networks have a significant degree of autonomy from the state. Networks are not accountable to the state; they are self-organizing.
vii. Networks are argued to be a means for co-ordinating and allocating resources – a governing structure – in the same way as markets and bureaucracies.

It is however important to stress the fact that New Public Governance approach, being a new paradigm shift does not imply a complete departure from NPM reform model which remains a significant approach for the role of the state and the private sector in public administration, but rather its inclusion in a wider context that emphasizes stakeholders "increasing participation in decision-making process. In parallel, the new environment generates negotiations between New Public Management and other approaches, thus questioning its coherence at the level of principles and methods related to risk taking and managing the uncertainty of the ever-changing, international environment (Howlett, 2019). New Public Management has been associated with organizational changes that improve the ability to handle and accomplish tasks by delegating authority and granting power to separate, semi-autonomous organizations. However, limiting the role of the government initiated by a series of changes in the implementation of the New Public Management ideas did not deliver the expected results, as it was accompanied by the inability to deal with severe problems beyond organizations' boundaries and organizational levels of administration (Lægreid and Verhoest, 2010; Pollitt and Bockaert, 2011).

The efforts of many national governments around the globe today in designing and implementing new forms of horizontal governance such as public-private partnerships (Osborne and Plastrik, 2000; Hodge and Greve, 2005), collaboration with stakeholders (McLaverty, 2002; Edelenbos and Klijn, 2005) and other forms of citizen participation laid beneath the term New Public Governance. Arising as a more holistic model in public policy and leading to the shift in power relations, it pervades the notion of public management as long as the role of government changes dramatically. Henceforth, governments rely heavily on the support provided by social actors and organizations in their efforts to implement policies designed to cope with increasingly complex problems. Many of these problems have conflicting values and addressing them requires governments to embrace horizontal interconnection and collaboration between organizations (Sorenson and Torfing, 2007). Furthermore, the demands for integrated services intensify the need for horizontal networks to be created through cooperation between different organizations. Taking it one step further, public governance requires the involvement of more than one agent in the policy making and implementation process. Private actors, social organizations and citizens are important factors that can interfere with or even reverse political interventions in public administration (Klenk and Reiter, 2019).

Service Delivery

Service delivery or provisioning can be viewed as the ability of an organisation/unit to meet goals expected of it. This perspective presupposes that prior to its establishment, an organisation/unit have certain predetermined goals to pursue. The idea of service delivery, therefore refers to the outcome of an assessment to determine how effective or how satisfactory the performance of an organisation has been in relation to its predetermined goals over a given period of performance. Shittu (2020, p.2) defines service delivery as referring to "the extent to which the services provided by the listed sectors meet or exceed the expectation of the beneficiaries (general public)." Service delivery is a phenomenon applicable to both private and public sectors in the sense that regardless of the nature of an organisation, there are goals and objectives expected of such organisation by its promoter(s). Thus, the relevance of the organisation is only determined by its ability to deliver expected services.
Service delivery in public organisations attract widespread concern partly because government has profound effect on the life of the generality of the citizenry of a society. Olowu (1999) remarks that service delivery is the raison détre of the public service. This implies that service provisioning is the primary reason for the existence of the public service. Public service delivery becomes so paramount because it represents the fundamental structure of nation-building, it serves a tangible link between government and citizens to the government, and it also promotes the values of nations to the citizens and serves as a bond between the State and citizens (Walle and Scott, 2009). By and large, the healthcare sector in Gombe State like other sectors represents a major aspect of societal life of the people where effective services are expected by the populace. The failure of the agency over the years to meet the expected goals may have propelled the adoption of SAQIP as a strategy of public service reform.

State Accountability and Quality Improvement Project (SAQIP)

The State Accountability and Quality Improvement Project (SAQIP) was an initiative of Pact an international non-profit organisation. The project was funded by the Bill and Mellinda Gates Foundation. The concept of SAQIP is based on the philosophy that for development to be truly sustainable, communities must be at the helm leading and owning their development. SAQIP was deployed in combating the perennial problem inherent in Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) in Nigeria.

According to Pact, SAQIP interventions are delivered across several layers of the Gombe State primary healthcare delivery structure from governance and coordination, to facility-based service delivery, and community stakeholders engagements. In other words, the project focus on a 3 pronged thematic areas, namely:

i. Improved governance, capacity and performance of the public health system;
ii. Improved accountability and community participation in the public health system; and
iii. Increased utilization of public MNCH services.

The specifics of SAQIP entails capacity building for healthcare and other support staff, increasing access to Maternal, New born and Child Health services (MNCH), and enlisting community participation in strengthening accountability. It is the enlisting of community participation in SAQIP that demonstrates a major principle of the new public governance model.

The Implementation of SAQIP in Gombe State

SAQIP was implemented with the objective of reversing the negative trend that became prevalent in maternal and neonatal healthcare delivery system in Gombe State. The project intervention areas in Gombe State include 11 local government areas of the State, 57 wards comprising of Ward Development Committees (WDC), and 57 Primary Healthcare Centres (PHC). The components of the Project are capacity building, clinical mentoring, and quality improvement, the revival of the Ward Development Committees, formation of mother's groups, health management information system, integrated supportive supervision, supply chain management, and community score card. Furthermore, to achieve the outcome of improved governance, capacity, and performance of the

public health system in the State, SAQIP designed and implemented clinical training interventions which focus on strengthening the capacity of selected health facilities. A major feature in SAQIP was the involvement of communities in the running of the PHC in the State. It restructured and revitalised the Ward Development Committees through assessment, capacity strengthening exercises, development of governing constitutions, election of leaders etc. These changes enabled the institutions play active roles in improving public health facilities in the State- such as mobilising resources for the PHCs, among others (SAQIP, 2019; p.29).

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

What constitute data in this section were largely information obtained from a compendium of SAQIP (2019) by Pact. In addition, the research also engaged key staff of the GSPHCDA who also shared insight on the implementation of SAQIP in Gombe State. A major finding of this study is that some of the principles of NPG were prominent in SAQIP and they were responsible for its successful implementation. These principles includes collaboration, participation, and engagement which all played critical roles in SAQIP. The principle of collaboration in SAQIP between various stakeholders involved in the healthcare sector in the State. These stakeholders are GSPHCDA, PHC, WDC, and Civil Society Organisation (CSO). Another important principle of NPG which was found prominent in SAQIP is participation. By reviving the Ward Development Committees (WDC), SAQIP encouraged members of communities to participate actively in mobilising to build and furnish laboratories and other facilities for PHCs. Further investigation during the interview revealed that SAQIP made a major impact on the WDC by rejuvenating them and enlightening the members. Members of the WDC became aware of their importance and took active interest in the affairs of the PHC in their respective locality. There is currently a major challenge with the WDC membership as serving members are resisting attempt to conduct elections through which each ward would reconstitute its committees.

Engagement is the third principle of the NPG model that has remained prominent in SAQIP. The Mother's Groups (MG) formation through the Worth MGs focus on livelihood, income generation, and numeracy literacy among women in various communities to provide opportunities for women to interact in social activities thereby enhancing their livelihood, access to income as well as improving their socialization. For instance, the NGO -Pact utilized its robust set of capacity development tools – Organizational Capacity Assessment and Community Performance Index – to support and improve the operations of the GSPHCDA and its associated LGA structures. This was a factor in GSPHCDA becoming the best SPHCDA in Nigeria in 2018. Pact's capacity development model was also used to revive the WDCs in Gombe State, leading to the committees becoming capable of ensuring demand-driven MNCH services at the PHC level in the state. It is worthy of note to also know that Gombe State's WDCs were adjudged the best in the country as shown by the assessment of the annual score card deployed by the National Primary Health Care Development Agency in 2018 (SAQIP Compendium, 2019). Through the interview with the GSPHCDA, it was revealed that the PHC had not be in touch with Mothers Group since the completion of SAQIP. The loss of contact is a signal that the enthusiasm of group members would wane down with passage of time and this in turn lead to reduction in the patronage of pregnant women at the healthcare centres.

Furthermore, the project engaged civil society organizations to aid in the formation of Mothers Groups for women of childbearing age using Pact's WORTH model's literacy-led approach to economic empowerment through savings, loans and income generating activities. The MGs are exposed to MNH education sessions to increase their factual knowledge of danger signs associated with pregnancy, labour and in newborn, which motivates the women to seek and pay for MNH services.

The success of the implementation of SAQIP in Gombe State between 2014 and 2019; the project has been commended for its improvement in maternal, neonatal and child health care services in the State. In fact, the Gombe State Primary Health Care Development Agency (GSPHCDA) was rated as the best State Primary Health Care Development Agency in Nigeria as at 2018. This rating was due

largely to the improvement recorded in the State. The improvement recorded in the maternal and neonatal healthcare include 132% increase in newborns that received immediate skin-to-skin contact with the mother after delivery, establishment of 1872 mothers groups, 85.6% of pregnant women in the mother's group delivered in a health facility, quality improvement teams constituted from facility and community in 57 supported PHC's to promote community involvement in problem solving at health facilities. In its publication, the GSPHCDA (2020) while reflecting on its successes between 2016 and 2019, shows that staff and equipment in PHC have increased from 25% in 2016 to 53% in 2019, quality of care for sick new-borns have improved from 35% in 2016 to 73% in 2019 just as there have been increase in the number of women that attend ante-nental care from 46% in 2016 to 69% in 2019.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing discourse, it is clear that the academic literature on the reform of governance offer a compelling narrative of government and public services, suggesting that traditional hierarchical arrangements have, over time, been replaced with more effective and efficient mechanisms of governance. The rather simplistic argument suggests that market forces were introduced to overcome the inherent limitations of hierarchies. When the inevitable limitations of markets eventuated, a discourse of networks and NPG emerged ostensibly to counter these challenges. In the academic literature, we talk of paradigm shift from traditional hierarchical public administration to New Public Management and now to New Public Governance.

Rather than a wholesale shift to new governance regimes, we suggest that a rather more complex picture of hybrid arrangements comprising features of different forms of governance systems should emerge at the same time. An illustration of the efficacy of NPG in the implementation of State Accountability and Quality Improvement Project (SAQIP) is an effective model of NPG. Under this arrangement, the state should carry out its regulatory role, the markets should provide goods and services and the network of NGOs, Civil Society groups and Community Based Organisations CBOs) should engage with the government in implementing policies and programmes. In the words of Rhodes (2003) "although the state does not occupy a privileged, sovereign position, it can directly and imperfectly steer networks" (Mahmoud, 2023).

The effectiveness of the model has been demonstrated in the unprecedented records attained by the GSPCDA. The implementation modalities of SAQIP which distinguishes it from the regular policy implementation processes in the public sector are collaborative, participatory, and engagement orientation which collectively sustain the pressure on all the relevant stakeholders in the system. However, it is instructive to note that SAQIP was only implemented in 57 wards out of the existing 114 wards in the State. This means that PHC in the remaining 57 wards across the State are still suffering the same fate which PHCs were subjected to prior to the implementation of SAQIP. It was also discovered that the sustainability of the successes of SAQIP appear to be in danger in the sense that the master trainers which represents a pool of experts for the implementation of the project are not being retained either on account of retirement or relocation from their duty location. Another challenge is the absence of quality improvement team which is to serve as monitoring team over the project.

In order to ensure the sustenance of the successes recorded under the implementation of SAQIP, and more importantly enhance qualitative maternal and neonatal healthcare sector in Gombe State, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. The Gombe State Primary HealthCare Development Agency should actively strengthen the principle of participation which the WDC represent in the implementation of SAQIP. The current situation in which members of WDC are frustrating the conduct of elections through which they are to be replaced can only derail the course of the project.
2. The continuous depletion of the rank of trained personnel of the project as a result of retirement should be halted by a way of carefully designed and implemented knowledge

transfer programme in form of capacity building as well as continuous recruitment of qualified staff.

3. Quality improvement teams as envisioned in the SAQIP scheme should be activated and given all the necessary supports for maximum performance.
4. The principles of collaboration, participation, and engagement which are the defining ideals of NPG should be replicated in other equally important sectors of the economy. Education, housing and water sectors are some of the pressing areas of needs of the people and in which the State Government can rapidly deploy a similitude of SAQIP with a view to improving service delivery in the areas.
5. Other public sector agencies and institutions in the State should be made to incorporate the principles of collaboration, participation and engagement thereby enhancing accountability and effective service delivery in their respective sectors.

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OPTIMISING WORK EFFICIENCY: EXAMINING MOTIVATIONAL INFLUENCES ON CIVIL SERVANTS' PERFORMANCE IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

For each organization's management, performance is crucial. In order to strengthen its services and increase its chances of survival and growth, managers can use this information to determine whether their companies are improving, worsening, or stagnating. Nigeria has been attempting to implement several tactics to encourage public personnel to fulfil their legally mandated duties. Nonetheless, the government does not currently possess a more effective or convenient tool to shape the ethical standards of public employees. In light of this, this study evaluates the variables influencing civil servant performance in Nigeria's Kwara State civil service. Consequently, Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination table was used to determine the overall sample size for the study. A sample size determination table, in a population (Selected MDAs in Kwara State) of one-thousand, six hundred and eleven (1611), the appropriate sample size is three hundred and thirteen (313) respondents. A survey design was adopted and data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The analysis was done through the Likert scale. The results showed that promotions, job stability, and pay benefits all have an impact on how well Kwara state civil personnel perform. The research concluded that civil servants lacked adequate training, hindering their ability to enhance their effectiveness and also concludes that promotion and salary increments are the major factors that affect the performance of civil servants. Hence, it is recommended that salary and allowances, job security, promotion, and training should be adequately catered for.

Keywords: Civil Servants, Influence, Motivation, Performance, Promotion

Introduction

It is common knowledge that the Civil Service is essential to a nation's ability to run smoothly, whether it is under a military or democratic system of government, as it carries out policies, acts, and programs that benefit the general populace. The Civil Service plays a major role in the implementation of government policies and programs since the executive branch is tasked with carrying them out. Even though the Executive branch of government is held to high standards, many civil officials' nonchalant and careless attitude toward their work has led to low-performance ratings for numerous Nigerian administrations, most notably Kwara State. In light of this, numerous reforms have been created and implemented in the past to examine the problem of civil servants' unfavourable attitudes and give better answers.

The structures and beginnings of the Kwara State Civil Service date back to the British colonial era (Ipinlaiye, 2001). The State was established in 1967 with 24 ministries as one of the 12 states that General Yakubu Gowon, the country's Military Head of State at the time, had established in May 1967 to replace the four regions. Prior to being renamed as Kwara, a local term for the Niger River, the state was known as West Central State. This creation served as the foundation for the State's authority to create its agencies, which will aid in formulating and carrying out a range of public policies aimed at addressing the needs of the general public. We call this organization the Civil Service. Consequently, government workers employed mostly in non-military government ministries make up the civil service. The majority of civil servants in the Kwara state ministries are career civil servants, with advancement in the career ladder determined by factors such as seniority, educational attainment, and professional track record.

Several steps have been taken to help government officials in Kwara State fulfil their tasks and responsibilities in a proactive, efficient, and effective manner. As a component of these efforts, many panels aimed at reforming the civil service were established, including the Adebo Commission in 1971, and the Udoji Commission in 1972–1974. However, the 1979 constitution, which was fashioned after the US Constitution, brought about a significant change. Another attempt at reforming the civil service was the Dotun Philips Panel of 1985. General Ibrahim Babangida's 1988 Civil Service Reorganization Decree significantly altered the composition and expectations for the performance of Kwara State's civil service. The Ayida Panel's findings included suggestions for rolling back some of the previous advances and going back to the older, more effective civil service. Following decades of military control, the public service has been undergoing methodical and progressive reforms and restructuring since May 29, 1999. All of these reforms are being implemented in order to guarantee efficacy and efficiency in the overall performance standards of Nigeria's civil service. Even with these changes, the civil service is still viewed as being ineffective and sluggish, and the panels' prior attempts to improve its effectiveness and efficiency have not had much of an impact.

It has been found that the numerous reforms implemented in the past have simply served to treat the symptoms; that is, they have not addressed the underlying causes of the rot, which is the civil service problem. Salisu (2001) claims that incompetence and ineffectiveness in the civil service pose a threat to government policies and development efforts in many African countries, particularly Nigeria. Consequently, Nigerian governments, both post-independence and current, have undertaken well-defined reform programs aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the civil service. The service is plagued by a weak governance structure, red tape, poor accountability, low professional standards, waste and corruption, poor productivity, a lack of control, redundancy, and an excessively bloated staff structure. Despite this, the service continues to be inefficient and unable to reform itself.

The main goal of this paper is to investigate the factors that either improve or limit the performance of Kwara state's civil servants. The importance of this research cannot be understated, as both the current and previous Kwara state governments have said that the state's civil servants' performance is unremarkable. As a result, this research will be helpful in identifying potential causes of low performance as well as strategies for raising it.

Literature Review

There is a good deal of literature on Nigerian civil service performance, but we will try to gather some of the works that are directly related to the study's focus.

