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EXPLORING THE FOOTPATH TO PEACE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria has since over a decade been embroiled in fleeting threats to peace ranging from armed conflicts to insurgency, kidnapping and extortion, armed banditry, pastoralists – farmers conflicts, indigene – settler conflicts, ethno – religious conflicts among others. These violent events have separately and in combination inflicted varying degrees of hardships and losses on both human lives and the country at large, culminating in massive depletion of productive force, forced displacements and enormous military spending at the expense of basic human needs. This is in spite of both the institutional and policy responses being deployed to stem the tide. Against this backdrop, this exploratory study is motivated to ascertain the underlying causes of the seemingly intractable threats to peace across Nigeria. In doing so, data generated from both primary and secondary sources were utilized to arrive at the conclusion that the raging violence are rooted in materialist and existentialist motivations. As a result, the study anchors on the entitlement analytical guide to recommend a shift from the security approach to peaceful alternative in responding to the threats to peace by creating an enabling environment for the conflict actors to concede incompatible goals, especially the illegitimate goals as this is a desideratum for a compromise of interests encapsulated in peace.

Key words: *Violence, Peace, Security approach, Conflict, Forced displacement.*

Introduction

It may not be an exaggeration to state that peace is everywhere sought yet nowhere found. In fact peace is fugitive and has always been the dominant aspiration of the human society. But this seems unrealizable as the human society is increasingly enmeshed in ravaging violence of unprecedented proportion. Since the recorded human history, armed conflicts have dominated human affairs. Some of them border on survival and resource predation expressed in territorial conquest and the movement of people from food – deficit to food – surplus regions taking with them their families and flocks (Tandon 2000). In the course of these movement, the resource scavengers sometimes conquer the areas to which they moved and sometimes get absorbed in them to the extent of losing their separate identities and angling to usurp the entitlement of the host areas (Omemma 2010). Invariably, the ensuing push and pull propelled by both anger and greed often unleash a monster, of violence of varying degrees that may be ethnic, religious or regional in complexion.

In Nigeria, most of the prevalent forms of violence are nonstate conflicts rather than state-based conflict (World Bank Group 2020). These include the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, armed banditry in the North West, Herders – Farmers conflict in the North Central, separatist insurgency in the South East, resource control militancy in the South – South and kidnapping and ethnic militia in the South West geopolitical zones. Other current and emerging violence that have been threatening peace in parts of Nigeria include crude oil bunkering, internationalized intrastate conflicts encapsulated in transnational and transborder crimes, border conflicts, communal conflicts, indigence - settler conflicts, chieftaincy tussle and so on.

In the light of these prevailing violence, much of the Nigerian political society has virtually been turned into what Schuman (1953) cited in Echezona (1993) described as a wilderness of ruins drenched with the blood of the slain, rent with agonized cries of torment, looted by mercenaries, and traversed by pitiable bands of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), among whom mass madness and cannibalism are not infrequent. The implication is that the vagaries of violence plaguing Nigeria are destructive even for the victors (Sun Tzu 1988). As have been well captured in

previous studies (Omemma 2012; Omemma 2021; World Bank Group 2018; World Bank Group 2020, etc), the cost of the current and emerging violence manifest in the cataclysmic effects on the society prominent among which are direct loss of human lives, forcible displacement of population, disruption of economies, institutions and societies (IEP 2018), including maiming of productive population leading to massive depletion of labour force.

Yet these deleterious events are avoidable except for the relentless goading by the merchants of death in cahoots with the ambitious seekers of fortune, including usurpers, pretenders and plotters who fill the fields with bloodshed even to the level of destroying each other, all in a bid to become superpowers in the realm of money, fame and power (Cleary 1988). Worst still, the resultant forced displacements compel fathers and sons to be separated from each other, brothers not being secure with each other, husbands and wives to be separated, and everyone to be stripped of the capability to safeguard his or her life.

Of course, the violence across the country has been eliciting responses from the government through its relevant agencies. But these responses have been predominantly reactive in outlook while hesitantly resorting to the proactive that should have preceded every response initiative. Thus in most cases, response to brewing violence are delayed until when it has snowballed to a complex and catastrophic level. This may explain why most violent events in Nigeria seem intractable despite the huge military spending and humanitarian interventions. Even at that, some of the commentaries from the political leaders and even the medial are disingenuous and at times inflammable instead of providing solution to the raging violence in parts of Nigeria. In particular, some of the studies of the violence in Nigeria are not only sentimental but also fraught with incomplete and distorted analysis, thereby glossing over the underlying cause(s). In the end, both the policy responses and scholarly efforts end up as motion without movement as the violence lingers. This study is therefore prompted to bridge this gap in the extant studies by proposing alternative footpaths for peace in Nigeria.

Navigating the turbulent waters of defining peace

Attempts at conceptualizing peace by experts and analysts in the field have been polemical. This has resulted in the maze of conceptualizations which leave one in a quandary about the meaning of peace. In this study therefore, effort is made to refrain from delving into this definitional quagmire by grouping the variants of ideas into three different compartments. These are the realist, the idealist and transformationalist notions of peace.

The realist notion of peace

Realism is a distinguishing appellation for the idea of group of thinkers in the social sciences and particularly, in the international studies because of their philosophical orientation and analytical preference to event as it is and not as it ought to be. Sequel to this orientation, the realist understanding of peace is that it is a prevailing social order constructed and maintained by the strongest based on their capacity to compel compliance and impose sheepish quiescence on the weak. In other words, the central organizing thought of the realist thinkers is that peace is a whimsical domination of the weak by the powerful. The realist logic is drawn from their perception of the human society as a jungle where might is right. Thus, the only guarantee for peace in a given society is the monopoly of violence by the most powerful to impose compliance to the standard behavior or risk extermination. Hegel (1821) in his *Philosophy of Right* amplified this idea by positing that the cure for the insecurity and disorder resulting from armed conflicts and violence is found in the domination of the powerful over the rest. This conclusion is consistent with much of the thoughts of Hobbes (1651) and Morgenthau (1948) and other realist apostles who hold a mechanistic view of peace as a device determined by power to the exclusion of other consideration

including dissension. According to Machiavelli (1513) the means to achieve this is to increase the prospect of peace by decreasing the prospect of violence through alliances because of its capability to balance the power of aggressors and maintain peace and stability. From this line of thought therefore, Machiavelli sees peace as nothing other than balance of power. This position was reinforced by Clausewitz (1832) in his book *On War* where he described peace as “a matter of ensuring a stable balance of power when the strength of two opposing groups of states would match”. But Hobbes who is a renowned top-notch realist did not share this view. Instead, he is of the consideration for the establishment of standard behaviour as peace. In his view, the standard of behaviour which he calls leviathan suffices for a super-ordinate force similar to a specific modality of power relations which would determine and guard the prevailing human interaction as well as interpose in the interpersonal and intergroup competition for scarce resources. This Hobbesan position was re – echoed by Dunne (2000) in his observation that violence can only be cushioned or set aside by the most powerful who has the capability to deter others from aggression and who is able to construct elementary rules for their coexistence and relationship. From the realist standpoint therefore, an understanding of the very roots of conflict is underpinned in the resistance to the whims of the acclaimed strongest who often considers such challenge as an affront and a mere irritant to be crushed.

The idealist notion of peace

Idealism, which is derogatorily called utopianism by its critics, is a descriptive label for the idea of group of thinkers who abhor violence as not only the greatest of all moral evils but also brutal and wasteful. According to them, violence especially armed conflict dehumanizes man and makes him a destroyer of his fellow man. On the strength of the resultant human suffering and destruction therefore, the idealist thinkers insist that threat to peace is inexcusable and should be avoided. Among the spiritual forebears of idealism were Plato and other ancient Greek philosophers. Others include the Romanticists, Humanists and Pacifists of both Christian and non-Christian stock who drew their impetus from the fountain of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. It is therefore not surprising that at the heart of the idealist pontification is that “evil cannot be overcome by evil, only by non-resistance” (Leeds 1981, p.329). This explains the principle set by Jesus in Luke chapter 6 verses 27 to 29, “... I say to you who hear; love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other also. And from him, who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either”. The basis of his teaching is that violence and hatred breed further violence and hatred whereas love can lead to reconciliation. Invariably, Jesus might have been motivated by the axiom that eye for eye results in blindness and so chose the path of avoidance of violence escalation, which may lead to mutually assured destruction.