Udoji (2010) posits that the civil service's performance output is contingent upon the systems and structures that form its foundation. According to him, the system's acute obsolescence stems from the use of outdated methods to manage the contemporary government economy, which contributes to low public servant performance. According to the author, this is equivalent to a general practitioner treating current infections with M and B tablets, which are now treatable with an antibiotic, or a farmer attempting to clear a dense bush with a hoe and machete rather than a tractor and bulldozer. A modern government's management of its operations is a large enterprise that calls for sophisticated

techniques. Thirty years ago, civil servants could not have imagined the involvement that Public Service in Nigeria is engaging in today. However, Udoji declines to recognize and comprehend that the public workers' culture, customs, and beliefs play a significant role in the rise in their productivity. Will modern techniques of managing the public service affect the performance standards of its employees, given that their culture, customs, and beliefs greatly influence how they carry out their tasks and responsibilities? Modern management techniques hardly ever seem to have an adverse effect on civil officials' daily lives, which always lowers their productivity. Why do modern doctors still utilize matches to treat some diseases in the modern era, given that Jerome Udoji once described the M and B tablet example as a strange, antiquated, and insufficient method of curing modern infection? These are still in use today because the outdated systems and techniques they employ are still applicable.

Relevant to this, Ejionye (2011) said that the average Nigerian worker in the modern era is a lethargic and lazy individual. Love of money, wealth, and all the finer things in life, he shies away from work and responsibility. In Nigeria, the majority of salaried workers were primarily worried about impending industrial action, approaching public holidays, duty certificates, extended breaks, and authorized casual leaves. Alongside these benefits are regular pay raises, alluring benefits, fast promotions, false claims, and a competitive bonus structure. Ejionye's perspective is overly broad since it would be difficult for people to regularly meet anyone in the ministries (offices) if all Kwara State civil servants possessed the traits and dispositions he described above. Moreover, it is important to recognize that not all Kwara State civil servants conform to this characterization.

Motivation is a basic requirement for productive worker performance, as recognized by management theorists such as Maslow, McGregor, Herzberg, and Vroom. Critical components that have been found to be important for creating a positive work environment and increasing employee engagement include competitive pay, job security, promotions, clear targets, greater responsibilities, authority with accountability, and job security (Adenaike, Ajayi, Adewale, & Odunlan, 2009). In the public and civil service setting, public service motivation (PSM), as defined by Perry and Wise (1990), becomes especially pertinent. It emphasizes a person's propensity to respond to reasons grounded in public institutions.

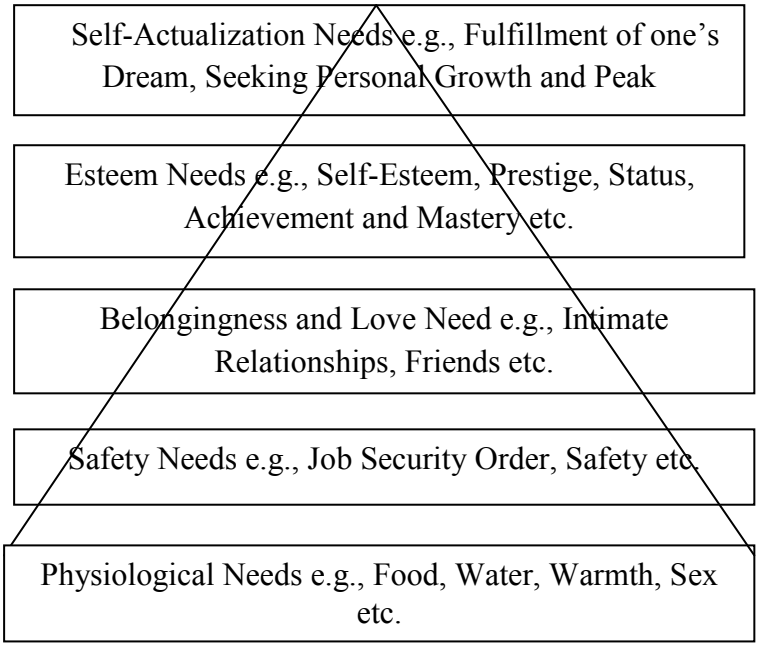
According to research by Olawale (2011), timely promotions and pay allowances have a significant impact on employees' job happiness and productivity. In order to improve workplace performance, Ajayi (2011) highlights the importance of job type, leadership, social connections, fair promotion procedures, and compensation increases. Yazinski (2010) outlines strategies such as staff retention plans that emphasize the value of work-life balance, communication, growth opportunities, positive work environments, training, and trust in leadership. Nonetheless, Arowolo (2012) recommends enhancing performance through the provision of work facilities, pleasant work environments, capacity building, amicable relationships, informal team building, performance appraisals, and a balanced approach to discipline and rewards. Oscar (2012) cautions against the detrimental effects of decreasing compensation and weakening incentives. Within the field of Public Administration, specialists promote rewards, advancements, and moral workplace conduct as means of efficiently inspiring public and private servants.

Theoretical Review

Abraham Maslow's and Douglas McGregor's theories of Hierarchical Needs are used in an effort to explain, forecast, prescribe, and analyze the job motivation and performance output of the civil officials in Kwara state:-

The Hierarchical Needs Theory by Abraham Maslow was developed in 1954. According to Maslow, a worker's needs must be satisfied in order for their performance to increase or improve. The author helped us to see the multiplicity and hierarchical nature of these needs. According to Maslow's model and theories, businesses and the government have an obligation to equip employees with the tools necessary in the workplace to inspire and motivate them to contribute as much as possible to the

achievement of organizational goals. This includes the Hierarchy of Needs. The following diagram illustrates Maslow's Hierarchical theory of needs:-



i. Physiological Needs: These are basic human requirements such as food, drink, shelter, sleep, air, and sex that are necessary for an individual's immediate needs or existence.
ii. Safety Needs: The absence of hazards in the workplace gives rise to these needs. risks, both mental and physical, such as order, land, freedom from physical accidents, and job stability.
iii. Belongingness and Love Needs: These demands focused on having a feeling of community inside the organization as a whole; these included involvement in important decision-making processes within the organization as well as workgroups, relationships, and informal groups.
iv. Esteem Needs: Giving certain employees extra credit for a job well done is part of this; this fulfils their demands for achievement, prestige, status, domination, mastery, and managerial responsibility.
v. Self-Actualization: This is the realization of one's dream, which includes reaching peak experience, self-fulfilment, pursuing personal development, etc.

The first need, which addresses the most basic demands for survival itself, is the one that Abraham Maslow claimed we must address first. According to his additional remarks, we can consider higher-order requirements like as influence and personal development if the lower-order needs of bodily and emotional well-being have been met.

Civil servants in Kwara state bemoaned some of their needs that were being ignored and jettisoned by the state government as the yardstick behind their low performances e.g., low salary structure, non-promotion of staff as when due, irregular payment of bonuses and allowances, non-provision of conducive working environment hinder their performances. Meeting these various needs positively according to Maslow will increase the performance output of the Kwara state civil servant and their attitude towards their work will be automatically changed.

Nevertheless, because human needs are indivisible and immeasurable, this theory restricted the demands of the workers into orders and categories, which is not always the case or reflective of reality. The idea that meeting the lower requirements comes before meeting the higher-order demands is another way in which this theory is constrained. Despite this, the theory still has value in today's world of management and improving employee performance in contemporary organizations. It does not, however, account for the reality that workers can shift directly from higher needs to lower needs, contrary to his original proposition.

Douglas McGregor: - Theory X and Theory Y

Douglas McGregor developed Theories X and Y in an attempt to describe two opposing models of worker motivation applied by managers in human resources management, organizational development, organizational behaviours, and communication systems in the workplace. The two theories were dubbed "Theory X" by McGregor, who emphasized the need for stringent oversight and external rewards and sanctions, and "Theory Y" by McGregor, who emphasized the value of job satisfaction as a motivator and gave employees the latitude to tackle jobs imaginatively.

Theory X

According to this view, almost all employees detest their jobs inherently and are either unmotivated or have low motivation to do a good job. Consequently, in order to accomplish organizational goals, "Theory X" managers must mainly depend on clear guidelines, directives, close supervision, and the fear of discipline in order to coax compliance and extract maximum performance from their workforce. This theory's execution may lead to extremely stringent oversight, mistrust, and a punishing culture throughout the entire organization. According to this notion, every employee's actions and activities should be monitored, and the accountable party should receive a direct reward or reprimand, depending on the consequences of their actions. This theory is highly appropriate in situations where workers and employees view their jobs as a burden and have an innate dislike of them. This is the case with Kwara state civil servants, who typically arrive late to work and sleep during the workday. They also receive more holidays, higher pay, and fewer responsibilities. As a result, Kwara state civil servants need to be closely monitored, trained, regularly instructed, threatened with punishment and held to rules and regulations in order to achieve complete compliance, obedience, and improved performance. Nevertheless, this approach will restrict the abilities and innovative ideas of certain Kwara state government employees who are highly productive and proactive in carrying out their responsibilities.

Theory Y

On the other hand, "Theory Y" contends that employees typically do well when provided with the right tools, surroundings, and guidance. According to this view, employees are a valuable resource for the company. This theory also holds that employees tend to find fulfilment in their work through their physical and mental labour because they view it as their daily bread, something they have to do; they take on responsibilities and find creative solutions to problems; as a result, they don't require close supervision. This is because theory Y managers think that employees will be dedicated to their goals in proportion to the satisfaction they derive from accomplishing them. Additionally, they think that in order for the organization to succeed, its employees must be treated as responsible, mature individuals and be given the opportunity to actively participate in important decision-making processes that are based mostly on self-direction, self-control, and minimal outside supervision. This philosophy applies to the Kwara State government and the head of the state's civil service in order to provide its employees with a sense of community and to help them realize that they are people, not just animals that can be mistreated, coerced, or forced into doing whatever they choose. To improve comprehension of the performance output of Kwara state civil officials, Theories X and Y should be included and combined.

Relevance of the Hierarchical Needs Theory and Theory X and Y to the Study

The applicability of Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y as well as Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is demonstrated while looking at motivating factors that affect Kwara State's civil officials' performance. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, which emphasizes basic to higher-order requirements, labour efficiency can be maximized by attending to a variety of employee demands, such as remuneration, job security, and professional development. However, McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y provide insights into managerial attitudes and suggest tactics according to the perception of employees as either intrinsically driven or in need of close supervision. Acknowledging and utilizing these theories facilitates customized motivational strategies, cultivating a favorable work atmosphere, and promoting self-reliance among public employees, consequently augmenting their output and contentment with their jobs in Kwara State.

Methodology and Data Presentation

A descriptive survey approach was adopted by drawing data from both primary (Questionnaire) and secondary (Textbooks, Journals and Internet) sources. The target population of the study consists of staff in the ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) in Ilorin, Kwara State. Hence, Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination table was used to determine the overall sample size for the study. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, in a population of one-thousand, six hundred and eleven (1611) respondents, the appropriate sample size is one-hundred and thirteen (313) respondents. The Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table is shown below as evidence of our sample.

The study made use of a probability proportionate cluster sampling technique in distributing the questionnaire by dividing the total by the number of clusters multiplied by the total sample size.

Table 1 Krejcie and Morgan Sample Size Determining Table

Item A		**Item B**		**Item C**		**Item D**		**Item E**	
N	**S**	**N**	**S**	**N**	**S**	**N**	**S**	**N**	**S**
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	123	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	**1700**	**313**	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	1000000	384

Note: *N = Population Size and S = Sample Size.* ***Source***: Krejcie and Morgan,1970

Table 1 is Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determining table; it already has a table design for researchers to use for easy determination of sample size. While 'N' in the table is the assumed population; the 'S' in the table is the appropriate sample size for proper representation.

According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, in a population of one-thousand, six hundred and eleven (1611), the appropriate sample size is one hundred and thirteen (313) respondents.

Therefore, the sample size for the study is 313, so a total number of 313 questionnaire were distributed to respondents.

Based on the above formulae, simple percentages were used to allot questionnaire to each selected MDAs in Kwara state.

Table 2 Number of Allotted Questionnaires to the Target Population

S/N	Target Population	Population	Allotted Questionnaire
1	Kwara State Ministry of Finance, Ilorin	482	94
	The Head of Service, Office of the Head of Service, Ilorin	352	68
3	Kwara State Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science and Technology	389	76
4	Kwara State Council for Arts and Culture, Ilorin	388	75
Total		**1611**	**313**

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The above illustrates how questionnaire was effectively distributed to the chosen MDAs. This distribution strategy facilitated the collection of data for the study and guaranteed a high response rate.

Results and Discussion

The research question which states: What are the factors affecting the performance of civil servants in Kwara state, is analyzed by looking at all the relevant variables.

Factors Affecting Performance

The researchers sought to know from the respondents whether these variables (Salary and Allowances, training, Job Security, Promotion, Increased Responsibility, Authority and Accountability) affect the performance of civil servants in Kwara State.

Table 3 Factors Affecting Performance

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	94	30.0
Agreed	129	41.2
Undecided	39	12.5
Disagreed	27	8.6
Strongly Disagreed	24	7.7
Total	**313**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 shows that 94 (30.0%) strongly agreed and 129 (41.2%) agreed that salary and allowances, job security, promotion, working conditions, training, increased responsibilities, authority and accountability affect the performance of civil servants in Kwara state while 39 (12.5%), 27 (8.6%) and 24 (7.7%) of the respondents disagreed, strongly disagreed and undecided respectively. This illustrates how salary and bonuses, job security, promotions, working conditions, and training affect the productivity of Kwara state government employees.

Effect of Salary Increment on the Performance

The researchers asked the participants if receiving a salary increase motivates them to work more.

Table 4 Effect of Salary Increment on the Performance

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	123	39.3
Agreed	87	27.8
Undecided	28	8.9
Disagreed	46	14.7
Strongly Disagreed	29	9.3
Total	**313**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4 reveals that most of the respondents strongly agreed that 123 (39.3%) and 87 (27.8%) agreed that salary increments spur workers to greater performance. 28 (8.9%), 29 (17.4%) and 29 (9.3%) of the respondents were undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The research conducted that wage increases motivate employees to perform better.

Hard Work for Promotion

The researchers aimed to find out whether officers who get promoted based on their recognition as dependable, industrious, and state-aligned are driven to perform well.

Table 4 Hard Work for Promotion

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	77	24.6
Agreed	109	34.8
Undecided	29	9.3
Disagreed	66	21.1
Strongly Disagreed	32	10.2
Total	**313**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4 reveals that out of 313 respondents, 109 (34.8%) agreed and 77 (24.6%) strongly agreed that the government motives its workers by promoting them when due any officer to be hardworking, diligent and loyal to the state while 66 (21.1%) disagreed and 32 (10.2%) strongly disagreed as well as 29 (9.3%) were undecided respectively. This analysis demonstrates that the government enhances employee motivation by giving them promotions when they are due.

Promotion as a Motivator for Performance

The researchers enquired to know whether promotion serves as one of the motivating factors for higher performance.

Table 5 Promotion as a Motivator for Performance

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	152	48.6
Agreed	94	30.0
Undecided	19	6.1
Disagreed	23	7.4
Strongly Disagreed	25	7.9
Total	**313**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 5 shows that 152 (48.6%) respondents strongly agreed that promotion is a motivator of performance, 94 (30) also agreed, 19 (6.1) undecided, 23 (7.4) disagreed, and 25 (7.9) strongly disagreed. The table's analysis demonstrates that performance is motivated by promotion.

Level of Performance when Promoted

The researchers sought to know the extent of the performance of civil servants as he/she gets promoted

Table 6 Level of Performance when Promoted

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	94	30.0
Agreed	121	38.7
Undecided	12	3.8
Disagreed	48	15.3
Strongly Disagreed	38	12.2
Total	**313**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 6 indicates that out of 313 respondents, 94 (30%) strongly agreed 121 (38.7%) agreed, 12 (3.8%) were undecided, 48 (15.3%) agreed and 38 (12.2) strongly disagreed that promotion encourages performance. This demonstrates that the level of performance would significantly increase when civil servants in Kwara state were promoted.

Training Opportunity for Performance

The researchers intend to know from the respondents whether they frequently attend training sessions such as conferences, seminars, and workshops in order to improve their performance.

Table 7 Training Opportunity for Performance

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	39	12.5
Agreed	44	14.1
Undecided	12	3.8
Disagreed	122	38.9
Strongly Disagreed	96	30.7
Total	**313**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 7 shows that out of 313 respondents, 39 (12.5%) strongly agreed, 44 (14.1%) agreed which shows that seminars, conferences and workshops were not organized for staff to enhance their performance while 122 (38.9%) strongly disagreed, 96 (30.7%) disagreed and 12 (3.8%) undecideds respectively. Analysis shows that the civil personnel were not given the necessary training to improve their performance.

Indices of Performance

The researcher sought to know whether civil servants uphold the standards of the civil service, which include being accountable, being on time for work, being obedient to the government, carrying out their duties, maintaining order and showing consideration for other employees and guests.