Deriving from this submission, the idealist understanding of peace is tolerance of the dark side and brutish anarchy of the other. In this way, tolerance connotes voluntary acceptance of the status quo even if it is unjust. In the idealist reasoning, the essence is to not ruffle the feathers and this is in line with the time-textured aphorism that two wrongs cannot make a right. Perhaps, that might influenced the opinion of the Dutch scholar and pacifist Desiderius Erasmus (1466 – 1536) that violence is “brutal, wicked, wasteful and stupid. In short, to him, it brings more evil than it removes. To avoid the deplorable situation, the composite view of the thinkers is the practice of social cooperation and accommodation based on for instance, the principles of reciprocal gift-giving, fair play, just-dealing and dialogue. This is probably the same view held by the ancient Chinese philosophers such as Confucius (554-179 BC) in advocating good faith and moderation as the key doctrines of interpersonal and intergroup relations. William Ellery Channing (1780 – 1842) who was one of the pioneers of the American Peace Movement equally reinforced this opinion by prescribing education as the only effective means to eliminate war and bloodletting. In a similar

manner, Angell (1909) strongly believed that people's idea about the dark side of human nature has to change before peace machineries could be erected. But Plato (427 -347 BC) in his *Republic* was emphatic in tying peace to justice when he asserted that the basis of peaceful social existence is justice, which he defined as “the bond which holds a society together, a harmonious unions of individuals each of whom has found his life – work in accordance with his natural fitness and his training”, (Sabine and Thorson 1973, p. 64). To buttress his argument, he identified the parameter for peace in society as functional specialization of roles. In his theory of three souls, for instance, he acknowledged that nature endowed everyone with peculiar skills and allowing every individual to perform the role they are fitted is tantamount to justice, which is an essential prerogative of peace. By implication, the tendency to forcibly debar people from performing the function which nature has best fitted them may spell endless troubles for all mankind (McDonald 1968; Davies and Vaughan 1935).

The transformationalist notion of peace

This represents the collective description for the view of the group of scholars and statesmen who see peace as an expurgated violence. By this is meant that peace is dependent on the root and branch elimination of the existing system of structural violence such as inequality, poverty, injustice, political oppression and the emotion manipulation or degrading of others. In other words, peace is regarded as a product of a reform and that explains why Galtung (2015), sees peace as a situation of reduced or nonexistent structures of violence. This implies that peace is allergic to irreconcilable or clashing interests. Invariably, expurgation of violence becomes necessary to usher in peace in the society probably because “those high up are scared to death what will happen if those lower down come up” (Galtung 20215, p.36). As a result, the power holders will try to devise shrewd schemes to thwart any attempt, to challenge or reform the existing system to socially acceptable one. In addition, some unpopular existing structures often adopt the tactic of inciting subnational groups to quarrel among themselves on the “divide and rule” technique rather than unite in opposition against the regime in power. This was deftly employed by the colonial authorities during the liberation struggle in Nigeria (Coleman 1958) and most governments in the postcolonial Africa are good students of this tactic. In like manner, the beneficiaries of the status quo will often rise up to defend it irrespective of the discontent it breeds

It is perhaps in contemplation of the fact that forces of social and political conservatism will in all probability prevent radical change in the direction of peace that thinkers of transformation prescribed violence or direct action as a necessary evil required to overthrow an oppressive and dehumanizing system. That for instance, explains why St. Augustine (354-430) and his co-travelers of the scholastic theologians unanimously approved what they described as “holy” wars against the infidel (i.e. the Crusades of the Middle Ages). In other words, the spokesmen for the church generally accepted wars of defense and wars that are intrinsically justified as means of redressing grievances. Thus to them, violence is inevitable or necessary under certain or extra-ordinary circumstances. This position was re-echoed in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels who stoutly and trenchantly believed in the inevitability of violence revolution to bring about reforms and lasting peace in the society. They buttressed their claim by urging workers of every nation to unite and overthrow their oppressors because they have nothing to lose but the chain of their exploitation and oppression. Specifically, Marx considered violent change as “the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one” (Lenin 1976). Following Marx idea and exhortation, Frantz Fanon (1963) in his path-breaking book *The Wretched of the Earth* insisted that courage laced with violence in the face of quintessence evil will break the yoke of oppression and free the people from dehumanizing system. That is why he advised that “each generation must out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it (Fanon 1963, p.166). Logically therefore, it behooves the victims to confront their confrontation if they must liberate themselves because as

Sartre (1963, p.26) had noted “violence like Achilles' lance can heal the wounds that it has inflicted”. Hegel () equally emphasized this in his assertion that “the future belongs to the oppressed”, provided they are determined to find their freedom in and through violence. Similarly, Jinadu (1980, p.77) opined that “the transformation of society at both the infrastructural and superstructural levels will result mainly from the violent confrontation between the oppressor and the oppressed.”

In a nutshell, the bottom line of the transformationalist perspective is that peace emanates from the destruction of an existing system that breeds discontent and its replacement with a new one that is satisfactory to the people. This tends to represent Galtung's (2015, p.30) idea of positive peace as a form of movement “toward the reduction and removal of structural and cultural forms of violence”. According to him, the condition for peace is that structural violence has to be eliminated and cooperation built into the structure as something automatic, and sustainable under the banner of equity and mutual benefit. Galtung's thesis was solidified by the Positive Peace Report 2024 which identified eight pillars of peace as well-functioning government, sound business environment, equitable distribution of resources, acceptance of the rights of others, good relations with neighbours, free flow of information, high levels of education, and low levels of corruption (Global Peace Index 2024; Institute for Economics and Peace 2024). These factors associated with peace have animated relationships, which stresses the fact that one factor alone cannot guarantee peace in the society but differentiated roles. So in the thinking of the transformational, the only option for peace is the destabilization or overthrow of ill-functioning government by unconstitutional or violent means including political-motivated violence (Positive Peace Report 2024). This according to them was exemplified in the United States after the 1776 revolt and the South America republics after the overthrow of Spanish rule in the nineteenth century (Leeds 1981). Similarly, the French Revolution of 1789 was achieved through the direct action of the citizens who thereafter became active participants in government.

The conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing is that sharp differences exist about the meaning of peace and how to achieve it in the human society. Aside their different denominations however, there is a graveyard of consensus that peace is indispensable. Thus, each strand of thoughts provided splendid and extremely profound insight into the understanding of peace. That notwithstanding, their contributions to knowledge was feathery and provided no convincing and acceptable footpath to peace. For instance, the idealist thinkers overly heaped emphasis on defeatist approach to peace by encouraging the people to suffer in silence and to see a predicament as an unavoidable part of human condition dwelling in human nature. In this way, they gaslight those whose lives have been crushed to the ground to borrow a leaf from Job who endured suffering at the expense of rebelling against God so as not to disturb the peace between him and God. The implication is that the peace being canvassed by the idealist adherents has nothing but a sacramental value which invariably translates to negative peace that settles nothing. In the same manner, the realist notion of peace is fraught with misleading claims and empirical deficiency. This is attributable to their inclination and penchant for security approach to peace. That creates the impression that peace is the elimination or absence of threat or its suppression. Regrettably, this traditional notion of peace dominates decision making in the present time and has continued to influence isolated identification of problem, decision upon its causes and ways to tackle them while curiously ignoring other drivers of violent conflicts (Positive Peace Report 2024). Expectedly, this linear causality approach has failed woefully because of its lack of fuller understanding of the system dynamics necessary for peace to flourish in the society. More so, the realist assumption that peace is imposed by the powerful in the society portends a blowback outcome in the form of greater violence in the long run., even the modality espoused by the transformationalists to bring about a rapid and sweeping reforms of the prevailing system that breeds discontent is counterproductive. This derives from the fact that barbarous practices of warfare in whatever guise is destructive even for the victors. Moreover, as Leeds (1981, p. 218) has rightly observed “the use of violence can prevent the consideration of non-violent method for seeking the same aims. It can become an end in itself and hence provide no real solution”. For instance, the

resultant cycle of doom will ensure that the scars of the bitter struggle will remain and the prospects of lasting peace squandered, thereby leaving the society deeply divided and unstable. This may explain why despite enormous military spending, violence has continued ravage parts of Nigeria.