Table 8 Indices of Performance

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	89	28.4
Agreed	131	41.9
Undecided	34	10.9
Disagreed	40	12.8
Strongly Disagreed	19	6.0
Total	**313**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 5 reveals that 131 (41.9%) and 89 (28.4%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that civil servant maintains the civil service norms of being punctual, loyal, dutiful, orderly and courteous

to other staff. 40 (12.8%) disagreed, 19 (6.0%) strongly disagreed and 34 (10.9%) were undecided respectively. This investigation demonstrates the excellent performance of civil officials.

Discussing of Major Finding

The findings of the study reveal several factors influencing the performance of Kwara State's civil servants. Firstly, pay and benefits, job stability, training, promotions, and increasing authority and responsibility were identified as significant contributors to performance. This aligns with existing research by Adenaike et al. (2009), Olawale (2011), Ajayi (2011), and Yazinski (2010), which collectively emphasize the importance of compensation, allowances, promotions, training, job security, and greater responsibilities in impacting employee performance. Notably, the study highlights that promotions serve as a strong motivator, consistent with Arowolo's (2011) findings that compensation, allowance, and promotions significantly influence employees' satisfaction levels. The results also underscore the importance of promotions as a means to reward excellent work, aligning with Strauss and Sayles' (1980) perspective on promotions being a crucial source of employee incentive and an effective affirmative action strategy.

Quantitative results further support the assertion that promotions positively impact the performance of Kwara State civil personnel. This corroborates findings by Arowolo (2012) and Park et al. (2003), emphasizing that promotions or rewards motivate employees to exert maximum effort and contribute to improved performance. However, the study identifies a gap in training provision for civil servants, contrary to Yazinski's (2010) suggestion that hiring the right people and providing adequate training is essential for enhancing employee performance. The absence of necessary training opportunities represents a potential area for improvement in the civil service's efforts to optimize workforce performance.

The study also reveals that salary increases play a significant role in encouraging better performance among Kwara State civil servants. This finding aligns with La Motta's (1995) research, indicating that unanticipated praise, acknowledgement, and compensation, including salary increases, elevate motivation levels. However, it contrasts with Zhou et al.'s (2010) suggestion that compensation increases might create inflated expectations, potentially frustrating employees and depressing their output. The importance of addressing salary-related concerns to maintain and enhance employee motivation is evident in the study's results.

Additionally, the study highlights the exceptionally high performance of Kwara State civil servants, emphasizing factors such as cooperation, discipline, accountability, promptness and punctuality, adherence to job specifications, and loyalty as determinants of performance. This finding aligns with a previous study on Kwara performance indices. However, it contradicts Orire's (2007) assertion of documented instances of negative behaviour in the civil service, indicating a need for further exploration and understanding of the variations in performance and behaviours within the civil service. The government's role in encouraging employees through timely promotions, leading to increased dedication to their jobs, emerges as a positive aspect of the organizational culture.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study examining factors influencing the performance of Kwara State's civil servants provides valuable insights into both positive aspects and areas for improvement within the civil service. The identified positive factors including the impact of promotions on motivation, wage increases, and high-performance indicators, point to an organizational culture that is supportive of civil servants' commitment and productivity. On the other hand, it becomes clear that a potential constraint that can affect worker productivity is the lack of appropriate training opportunities.

In order to improve overall efficiency, it is imperative that the Kwara State government take into consideration filling in the gaps that have been discovered, especially with regard to continuing staff training. The civil service can guarantee that workers have the ability to adjust to changing job

requirements by making investments in professional development, which will ultimately lead to increased productivity and effectiveness.

Additionally, the favourable results pertaining to the things that motivate employees, such as wage raises and promotions, suggest that these characteristics may be further utilized to improve worker performance. To maximize the overall effectiveness of Kwara State's civil service, it will be important to acknowledge and emphasize these excellent elements while concurrently addressing areas that require advancement. Sustained gains in the effectiveness and performance of the civil service can also be facilitated by continuous monitoring, feedback systems, and a dedication to fostering a positive work environment.

Recommendations

From the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

i. It recommends that pay and benefits, job security, training, increasing responsibility, authority, and accountability be sufficiently taken care of in order to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of civil servants' work.
ii. Implement a system of performance-based incentives to recognize and compensate civil servants for their outstanding work and output. This could take the form of cash bonuses, praise, or chances for professional growth. People would be encouraged to do well in their jobs under this system since they would know that their efforts would be recognized and rewarded.
iii. It is recommended that civil servants' knowledge and skills be improved in order to demonstrate the government's commitment to supporting their professional development as well as to give them the means of performing their jobs more effectively.
iv. It recommends to address the difficulties that civil officials can have on a personal and professional level. Establish employee support programs that address stress management, work-life balance, and mental wellness. The comprehensive well-being of public employees should be a priority for the government.

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GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: THE HARBINGER TO INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNAL DIGNITY

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of good governance as a crucial factor in ensuring national prosperity, enhancing development, and maintaining sustainable individual and communal dignity. Developmental deficiencies in Nigeria are attributed to the crisis of poor governance, which results in high unemployment rates, budget deficits, infrastructural gaps, increasing debt profiles, multidimensional poverty, and insecurity. Using secondary data and participant observation, the study reveals that poor governance perpetuates poverty, and impoverished populations contribute to poor governance through systemic disorder, ignorance, lack of democratic culture and practice, corruption, and indiscipline. Conversely, good governance is essential for the growth and sustainability of any country. The study highlights the need for effective strategies to enhance good governance and meaningful development. It emphasizes the importance of realistic action plans focusing on viable remedial interventions to drive sustainable economic growth and development. The study recommends that, to maintain competitiveness in the new economic age, the government should provide the necessary infrastructure to encourage the application of innovation and technology across all sectors of the economy. This would bolster the economy by adding value, creating a sustainable technology-based entrepreneurial culture, and generating new business opportunities, as well as incubating spin-off technologies. In conclusion, the study asserts that deliberate intervention policies, when appropriately and faithfully implemented, will stimulate and propel Nigeria's inherent potentials toward productivity and gainful engagement.

Keywords: Good Governance, Communal Dignity, Democracy, Public Institutions, Accountability.

Introduction

In the last decade, the concept of the Next-11 countries (Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Turkey, and Vietnam) has gained attention. These countries are seen as potentially large, fast-growing economies with significant growth opportunities. Prior to this, the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) had already joined the G7 as the world's largest economies, showcasing their economic success (Nwachukwu, 2013). In Africa, several nations have recognized the need for meaningful economic development to drive a paradigm shift toward sustainable economic growth and development. Nigeria, in particular, has made notable strides in establishing economic structures that can stimulate and propel inherent potentials toward productivity and gainful engagement (Okhakume, 2013; Okoronkwo, 2020).

Nigeria is on a path toward significant change, driven by its vast untapped solid mineral deposits, growing youth creativity, and hunger for industrialization among its young population (Okhakume, 2013). Nwachukwu (2013) suggests that Nigeria stands on the threshold of what could be its greatest transformation, with young workers becoming the country's most valuable resource in the 21st century. However, transitioning from a public-sector-driven economy to a private-sector-led one requires a conducive and enabling economic environment that stimulates productivity and simplifies enterprise. The government must develop its infrastructural base and ensure that social amenities are available to add value to human existence (Afegbua, 2007).

Without these foundational elements, Nigeria faces high inflation, low purchasing power parity of the naira, unreliable power supply, high fuel prices, poverty, and unemployment. These issues result in

recurring fiscal vulnerability and declining economic conditions, threatening the nation's viability and future prosperity. Additionally, insecurity from kidnapping, terrorism, and other criminal activities, as well as the rising incidence of internally displaced persons (IDPs), place undue pressure on critical social and physical infrastructure, leading to systems failure, high youth unemployment, legal bottlenecks, corruption, and lack of accountability among officials (Nwachukwu, 2013; Agboti & Orakwe, 2020; Iroanya, 2022). Poor governance perpetuates poverty, and impoverished populations contribute to poor governance through systemic disorder, ignorance, corruption, and indiscipline (Nnamani, 2006; Iroanya, 2023).

Enhancing good governance and national development is essential for job creation, youth engagement, and empowerment by indigenous organizations executing projects in the nation. Xianbin and Oiong (2021) assert that good governance fosters gender equality, protects the environment, allows citizens to express personal freedom, and provides instruments to alleviate poverty, fear, and deprivation, creating a violence-free atmosphere. These objectives are critical for the government and all Nigerians. Despite developmental challenges, such as regional insecurity and youth restiveness, addressing these issues requires cooperation among development partners, government agencies, faith-based organizations, multinationals, host communities, and individuals with complementary ideas and activities (Oyesola, 2013).

Good governance is crucial for the growth and sustainability of any country (OECD, 2013; Addink, 2017). To enhance good governance and national development effectively, realistic and effective strategies must be developed (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011). This study focuses on examining the trend of governance in Nigeria, sustainable individual and communal dignity, and providing a workable approach to good governance and national development. The central question is: what is the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting individual and communal dignity? Using secondary data sources and participant observation at the Zonal Advocacy Workshop on Economic Diversification in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, this study offers pathways for improvement, focusing on socio-economic and political reforms.

The research reveals that good governance positively enhances individual and communal dignity. These findings align with the ideas of Nwachukwu (2013) and Xianbin and Oiong (2021). The study emphasizes that Nigeria has a better chance of overall success with more developed and sophisticated institutional, legal, and political frameworks. Furthermore, it contends that Nigeria should diversify away from oil, using oil revenues to fund infrastructure and recurrent spending while ensuring efficient use of existing funds. This study is descriptive in nature.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of the Study

Governance is often regarded as a nebulous and ambiguous concept. According to Addink (2017), the word governance is derived from the Greek verb "kubernao," meaning "to steer." This term was first used by Plato as a metaphor and later adopted by Latin (gubernare) and other languages. Governance can operate in organizations of any size, for any purpose, whether good or evil, for profit or not. Literature generally concludes that governance refers to the development of governing styles where boundaries between public and private sectors become blurred (Stoker, 1998). Asogwa (2008) defines governance as the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs.

Mandal and Gupta (2015) describe governance as the process of decision-making and the implementation of decisions. Addink (2017) identifies two aspects of governance: the act of governing by persons or institutions and the process of bringing about these acts. Governance encompasses all governmental actions and activities aimed at making and realizing effective economic policies. Governance can be applied in various contexts, such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance, and local governance. It includes all methods societies use to distribute power and manage public resources and problems.

This study focuses on national governance and good governance. Okoronkwo (2020) defines good governance as the ability to perform efficiently, effectively, and responsively, guided by feasible and desirable principles at all societal levels. Xianbin and Oiong (2021) describe good governance as a commitment to democratic ideals, norms, and practices, characterized by trustworthiness, just business practices, and institutions that drive political and socio-economic connections. One key characteristic of good governance is the collaborative administration of public life by both citizens and the state. The three broad categories of government stakeholders are the state, the market, and civil society. Good governance, expressed through reliability, predictability, and accountability, is increasingly seen as a key factor in ensuring national prosperity (OECD, 2013; Addink, 2017).

Ezenyili (2012) uses the concept of good governance to enhance development and address institutional failures. Developmental deficiencies in developing countries, such as Nigeria, are due to governance crises. Good governance is crucial for economic and social development, promoting the rule of law, transparency, managerial competence, participation, accountability, and public service ethics. Good governance facilitates the transition to more open and democratic societies and is fundamental to ensuring citizens' quality of life (OECD, 2013; Addink, 2017; McDonald, 2022).

Scholars agree that the features of good governance include good education, basic infrastructure development, public safety, employment opportunities, a favorable business environment, and a free market economy (Mandal & Gupta, 2015; Xianbin & Oiong, 2021; McDonald, 2022). The purpose of good governance is to minimize corruption and promote the views of minorities and marginalized populations. In decision-making, good governance considers the present and future needs of society, acting in a timely manner with forethought and awareness (Mandal & Gupta, 2015; McDonald, 2022; Kaufmann & Kraay, 2023). This study asserts that good governance is the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting individual and communal dignity.

Based on the literature, this research was designed, and the following theoretical framework was developed. This research revolves around the good governance theory. According to Xianbin and Oiong (2021), good governance theory refers to the allocation and management of resources to address collective challenges, occurring when a state efficiently delivers public goods to its citizens. This requires evaluating states in terms of the quality and quantity of public goods provided. Addink (2017) posits that good governance theoretically involves all state powers: legislative, executive (administrative), judicial, and additional powers like ombudsmen and courts of audits. The key elements of the theory are accountability, efficiency, and openness.

In Nigeria, the absence of good governance principles and elements fosters anger, distrust, severe alienation, and multidimensional poverty, which are at the root of many conflicts. The lack of basic infrastructure, such as roads, water and sanitation, shelter, electricity, and employment opportunities, has given rise to terrorism, militancy, social instability, and political violence (Agboti & Orakwe, 2020; Okoronkwo, 2020; Iroanya, 2023). Consequently, theoretical work on good governance reveals that these principles and elements are often lacking in Nigeria, leading to negative consequences for the economy and environment due to poor leadership, the ruling class's activities, and multinationals' collaborations (Eteng, 2015; Agboti & Orakwe, 2020).

The Principles and Dimensions of Good Governance

Addink (2017), Okoronkwo (2020), and McDonald (2022) outline the principles of good governance to include: participation, rule of law, human rights, transparency of decision-making, accountability, equity and inclusiveness, consensus orientation, predictability, effectiveness, responsiveness, and strategic vision. This study will focus on the most remarkable links to illuminate the characteristics of good governance.

At its core, good governance is participatory. Equal participation by all members of society means encouraging involvement from diverse backgrounds and various areas of expertise, either directly or through elected representatives. Equity and inclusiveness are inherently tied to participation, serving

as key components of a healthy organization or society. Diversity, equity, and inclusion must act as the foundation of all operations in good governance. Additionally, good governance implies the rule of law, maintained through the impartiality and effectiveness of the legal system, an independent judiciary, and incorruptible law enforcement agencies.

Transparency in the decision-making process ensures that information is freely available and accessible to those involved or affected by decisions. Accountability and responsibility are also crucial, with participants in the political and economic process being accountable to each other for their decisions. Integrity, transparency in practices, and adherence to the law are closely linked to accountability. One of the most motivating principles of good governance is strategic vision, which is ultimately the responsibility of leaders. To realize good governance, organizations or governments should plan strategically, define their mission and values, and foster a conducive work environment. The capacity of government to provide predictability in policy and institutional environment is key to efficiency. These principles enhance democratic institutions by ensuring frequent, free, fair, and credible elections, a representative legislature, an independent judiciary, and a free media.

Dimensions of Good Governance

The dimensions of good governance, as articulated by Mandal and Gupta (2015), Okoronkwo (2020), and McDonald (2022), include the following:

1. **Political Dimension**: This dimension addresses the legitimacy of government, the accountability of political elements, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Its components include the exercise of franchise, the profile and conduct of representatives, political parties, the political executive, legislature, and political decentralization.
2. **Social and Environmental Dimension**: This dimension focuses on building, strengthening, and promoting democratic institutions and tolerance throughout society. Its components include the welfare of the poor and vulnerable, the role of civil society and media, and environmental management.
3. **Legal and Judicial Dimension**: This dimension measures whether the exercise of power is within its boundaries and its ability to effectively maintain law and order, safeguard human rights, and enable access to and delivery of goods and services. Its components include law and order and internal security, safeguarding basic rights, police administration and citizen-friendliness of the police, access to justice, and judicial accountability.
4. **Economic Dimension**: This dimension pertains to the state's ability to ensure macroeconomic stability and create a conducive climate for economic activity across different sectors. Its components include fiscal governance, the business environment, and support to the primary sector.

Issues in Promoting Good Governance in Nigeria

1. Development of Democratic Culture

Recent economic and social development has increased attention given to the role that good governance plays in achieving social and economic development (OECD, 2013; Okoronkwo, 2020). Public management reforms have been a key factor in improving capacities of countries to address issues such as budget deficits and external pressures on competitiveness; perceived lack of public confidence in government, growing needs for services; and increasing demands for better and more responsive services. Again, good governance and democracy have become a very comparative and embracing ideal admired by most countries and has grown rapidly to become a major in analysis of what is missing in Nigeria's struggle for economic and political development. Hence, there is a relationship between democracy and good governance (Ezenyili. 2012; Addink, 2017; Xianbin and Oiong, 2021).

Ultimately, even as universally appreciated, democracy as a vehicle of social cohesion, not coercion, ought to attain the platform for cohabitation, debate, popular participation, free enterprise, high productivity as well as change which arises from a well-placed definition of the entire dimensions of the state in preparation for the emergence of the new order. Of course, the dominant facilitator of this

is the government, which on the strength of the mandate of democracy provides the sufficient ground of law for the running of the other values of the state such as free enterprise, the infrastructure and the conduct of the substructure (Nnamani, 2006) as well as operation of private firms, strength of civil society, and welfare of communities and individuals (OECD, 2013). In fact, the relationship between the liberal social factors and the fixed institutions of the state determine the extent of actualization of the formal as well as informal sector-elements in the perpetuation of the political environment. In most cases the liberal environment provided the leverage for the various social factors including the individual players, social issues and major economic players to apply the objective values in throwing leadership for the realization of the national dream (Nnamani, 2006).

However, Nigeria's democracy has remained unstable since she returned to democracy in 1999. The political terrain and governing procedures been characterized by corruption which has undermined democracy and has had grave implications for good democratic governance in Nigeria. Corruption as a means of exclusion (deficit) is a stumbling block in the development of Nigeria's good democratic governance from a nominal to a practical one (Nnamani, 2006; Iroanya, 2023). In the same vein, Ezenyili (2012) explained that the vast discrepancy between Nigeria's nominal democracy and corrupt governance practices show that it is much easier to talk the talk, than it is to walk the walk. That is to say, good governance is easier to deliberate in theory, than to effect in practice, looking at the case of Nigeria. Admittedly, after twenty four years of uninterrupted democracy, Nigeria still suffer acute poverty of democratic culture and practices (Iroanya, 2023).

Indeed, to enhance good governance, Nigeria must deliberately promote a viable and transparent electoral process. The right to opinion and dissent must be given space in our political discussion. Internal party democracy is a sine qua non to the genuine development of democratic culture (Nwosu, 2013). As Nnamani (2006) puts it, in popular debate and dialogue, citizens are assured of the alternative viewpoint. It is on the strength of this position that this research consider it proper that all issues must be tabled and discussed; and all positions modified in the interest of the rest of Nigerians who must remain steadfast with this enterprise called Nigeria. A situation where the philosophy of winner takes all or a do-or die affair is allowed in the political process is a big deficit for democracy. More worrisome is the attitude of the opposition parties which rush to the ruling party immediately after elections just to secure political office appointments. When that happens, the nation is denied of any strong alternative to select from (Attayi-Elaigu, 2008).

More so, to foster true democratic culture, the need to provide a platform to engender accountability, probity and transparency in governance is non-negotiable. Such a forum, to a large extent, will dissuade dangerous speculations within the polity because the needed light would have been shed on cloudy aspects of governance that Nigerians have misgivings about (Ifijeh, 2013). At any point, the public should be certain of what is officially being done to fight corruption, minimize unemployment or ensure that elusive electricity is made constant, and whether the right steps are being taken to provide infrastructure. At such crucial moments, the leaders can be challenged for not leading by example. More fundamentally, Ifijeh (2013) affirms the need for Nigerians to be more apprised of steps taken to nip insecurity in the bud. Also, the leaders should exhibit uncommon diligence, inspiration, selflessness, passion, maturity and willingness to sacrifice towards the promotion and preservation of the national interest. This would contribute to the transformation of the country and to the consolidation of democratic process and national development.

More importantly, Nigerians will have to find a way to do away with the present system of godfatherism - an archaic, corrupt practice in which individuals with lots of money and time to spare sponsor their chosen candidates and push them right through to the desired political position, bribing, threatening, and on occasion, murdering any opposition in the process (Nnamani, 2006). Nigeria will have to make sure that the electoral body overseeing elections is run by widely respected and competent officials chosen by a nonpartisan group, free of governmental influence or interference (Achebe, 2012). In addition, the irrepressible literary icon called on Nigeria to develop a version of election and finance reform, so that the country can transform its political system from the grassroots

level right through to the national party structures at the federal level. In this regard, the nation's democratic institutions should be strengthened in order to bring about a lasting culture.

2. Promotion of Ethical Values

The poor socio-economic condition in Nigeria and the inability of the leaders to create conditions necessary for higher national development should be a concern to any person who cares about Nigeria. The decline of Nigeria cannot be arrested through economic revival alone, but a fundamental change in attitudes and through the rebirth of a new nation. How to reinvent the attributes of this new nation established as self-reliant and self-sufficient; and how to contain the corrupting influence and abuse of power in the new nation of our dream should occupy our mind. The basic assumption is that all Nigerians are committed to the rule of law and respect for the individual, with his rights and obligations to the nation, as well as respect for human dignity (Iroanya, 2016). Ideally, for a society to be truly free, it should be an elective democracy. But from Nigeria's experience, Thompson (2012) observed this is not always the case where freedom from poverty and disease may, sometimes, be more critical than freedom to choose and elect the national leadership.

Consequently, without firm and founding principles a nation may never know peace, order and prosperity. But just as there are obstinate people, there are also obtusely obstinate nations that can only learn the hard way. This has consigned many formerly powerful people to political irrelevance and a few self-important actors to figures of national scorn and derision (Alamu, 2013). Expectedly, those who cling to power in the name of privilege are destined to lose both power and privilege. The recrudescence of military takeover in some African countries should serve as a wake-up call to poor leadership in the continent (Ojo, 2023). As a matter of necessity, Nigeria should establish and enshrine a level playing ground for all ethnic groups as well as establish a level playing ground for all Nigerians irrespective of race, region or religion, creed or class. These foundational principles has to be establish now that all Nigerians irrespective of race, region or religion have a right to aspire to rule and preside over the affairs of Nigeria provided the electorate relinquish their sovereign authority by endorsing the aspiration. Nigeria cannot be said to be truly and fully democratic until those principles has been established and the transition of power to the citizens has taken place (Alamu, 2013).

Furthermore, Lickona (2008) in Dike (2008) noted that respect and responsibility are the two foundational moral values that a society should teach its citizens. Other values are honesty, fairness, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation, courage and democratic values. However, rule of law, equality of opportunity, due process, representative government, checks and balances are procedural values that define democracy. This study punctiliously states that freedom, fairness, equality, independence, participation and dignity be linked to the values of good governance in the administration of affairs in Nigeria. This will enhance integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality in the administration of its affairs. All these would enable the people to create a viable humane society and to act respectfully and responsibly. The increasing moral problems in Nigeria such as systemic disorder, corruption, greed, dishonesty, violent crime, politically motivated killings, drug abuse and other destructive behaviors, calls for the promotion of ethical values in the society (Nwankwo, 2022). Presently, corruption drives and shapes social values in Nigeria, and for some individuals, the quest for 'easy money' is the justification for breaking the laws of the land and distorting policies directed toward national development. Consequently, unnecessary display of ill-acquired wealth threatens Nigeria and its democratic political process. When the leaders and the followers think of public service in instrumental way, accountability declines, and national development is adversely affected (Dike, 2008).

Against the background of the above, parents should give their children good home training and made to imbibe principles of simplicity, selflessness, humility, hard work and sincerity. A society may not develop if the leaders and followers do not possess the appropriate character to enable them get committed to democratic values and to work for socio-economic development. This is why the founding fathers of American democracy had noted that moral education is essential for the success of a democratic society. This is because the people must possess the appropriate character to build a free

and just society and the moral foundations to make democracy thrive in the society. These virtues must be instilled in the people at an early age. These virtues are necessary for leading a moral life of the individuals and for the health of the nation (Garrod and Bramble, 1977 in Iroanya, 2015). Therefore, strong personal character should manifest itself in service to organizations and communities. Accordingly, moral development promotes critical thinking and moral reasoning which positively impacts individual and communal dignity.

3. Promotion of Functional and Qualitative Education

Education is the basic foundation of any progressive nation and whatever money spent on it is a resource well spent. There is no alternative to free, functional and qualitative education in Nigeria. The efforts being made by the government to develop the nation would come to naught if functional and qualitative education is not made accessible to all (Jakande, 2009). The crucial role of the education sector as the hub on which a meaningful and rapid socio-economic development of the nation rests should lead the government across board to see the development of the sector as one of its cardinal points. Thus, Oji (2009) opined that no investment on education could be said to be too much. Education is the key that unlocks the shackles of ignorance. Education is the light. It is the way. In this wise, functional and qualitative education in this study means the intellectual, emotional, cultural, social, spiritual and physical development of a person. One cannot develop a person who is only good in counting numbers but does not know how to be a good neighbor. Education is all about all round development of personality and not academics.

Again, it would turn out products who think about giving to the society, who love all people irrespective of whom they are or where they are from and inculcate in the students love for the country and for people. It should recognize the affective domain of education as well as the cognitive which is a demonstration of the value the nation places on good behavior. Also, it rewards excellence, especially in behavior not only in academics. It does not forge an illegitimate accommodation between the best and the worst, between the intelligent and the certified dullard. Suffice it to note that Nigeria would not achieve national development when she has enshrined the practices of treating her students unequally by punishing the best and brightest so as to appease the worst and unserious. In the guise of promoting federal character, Raymond (2013) declared an intelligent and hardworking student from, say, Anambra state who scores 130 in the entrance exam will be advertently denied admission into a federal unity school just to ensure that his counterpart from Sokoto state who scores 2 is accommodated under a federal arrangement. This is nothing but a template for glorifying mediocrity.

Hence, the problem in the education sector needs special attention to salvage it in the country. Such obstacles as poor quality graduates, examination malpractices, cultism, certificate forgery, inadequate commitment to duty by stakeholders; and inadequate funding are problems especially peculiar to education, and therefore require special attention. Another issue is the decline in teacher education. There is the need to overhaul the quality of education which the teachers themselves need in order to deliver quality education to pupils and students in schools and institutions of learning and to check the outrageous decline in the qualities of education which the teachers themselves have had in the recent past (Nwachukwu, 2008). It is so ironic that the Nigerian education system has a major problem of attracting and keeping qualified and committed teachers because the system is rotten (Agina, 2007). This is why the percentage of graduates who are able to secure employment is incredibly low, when compared with the rate at which the universities and colleges spurn them out yearly. Worse still, most of the graduates are not trained in areas that are related to the economic and developmental plans of the country, and so, they are not academically or vocationally aligned with the demands of the businesses or organizations they may like to work for (Idehen, 2007).

Since it has become almost consensual in the court of public opinion that the standard of education has fallen in the country, nothing can be timelier and appropriate than a re-examination of the quality of education of the teachers themselves (Nwachukwu, 2008). Other measures should include, better funding of the universities, such that you have more classrooms, bigger well-stocked libraries and

improved accommodation. The cafeteria system should be introduced in the universities for good but affordable food because you need good food to be able to read. Also, the government should continue to provide interventions through the UBE program in order to enhance UBE delivery and fast track attainment of notable protocols to which it is a signatory. Government intervention in this regard should primarily witness the injection of funds for addressing target needs in the areas of infrastructural development, provision of instructional materials; and teachers' capacity building towards addressing challenges that have hindered the actualization of the full potential of basic education sub-sector (Akinyemi, 2009 in Iroanya, 2015). In addition, all stakeholders in education sector should step up the education standard by evolving such development models that give further impetus to education as a necessary tool for change and societal growth.

4. Investment in Public Infrastructure

Infrastructure investments are crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including halving global poverty by 2030. Infrastructure significantly impacts poverty reduction, health, education, and social cohesion (Sachs, 2005; Addink, 2017). For instance, roads lower transaction costs, boost girls' school attendance, improve access to healthcare, and enhance international connectivity (Jerome, 2011). John Keynes' economic strategies during the Great Depression highlighted the importance of injecting funds into public works to combat unemployment (Adeleye, 2013).

Infrastructure, categorized into hard, soft, economic, and social, is essential for economic functionality (Jerome, 2011). Research underscores the critical role of infrastructure in sustainable growth and individual and communal dignity (Addink, 2017; Xianbin and Oiong, 2021; Kaufmann and Kraay, 2023). The World Bank's 1994 report and subsequent studies emphasize infrastructure's vital role in development, especially in Africa (Ndulu, 2006; Jerome, 2011). Infrastructure development and economic growth create a virtuous cycle, enhancing human capital and economic returns (Sachs, 2005; Jerome, 2011).

Investment in infrastructure reduces transaction costs, facilitates trade, lowers input costs for businesses, creates employment, enhances human capacity, and improves environmental conditions, contributing to sustainable growth (Sachs, 2005; Jerome, 2011). Nigeria must develop world-class infrastructure, diversify its economy beyond oil, and focus on sectors that improve youth employment and remove growth obstacles (Nwachukwu, 2013). The government should boost investment in education and health, funded by oil revenues, and ensure efficient fund utilization.

Youth and women empowerment programs should be launched to help them discover their talents and contribute to community development. Supporting SMEs, which drive future markets, is vital. Policies should facilitate SMEs' access to finance and profitability, recognizing them as key drivers of wealth and job creation (Iche, 2013). Investment in the informal sector can reduce oil dependence and promote quality, competitive products and services. These initiatives align with Nigeria's Vision 20: 2020 and the National Development Plan 2021-2025 (Zaku, 2009).

Good Governance in Nigeria: A Mirage

In spite of series of development strategies put in place by successive governments, and sometimes with good intentions, all attempts to generate meaningful development proved futile (Iroanya, 2015). A lot of factors have combined together to fetter Nigeria's development.

One significant issue is that some programs are heavily influenced by what Omoifo (2006) called "the Washington Consensus". Although such a consensus may be partly relevant, it does not coincide with the internal coherence of our economic or developmental strategies. Rather than adopt the World Bank and International Monetary Fund economic templates wholesale, Nigeria should design creative and astute mobilization engagements and activities. This approach will open a floodgate of linkages and contacts with a broad spectrum of progressive politicians, social workers, opinion leaders, faith-based organizations, market leaders, professional organizations, and other social movements within

and without. Overtly, governments that involve the public are in a better position to make good decisions. These decisions will enjoy more support once taken, while accountability, transparency, and participation are reinforced (OECD, 2013). Otherwise, it would lead to incessant stealing and vandalization of government installations.

High levels of corruption and indiscipline present another barrier to good governance, individual, and communal dignity. Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) and Achebe (2012) acknowledged that the Nigerian state is corrupt, managed by corrupt leaders who have made the state an instrument of capital accumulation rather than using it to project the interest of the citizenry. Consequently, accountability declines, and national development is adversely affected (Dike, 2008). Okoro (2012) disclosed that Nigeria loses more to corruption than it loses on oil subsidy. The federal government alone lost over N450 billion to corruption from January to November 2011. The 2023 NEITI report on Ministries, Departments and Agencies has further exposed the impact and cost of the hydra-headed monster in Nigeria. This amount could have been enough to fix the dilapidated federal roads in the country. Additionally, Nigeria's slow implementation of structural economic reforms limits its investment upgrade. This is further hindered by corruption, weak institutions, and vulnerability to oil price drops.

More importantly, Nigeria is challenged by the alarming degree of waste in the industrial manufacturing sector in the form of expensive industrial production machinery and equipment standing idle for years/decades. Some have been and are still in the crates since the 1970s when they were imported (Nnadi, 2013). The author discovered that the degree of under-utilization is in excess of 85%, as confirmed by a National Technical Survey exercise in the 1990s. Worse still, insecurity in Nigeria has had a devastating impact on the general well-being of the people and to a larger extent the mercantile configuration of the entire landscape. The pervasive insecurity in Nigeria portrays not only the socio-economic, security, and mental attitudes of the nation but also the prevalence of misery and inhuman living conditions. Hence, insecurity in the country remains a thorny issue which the political leadership has failed to grapple with due to policy predilections and deliberate failure to face the reality of the situation.

Fundamental Remedial Imperatives

In line with the objectives of the study, the following viable options for mainstreaming Nigeria's national development aspirations towards individual and communal dignity are identified.

To prepare for life in a modern society, citizens should be exposed to free, functional, and qualitative education and acquire good moral values to enable them to create a humane society and to function effectively in a democratic political environment. The challenge for the political, religious, and traditional leaders is to confront Nigeria's problems with innovative ideas and values in the nation's school curricula for good character development and sustainable individual and communal dignity.

The education curriculum must be tailored to the needs of contemporary society and global expectations. The curriculum should be made fuller, better, and more penetrating in all fields, thereby preparing students better for the future. Also, there should be changes in the training and orientation of teachers to make them more like the teachers of old, who were interested in their pupils' future and the adequacy of their training for life challenges.

All tiers of government should strengthen their legal, regulatory, and institutional frameworks and provide the enabling environment to attract local and foreign investors to promote economic diversification and enhanced internal revenue generation. Regulatory agencies should be allowed to operate independently and be adapted to fit the nation's peculiarities.

The role of leadership in development cannot be overemphasized. Leaders should at all times demonstrate zeal and commitment to the tenets of leadership, which must be buoyed by competence, character, trust, skill, building capacity, and integrity. They should pursue reform or attitudinal change

anchored on the principles of integrity, honesty, objectivity, impartiality, and broadening governance through transparent legislation.

Appropriate linkages and collaboration should be established between policymakers, financial institutions, research institutions, farmers, and other stakeholders, particularly the industrial sector, to promote agricultural development to reduce high levels of unemployment, poverty, food insecurity, and other socio-economic challenges facing the nation.

Finally, it is high time Nigeria resolved to holistically apply the federal character principle and allow it to color every aspect of her national life or, better still, discard it altogether. Nigeria cannot use the logic of federal character to arrest the educational advancement of forward-looking and progress-minded students from certain regions just to compensate for the backwardness of students from other regions whose indigenous leadership has deliberately underdeveloped.