Against this backdrop, this study is motivated to close the chasm in the existing scholarship by conceiving peace as a compromise of interests. This compromise of interests translates to friendly relations which is the opposite of fractious relations or conflict that is a product of incompatibilities or contradiction of goals. But since incompatibilities are hardly transformed or resolved (Galtung 2015, 2007; Leeds 1981), they often dovetail into violence which is the direct opposite of peace. Based on this understanding, peace is the outcome of goal restraint or concession leading to goal compatibility. That is why Galtung (2015, p.14) stressed that “compatible goals lead to ever higher levels of peace, conviviality”. Yet this is dependent on the incompatible goals being transformed to a goal that is beyond the clashing goals, which is compromise or what Galtung (2007, 2015) prefers to call “a new reality” different and above the desires and goals of contending parties. By so doing, the new reality which is transcendental to the interests of the contending parties will culminate in friendly relations necessary for the parties to live and develop together.

More so, much of the impetus for the conception of peace as a compromise of interests derives from the contention of Jummel (1981 p.4) that peace is “a mutual adjusting of what people want, can get, and are willing to pursue”. This may have inspired Boutros – Ghali (1992, p.1) to conceive peace as a “common ground created between people” or states. This essentially points to the imperative of conceding some goals by the parties so as to arrive at a mutually beneficial outcome. In other words, the footpath to peace and what makes peace to take foothold in the society is represented in the congruence of the expectations of parties with their mutual interests, capabilities and wills. The implication is that the concession of incompatible goals is a straight way to compromise or conflict transformation, which creates a fertile ground for peace (Omemma 2021). The point being stressed is that once there exists a coincidence of interests between the parties, then the obstacle to peace may have been effectively dismantled.

In the context of this postulation, the position of this study is that the conflict actors in the raging armed conflicts across Nigeria should concede some goals to enable peace take foothold in the country and open the environment for sound business activities and development bearing in mind that “business development is conditional on peace” (Global Peace Index 2024, p.5). This position is grounded in the words of Benjamin Franklin (1773) in his letter to Joseph Quincy that “there was never a good war or bad peace”. Therefore, the traditional approach of seeing the other party as a threat to be deterred or eliminated should be changed to focus on achieving a “win – win or lose – lose outcome, which is emblematic of the meaning given to peace in this study as a compromise of interests.

Analytical trajectory

It has to be conceded from the outset that the phenomena of violence and peace have generated a diversity of theoretical perspectives, each competing for a pride of place as the most valid and reliable explanatory guide. Despite the diversity of orientation, there is an agreement that violent conflict has continued to dominate the human affairs and therefore need to be explained to prescribe a sustainable path to peace in parts of the world. In recognition of this need, attempt is made in this study to navigate the quandary of fleeting theoretical assumptions by organizing them into two analytical spheres of preference as encapsulated in the materialist and existentialist theoretical persuasions.

Within the materialist explanatory domain, the relative deprivations theory which was expounded by Ted Robert Gurr (1970) in his seminal work *Why Men Rebel* has frequently been used and abused by different scholars. This does not however, dilute the main thrust of the theory which is that violence

arises from “a perceived discrepancy between man's value, expectations and their value capabilities” (Ibid, p. 13). In his thinking, the perception of thwarting circumstances, such as discriminatory policies is attributable to discontent expressed in violent resistance. The problem with the theory is how to neatly separate expectation from dreams, illusion, delusion, hope or mere wishes which often like an extravagant dream cannot survive reality tests. Another empirical defect of the deprivation explanation is how to reconcile the fact that there exist numerous political systems which have remained enormously stable with a political quiescent populace over long periods of time and yet, by all available indicators have a radically unequal distribution of values (Okanya 1999, p.17). A related materialist interpretation of violence is the greed and grievance theory which was originally developed by Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) but popularized by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2004) in their influential paper “Greed and Grievances in Civil War”. The thrust of the theory is that grievance arising from overt deprivation and exploitation is the major propelling force of violence. The departure from Gurr's deprivation argument is that the action is not based on perception but on actual existence of thwarting social condition which in the thinking of Marx and Engels take the form of exploitation of labour. According to them, it is the exploitation of labour that polarizes the society into unequal classes of haves and have-nots or the oppressors and the oppressed, etc. Grievance therefore arises from the consciousness of the people about the source of their deplorable social condition and this prompts them to resort to violence to upturn the situation. Another ligament of their argument is that civil war or rebellion is motivated by greed for power and status, as well as rewards and financial gain resulting from direct payment or looting (Okanya 1999). According to Welch (1980) and Olson (1971) in their separate works, the extent to which the threat or use of violence will enhance the overall value position of peoples and that of their community with which they identify greatly shapes people's justification for violence. In other words, people are likely to participate in violence when there are rewards being dangled before them in lieu of taking part. So to fully understand the cause of violent conflict, Collier and Hoeffler (2002; 2003; 2004) in their several studies, argue that certain individuals in the society instigate violence to satisfy their self-centred advancement and purely materialist gain. They identified such individuals to include local elites, unemployed local male youths and multinational corporations (MNCs) that engage in illegal extraction of resources. In addition to these individuals are the war entrepreneurs or mercenaries. Equally, powerful vested interests such as arms manufacturers and the military may sometimes take steps to prolong wars by encouraging military spending to suppress elemental wishes (Edward 1927). An important example was during the Cold War when the military industrial complex instigated and sustained the arms race simply because it had interest in perpetuating, an even increasing level of arms production, research and development (Leeds 1981). Incidentally, the same powerful vested interests have been strongly linked with the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons fuelling the raging violence in parts (Omemma 2021, Federal Government of Nigeria 2019). Nevertheless, the greed and grievances theory of conflicts just like its progenitor, relative deprivation theory, suffers from empirical difficulties. For instance, it fails to recognize that normative consideration equally motivates people to engage in violent action as some people's involvement in violence can also be dictated by intrinsic desirability of prospects of change to alternative order. This simply means that at times people out of their deeply felt conviction and not because of expected reward in the form of political appointment or financial benefits equally resort to violence without expecting anything in return.

Probably because of the inherent inadequacies of the materialist explanation of violence, some studies have taken flight to the existentialist explanation woven around fear of extinction theory of conflict (Fanon 1974; Darwin 1871; Ross 1993; Horowitz 1985; Geertz 1975; Northrup 1989; Bowen 1996; Burton 1979, etc). The fundamental thrust of the theory is that violence is driven by some sense of real insecurity or threat to people's identity. This is particularly so when such violence may have been influenced by Darwin's idea of “survival of the fittest” which gives impression that the human society is a jungle where might is right leading the seeming perennial battle for survival. As such, Northrup (1989) maintained that events which threaten to remove the feeling of 'safety'

that are tied to different forms of identify usually lead to defensive reactions aimed at avoiding such spiritual or physical exposure. The implication is that violent conflict will inevitably occur between different groups because the movement of people from food – deficit to food – surplus regions sometimes generates fear in the other people that their culture, history and life-style will be erased through either prejudice or domination. Ultimately, the ensuing conflagration often takes the form of ethnic cleansing, genocide, forcible expulsion or ostracism within the society (Leeds 1981). This may explain why Geertz (1963), Ma'abo Che (2016) and Collier et al (2003) in their separate studies insisted that conflicts spring from ancient hatreds between ethnic groups and mutual fear of domination, expulsion, or even extinction.