Conclusion

This study has examined Nigeria's failure to achieve the desired effect of good governance and sustainable individual and communal dignity. It observed that the absence of the principles, elements, and features of good governance in Nigeria is responsible for the high rate of unemployment, budget deficit, infrastructural gaps, increasing debt profile, multidimensional poverty, and insecurity. Therefore, this study emphasized that a realistic action plan focusing on viable remedial interventions is necessary and imperative for meaningful economic development, driving a paradigm shift, and actualizing sustainable growth and communal dignity. It is hoped that the recommendations in this study will stimulate and propel Nigeria's inherent potential toward production and gainful engagement.

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2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS AND THE POLITICAL INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS) IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

To what extent are Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in emerging democracies allowed to participate in the electoral and political process? This paper examines the implementation of laws, reforms, and policies related to the participation of PWDs in Nigeria's political process. Despite recent efforts to improve political inclusion and respect for PWD rights, there is a need to assess the impact of these reforms on PWD participation, especially in light of the 2023 general elections. Using direct observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, this study evaluates compliance with the Disability Law, reforms, and frameworks. Challenges include weak inter-agency synergy, slow replication of laws at subnational levels, and poor accountability, which hinder the effectiveness of disability-inclusive elections. Findings highlight the non-implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in Nigeria, which calls for accessible and inclusive voting procedures. The paper recommends enhancing political inclusion and strengthening PWDs' capacity to participate equally in Nigeria's political process.

Keywords*:* Research instrument, Validity, Reliability, Quantitative research, Qualitative research

Introduction

Participation in electoral and political processes is a fundamental right of all citizens irrespective of gender, class, ethnicity, and ability. However, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Nigeria and many other African countries have often experienced difficulties in participating in electoral processes due to legal, institutional, cultural, administrative, and procedural barriers (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2022; Africa Polling Institute, 2022; Bhavisha Virendrakumar, et.al, 2018). Prominent among the difficulties militating against the electoral participation of PWDs in Nigeria are inaccessible polling units, limited availability of relevant voting materials, inaccessible campaign materials, limited economic resources to engage in politics, discrimination, stigmatization, violent/riotous electoral processes, political intimidation, and over-militarization of elections (Shittu, et.al 2022; PLAC, 2022; Olokor, 2022; Thompson, 2020; Stefanie Reher, 2020; Haruna, 2017).

Various legal frameworks, reforms, policies, and strategies have been proposed and implemented to facilitate the electoral inclusion of PWDs, including the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Article 29 of this treaty requires all states to

ensure that "voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use," and to protect the rights of all disabled people to participate fully and equally in political and public life. Nigeria, a signatory to the UN Convention, has also domesticated the Disability Act. For instance, Part IV; Section 30 (1&2) of the 2018 Disability Act state that:

> Government shall actively promote an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in-
> (a) the conduct of public affairs without discrimination;
> (b) non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country; and
> (c) activities and administration of political parties.

In furtherance of disability-inclusive participation in Nigeria's election, the new 2022 Electoral Act made provisions for the participation of PWDs in elections and charged the election management body to make provisions for its implementation during elections. Specifically, Section 54 (1) and (2) of the 2022 Electoral Act state as follows:

> 56. (1) A voter who is blind or is otherwise unable to distinguish symbols or who suffers from any other physical disability may be accompanied into the polling unit by a person chosen by him and that person shall, after informing the Presiding Officer of the disability, be permitted to accompany the voter into the voting compartment and assist the voter to make his mark by the procedure prescribed by the Commission.
> (2) The Commission may take reasonable steps to ensure that voters with disabilities are assisted at the polling place by the provision of suitable means of communication, such as Braille, Large embossed print or electronic devices or sign language interpretation, or off-site voting in appropriate cases.

In line with the 2022 Electoral Act, the electoral management body was saddled among other responsibilities to compile and update continuously, a National Register of Voters as contained in Part III of the Electoral Act. Specifically, Part III Section (9a&b) states that:

> The Commission shall register shall include the names of all persons— (a) entitled to vote in any Federal, State, Local Government or Federal Capital Territory Area Council election; and (b) with disability status disaggregated by type of disability.

In line with Article 29 of the UN CRPD, the 2022 Electoral Act, and the INEC framework for access and inclusion for PWDs, various assistive devices were proposed to be implemented throughout the election phases to ensure the effective participation of PWDs in the electoral process. The legal provisions empower the election management body to formulate policies and guidelines towards enhancing the participation of PWDs in the electoral process.

Consequently, in 2018, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) developed a framework for access and inclusion for PWDs, aligning with Article 29 of the UN CRPD and Nigeria's Electoral Act (INEC, 2018). INEC pledged to provide assistive devices such as braille ballots for the blind, magnifying glasses for people with albinism, sign language interpreters or large print posters, picture animations, and short videos in the absence of sign language interpreters (INEC, 2018). Additionally, ramps were to be placed across slightly elevated surfaces to allow voters with physical impairments access to polling areas, and priority was to be given to PWDs in queues to enable them to cast their votes without delay (INEC, 2018). While these measures aim to improve PWD participation in the electoral process, empirical studies on their implementation and compliance during elections remain underexplored in the Nigerian political participation literature.

Previous studies on the democratic inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups have focused on ethnic and racial minorities, immigrants, and women using various socio-economic variables such as age, sex, and education status (Verba et al., 1995; Milbrath, 1965, 1981). Disability has been a missing variable in the participation literature (Priestley et al., 2016; Reher, 2020). Yet, disability

represents one of the largest minority groups in both developed and developing democracies (Reher, 2020; Friedman, 2018; PLAC, 2022). In Africa, and Nigeria in particular, studies on the inclusion of PWDs in the democratic process have been spearheaded by advocacy groups, civil society organizations, international agencies, and volunteers, leading to the enactment of the Disability Act, Electoral Reforms Act, and many other disability inclusion policies and strategies. However, there is a dearth of empirical research on how successive electoral reforms and policies have impacted the participation of PWDs in Nigerian elections.

Against this background, this study examined the implementation of the existing legislative framework and policies regarding the political inclusion of PWDs, identified the gap between such policies and their implementation, and investigated the availability and use of assistive devices supporting PWD participation in Nigeria's 2023 electoral process. This paper sought to determine the extent to which voting materials, procedures, facilities, and assistive devices were appropriate and accessible for PWDs to participate in elections, assessed the level of INEC compliance with extant conventions and laws relating to PWDs, and identified challenges currently impeding PWD participation in Nigeria's political process.

Provisions of assistive devices

In line with Article 29 of the UN CRPD and Nigeria electoral laws, the election management body made provisions for various assistive before election day to be used to support voters with disabilities on election day. These include magnifying glasses for people with Albinism, brail ballot guides for people with visual impairment, bold posters or picture animation for people with hearing impairments as well as ramps and rails to make mobility easier for people with physical impairment. Provisions of these devices were consistent with the position of law in Section 56 (1&2) of the 2022 Nigeria Electoral Act which mandated the election management body to make provisions for reasonable accommodations to support voters with disabilities during elections. Participants in both interviews and FGDs attested to the level of compliance by the INEC in terms of making available several assistive devices to support PWDs during elections. Participants affirmed that they saw devices such as brail ballot guides, and magnifying glasses among others. In an interview with the INEC desk officer in charge of PWDs in Oyo State, he narrated his experience before the election:

> I am very happy to say as regards the just concluded 2023 general election, before the election, I was able to receive the assistive materials right from the headquarters. I received it myself because I had the data before the election, we had meetings with various CSOs and JONAPWD where we gathered some data on PWDs all over the federation right from the polling unit level. After receiving the materials, we distributed them through our electoral officers to various local governments. We also received a form for persons with disabilities, a voter who comes with any kind of disability, has to fill out that form to capture their data.

Corroborating the above, the State Chairman of JONAPWD in Kwara State narrated his experience during the presidential election in the State where various assistive devices were sent to the State from the headquarters to support PWDs to vote during elections in which he was called to witness at the Central bank of the state. According to the participant:

> Before election day, the Brail ballot guide was given to us to showcase how we can use it and how to do that as observers in the State. Also, when the INEC-sensitive materials arrived in the state at CBN, at least I was there. Some of the CSOs were also there and we saw all these assistive devices and we were very, very, very happy.

In addition to this, provisions were also made for bold posters pictures or animation that can support people with hearing impairment in the absence of a sign language interpreter. Many election observers including the leading civil society organisation in Nigeria reported that more bolder posters were spotted at the various polling units as compared to other assistive devices like brail ballot guide and

magnifying glasses. Some participants who were representative leaders of the association of PWDs at sub-national levels in addition to INEC desk officers in charge of PWDs confirmed that provisions were made for the assistive devices. Many domestic and international observers also commended INEC for its efforts at fostering greater inclusion of PWDs in the 2023 general elections. According to the African Union preliminary observation report, it was reported that:

> INEC is also to be commended for its efforts at fostering greater inclusion, especially for persons with disabilities, by providing assistive devices at polling units, including braille ballot guides and magnifying glasses (African Union Observation Report, 2023)

In a related comment, a participant who is a leading member of JONAPWD in Oyo State attested to INEC provisions of various assistive devices to support PWDs to vote during the 2023 elections. The participant noted that INEC had significantly improved in the provisions of these devices owing largely to the level of collaboration and consultation that had existed between them before the election period. The participant revealed that:

> One of the improvements on the side of blind persons from the INEC is the provision of a brail ballot guide. For individuals with hearing impairment, INEC did pictures which are expected to be pasted at every polling Unit for deaf people to read to know the procedures they have to follow during voting. And the placement of the ballot box this time around makes it easy and accessible. You know in the past, where they placed ballot boxes is one of the areas we complained to INEC during some discussions that it is difficult for a person who is on crutches or wheelchairs to access those places on their own and drop in their ballot papers. So, this time around, across the board, INEC now arranged that those ballot boxes will be placed in a more convenient place.

Priority Voting

Almost all the participants in the FGDs and interviews attested to the INEC compliance level of compliance in the aspect of priority voting. It was reported that once PWDs arrived at the polling unit, they were allowed to cast a vote and leave immediately. It is important to note that giving priority to PWDs to vote on time is not at the INEC discretionary power, it is a fundamental right of PWDs backed by laws and other policies. For instance, Section 26 (1&2) of the Nigeria Disability Act stated that '*in queues, persons with disabilities shall be given first consideration and, as much as possible be attended to outside the queue.'* Many domestic and international election observers commended INEC compliance in this aspect. For instance, the Campaign for Equal Voting Access to Persons with Disabilities (EVA4PWD) reported having deployed observers across the six geo-political zones of the federation that priority voting remained the dominant of all areas of INEC compliance to disability laws in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria (News Agency of Nigeria, 2023). This is further supported by the JONAPWD leader in Oyo State who also observed elections at various polling units in Southwest Nigeria. He affirmed that:

> Let me be objective, I said earlier that the 2023 election was the best so far when it comes to election review in the community of persons with disabilities. Every rule was followed to the letter by INEC as regarding the easy participation of persons with disabilities. Not only INEC this time around but even citizens now. Gone are the days when some citizens found it very difficult to allow individuals with disabilities to vote as they reached the polling unit.

However, in a slightly different opinion, a few participants reported on the contrary with respect to their observations during the elections that priority voting was not given in some polling units because voters were shouting that PWDs should join the queue they are human beings like other voters. Another report says that INEC was not the one giving priority to voters, it was the general public or voters who felt that PWDs should cast their vote and leave due to their condition which in the

participant's opinion means that *'PWDs are perceived as an object of pity that needs help rather than seeing them as holders of right like every other citizen on the queue which align perfectly with the charity model of disability rather than human right model'.*

While the two scenarios might portray citizens' recognition of PWDs as equal members of society like others, it could however represent the situation where the citizens had limited understanding of disability rights in elections. Continuous education and sensitization programs will foster citizens' awareness of disability rights in future elections.

Areas of Poor Compliance

Deployment of Assistive Devices

Despite the INEC's effort to provide assistive devices, deployment of these devices remained a challenge as participants who directly observed the elections across various polling units confirmed that many of these devices were not found where voters with disabilities were.

Participants affirmed that INEC's lack of accurate data on PWDs before Election Day contributed to the poor deployment of assistive materials. On the contrary view, many participants who were INEC officials confirmed the deployment of assistive devices to polling units was based on PWDs' data available to INEC before election which was gathered through the support of various NGOs working for PWDs inclusion in the election. While these strategies do not amount to having accurate data on disabilities that can be relied upon by INEC to distribute assistive materials during elections, INEC officials accepted that the distribution of assistive devices to various polling units was not adequate as many assistive devices was not enough to cover all the polling units. A participant who is a disability desk officer for INEC at the subnational level reveals that:

> For instance, we had more than enough of the brail ballot guides, but that of magnifying glasses were not enough to the extent that we had to struggle it among ourselves because it was expensive to procure.

One of the reasons for poor deployment is the lack of accurate and comprehensive data on PWDs in addition to other logistics issues.

Independence Voting

Ensuring that PWDs, especially the visually impaired could vote independently and privately remained a concern during the 2023 general elections. Participants affirmed that some polling units did not have the Brail ballot guide and where it is available, many blind voters did not know how to use the device due to poor election personnel training especially, the INEC ad-hoc staff and PWDs themselves. This narrative fits perfectly with researchers' direct observation during both presidential and governorship elections in Oyo State where visually impaired voters were presented with brail ballot guides to enable them to vote independently without the support of any polling official or trusted persons. Unfortunately, many could not make use of it because they had no prior training on how to use it.

However, variation in terms of disability status could be a factor responsible for poor usage of the brail ballot guide, for instance, some participants believed that brail ballot guides are for those who develop blindness from childhood (congenital blindness) because they have been taught from the beginning of their life compared to somebody that develop it along the line (acquired). Some participants who were polling officials perceived that the Brail ballot guide were for people who were partially sighted and not for people who were completely blind. This study argued that regardless of whether a person's blindness was congenital or acquired, the kind of brail ballot guide made available by INEC was easy to use for elections where proper pre-election training has been carried out. In line with this thought, one of the polling officers noted that '*those blind voters do not need to know how to read brail before he/she can make use of the brail ballot guide to vote the moment such a person can identify the position of the political parties.*

Inaccessible Polling Units

Accessibility to polling units is a fundamental right of PWDs, especially for wheelchair users. As a matter of law, Part One Section 7 (a&b) of the INEC 2018 framework for the conduct of election under the location of polling units stated that '*polling units shall be in places accessible to all voters including persons with disabilities.*

Also, Item (ii) objective (iii) of the INEC strategic plans for the implementation of framework for inclusions stated that the commission shall 'collaborate with relevant stakeholders to ensure that centres used for electoral activities are disability friendly and accessible. However, this study found INEC's poor compliance with placing the polling units in inaccessible places for people with physical disabilities. Many polling units according to reports lack assistive devices such as ramps, handrails, and other necessary facilities to support voters with physical disabilities, especially wheelchair users. A participant who is a wheelchair user in a focus group discussion narrated his experience:

> What I will say is that anyway, I am disabled myself. I'm a wheelchair user. From my raw experience at the polling unit, INEC did not do very well for PWDs, especially wheelchair users. You know, why I am particular about wheelchair users, you see, for instance, a visually impaired leaving his home can be guided either by a stick or by someone right to the polling unit, once you approach the polling unit, INEC will give everybody including pregnant woman, the elderly and the disabled the priority, and they did that, especially at my polling unit and some other polling unit we visited, they did that. But with respect to wheelchair users, there is hardly any polling unit that is wheelchair friendly. I repeat, there is hardly any polling unit across the federation that is wheelchair friendly (you can quote me anywhere). So, if you are in a wheelchair and you approach the polling unit, you are most likely to abandon your wheelchair and must crawl to go and vote or else they have to carry you. Let me be honest with you, I crawl to where I voted.

The participant further revealed that if you find such an accessible pooling unit with wheelchair users, that was most likely never intended. That might be an accident and maybe the place is naturally flat and then you can access it. Otherwise, it's not possible. There's no infrastructure made available by INEC for wheelchair users in particular. Some issues emerged in an interaction with INEC officials concerning accessible polling units. Prominent among which is non-compliance to disability laws by builders to ensure that every building is disability friendly and there is nothing INEC can do about that especially when it falls within the location of polling units. Notwithstanding, there are variations in the reports from participants as the majority of FGD participants attested to INEC's good compliance with locating polling units in an accessible place. Evidence suggests that participants who experienced easy accessibility were people using crutches to walk, majority of the wheelchair users lamented bitterly about the inaccessibility of the polling unit. A physically challenged participant using crutches reveals that:

> In order not to be repetitive of other speakers, in the Oyo West polling unit where I voted, the ballot box and pooling station were situated in an accessible place, and I voted without any support.