In a nutshell, the core of the existentialist explanation is that violent conflict in human society cannot be wished away because individuals cannot adopt fire – watching approach to a scheme geared towards forcing them to accept practices that destroy their identity and other goals that are attached to their needs (Burton 1979). This can be illustrated from the many brutal wars of medieval Europe prompted by the desire to convert the heathen or those of a rival faith. Even, after the “holy” wars, the battle shifted to the intra – faith war particularly between Protestants and Catholics culminating in the Thirty Years War (1618 - 1648) that ended with the Westphalia Treaty. Similar wars occasioned by threats to identity or existence were between the Sinhalese and Tamils in the Sri Lankan Conflict, the Rwanda genocide involving the armed confrontation between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi in the early 1990s. The same can be said of what may be described as the frozen conflict in Cyprus since 1974 following the invasion of Cyprus by Turkey in a bid to shield the Turkish Cypriot from annihilation by the Greece Cypriot - backed Greece (Wikipedia 2009). Nigerian Civil War (1967 – 1970) induced by the pogrom of 1966, etc. In recent history, the situation in Sudan became toxic following the obnoxious policy of Islamization and Arabization of the people of the south Sudan through ethnic-cleansing (Omemma 2010). This expectedly, degenerated into a long drawn war with heavy humanitarian crisis, thereby eliciting humanitarian intervention and the United Nations – moderated split of Sudan into two sovereign states in 2011.

Even the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria was activated on fear of extinction consideration. This was confirmed by the erstwhile spokesman of the group Abu Qaqa in a statement that it was the drive to shield Islam from extinction in the northern Nigeria that motivated their emergence (The Nation 2012; Omemma 2012). This ultimately underscores the philosophy of the group as “Boko Haram” implying that western values (i.e. Christianity and western education) are sin. In this way, the major goal of the Boko Haram insurgents is the containment of the spread of Christianity and western education to save Islam from extinction in the northern part of Nigeria. In view of the foregoing, the existentialist argument tends to validate the claim that most if not all violent conflicts in the world are driven by deep-seated fear of either extinction or domination and the assertion of ethnic – religious identity.

Nevertheless, despite possessing a strong sense of appeal, the existentialist approach to explaining violent conflict is equally ensnared in a major drawback which stripped it the intended empirical and explanatory power. For example, it glossed over the fact that there exist many states in the world that are characterized by both ethnic and cultural cleavages, yet they enjoy harmonious co-existence. The United States of America, Italy and even Botswana in sub-Sahara Africa, etc lucidly illustrate this point.

Sequel to the obvious shortcomings of the extant theories, this study has taken the challenge to rely on the entitlement theory as the most suitable explanatory tool. The choice of this theory stems from its ability to subsume other theories to give it the much needed explanatory and prescriptive power. The theory was developed by John Rawl in *A Theory of Justice* published in 1973 where he argued for a redistributive state because in his thinking everyone has some entitlement or claim in the totality of natural assets and that no one should have differential claims (Leeds 1981). The idea was reinforced by Robert Nozick in *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1975) where he expanded Rawl's idea of

redistributive state to include that a person is entitled to whatever he earns or inherits as long as property or money is gained justly and legitimately. Against this backdrop, the central argument of the entitlement theory is that violent resistance is inevitable when a person or a group experience denial of entitlements or discover that their rightful benefits or entitlement has been arbitrarily withheld, blocked, subtracted or shrewdly dispossessed. This may take the shape of disinheritance, sabotage, disenfranchisement, expropriation, goal – blocking, etc. The United Nations General Assembly in its Resolution 1904 (XVIII) which came into effect in 1968 identified those actions that may jeopardize entitlement to include “...any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, or enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life”. Based on this United Nations position, entitlement claims also extends to equality of access to employment in public service as well as inheritance and franchise. As such, citizens of the state are entitled to enjoy the good life provided by the government including employment opportunities and job security. So in the event that one's promotion is pigeon – holed at workplace, such tendency is capable of eliciting violent resistance. The same may apply to when franchise of a certain ethnic group is jeopardized to the extent that social or legal restrictions prevent them from political participation or representation. Another frequent source of violence to illustrate the entitlement argument emanates from disinheritance. In other word, conflict can arise when individual or family members discover that access to their parent's property or money has been withheld or inhibited through deliberate exclusion on the ground of illegitimate birth or gender bias, etc. Given the sensitive nature of issues bothering on identity question, for instance, the likelihood of violent resistance is usually high with explosive consequence as the affected individuals will always fight to reclaim their identity and their entitlement. Even at the larger political setting, some of the conflicts are linked with the discriminatory sharing of the commonwealth or strategic political positions at the expense of a particular ethnic or religious group.

According to this argument, this stems from the fact that human beings are both mentally and emotionally attached to the product of their endeavor and consider interference or pigeon-holing of their access to their entitlements as a frontal attack to their dignity as a human person as well as to their right to existence. Therefore, everyone including victims of disinheritance or dispossession of legitimate earnings is ever determined to defend their entitlement even with blood mixed with anger until the last breath. So, to prevent such a scenario and live in peace, the theorists suggest that people should be allowed to enjoy their benefits and to use their talents, ability, luck and good fortune to excel and earn their livelihood. Against this backdrop, the highpoint of the entitlement explanation is that exclusion or denial of entitlement is an injustice that creates a fertile ground for horizontal inequality and such a situation is not conducive for peace. So the footpath to peace is to dismantle obstacles that infringe on people's entitlement, which are exclusion, injustice and inequality.

In the context of this study therefore, the current and emerging armed conflicts in Nigeria can be understood in the claim or assertion of entitlement prism. For instance, indigene – settler conflicts results from claims and counter – claims of right to land, water and power between the acclaimed indigenes or sons – of the – soil and the settlers who are derogatorily regarded as “native foreigners”. Some of these conflicts include the resurfaced Ife – Modakeke conflict in Osun State between January and December 1998, Jos crisis since 2004, Tiv – Jukun crisis, Southern Kaduna conflict, Umuode – Oruku conflict in Enugu State, Ezza – Ezillo conflict in Ebonyi State, Aguleri – Umuleri conflicts in Anambra State, etc. Another related conflict being flamed by the entitlement claim is the farmer – herder conflict which revolves around right of passage claim by the pastoralists to graze their animals. On the other hand, the crop farmers also lay claim of entitlement to their ancestral farmlands where the cattle incessantly stray into and destroy crops which they depend on for livelihood. The experiences in Benue and Nasarawa states and elsewhere suffice. More so, the armed banditry in the Northwestern part of Nigeria can eloquently fit into the entitlement

explanation. For instance, banditry emerged as a resistance to the prohibition of illegal mining in Zamfara State and other parts of northwest geopolitical zone. This largely stems from the people's claim of entitlement to the mineral deposits as their birthright which the Federal Government of Nigeria is arbitrarily denying their access. But how the seeming resistance snowballed into armed banditry is beyond the purview of this study. In a related development, both the Boko Haram insurgency and the IPOB/ESN insurgency are propelled by entitlement claim. For instance, while the Boko Haram elements claim that northern Nigeria is entitled to Islam as the only religion, the IPOB/ESN element anchor their ferment on the entitlement to the presidency of Igbo extraction otherwise, the Igbo should exist from the Nigeria state. Most importantly, the resource control ferment that led to the Niger Delta crisis and the consequent mayhem unleashed by the Niger Delta militants was to assert claim to the entitlement of the Niger Delta to commensurate compensation for the oil spillages that degrade their environment through the smothering of soil fertility and the suffocation of the fishes in the region's waters.

It is however instructive to note that claim of entitlement should not be stretched to social status, cultural barrier, personal experience or endowment. In fact, it will amount to an exaggeration of entitlement when an individual seeks the removal of differentials so as to be treated the same with everyone. Everyone was not allocated by birth, ability or luck to a certain station of life or social position which carries certain rights and obligations. So, any move to equalize such established rights of individual is to invite resentment and violent resistance. That is why the idea of entitlement is strictly limited to what rightfully belongs to a person by virtue of the individual's achievement, merit, accident of birth or membership of community, family or association. Essentially, the bottom line of the entitlement theory is that conflict is inevitable to resist or reclaim people's established rights accruing from their talents, abilities, birth and good fortune. Invariably, the entitlement idea extends to the consideration that people who contribute most to the society or organization should be rewarded in proportion to the contribution with greater privileges than others. This suggests that the path to peace in Nigeria is for everyone to be treated according to their deserts, achievement or ability in life. Anything void of this portends trouble.

Survey of threats to peace in Nigeria

Ever since the organization of human society, there has not been any shortage of threats to peace. These threats comes in different sizes and shapes such as communal conflicts, armed conflicts and warfare, ethno – religious conflicts, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, transnational organized crimes, illegal markets, territorial invasion and occupation, murder and ritual killing, including man – induced natural disasters such as climate change, ozone depletion, global warming, green house emission, flooding, pandemics, etc. Nigeria began to witness these threats to peace in torrential sequence soon after the return to civilian government in 1999 when the lid of the suppressed conflicts was lifted. Initially, the violence events were localized and isolated to communal conflicts bordering on land, kingship and religion. Examples include the Jos crisis, Tiv – Jukun conflict, Aguleri – Umuleri conflicts, Umuode – Oruku conflicts, Iga – Omasi conflicts, Warri crisis, Ezza – Ezilo conflict, to mention but a few. Before long, the emerging violence assumed a national outlook threatening the peace and national cohesion of the country. Prominent among these new threats to peace include the Sharia crisis, Niger Delta militancy, Boko Haram/ISWAP insurgency, IPOB/ESN insurgency, armed banditry and cattle rustling, indigene – settler conflicts, pastoralists – farmers conflicts. A common feature of these new threats to peace in Nigeria is that the perpetrators resort to dastardly methods of terrorism to unleash massive mindless killings of the vulnerable civilians in addition to kidnapping and extortion of the others.

The worrying aspect of these threats is that they are frequently being exacerbated by either the flow of tangible resources in the form of armed fighters and money across territorial borders or the flow of intangible resources in the form of ideas, inspirations and grievances or the combination of the

both (World Bank Group 2020). Most importantly, the current and emerging internal security threats are often fueled by grievance emanating from dispossession of land through irregular allocation to reward loyalty. Another factor that contributes to the persistence of the threats is lack of commitment to uprooting the underlying forces behind the grievance. This stems from the overbearing penchant to suppress conflict at the incipient stage. Major perpetrators of these raging threats to peace are rebel groups, militia group, and violent extremists. They share unique characters, which is not limited to being socially uprooted, rootless, unemployed, young, school drop – outs, mostly cashiered out of security forces, failed in businesses, ex – convicts, ex – illicit miners, thirst for pillage, petulant and vengeful (Magombe 2000).

Opinions are widely divided over the motivating factors for threats to peace. But there are consensus that one factor alone cannot be attributed to the raging threats to peace in parts Nigeria. As such, a multi – causal approach has been adopted and subsumed under the materialist and existentialist explanations as extensively discussed in the preceding section. Based on materialist interpretation, resources are scarce and this implies that human interaction is guided by who gets what, when and how (Laswell 1983). This naturally eventuates into struggle for the equitable share of the commonwealth that in most cases disrupts peace between the contending groups in the society. More often than not, the competition for the scarce resources becomes toxic taking the dimension of “winner – takes – it – all” syndrome to the detriment of the weak. The result is social inequality and the attendant grievance by the losers arising from perception of marginalization, deprivation or exclusion from the scheme of things. This dovetails into fear of extinction encapsulated in the existentialist explanation of violence. In this regard, the poor and the less privileged group often blame their social condition on overt discrimination and victimization either on the ground of ancestral hatred of their ethnic origin or religious preference. So in most cases, violence results from or gives rise to stereotyping, ethnic profiling, tribal bullying and segregations that deepens the fault lines of inequality, exclusion and injustice This position may have influenced Collier and Hoeffler (2004), Cramer (2003), Fearon and Laitin (2003), Lichbach (1989) and Ostby (2013) to conclude in their separate studies that “some of the greatest risks of violence today stems from the mobilization of perceptions of exclusion and injustice rooted in inequalities across groups” (World Bank Group 2018 p. xxii). Whatever might be the motivation, however, the reality is that in the final analysis, the raging violence in parts of Nigeria have inflicted so much sorrow without borders, on those either inside the ring or outside the ring.

Costs of threats to peace in Nigeria

To a large extent, the scourge of violent conflicts has not only demonstrated the capability to affect somebody elsewhere, but to also dislocate the socio-economic fabrics of the epicenter and spillover countries, including the disarticulation of the social harmony, disruption of social intercourse, truncation of human development, and the subjection of the volatile areas to an endless motion without movement (Omemma 2021). In specific terms, the raging threats to peace in parts of Nigeria have unleashed various havocs not limited to the following:

- **Loss of productive force:** The workforce is increasingly being depleted as most casualties are able – bodied men, young men and women who have the potentials to battle and tame the environment and harness nature to fullness. Others are professionals: engineers, medical doctors, nurses, lecturers, artisans, high – level administrators, lawyers, and other skilled individuals. Yet these are the categories of people that can make an industrial economy function and thrive. The result is a paralytic economy that is plaguing the country which attributable to the depleted number of highly skilled manpower.
- **Forcible displacement:** A related cost of the raging violence is the escalation of brain drain to the safe and presumably comfort zone of the world as the remnant productive survivors have

joined the *japa* bandwagon. The raging violence have equally demonstrated the propensity to inflict forcible displacement on the civilian population. While many are internally displaced and are currently languishing in the various IDP camps scattered across the country, some others who were equally dislocated from organic base of existence have migrated to the neighbouring countries and distant regions of the world as refugees. Majority of them die in the IDP camps because of their vulnerability while those that are physically fit are confronted with the challenges of contestations with their host populations who blame their presence on the existence of hardship and resource scarcity.

- **Surge in military spending:** In its bid to fulfill the statutory responsibility of providing the good life and guaranteeing the safety of lives and property, successive governments in Nigeria have resorted to increased spending on military hardware. This may have been driven by assumption that the capability of every state is measured by its military power and in terms of cost – benefit calculus, the benefits of the word “victory” far outweigh the costs of the war despite the contention by the peace movement that the costs of higher military spending outweigh the benefits (Galtung 2015). The fact however, is that in the course of military spending, other important sectors of the economy are neglected, thereby letting the masses that are the metaphoric grass to suffer.
- **Cyclical spread of threats:** The experience in Nigeria has shown that new violence often arises from the returnee internally displaced populations (IDPs) who discover that their lands have been taken away from them and probably awarded to others through irregular allocation to compensate loyalty. As such the dispossessed returnees usually resort to violence to reclaim their land. Most importantly, the current violence also creates the vicious cycle effect because “more desperate and embittered childless parents and parentless children automatically join the ranks of more maddened people to exert revenge and revanche (Chalmers 2001). This largely accounts for the protracted violence in parts of country.

Responses to threats to peace in Nigeria

The conventional wisdom which is yet to be invalidated is that the primary responsibility of government is the preservation of law and order. According to Leeds (1981), this to ensure that people can live without too much upheaval so that they can make plans and carry on their legitimate business, confident that agreements, contracts and laws will be enforced. In fact, without government in human society, there may be a relapse to the Hobbesian state of nature characterized by brutal anarchy. This is why every government whether autocratic or democratic is walking the talk of fostering cooperation among the citizens so that they can work socially with others for the common good. More so, governments assert their mandate to regulate competition to better one's own position at the expense of others and the whole essence is to ensure that peace is not threatened in any given territorial area.

But given the persistent threats to peace in parts of Nigeria composed of people with essentially different ties of race, language, religion or traditions from others, successive governments had one time or the other put in place institutional structures to respond to any emerging differences of opinion or incompatibility of goals about the criterion for determining the means to achieving their basic needs. For instance, section 14 subsection (2) (b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) declared that “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government.” In line with this provision, there exist three institutional responses that have been frequently adopted to address violent events as discussed below.

The coercive response

This has rightly been christened by Galtung (2007, p.23) as the “security approach to peace” and draws impetus from the realist philosophy which understands the footpath to peace as military preparedness for the elimination of threats. Thus, it involves armed force to impose peace based on the assumption that evil cannot be approached with negotiation. According to Zarkov et al (2015), coercive response to conflict dates back to the ancient territorial conquest and empire for the protection of one's borders and one's population. Since then, violence is considered by any government as a threat to the security of the state and those associated with violence are singled out as enemies of the state to be deterred or eliminated. In the event that the violence involves a group or is between nonstate actors, then the government does not hesitate to treat the violence as disturbance of peace that should be fiercely silenced. In this way, coercive response presumes that peace equals absence or elimination of violence, and this has been the tradition and dominant response mechanism in Nigeria.