Barriers to the INEC's poor compliance with disability-electoral laws during elections

This paper earlier stated to unravel barriers limiting the election management body to fully comply with disability laws in the administration of elections. Some of the barriers found are discussed under the following themes.

Inadequate election personnel training

Despite the INEC's effort to comply with laws in the use of assistive devices, this paper found poor pre-election personnel training as a barrier militating against INEC's full compliance. It was gathered that many INEC ad-hoc staff lack adequate knowledge of the functions of various assistive devices.

Specific reference was made to the use of a bold poster otherwise called form EC30E (PWD) made available for the deaf voters to vote independently in the absence in the absence of a sign language interpreter at the polling unit. Reports from the participants revealed that the attention of deaf voters was not directed at the posters as many of the posters were pasted at a distance away from the polling unit. Also, many of the polling officials do not even know the usefulness of the poster. A participant, who is a member of the leading advocacy groups for PWDs political inclusion in Nigeria, narrated her experience during observation of the presidential and governorship elections at the subnational level:

> When I got to the polling unit, I saw the bold poster for the deaf pasted on the wall. I then approached the polling officials that what is the usefulness of this poster, many of them were just looking at me that it was one of the documents they said we should display on the wall…they did not know it was meant for deaf voters to understand the voting process in the absence of sign language interpreters at the polling unit.

Clauses in the existing laws

Two clauses have been identified in the existing laws that could be partly responsible for INEC's poor compliance with disability inclusion during elections. The first clause is the lack of a clear-cut section for different clusters of disabilities and their respective assistive devices to be used during elections. For instance, while Section 56 1&2 of the 2022 electoral Act made provisions for PWDs generally, emphasis was placed on visually impaired voters compared to other types of disability. This has been partly responsible for INEC's concentration on the provision of brail ballot guides during the recent elections. The second clause is the condition of the law that says PWDs especially the blind can come with their trusted person to the polling unit to assist them to cast their vote if they are unable to use the brail ballot guide. Participants observed that this could weaken INEC's commitment because there is an alternative means to vote. Participants further affirmed that INEC has tried concerning the issue of inclusion of PWDs this time around but most of their efforts were focused on the blind voters, they did not consider many other disability types.' INEC disability desk officer at the state level revealed that:

> …like this braille ballot guide, they gave us excess I still have extra in my drawer there but those magnifying glasses were not enough we just had to ration them among ourselves.'

It is important to note that the position of law that allows PWDs especially people with sensory impairment to vote by proxy is consistent with the practice of disability inclusion in many countries, however, choosing whom to assist them in voting is always a challenge in Nigeria as studies reveal lack of trust among polling officials to vote according to their choice (Shittu, et. al 2022).

Disaggregated Data of PWDs

The lack of accurate data on PWDs further limits the INEC's capacity to properly allocate assistive devices to various polling units with the highest number of PWDs. Reports had it that some polling units with no PWDs had more assistive devices than some polling units with a higher number of disabled voters. Although, INEC claimed to have partnered with some stakeholders to map out some locations with a concentration of PWDs ahead of the election, nevertheless, the total number of PWDs and their respective disability status in Nigeria remained unknown and this has been partially responsible for INEC's poor compliance in terms of distributing relevant assistive materials to support them during elections.

Discussions

Relying on the specific objectives of the study, the findings showed that the Nigeria election management body tried in recent general elections towards improving the inclusion of PWDs in the electoral process when compared to previous elections in Nigeria. This finding was consistent with many international and domestic observation reports that appraised INEC efforts towards ensuring disability-inclusive electoral processes in the 2023 general elections. (AUEOM 2023; EUEOM 2023;

The Commonwealth 2023; IFES 2023). However, this study found mixed reactions among participants concerning INEC's level of compliance with disability laws which this paper classified into areas of good and poor compliance. Concerning areas of good compliance, the study found that provisions for various assistive devices including brail ballot guides, magnifying glasses and bold posters among others were made to support voter with disabilities.

Provisions of these devices, no doubt showed that the Nigeria election management body committed itself to inclusive electoral processes which is consistent with Article 29 of the UNCPRD which mandated the State parties and its institution to provide reasonable accommodation for PWDs to participate in electoral processes on an equal basis with people without disabilities. INEC also demonstrated its commitment through the creation of a special department such as Gender and Inclusivity in which PWDs' inclusion in election remain their priority. It is also important to note that the Nigeria Electoral Act has mandated INEC to make provisions for assistive devices for PWDs to vote during elections. Among other areas of good compliance is the priority voting given to all PWDs as they arrive at the polling station to cast their vote which is consistent across different disability clusters. Reports from different quarters have attested to priority voting as the major provision made by election management bodies for PWDs during elections in Nigeria. In the assessment of the provisions made for PWDs to vote in the July 2021 Local government election in Lagos State, the Centre for Citizens with Disabilities reported that priority voting was found as the major provision that PWDs enjoyed during elections (Ogwo and Uchediunor, 2023).

Although there are variations for priority voting across various polling units due to peoples' attitudes and ignorance of disability rights during the elections, previous studies reported that negative attitudes and stigmatisation towards PWDs constitute barriers militating against their electoral inclusion in many African countries due to culture, believe system and orientation towards PWDs which perceives them as object of pity and charity rather than owners of rights (Haruna 2017; PLAC 2022; IFES; 2022).

Despite INEC's effort to ensure an inclusive voting process for PWDs in the recent elections, there were some areas of poor compliance observed and reported by the participants during the recent elections. Prominent among these was the inaccessible voting location for persons with physical disabilities especially wheelchair users. Several studies have alluded to inaccessible polling stations as major barriers affecting PWDs to participate equally in the political process across many democracies (Shittu. et.al 2022; Agran, MacLean, & Andren, 2015). Goldman (2005) specifically reported that PWDs were forced to vote in inaccessible polling stations during the 2005 US general elections which is contrary to the provision of the American Disability Act. This is however contrary to the experiences of PWDs in Canada where the election management body in Canada provided several alternative voting processes including mail-in-ballot, accompanying elector behind the voting screen, level access at all polling stations, interpreter service, among others to support voters with disabilities during elections (Prince, 2012). A civil society organization committed to disability-inclusive elections in Nigeria reported in its recent assessment of the level of PWDs inclusion in local government elections in Abia and Lagos States, as well as the extent to which States Independent Electoral Commissions provide an accessible environment for PWDs to participate.

The study found several barriers including the absence of disability-friendly election frameworks at the state level, little or no involvement or consultation of organizations representing persons with disabilities before and during elections, and inaccessible polling units among others affecting the turnout of PWDs during the elections (Nwokoro, 2022). A report in this direction negates previous studies which recommended that any policy and programmes that will promote the inclusion of PWDs must first all involve the organisation and representatives of PWDs to be meaningful (Prince, 2012). Previous studies have also reported that PWDs in Africa do face critical and multifaceted challenges in an attempt to participate in electoral processes and critical of these challenges include inaccessible electoral information, transportation to electoral venues, and inaccessible formats of ballot papers among others (Bhavisha Virendrakumar et. al 2018).

Poor implementation of the disability law during elections is not limited to the political experiences of PWDs in African countries. Studies on compliance to CRPD among OSCE participating States revealed that PWDs are keen to be engaged in the political life of their communities, they face several barriers including gaps between the promise of law and policy and their actual implementation particularly, in the aspect of inaccessible polling stations (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA 2014) despite the availability of legal accessibility standards that applies to all polling stations. A report from the Lagos State primary election also attributed architectural design as a barrier limiting PWDs from accessing the venue of the election as the election organisers made no special arrangement for PWDs in this aspect (Okoli, 2013).

Overall, many election observers in the just concluded 2023 general elections in Nigeria reported that polling units were not accessible to persons with physical disabilities. One of the reasons for this is that fact the election management body did not conduct a polling unit accessibility audit before the general elections. Another issue that emerged from this study is the fact that barriers to political participation do not affect all persons with disabilities equally as wheelchair users are more affected in accessing polling stations compared with other forms of physical disabilities such as people using crutches. One of the ways to encourage the participation of PWDs who cannot or find it difficult to reach a polling unit is to create alternative forms of voting including mail-in voting, and elector behind the voting screen, among others which had been adopted and practised in Canada and many European countries (FRA, 2014; Prince; 2012).

The study further found that despite the problem posed by the scarcity of disability data to INEC in fully distributing assistive materials to the polling unit, INEC also failed in making use of the form EC40H meant to capture the data of PWDs and their respective disability types that come to vote which will assist INEC in preparing for future elections. The study also identified barriers limiting INEC from effectively complying with the provisions of laws during elections concerning PWDs. Prominent among these are inaccurate data on PWDs, poor representation of PWDs as ad-hoc staff, insufficient training for INEC ad-hoc staff and poor voter education and awareness programmes, and societal perception of PWDs as neither holders of rights nor objects of pity among others. Previous studies related to issues affecting the political inclusion of PWDs in Africa found that negative perceptions and discriminatory attitudes are the critical factors towards these minority groups (United Nations Department for Social and Policy Development) [UN DSPI, 2016]. Overall findings of this study negate Nigeria's initial report submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of PWDs by Article 35 of the CPRD which claimed that the INEC framework has effectively addressed the barriers such as social, institutional, attitudinal, and environmental affecting the effective participation of PWDs in Nigeria's political process (United Nations Human Rights Treaty Body, 2021).

Conclusion and Recommendations

There was no doubt that the election management body made some significant improvements in the recent 2023 general elections towards improving the participation of PWDs in the electoral process as provisions were made for various assistive devices before election day, however, there were issues with deployment and application on election day due to poor disability data and inadequate pre-election training, as well as poor voter education and sensitisation programmes. One critical issue that emerged from this study was the question of accountability on the part of the election management body in a situation where laws were not followed or flagrantly disobeyed in the administration of elections. The second issue was whether PWDs had opportunities to make a complaint when their rights to political participation were not realized. Addressing these issues in the legal and policies would strengthen the implementation of laws, reforms, and policies relating to the participation of PWDs in Nigeria's political process. This is crucial for right realisation and personhood because, without an opportunity to participate in politics, an individual is effectively denied citizenship and potentially rendered inconsequential to those who hold power. Considering the centrality of the election management body as one of the democratic institutions in ensuring inclusive electoral processes, this paper concluded that strengthening the capacity of this institution through accountability and removing various barriers limiting its ability to effectively deliver on its mandate

become imperatives towards mainstreaming disability-inclusive election in Nigeria's democratic governance.

It is therefore recommended that INEC should endeavour to find out the number of PWDs and the types of disabilities in the Polling Units before election day. This exercise should be carried out in collaboration with the organisations of PWDs across the 774 local governments of the federation. Also, further visits to the polling units before the election day to identify their accessibilities will guide the staff in the positioning of the polling area for easy accessibility for PWDs. This should also be done in collaboration with organizations representing persons with disabilities and other stakeholders ahead of the next general elections. The data from this assessment will support INEC in its vital work of providing assistive devices based on the need for polling units across the country. The election personnel and their Ad-hoc staff should be sufficiently trained on the functions and usefulness of the various assistive devices made available to support PWDs before election day. At the point of deployment, INEC staff should ensure that their deployment kit contains various assistive devices including magnifying glasses, braille ballot guides, and bold posters, among others. To ensure proper compliance, a certain percentage of PWDs should be recruited to work as INEC personnel or ad-hoc staff on the day of the election. Finally, future reforms to disability electoral laws should include alternative voting strategies such as mail-in voting and explicitly list all the PWDs that require assistive devices to vote during elections.

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GEOPOLITICS AND NIGERIA'S RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE

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Abstract

This study delves into the realm of geopolitics by analyzing Nigeria's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Against the backdrop of escalating tensions in Eastern Europe, Nigeria's stance holds significant implications for its foreign policy outlook and regional dynamics. The paper examines Nigeria's historical relations with both Russia and Ukraine, highlighting key diplomatic engagements and geopolitical alignments. Furthermore, it explores the economic and strategic considerations guiding Nigeria's response, including energy dependencies, international partnerships, and regional stability concerns. By analyzing Nigeria's response to the Ukraine crisis, this paper offers insights into the complex interplay of global power dynamics and regional interests, shedding light on the evolving landscape of geopolitics in the 21st century.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Geopolitics, Invasion and Conflict, Russia, Ukraine,

Introduction

In context, Russia's invasion of Ukraine defines a post-liberal global order. This is because the invasion posed enormous challenges for international peace and security. The impacts of the invasion were also felt by the countries of the Global South, including Nigeria. While Moscow's behaviour had elicited a strong response from Western countries, led by the United States and its allies, they have imposed regimes of hurtful sanctions on Moscow. However, some countries from the Global South refrained from toeing the line of Western sanctions but merely condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine's territorial integrity. On Nigeria's response, hers was cautious, navigating between her value-driven foreign policy goals and expressing independent but cautious pragmatic behaviour.

The immediate official response of Nigeria was a form of surprise that Russia could flagrantly aggress on an independent Ukraine territory (Ajala, 2022). Furthermore, the Nigerian government issued another official response condemning Russia's "special military operation[1]" in Ukraine and called for an immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine's territory (Okafor, 2022). Abuja played in her candid action a passive neutrality card in her response to Russia's invasion. Unlike the West, led by the United States rolled out regimes of comprehensive sanctions on Russia, Nigeria's response was understandable in the context of her guiding value-driven foreign policy objectives which are:

1. Respect for every state's sovereignty and independence in line with international norms and conventions.
2. Recognition of the right of every independent state to defend its territorial integrity against any form of aggression.
3. Promoting world peace and security.
4. Maintaining cooperation and friendliness with other countries.

Abuja's display of a neutral stance on the imposition of sanctions on Russia was also a demonstration of cautious pragmatism. Although, Abuja aligned with the UN norms by also condemning Russia's

[1] Russia's operation in Ukraine was dubbed a 'special military operation.'

behaviour, her position on the United Nations General Assembly's (UNGA) resolutions showed she acted in line with her national interest goals. For instance, her voting behaviour as stated in the table below revealed her position on the invasion.

Nigeria's Voting Pattern in UNGA on the Russia/Ukraine Conflict

Date	UNGA resolutions	Voting Pattern
02-Mar 2022	Condemnation	Y
07-Apr-2022	Suspend	A
12-Oct-2022	Annex	Y
14-Nov-2022	Reparation	A
23-Feb-2023	End war	Y

A- Abstain
N- No voted against
Y- Yes in favour
Source: Author's extraction from Golpaldas R. (2023)

The table presents UNGA's resolutions since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. There were five significant votes, Nigeria had voted in favour of three and abstained on two. Abuja had voted yes in favour of the resolutions condemning Russia's invasion, affirming Ukraine's sovereignty, and demanding Russia's unconditional withdrawal. She however abstained on the second vote on suspending Russia from UNHRC; voted yes on the third resolution not to recognize Russia's annexation claims of Ukrainian territories. Cautiously abstained on the issue determining Russia paying reparation for the invasion of Ukraine war. On the fifth, Abuja voted yes in calling for an end to the war.

In analysing Nigeria's position and stance as showed in her voting patterns on UNGA, one is likely to conclude that Abuja's stance was shaped by some factors that are in tandem with her national interest. These are:

1. The tendency to act within the nonalignment ideological stance.
2. The historical relationship between her and Russia especially on Abuja's post-colonial liberation struggles, was a major plank of Nigeria's foreign policy in the 1970s and 80s.
3. Russian positive contributions to Nigeria's developmental agenda.
4. Russia's growing influence in Nigeria's energy needs and food security.

Consciously or not, Nigeria did not want to be a pawn in the re-emerging Cold War-like rivalry between the West and Russia. This is because, since the invasion, the war has assumed the dimension of the one fought on old ideological and military alliances. Therefore, it is more rational and pragmatic that Nigeria did not throw her hat in the ring to take sides with any of the warriors.

In theoretical terms, one is compelled to affirm that Nigeria acted within the prism of the Rational Actor Model (RAM). It posits that the behaviour of state actors is rational when the action agrees with a state's national interest or when the behaviour of state actors is purposeful (Schmidt and Wight 2023). In addition, a state actor is rational if her choice of action is designed to achieve outcomes consistent with her goals. The model treats foreign policy choices as the main products of the state actors. Given the narrative, a rational decision-maker considers the foreign policy goals of the nation and determines which ones take priority over others. Then, she identifies and analyzes the diverse options available and focuses on the costs and benefits associated with each option, that is, she tries to estimate the consequences of making choices. This involves not just the gains and losses, but also estimating the relative likelihood of various outcomes. The relationship between this theory and Nigeria's response to Russia's invasion was in consonance. Every state actor must be rational in the decision-making process, especially on matters of national interest. Thus, Nigeria's stance and position were at best rational within her national interest goals. Her call for condemnation, cessation

of hostility, withdrawal, and an end to the war was rationally value-driven (Schmidt and Wight 2023). Same as her position to abstain from controversial issues showed her cautious pragmatic behaviour.

Historical Background to the Russian Ukraine Invasion and Literature Review

Historically, Ukraine was part of the old Soviet Union (USSR), in 1991 Ukraine got its independence from the disintegrating USSR. The Soviet Union was a Russian-dominated political construct with the Ukrainian acting more of a puppet of the central authority in Moscow. As with many other Soviet republics, Ukraine was effectively colonised by Moscow, a relationship carried over from the pre-revolutionary era of Tsarist imperial Russia. Due to this turbulent history, Ukraine was a traumatised nation at its independence with no statecraft tradition of its own on which to build a new, independent state.

Therefore, the story of contemporary Ukraine is largely the story of its attempts to define a new future for itself in Europe and Russia's attempts to obstruct this new direction. Earlier in its independence, the Ukrainian declaration was ratified by a referendum with a 90 per cent vote making its transition to independence peaceful, with both the communists and democrats agreeing to break away, largely due to the predicted economic potential of the country (Chatham House 2022). However, the origins of the 2022 invasion lie in Russia's long-standing aspiration to control Ukraine as its periphery. Part of the agenda by Russia was to tie Ukraine's development to Russia's economic and political interests. Initially, Russia's strategy was soft coercion, but it became more assertive and aggressive due to unexpected changes in the pro-Western Ukrainian government. In particular, it was the Orange Revolution of 2004 that made the Russian government under the leadership of President Putin reconsider his tactics. His favoured candidate for the Ukrainian presidency, Viktor Yanukovych, was ousted by Victor Yushchenko, a pro-western opposition candidate.

This did not stop Russia's influence in the Ukrainian economy and politics, Russia maintained a grip on key sectors of the Ukrainian economy and politics. Ukraine's exports were still primarily to Russia, top security positions were held by individuals with Russian passports, and it was completely dependent on Russian gas: Ukraine had signed a very unfavourable gas deal in 2008, which committed it to being the largest buyer of Russian gas, at a higher than market price. Meanwhile, the Russian navy's Black Sea fleet continued to be based in Crimea, with a 2010 deal ensuring it would remain there for decades to come. However, all Ukrainian presidents (including Yanukovych) had to respond to a growing public demand for closer integration with the European Union (EU). This is because the EU offered far better economic benefits and respect for human rights than continuing ties to Russia. This did not go down well with Moscow who wished to prevent a democratic Ukraine from becoming part of the EU market, thereby upping its hostile rhetoric against the EU as well as NATO.

The annexation of Crimea

The path to annexation began when Ukraine's attempts to build closer political and trade relationships with the EU. Russia annexed Crimea during February and March 2014 when Ukraine was vulnerable with a temporary government and an unprepared military. Putin deployed 30,000 troops without insignia to seize control of the regional infrastructure and then staged a referendum to legitimize the occupation (Antwi-Boateng, Osman and Al Nuaimi, Mohammed Huwaishel, 2023) The West urged Ukraine not to react with force. Russia further aggressed by leading a revolt in the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine. By creating a new problem elsewhere, Russia distracted international attention from the Crimean takeover which had been bloodless. Russian special forces, jointly with local militias in Donbas, declared independent 'people's republics' leading to open military conflict with Ukrainian armed forces.

Between 2014 and 2021 the conflict cost Ukraine more than $10 billion, caused 14,000 deaths, and left Donbas the most landmined area in Europe. President Putin's tactic was to force Ukraine into concessions by waging this prolonged, low-intensity conflict. Even diplomatic efforts like the Minsk agreements of 2014 and 2015 could not resolve the crisis as the demand by Russia to grant unique powers and autonomous status for the Donbas region was not accepted by Ukraine (Chatman House

2022). Over time key diplomatic players such as France and Germany shifted their position to support Kyiv's interpretation of the Minsk agreement and Ukraine's gradual but steady integration with the EU as part of its Association and Trade Agreement was offensive to the sensibility of Moscow. By 24 February 2022, the Russian President ordered a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, to denazify Ukraine. Their initial objective, to swiftly install a Russian puppet government in Kyiv, failed.

Russia's invasion however has three main objectives, all of which have strong domestic motivations. First, Ukraine is viewed as belonging to the Russian 'sphere of influence', a territory rather than an independent state. Ukraine and Belarus, as former Soviet Union states, are believed to form a single historic 'triune' nation with Russia. Putin started the war to destroy Ukraine's nation-building project, aiming to restore a 'historical Russia' according to borders before 1917. Ukraine's attempts to break away are seen as a direct, Western-backed attack on Russia's sovereignty. This strong sense of entitlement drives the Kremlin to obstruct Ukraine's integration with Euro-Atlantic structures. Initially, Russia tried to use the Donbas conflict to keep Ukraine unstable, weak, toxic for Western investments, and unfit for membership in any collective security alliance, especially NATO. The 2022 invasion indicated a strategic shift as Russia sought to subjugate Ukraine by force, although this appears to have been an enormous miscalculation. Russia's second objective is to solidify its autocratic rule at home. He wants to prevent the emergence of an alternative, democratic system of government on the Russian border. A defeated, compliant Ukraine serves as a lesson to ordinary Russians – that revolution leads to disaster. A failed Ukraine is an antidote to democratic sentiments inside Russia, where memories of the chaos following the Soviet collapse remain powerful. Third, Putin uses Ukraine to feed a wider narrative of Russia as being a fortress under siege by the West and needing a strong commander-in-chief to protect its 'civilization'. In Russian media, the war in Ukraine is portrayed as a 'special operation' in response to a Western project to undermine Russia.

The Weight of Russia's Invasion on Nigeria-Russia Relations

The weight of Russia's invasion of Nigeria's socio-economic space was huge. It impacted more in two areas of economic engagement. One on her energy needs and two on her food security. Nigeria's main imports from Russia are refined petroleum, potassic fertilizer, and wheat (OEC, 2022). Nigeria's imports from Russia have increased at an annual rate of 16.5 per cent from $27.3m to $1.25b (OEC, 2022). In 2021, Russia's exports to Nigeria were $1.25b and it was mainly made up of refined petroleum worth $503m, wheat ($493), and potassic fertilizer worth $71.4m (OEC, 2022).

The weight on food security: According to Reinhart (2022), Nigeria relies on Russian grains and wheat, which account for over 30 per cent of the required grain need. Nigeria also imports from Ukraine US$604.29 million worth of goods in 2021 with 80 percent of these imports on food-related imports, especially wheat and grains (Tradingeconomics, 2023). Nigeria is also one of the 10 countries with the highest number of people in the food crisis. According to the 2022 Global Report on Food Crises; 12.94 million people were in acute food insecurity in 2021 alone (HRW, 2022). With this gory data on the food-related crisis, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) data stated further that wheat is the third most-consumed grain in Nigeria after maize and rice, and Russia was the second-largest source of wheat imports to Nigeria, meeting close to 30 per cent of her needs (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021). The food security situation looks increasingly worrisome and frightening as the war rages and this has put more pressure on Nigeria to get enough food to feed her people.

On energy relations: Nigeria is one of the biggest African oil producers. However, her nonfunctional refining capacity has made her vulnerable and dependent on imports from European countries, especially Belgium and the Netherlands. Unfortunately, these two countries rely heavily on Russian oil, but the sanction has made fuel importation from these countries difficult. Deepening this oil challenge was a global rise in the prices of crude oil from $63 to over $100 per barrel. Ordinarily, Nigeria as a leading oil producer should have benefitted from the price increase, it was a dream boom but a reality doom. The oil prices were a curse rather than a blessing. This was a result of her non-existing refining capacity and as an importer of refined petroleum products from Europe, she had to bear the consequences of increased oil prices. Worsened by European sanctions or boycott of Russian

oil, sourcing for alternative oil means in economic terms an increase in demand, and in the face of short supply, the increased cost will be borne by end users, including Nigeria. Consequently, any gain from crude oil sales owing to the surge in prices was wiped out by the import of refined petroleum products regime. As the conflict grows, the prices of petroleum products such as diesel, aviation fuel, kerosene, and cooking gas surged, leading to a high cost of living and poor quality of life.

The positive story from the global energy crisis was a call for an accelerated energy transition that would move Nigeria and many other countries away from highly polluting fuels to low-carbon energy such as renewables and nuclear (IEA 2023). Nigeria has now shifted its attention to improving its energy efficiency by deploying renewables, promoting energy savings, and increasing gas supplies for domestic usage. In the same vein, her policy on energy security has gradually shifted to the Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline with the hope of feeding the European market that was most hit in the wake of the Russian invasion. Nigeria's prospect as a gas exporter is more realistic in the wake of European blockage of Russia's oil through her plan to develop three major infrastructure projects (Pinto, 2023) These are the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano pipeline (AKK), the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline (TSGP), linking West Africa to Europe and the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline (NMGP). These projects have received renewed attention from the Nigerian government and given Europe's new energy strategy, these projects if delivered, will surely be a game changer and usher in Nigeria as a global energy producer.

Other areas of relations: As Europe reduces its business dealings with Russia, there are attempts from the Russian nation to find an inroad to African countries. The recent presence of the Wagner group, a Russian private military contractor, whose presence in the Sahel countries of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger is creating a security concern for Nigeria. The presence of the remnant of the Islamic State and Boko Haram has continued to pose a huge security concern for Nigeria. So is the flow of illicit arms and banditry groups. Former Nigeria President, Muhammadu Buhari, believed the region's problem could worsen through armed flow from the Ukraine war (Obiezu, 2022). Even if remotely possible, it is highly unlikely as the war rages because of the ammunition needs and the distance of Sahel to the theatre of war. Russia's involvement in Nigeria's steel development was another historical line of engagement. The Russian government was involved in one of Nigeria's biggest developmental projects, the Ajaokuta steel mill, an essential component of the Nigerian industrialization agenda. The steel complex, which took off in the 1960s, was contracted to Russia's Tyazpromo to build the plant and was incorporated in 1979 (Adekoya, 2022) but it has not seen the light of the day. With over $8b invested, in 2021, Nigeria re-entered an agreement with the Russian government to complete the project. However, the new sanctions Russia is facing in the light of its invasion of Ukraine have created a setback for the project.

Nigeria's stance and how it has shaped the world order?

Nigeria's decision to condemn and call for the withdrawal of Russian troops sends a signal to how she and other African countries would like to be viewed globally. It showed how independent and rational she could be in deciding on an international issue without recourse to hegemonic considerations. Her refusal to back Western sanctions on Russia similarly demonstrated an independent decision-taker who had rationally considered many options without pandering to any of the global powerful blocs. Also, her position to abstain from voting on Russia's reparation payment was instructive. She could make a pragmatic decision without offending any party. All this signals the reality of the world order that is not constructed on a Western unipolarity or West-East bipolarity.

The statement made by her voting pattern on the UNGA resolutions provided insights into the relevance of her nonaligned ideological stance. It demonstrated that the new world order was likely to be multiplex where the sanctity of alliances may play less role in how the international order is crafted. There is no gainsaying that the voting pattern of many countries on Russia's invasion showed a lack of unity. There was hardly a common position on a matter as simple as the condemnation of Russia's aggression and assault on UN norms. This position is likely to embolden Russia and reinforce the notion of a world order as viewed by realist scholars as having no moralizing compass and that the

action of the state is based on the interest of the state. Nigeria's action and position demonstrated this and portends that the world order is likely to be constructed on the value of the state's independent rationalism.

Given the historical context of Nigerian-Russian relations, it is not out of context to conclude that her actions in voting on Russia's invasion were willingly or not willingly shaped by their historical interactions. Their relationship might have guided Nigeria to respond the way she did. This portends great insight into how the post-liberal world order could be shaped shortly. Nigeria's position reinforces that old ideological nuances will play a factor in the making and unmaking of the post-liberal world order.

While the international economic space might gradually be re-evolving in a manner that new alliances can emerge, it is Nigeria's energy policy that may be changing the trajectory of the world order. Although not yet fully realized, Nigeria's eye on the European market may usher in a new international energy order. For instance, energy projects like the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano pipeline (AKK), the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline (TSGP), linking West Africa to Europe, and the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline (NMGP) were triggered by Russia's invasion and may redefine the global energy map that would make Nigeria a regional leader and Europe ally.

Finally, does Nigeria's position on the invasion tend toward embracing the BRICS organization? This is one question whose answer remains contentious. BRICS are countries of emerging economies, made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. One may not be out of tune to say all these countries tacitly backed Russia's invasion of Ukraine. I said tacitly because these countries never gave serious disapproval of Russia's behaviour and disrespect of UN norms. Therefore, could Nigeria's position be shaped by his intention to join this organization? According to the Nigerian Foreign Affairs minister, Nigeria will welcome joining the organization by the year 2026. He believed "Nigeria has come of age to decide for itself who her partners should be and where they should be. Being multiple aligned is in our best interest," (Silk Road Briefing 2023). Although this appeared speculative, the expression of the Minister revealed Nigeria's intent to join. BRICS's reputation and influence are growing globally, she and her allies such as Turkmenistan and Venezuela have already pocketed close to 73% of all global gas reserves, and with Nigeria in their kitty, BRICS nations plus their allies (Iraq and Libya) would hold over 80 per cent of all proven global oil reserves. The reality of a post-liberal world order is evolving. It is likely to dethrone Western hegemony.

Concluding Remarks

Nigeria's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been marked by cautious neutrality. The country abstained from voting on the United Nations General Assembly resolution condemning Russia's actions and has refrained from making strong public statements either in support of Ukraine or against Russia: Several key factors contribute to this stance:

1. **Economic Considerations**: Nigeria's economy, heavily reliant on oil and gas exports, faces vulnerabilities in the global energy market. Russia is a significant player in this market, and antagonizing Moscow could have economic repercussions for Nigeria. Additionally, Nigeria maintains trade relationships with both Russia and Western nations, making a neutral stance economically pragmatic.
2. **Domestic Concerns**: Nigeria is grappling with internal challenges, including economic instability, security issues, and political unrest. In this context, a non-confrontational foreign policy allows Nigeria to focus on domestic priorities without becoming entangled in distant geopolitical conflicts.
3. **Regional Dynamics**: Within the African continent, Nigeria plays a leading role and often advocates for African unity and non-interventionist policies. Aligning too closely with Western positions might alienate other African nations that favour neutrality or have stronger ties with Russia.

Nigeria's passive neutralism and cautious pragmatism have several implications for its international relations:

1. **Relations with Western Countries**: While Nigeria's neutral stance may strain some aspects of its relations with Western nations, it is unlikely to result in significant diplomatic fallout. Western countries recognize Nigeria's strategic importance in Africa and are likely to continue engaging with it on various fronts, including security, trade, and development.
2. **Relations with Russia**: By not condemning Russia outright, Nigeria maintains diplomatic channels with Moscow. This could be beneficial for bilateral relations, particularly in sectors such as energy and defence.
3. **African Unity and Leadership**: Nigeria's stance reinforces its role as a leader in advocating for African unity and non-alignment. This could enhance its influence within continental organizations like the African Union (AU) and bolster its position in regional diplomacy.

Nigeria's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine exemplifies a policy of passive neutralism and cautious pragmatism. This approach is informed by Nigeria's historical foreign policy principles, economic considerations, and domestic challenges. While it presents certain risks, particularly in relations with Western countries, it also offers opportunities for maintaining strategic autonomy and regional leadership. Understanding Nigeria's response provides insight into the complexities of international relations in a multipolar world and the nuanced positions that middle-power countries often adopt.

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ELECTORAL SYSTEMS, ELECTION ADMINISTRATION, AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Elections, electoral processes, and election administration are critical components of every nation's democratic process, including Nigeria's. These elections serve as mechanisms for political representation, accountability, and the peaceful transfer of power. Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, boasts a diverse political landscape and has made significant strides toward democratic governance since transitioning from military rule in 1999. This article critically examines Nigerian elections, electoral institutions, and election administration, focusing on understanding the country's democratic trajectory. It examines the complexities of Nigeria's electoral process and administration, shedding light on the key factors contributing to its successes and potential areas for improvement. The essay explores how electoral systems and election administration promote inclusivity, accountability, and political stability in Nigeria. Additionally, it addresses the challenges and opportunities Nigeria faces in enhancing its democratic processes. Employing a qualitative research methodology and a critical legal scholarship model, the article argues that the administration of electoral justice—particularly the protection of individual democratic rights under the Nigerian legal framework—is at risk. It also contends that the electoral challenges plaguing Nigeria stem from institutional issues and the power dynamics among political parties and actors.

Keywords: Elections, Election Administration, Electoral Process, Democracy, Electoral reforms.

Introduction

Nigeria is presently at a crossroads in its democratic experiment. After seven general elections in the Fourth Republic, Nigeria is yet to get her electoral process right. The electioneering process has always been fraught with huge institutional and credibility challenges. The late 1990s were a watershed moment in Nigeria's democratic journey. After years of military control, the nation began its transition to multi-party democracy. The first democratic elections in the Fourth Republic were conducted in 1999, resulting in a peaceful transfer of power from military to civilian government. This event was a significant milestone in Nigeria's democratic path, signifying the country's commitment to democratic values and the rule of law.