There seems to be many grounds for the coercive response to violence. First, it is considered appropriate when the combatants are unwilling to a ceasefire and the event is assuming a humanitarian dimension, especially if basic laws are flagrantly violated with no other group able to mediate. By that implication therefore, no responsible government can adopt a kind of fire – watching approach otherwise it will be considered as weak. Another ground for activating coercive response may be when rebels are assessed as having mustered strong capability and dastardly intentions which portends a real danger to the point of threatening the very power base of the regime in power. This ultimately requires superior strength of whatever kind to be able to deter or defeat the enemy. The third ground which is the most important is that in most cases, “not all parties are driven by legitimate grievances, some are driven by illegitimate greed.” (Galtung 2007, p.25). This invariably means that a decisive step has to be taken to stop the perpetrators before they destroy everybody. This can be lucidly illustrated with the coercive response to the Boko Haram insurgency, armed banditry in northern part of Nigeria and the separatist insurgency in the Southeast geopolitical zone of the country. For instance, the goal of the Boko Haram insurgents to abolish western education and Christianity across the north of Nigeria because they represent evil is illegitimate because Nigeria is a secular state (Section 10 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999). The same applies to the armed bandits insisting on illegal mining in the north which contradicts the item 27 of Part 1 of Second Schedule of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) that confers the jurisdiction of “extraction” on the Exclusive Legislative List just as the demand by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) for the exit of the South East geopolitical zone from Nigeria as a separate state of Biafra is treasonable and a violation of section 2 (1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) which stipulates that “Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state to be known by the name of the Federal Republic of Nigeria”. This logically suggests that coercion is the dry option since no concession or reforms may be granted by any government in any of these demands without conceding its own existence.

But while not being oblivious of the serious consequences associated with widespread violence it is the contention of this study that illegitimate goal is not a sufficient ground for coercive response. The reason is that just as prayers cannot cure ailment so coercion cannot effectively bring about peace. Instead, it serves as what Imobighe (2002, p 60) has described as “a temporary relief creating a precarious peace baptized by Galtung (2007, p. 25) as “a negative peace”. This stems from the fact that the suppression of the conflict will not remove the grievance and the trauma arising from the violence. The implication is that coercion can be used to win the war while peace is lost in the process as the suppressed violence is bound to resurface at a future time with even greater intensity culminating in the vicious cycle of violence. Invariably, coercive response to violence is not only unrealistic but “a political disaster” (Galtung 2007; p.22).

The humanitarian response

This is sequel to the failure of the coercive response and the catastrophic consequences of threats to perace. The burden for humanitarian response rests largely on the national government and in the case of Nigeria, in the federal government. But external actors such as development partners and international organizations including non-governmental organizations often support the adoption and implementation of sound responses, while state and local government authorities, including the private sector and civil society organisations (CSOs) complement the government's efforts.

The humanitarian response is necessitated by the asymmetric strategy to unleash mayhem on the civilian population producing humanitarian disaster in the aftermath as innocent civilians are frequently killed, maimed and others forcibly displaced. The overall objectives therefore for humanitarian response is to provide succour for the victims by resettling the forcibly displaced persons and reducing extreme poverty among the vulnerable groups. In doing so, humanitarian response helps to reduce or eliminate vulnerabilities in the theatre of conflict. This is why successive governments in Nigeria have been committed to promptly assuaging the hardships associated with tumultuous situations across the country by delivering aid to the violent parts of the country and saving lives, especially lives of the vulnerable regardless of political, religious or ethnic contexts (Jacoby 2015). One example of such humanitarian gestures is to help manage the shocks occasioned by influx of forcibly displaced persons by building camps for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) at the zones of safety and constantly supplying relief materials to cushion the burden that the internally displaced persons and other victims of violence have to bear. In addition, the government deploys security forces on internal security operations (ISOs) to the IDP camps with emphasis on the guarantee of their safety from hostile host communities.

But over the years, humanitarian responses have been ensnared in duplicity and complicity by both the government and the nongovernmental bodies who hide under it to provide camouflage for their ulterior motives of arms sales and illicit extractions of minerals. The government on its part employs the initiative to cover up the collateral damage of mindless massive military retaliatory bombing of civilians and extra – judicial execution. Such action usually elicits people's revolt and the consequent protraction and spread of violent conflict. More so, extant humanitarian responses often mistake effects and consequences for causes and conditions (Galtung 2007) by overly focusing on palliative approaches instead of shifting interest on building capacities, supporting those who desire peace, and connecting economic growth with governance (Hughes et al 2010). This obviously is in conflict with the principle of peace building and largely accounts for why violence conflicts in Nigeria are difficult to end once they have started.

The judicial response

This refers to the process of subjecting threats to peace to the court of law for resolution within the prescribed law. Invariably, it obviates the need to resort to coercive response. Instead, it involves the determination of claims and counter – claims concerning certain and emerging problems such as pastoralists - farmers conflicts, indigene – settler conflicts, separatist insurgency, terrorism. It is therefore, widely believed to be capable of reconciling conflicting goals of different groups through adjudication and by so doing make decisions which can be enforceable without the application of force. Thus the judicial response involves peaceful adjustment of conflicts within the confines of law by granting fair hearing and legal representation to the parties, including rebels. This is however, based on the assumption that the contending parties will legally be bound by the outcome of the judicial process

But experience has shown over the years that most judicial responses have ended up inflaming the violence to cataclysmic proportion. This stems from the fact that court deals with fact, that is, evidence and not truth of the matter. In doing so, the outcome of judicial proceeding does not

harmonize the interests of the parties involved in a conflict by producing a mutually satisfactory outcome (Imobighe 2002). Instead, it aggravates rather than reconciles the incompatibilities of interests that is a desideratum to peace. This has been attributed to the penchant for win – lose outcome that leads to the denial or miscarriage of justice. In this way, the hatchet can only be shallowly buried to resurface in the near future. Even the various panels, arbitration committees, and commissions of inquiry have not helped matter as most of them are usually abandoned or disbanded soon after inauguration, while those that ran their full course end up producing a proposal that lack binding character or an outcome that leave a lot of bitterness in their trail.

Prognosis

In view of the foregoing it may not be outlandish to assert that there exists no easy universally acceptable panacea to address all threats to peace in Nigeria. This is why successive governments have formulated a menu of policy responses to deal with the various sources of violence such as resource inequality and fear of extinction syndrome by the minorities. . One of such policies is the federal character principle enshrined in section 14 (1) (3) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) which allays the fear of marginalization or extinction ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few state or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in the government of the federation or in any of its agencies. The same is applicable to the government of the various states and local government councils which are mandated by subsections (1) and (4) of that same section 14 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) to carry out in such manner as to recognize in the conduct of their affairs the diversity of the people within their respective areas of authority as this actually is desirable to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the peoples of the federation.

With regards to addressing grievance arising from resource inequalities, section 163 (1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provided for the sharing of proceeds accruing from the resources generated from the states on the basis of derivation. This simply means that proceed entitled to each of the states of the federation shall be equal to the proportion of the net proceeds that is derived from that state. The contemplation is to address the grievances of exploitation without commensurate redress from the resource – rich areas of the country. Also to dilute religious schism, section 10 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria declared that Nigeria is a secular state. By this is meant that “the government of the Federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as state Religion”. Moving forward, there have been other policy responses to tackle transnational security threats such as terrorism, arms trafficking, drug trafficking, human tracking, smuggling, etc. These policy responses include the intermittent closure of land borders, strict immigration control and the expulsion/deportation of illegal immigrants. More so, the country has undergone series of reorganization culminating in the present thirty – six state structure. This was motivated to assuage frayed nerves arising from the Nigerian Civil War (1967 – 1970) and to promote even development among the constituent parts of the Nigerian Federation. But that initiative seems to lack the desired effect probably because of the inertia to grant greater autonomy to these various national groups.

Thus, even in the face of all these policy responses and measures, threats to peace have continued to simmer across the country to the point of threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria. This may have informed the World Bank in its several studies to prescribe preventive action as a pathway to peace in the violent – prone areas of the world (World Bank Group 2015; 2018; 2017; Global Peace Index 2024). The prescription was justified on the time textured aphorism that “prevention is cheaper than cure”. But, that line of thinking appears to be utopia and unrealistic since conflict in human affairs cannot be wished away. This derives from the inherent incompatibilities of individual interests. So it will be delusional to think of prevention of conflict instead of how to reconcile contradiction of goals to create a middle ground that is capable of preventing incompatible goals

from degenerating into violence. As Galtung (2007, p.19) had advised, contradictions or conflicts should be welcomed not avoided because they are challenges to expand our spaces and to furnish them creatively with new feasible, realities. Against this background, it is hereby concluded that it is violence not conflict that can be prevented and this can be realized if the conflict is transformed to an outcome that is mutually beneficial to the parties. On this basis, this study posits that the footpaths to peace in Nigeria are as follows:

- **Creation of a fertile ground for grievance ventilation:** This will afford the aggrieved parties the opportunity to vent their grievances. Since no person has the right to be always unyielding, it is believed that when the parties are enabled to express their grievance and state what they want, it will be easy to harmonize their interests. This however, depends on the willingness of the parties to refrain from extraversion of responsibility and insistence on winning. Instead, both the government and the combatants should be prepared to drop their pride and concede some grounds while accepting their act of commission or omission. It is only then that the prospect of achieving a mutually beneficial outcome can be feasible. If on the other hand, the violence is between nonstate actors such as the indigene – settler or herders – farmers conflict then the parties should seek a common ground by conceding some contradictory or illegitimate goals.
- **Comprehensive conflict analysis:** One of the reasons why peace is fugitive in Nigeria is the predilection of conflict analysts and political leaders to give distorted and incomplete analysis of conflict. This may be a function of their political, ethnic or religious preferences. But whatever may be their motivation, they often end up glossing over the underlying cause(s) of threats to peace leading to a symptomatic treatment. In this connection, what should be done, is to factor in every details so that nobody is spared to take responsibility and to make amends with a view to healing the wounds. In fact, this is why the avoidance approach by Jesus Christ seems like covering evil practices which is contradictory to his pontification and therefore unacceptable. The reason is that he failed to ascertain the cause of the slap. For instance, as the prince of peace and by extension, peacemaker, he should have made effort to discover what might have pushed the assailant – whether he acted out of provocation by the other person or not. This is important because if the cause of the violence is glossed over, it may amount to postponing the evil day as the attacker may have been encouraged to slap even more. In the alternative, the victim may muster courage to seek sympathizers to exert revenge and then escalate the situation to a catastrophic dimension. So, the path being canvassed to peace is to uncover the root cause(s) of violence even if doing so and the findings may be painful or shameful to reveal.
- **Peace journalism:** One of the forces fueling violence across Nigeria is misinformation and disinformation laced with the dissemination of hate speech. This is largely motivated to incite disturbance of peace. Galtung (2015, p.28) describes this practice as “bad news” journalism and noted that the media had “a sort of psychopathological attachment to failure, and to things going wrong”. Drawing strength from Galtung's observation, it is suggested that the media in Nigeria should eschew inflammatory commentaries and falsification of speeches by political leaders. They should equally refrain from flagrantly dishing out fake news just to generate traffic to their handles or media outlets or to impress their audience, especially in this era of social media manipulation by ethnic entrepreneurs and war contractors. In the alternative, the media in Nigeria should shift focus on contributing to peace by resorting to peace journalism with emphasis on “observing and reporting events within a solution-oriented peace discourse” (Galtung 2007, p.27). This ultimately will be for the greatest good of all Nigerians.

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INTER-PARTY DEFECTION AND DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN NIGERIA, 1999-2023

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Abstract

In 1999, Nigeria ushered in her Fourth Republic in our democratic experimentation, with great hope that it would not be truncated like the previous three Republics. After more than twenty-four years of our democratization process, many people now believe that democracy has taken firm roots and may not be supplanted easily. However, the spate of inter-party defection has raised serious concerns in many quarters. The ugly development no doubt has brought the issues of clear political ideologies and manifestoes among our political parties on one hand and legislative flaws in our democratic process on the other hand. Our intention is to explore the rationale behind the gale of inter-party defection in Nigeria. The theoretical frame work adopted in this paper is the Marxist theory of Post-Colonial state. Data for the study were generated from Secondary source derived from the analysis of documents such as books, journals and relied on the content analysis. The paper found that democratic consolidation will be undermined if inter-party defection continues unabated, though inter-party defections which are integral to democratic process in Nigeria are not driven by fundamental ideological considerations. Nearly, all the Political Parties in Nigeria lack clear ideologies. Their interest is on how to capture and retain state power. We recommend among others that constitutional provisions should be further strengthened to stem the rampant cases of inter-party defection and political parties should adhere to their internal democracy in the choice of their candidates.

Key words- *political party, political defection, democracy, democratic consolidation and fourth republic.*

Introduction

Nigeria's present political dispensation is so far the longest in her democratic experimentation. None of the three previous republics lasted this long, consequently many people maintain that our democracy is consolidating. However the spate of inter-party defections is now threatening the gains already recorded. This particular concept is variously known as decamping; cross-carpeting; party hopping' party switching; party crossover' floor crossing; and canoe-jumping (Malhotra, 2005; Mbah, 2011). This practice could be consequent upon political events involving political institutions or as a result of ideological pressure (Nokken and Poole, 2022). Our interest is on inter-party defections and the impact on our democratization process.

There is no uniform reaction to this practice.

Inter-party defection is not a recent phenomenon. Winston Churchill remained one of the foremost political defectors. In 1901 he joined the British parliament as a Conservative later defected to the Liberal in 1904 and defected back to the Conservative in 1925 (Wikipedia — The Free Encyclopedia, 2014). Similarly, in Nigeria, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the former Vice- President of Nigeria, defected to ACN from the PDP, only to move back to PDP. He later joined APC and later moved back to PDP. Party defection is not peculiar to Nigeria. Political Parties in Nigeria lack ideologies clarity and opposition parties are stifled by the practice. Party defection is essentially driven by pecuniary interest in Nigeria.

The act of defection in Nigeria could be traceable to the emphasis in the primacy of political power. The possession of state power directly gives access to economic power. As Mbah (2011) averred, the desperation to hold public office as means of accumulating wealth make Nigerian politicians to defect without justification. And this remains a major problem to democratic consolidation. And for our democracy to be consolidated, the critical issue of inter-party defection must be interrogated.

It is the quest to remain at the corridors of powers that fuels the inter-party defections. In Nigeria, once your party is not in power, your socio-economic interest will be threatened. In our zero-sum-game brand of politics, the winner takes everything and the loser is excluded from all the benefits derivable from the state power, those who have enjoyed public office would not like to be excluded from the ruling party in order to enjoy continuous state protection and patronage. Consequently, opposition political parties are decimated and seriously weakened. A virile political opposition is a fundamental factor in consolidating democracy in any society. An ineffectual and ill-organized opposition political party is a serious challenge in our democratization process.

Conceptual Clarifications

Some key words used in this article need to be operationalised. They include

a. Political Party:

A political party is a group that seeks to elect candidates to public office, aiming to capture and retain government positions as long as democratically possible. (Adigun Agbaje, in Remi Anifowose and Francis Enemu, 1999: 195). In other words, a political party is a group that seeks to elect candidates to public office by supplying them with a label- a party identification by which they are known to the electorate (J.O Wison; 1992: 138).

b. Political Defection:

This is an act of swapping political parties. It is an act of changing party allegiance, or moving from one political party to another. This particular term is known by different nomenclatures (Malhotra, 2005).

The Noun, “defection”, is taken from the Latin word, *defectionem* or *defectinum* to signify an “action of deserting or abandoning a party leader “(see “defection”. Available at <https://www.etynonline.com/word/defection>. accessed on 6 April, 2020). It implies a deliberate act of abandonment of allegiance or duty, desertion, or disloyalty to a cause or person. In the context of this article, it will be used to mean an intentional act of leaving one's political party for another party regardless of the reason or purpose.

c. Democracy:

The word 'democracy' derives from two Greek words, 'demos' which means 'the people and 'Kratein' which means 'rule of or by. It literally means 'rule by the people' (Anifowose and Enemu 1990:141).