Since its transition from military control in 1999, Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa, has made significant progress in establishing its democracy. Elections are vital instruments and critical in shaping the political scene. Bormann and Golder (2013) state that elections are central to contemporary democratic governance, serving as factors influencing the direction of democratic government in any country. This article aims to provide a thorough examination of Nigerian elections, electoral methods, and election administration while noting the difficulties and advancements the nation has seen in its democratic transition.

Nigeria, the most populous and economically prosperous country in Africa, has a complicated past that has complicated its transition to a stable democratic government. Since winning independence from British colonial authority in 1960, the nation has experienced a turbulent political environment marked by military coups and counter-coups, civil unrest, and fraudulent elections. Unufe (2019) reiterates that Nigerian elections have been characterized by a lack of credibility, visibly evident through the official declaration of results and the consequential rejection of these results. Hardly has there been an election at any level without resultant electoral litigation. The only exception was the 2015 presidential election in which the incumbent hastily congratulated the winner before the official declaration of results. This congratulatory message could be considered from another perspective as a way of dousing the palpable tension that emerged due to prevailing ideas that results would be rigged as usual. The author also postulates that the history of democratic experiments in Nigeria demonstrates that elections and electoral politics have generated so much animosity that the corporate existence of the country is under serious threat.

A similar view is expressed in Ekundayo (2015) that the history of elections in Nigeria has been a chequered one due to the manner in which elections are conducted, often marred by malpractices. Ogbeidi (2015) opines that elections in Nigeria have been historically violent and fraught with bitterness. To this scholar, previous elections in the country, without exception, were ravaged by violence, fraud, intimidation, manipulation by electoral officials, and falsification of results. This scholar further stated that available records have revealed that the greatest challenge to democracy is credible elections.

Conducting an election of internationally acceptable standards has remained elusive and constituted a major challenge to the democratic process in the country (Ogbeidi, 2010). However, through a number of electoral reforms and advancements in election administration, Nigeria has made tremendous progress in recent years in consolidating its democratic course. This article examines the development of electoral processes, electoral systems, and election administration in Nigeria, illuminating the difficulties encountered and the steps taken to promote a more robust democratic process.

Historical Overview of Nigerian Elections

Understanding the historical backdrop of Nigerian elections is crucial before getting into the current scenario. Nigeria had passed through periods of democratic administration interspersed with protracted military dictatorships after obtaining independence from British colonial authority in 1960. The general elections of December 12, 1959 could be described as the elections that ushered the country to her independence and rigorous political and democratic practice. Out of the 26 registered political parties, 3 political parties emerged as the dominant parties. The parties were Northern People's Party (NPC), Action Group (AG) and National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). The elections administration body at independence was Federal Electoral Commission (FEC). The electoral process was abused and at the same time was characterised by electoral violence. These consequently created constitutional crises which undermined the legitimacy of the new civilian government (Ogbeidi, 2010). The 1964 federal election and the 1965 regional elections were both ended in controversy which was accompanied by violence. The FEC which was expected to be an unbiased umpire was enmeshed in crises of partiality. The crises that followed and the attendant worsened socioeconomic conditions led to the military intervention.

This first military incursion into politics was barely six years after the celebrated independence. The military later lifted ban in polical activities after 13 years of ruling on 21st September 1978. A new electoral body Federal Electoral commission (FEDECO) was put in place. In order to ensure smooth transition, certain electoral reforms were effective such that a presidential candidate must poll 25% of the votes in least 2/3 of the 19 states. During the commencement of the second republic, five political parties were registered. The parties were Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP), People's Redemption Party (PRP) and Great Nigerian's People Party (GNPP). Though, the 1979 presidential election was adjudged peaceful, it was not crisis free. It

was marred by high level of political apathy with a range of 25-35% of registered voters actually participated in the voting exercise (Ogbeidi, 2010). The 1983 general elections were ridden with crises and the electoral body was considered incompetent due to the prevalence of electoral malpractices in the conduct of the elections. This consequently led to military intervention and the end of the second reepublic. The third republic spanned between 1989 and 1993 in which the results of presidential election was annuled overnight. There were national and international pressures on the military dictator to declare the winner of the election and to subsequently hand over power to the winner. Instead of handing over to a democratically elected president, the military Junta headed by General Ibrahim Babangida opted for an Interim Government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan. General Sanni Abacha who had already picked interest swifly removed the Interim Government barely six months after installation. Up until 1999, when the Fourth Republic took office and ushered in a new age of democracy, the political landscape of the nation was tarnished by frequent coups and authoritarian administrations.

Nigeria struggled to sustain stable civilian rule after gaining independence, with many military coups destabilizing democratic transitions. In addition to undermining democracy, these coups fostered a mistrust of the electoral process. Early elections in the country were characterized by fraud, intimidation of voters, and a lack of transparency, which fueled a cycle of ineffective institutions and political violence. It was unambiguously stated by Majekodunmi and Adejuwon (2012) that the elections in the past were marked with controversy just in the manner at which their outcomes faced the crises of credibility and legitimacy. In which it was also argued that the various elections conducted in the since independence in 1960 exhibited characteristics of fraud, corrupt inducements, violence and other pervasive governmental manipulations. These authors went further in their assertions that the history of elections and democracy in Nigeria depicts an open confrontation to the machinations by a repressive and cynical leadership. The political class capitalise on the prevailing socioeconomic of the people already ravaged by poverty to monetize the electoral process.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on critical legal scholarship model which is often referred to as critical legal scholarship. The model involves analysis of law and institutions through a lens that highlights power dynamics, social inequalities and the influence of political and powers (Tushet, 1986). One of the arguments of this school of thought is that law is not neutral as it often reflects and reinforces the existing power structures in the political system. It therefore, indicates that the law tends to favour the wealthy and powerful, while maginalising the weak and disadvantaged groups. The model also posits that legal doctrines are inherently ambiguous and open to interpretation which allows the judges and lawyers to manipulate the law to achieve their personal objectives. Critics of the model pointed however to the fact that the pessimistic view of the school of thought does not always stand as there are some instances where law has been used to achieve progressive social change. The theory is relevant in that it provides insights into how electoral system, election administration and electroral process in Nigeria are shaped and operated. It provides grounds to question the Independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the areas such as; the perceived influence of the ruling party, appointment of officials, accountability mechanisms, logistical challenges, etc. It also provides a framework through which the independence of the Judiciary could be critically analysed and how institutions can perpetuate existing power dynamics in Nigeria. The critical legal model provides a basis to advocate electoral reforms and create a more equitable and just electoral system.

Methodologies

The study utilises descriptive and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of Nigeria's electoral systems, administration and democratic processes in Nigeria. Descriptive and qualitative methods can provide deep insights and context that could enhance the understanding of the subject-matters. The study examines the historical and contemporary electoral administration and processes since the commencement of the fourth republic in 1999. It reviewed extant literature of the subject-matters to further establish the argument that Nigeria is at electoral crossroads and the imperativeness to channel a democratic path to credible electoral process.

Electoral systems in Nigeria

Electoral system is considered a pivotal of democratic operation as it encapsulates the laws structuring the manner through which political officers are elected. It denotes any set of rules whereby the votes of citizens determine the selection of executives and/or legislators. Scholars are of the opinion that there is no electoral system that is considered best (Bowler et.al., 2005). In this regard, the choice of electoral system of a country should be based on adequate consideration historical, cultural and other peculiar endogenous factors. In assessing any electoral system, the first issue is to understand the goals the system seeks to achieve in the political sphere taken cognisance of peculiar political and cultural configuration of the country. According to Horowitz (2003), there is no electoral system that reflects political cleavages, voters' preferences and configuration of political parties. Electoral system functions simply to aggregate preferences and generate results. Horowitz (2003) lay emphasis on the impossibility of any electoral system to translate individual choices to collective choice due to the prevailing inbuilt biases. Nigeria has used a variety of election methods throughout the years. A majoritarian electoral system also known as first-past-the-post voting was used in the early years, and the candidates who received the most votes in a particular constituency were considered the victors. Bormann and Golder (2013) describe majoritarian electoral system as one in which the candidates or parties that poll the highest votes win. While this method was straightforward, it often resulted in biased representation and prevented minor parties from having a significant political impact.

Nigeria shifted to a mixed electoral system in 1979 to encourage inclusion and representation. With this system, seats were distributed to parties based on their total share of the vote, combining aspects of first-past-the-post and proportional representation. However, the complex and disjointed political terrain of the nation was not entirely addressed by this hybrid paradigm. This is in alignment with the postulation of Ray (2004) that the electoral law of a country undoubtedly a factor determining the nature of the political system but is not the only determin ing factor. Besides, there are other socio-economic cum political factors which affect the people and the entire democratic operations in a country.

In contemporary political systems, there is a wide and perplexing variety of electoral systems which are generally grouped into majoritarian and proportional representation. Based on the structure of government, Nigeria adopts a federal form of government, and both federal and state elections are held variantly. The majority of the nation's elections, including the presidential, gubernatorial, and legislative ones, use the majoritarian type often called first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system. In this system, the candidates who get the most votes—regardless of whether they received an absolute majority of the vote—win the seats.
The FPTP system is criticized for having a tendency to favour powerful parties, which may sometimes leave minority views unrepresented. Additionally, it could promote regionalism, when politicians prioritize winning over their ethnic or regional constituency above tackling global challenges. It was pointed out in Mohammed (2013)) that the electoral system in practice in the country is a factor in the failure of governance in most of the parts of state of the federation. The scholar further his arguments that most of the political problems ravaging the country stemmed from the type of electoral system being operated in the country (Mohammed, 2013). Therefore, there is need to put in place an electoral system that promote transparency and credibility, devoid of electoral system and acceptable in all operations. Modern technology could be adopted in such electoral system as a way of enhancing the credibility of the system. According to Okediran and Ganiyu (2015) electronic voting is the future and it has the propensity to facilitate political participation.

Election Administration and Challenges

Election is an indispensable element of democratic practice as it affords the electorates opportunities to exercise their franchise and at the same time vests an element of legitimacy on the decision-makers. Similarly, it promotes political consciousness and sensitivity towards political rights. According to Clark and James (2021), the conduct elections depend on the thousands of people who give up their time to administer this crucial public service. The electoral officials are crucial to the effective

administration and implementation of electoral laws (Clark & James, 2021) The officials play critical and central roles in the administration of election. Often, there are concerns which undermine the conduct and administration of the elections and the electoral process. These concerns revolve around the electoral integrity and malpractices which in most cases result in legal battle. Therefore, election administration is critical and fundamental to sustaninable democratic practice and in discouraging voters apathy in any country.

Election administration entails the structure and processes for the selection of political office holders by an unbiased electoral body (Osabiya, 2014). The structure implies the the electoral body which has the responsibility majorly to conduct elections while processes imply the rules and procedures as dictated by the electoral legislation. The organization in charge of organizing and overseeing elections in Nigeria is known as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The integrity and openness of the election process are crucially dependent on INEC. Electoral administration involves compliance with electoral laws, staffing and training of specialist and non-specialist workers as permanent or adhoc for the purpose of the conduct of elections. Besides, electoral register must be complied and ensure it is up to date, polling stations to be located and supplied with adequate electoral materials. The election administration is incomplete until the polls close, the counting and tabulation process take place securedly and transparently (Clark, 2016). Election administration is the art of upholding the integrity of an election and promote the transparency of the process with the goal of discouraging potential manipulations. It was unambigously stated that the integrity, fairness and transparency of the electoral process can be challenged in tensed political situations (Clark, 2016). Through a number of electoral reforms, INEC has worked to improve its operations and increase public confidence throughout the years. However, the electoral reforms have not yielded the envisaged results due to the machinations of the political class and corrupt electoral officials. In the view of Majekodunmi and Adejuwon (2012), democratic consolidation in Nigeria is complicated by the apparent malfeasance of the electoral management body (INEC). In essence, election administration is sine qua non to Democratic sustainability.

In addition, INEC encounters a number of hurdles, including such as logistical problems, insufficient budget, and political intervention. The effectiveness and legitimacy of the election process have sometimes been harmed by these difficulties. Osabiya(2014) contends that there has been a linear relationship between the history of election administration and the inability achieve democratic. This is an interesting issue that needs to be further researched. The cultural diversity of the country has engendered the sensitivity of Nigerians to tribal and ethnic politics which weakened the election administration and undermined the electoral process. Despite its achievements, Nigeria's electoral administration has experienced various obstacles throughout the years. Electoral malpractices, such as voter fraud, ballot box theft, and vote manipulation, have long harmed the integrity of elections. Election violence and irregularities are among the major problems Nigeria's voting institutions face. Vote rigging, ballot stuffing, and voter intimidation incidents have been documented in a number of elections, which has caused residents' confidence in the democratic process to decline.

Furthermore, questions regarding the impartiality and inclusivity of the political process have been raised due to the prominence of money politics and the influence of affluent people in elections. Unufe (2019) alluded that election violence is induced by factors such as irregularities during the electoral process, imposition of candidates and complicity of security agencies. There is frequently an unfair advantage for wealthy political candidates over their less wealthy rivals, creating an unleveled playing field. Furthermore, insufficient electoral infrastructure, a lack of voter education, and logistical issues in holding elections across wide and different areas have all caused substantial obstacles to the democratic process.

Electoral Reforms

The potential for manipulation and the integrity of the electoral process has for a long time been a major concern to the political class and all stakeholders in Nigeria. The Nigerian government and numerous stakeholders have launched steps to enhance the democratic process after realizing the

necessity for thorough election reforms. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was established in 1998, and this was a significant step in improving the legitimacy and independence of election administration. All election processes in Nigeria were to be monitored and governed by INEC.

Following the unreliable 2007 elections, a comprehensive electoral reform was implemented in 2010, which resulted in considerable modifications to the voting system. To increase transparency and decrease election fraud, biometric voter registration, electronic voter card scanners, and result collation technologies were introduced. The general elections in 2007 and 2011 were extremely troublesome, with significant irregularities and violence. In the view of Omotola (2011), there was belief that the quality of elections in Nigeria continued dwindling unabated. Electoral reforms encourage genuine political competition and accountability on the part of political leaders. Electoral reforms without commitment to effect such might increase the rate of electoral litigations and these occurrences damaged public faith in the election process and prompted questions about Nigeria's democracy's durability.

Despite the difficulties, Nigeria has strengthened its voting systems significantly. Election legitimacy has increased to some degree with the implementation of electronic voter cards and biometric verification, which has decreased multiple voting and impersonation instances.

Additionally, there were positive indicators of change in how the general elections were conducted in 2015 and 2019. The elections were mostly peaceful, and INEC deserves praise for its efforts to engage and educate voters.

The 2023 general election was anticipated to avoid the anomalies that characterised the previous elections with the view that electronic transmission of results wouldmbe in real-time. Many Nigerians applauded the innovaions introduced by INEC as formidable electoral reforms. The hope of Nigerians was quashed when it was apparent that there was no committment on the part of the electoral body to adhere strictly to the guidelines. Omotola (2011) opined that electoral reform enhanvces public trust in the electoral institution. Electoral reform should therefore be accompanied with corresponding attitudinal change to further build public trust. Reforms must continue in order to improve the election process. Some of the issues that need immediate attention include bolstering INEC's independence, reducing voter apathy, and advancing civic education.

The Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, introduced the Bimodal Voter Accredition System (BIVAS) which is an electronic device designed to read permanent voter cards. Additionally, initiatives have been undertaken to improve civic participation and voter education, enabling residents to take an active role in the election process and hold politicians responsible. Greater openness and scrutiny have also been a result of increased participation of media outlets, foreign observers, and civil society groups in election monitoring. The innovations brought into the electoral process were aimed at increasing the voting confidence of the electorate. However, it is still a matter of long journey to improve the quality and depths of electoral process in Nigeria due to the prevalence of open intimidation of voters and high magnitude of vote-buying.

Conclusion

Elections, electoral processes, and election management are essential elements of Nigeria's democratic development. Since gaining its independence, the nation has gone a long way, and the current advancements are admirable. To guarantee free, fair, and credible elections in the nation, problems still exist, thus further efforts are required.

Nigeria may develop a stronger democratic foundation by addressing concerns with election violence, money politics, and political meddling, ensuring that the people's will continues to be the primary factor informing its government. The active involvement of individuals, a dedication to democratic ideals, and a sincere desire to enhance the election process will be crucial in determining Nigeria's democratic course for the better as the country continues to develop.

Nigeria's path towards a stable and strong democratic government has been difficult, fraught with obstacles and failures. Nevertheless, the nation has made substantial strides recently because of the adoption of electoral reforms, enhanced election administration, and a dedication to bolstering democratic institutions.

The government and the populace must not waver in their efforts to safeguard the values of democracy, the rule of law, and good governance even as Nigeria continues to experience challenges on its route to democracy. Only by ongoing discussion, inclusion, and the shared commitment to build a stronger, more open, and more responsible democratic Nigeria will lasting progress be made. Steps must be taken to Devi's a functional electoral system that promotes competiveness, participation, inclusiveness and confidence building with the focus of democratic sustainability through free, fair and credible election.

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