Scholars (Osaghae, 1992; Schumpeter, 1990; Nnoli, 2003; Appadorai, 2004; Dahl, 2000; Ake 2000; L. Diamond; J. Hartlyn, J. Linz and M. Lipset, 1989) have continued to dissect the concept of democracy in a manner it would reflect global practices. In spite of their contributions, democracy is still devoid of generally accepted definition. This could be attributed to structural inadequacy, cultural, environmental and societal imperatives inherent in recipient societies which condition the operation and practice of democracy. (Nwanegbo & Odigbo 2013b). Hence Osaghae (1992) argued that regardless of the discrepancies that could be observed, one fundamental objective of democracy is “how to govern the society in such a way that power actually belongs to the people.” More succinctly, Diamond et al (1989) posited that democracy is a system of government that congregates three vital stipulations of governance: (a) Meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and groups, especially political parties for political offices at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; (b) a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies at least through regular and fair elections such that no major (adult) social group is excluded, and (c) a level of civil and political liberty. For them, these are requisite conditions.

Following from the foregoing, Nnoli (2003) posited that it is a system of government usually involving freedom of individuals in various aspects of political life, equality among citizens and justice in relation to the relationship between the people and the participation of the people in choosing those in government. Unah (1993) observed that democracy does not function in isolation, it is about the people. And its success is measured or dependent on the extent it has empowered people to surmount their basic needs and enjoy unrestrained participation in the policy process.

Nwanegbo (op cit) concludes that what gives democracy meaning and substance is participation and authority of the people to determine who rules, what policy to support and decision which would benefit the greatest number of people. The absence of the above contaminates the functionality and operation of democracy and democratization process.

d. Democratic consolidation

For Diamond (1977), democratic consolidation represents a state whereby institutions, rules and constraints of democracy become the sole legitimate means for the acquisition of and exercise of political power. To Ogundiya (2009), it is about regime maintenance and about regard in the key political institutions as the only legitimate framework for political contestation and adherence to the democratic rules of the game. Constitutionally, in consolidated democracies, both government and non state actors and social forces in the state become subjected to and abide by laws, procedures and sanctioned institutions for conflict resolution.

e. Fourth Republic:

It refers to Nigeria's fourth attempt at democratic civilian rule. It took off on 29th May

Theoretical Framework

We adopted the Post-Colonial State theory which is within the Marxist theory of the state. Essentially it tries to explain the nature, character and role of the state in post colonial societies. Hanza Alavi (1973:144-147) argued that the colonial state was established by foreign bourgeoisie to subordinate the natives and exploit their resources for the benefit of the foreign bourgeoisie. Consequently, the foreign bourgeoisie consciously ensured that there was not a developed indigenous bourgeoisie strong enough to establish hegemony over the state. At independence, the post colonial state became the means of class formation and exploitation. As Miliband (1977:109) said, the state is here the source of economic power as well as the instruments. With the absence of indigenous bourgeoisie, the class that inherited power at independence now resorted to the control of the state power for wealth accumulation. The consequences were (a) the zero-sum nature of politics. Whoever controls the state power controls everything, and therefore the struggle for state control became very, very intense. No person wants to be excluded from the corridors of power, hence the tendency to jump from one political party to the other. (b) The state is turned into the means of production and (c) The hobbesian nature of the society.

The theory is a reaction to the inherent characteristics, contradictions and dynamics of post-colonial, peripheral capitalist and developing states, and a reaction to the Western Liberal theory of the state which argues that the state is an independent force and a neutral observer that caters for the common interests of the society.

Marxian persuasion is that a state is a product of society at a particular stage of development characterized by irreconcilability of classes-the oppressed and the oppressor as the economically dominant class which also became politically dominant through the medium of the state. State is therefore organ of class domination, exploitation, oppression and subjugation. State power is indispensable in the struggle of social classes to protect the two classes from consuming themselves.

The state power which arises out of the society places itself above the society and functions arbitrarily in favour of the dominant class, especially in post-colonial states.

The economy of the post-colonial state like Nigeria has not been decolonized. The society therefore, not free from colonial features such that the political hegemony of the colonizers is still a critical factor in the country's underdevelopment which manifest in different dimensions, especially crisis of party politics. Therefore, policies and actions of the post-colonial state are absolutely in favour of dominant class responsible for the crisis of party politics.

The theory is apt in explaining the spate of inter-party defection which borders fundamentally on efforts to remain within the corridors of the state power.

The main work:

Inter-party defection has become one of the greatest challenges to Nigeria's democratic consolidation. The alarming rate at which politicians defect from one political party to the other raises issues of political ideologies and sense of maturity among our politicians.

The genesis of inter-party defection in Nigeria can be traced to 1951, when an attempt was made to deny the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) a majority in the Western Regional House of Assembly, resulted in some members of the NCNC defecting to the then Action Group (AG). NCNC was unable to form a government in the Western Region (Adejewon, 2023). Mba (2011) maintained that defection has assumed a norm in our democratization process. Politicians who lose out in their party primaries cross over to other political parties and contest under their platforms. When electoral fortunes elude them, they return to their former political parties. Sometimes even after their successful outing in their new political parties, they may return to their former political parties.

Explaining the long history of inter-party defection and the consolidation of the trend in Nigerian political system, Mba (2011:3) observed that the practice has assumed a permanent feature in Nigerian democratic experience. Infact, party dispensations, inter-party defections and political instability are among the greatest challenges confronting our democracy in the current political dispensation. Politicians defect to other parties with promises of election tickets if they fail to secure party nomination during their own party's primaries. Some who felt disenchanted or denied of a level laying ground, defect to participate in the election (Nwanegbo et al, 2014).

So many factors have been adduced for the spate of inter-party defections in Nigeria, prominent among them is lack of internal democracy within political parties. According to Jinadu (2014) recognition of candidates for nomination and selection for primary elections depend on the strength of the candidates in area of economic and political power, without due consideration of the integrity and capacity or capability of the candidate involved. Consequently, party crises set in and aggrieved or disadvantaged politicians defect to other political parties or even form new political parties (Badejo et al, 2015), Malthora (2005), Aziken (2009), Mbah (2011) and Aleyomi (2013) offered reasons for inter-party defections, including personality clash, power tussles, divergent views on the operations of a political party's position on an issue, realization of one's personal political ambition and party leaders reneging on agreed issues of the political party probably on power sharing formular.

Inter-party defections are not exclusive character of one political party in Nigeria. It is a general practice. Thus, the magnitude of inter-party defections (for instance in Rivers State House of Assembly in 2023)) and its impacts on the body policy raises fundamental questions on the manifestation of the trend and sustainability of Nigerian democracy.

Evidently, it shows a clear indication that the phenomenon has the capacity of either derailing Nigerian democracy or reinforcing opposition with the capacity to provide a guide for democratic

consolidation. In fact, its persistence, utility and growth could provide a bleak future, on the sustainability of party politics in Nigeria political system (Nwanegbo, op cit)

Following from the above, inter-party defection refers to one's abandonment of his/her previous position or association, offers to join an opposition or ruling group or party over the issue of political ideology, manifesto or programme and party management (Eme, Ogbochie, 2014:1).

From 1999 to date, many politicians at the Local Government, State and Federal levels had consistently defected from one political party to the other. Some did so abandoning the parties on whose platform they were elected, while others after losing elections found it the best option for them to cross carpet to another political party (Eme, Ogbochie, *ibid*). Some scholars have argued that inter-party defection is caused by political events involving political institutions while others (Eme, Ogbochie 2014), concluded that it is a result of ideological pressure (Nokken and Poole, 2002).

A number of reasons can be advanced for the ceaseless inter-party defection in Nigeria. First, Nigerian Political parties lack clear-cut party ideologies unlike what is obtainable in other developed democracies like the United States of America, Britain, Germany, Russia, etc. In the United States for instance, it is practically impossible to see a democrat politician defect to Republican party for any reason whatsoever and vice versa. As Olanrewaju (2015) rightly submits, political ideology is an essential vehicle of a political party.

Another reason for notable defections by party members in Nigeria is as a result of politicians' personal political interest. Rebenstorf (2020) has contended that political interest is the key factor for political motivation as well as a variable indicating ability "ideological conceptualization", which is important for participation in democratic process. Applying this to the Nigerian politics, a politician will readily defect from his party to another without the slightest compunction when his political interest and commitment in the former party is no longer ascertained.

Closely linked with personal interest are the issues of personal ambition of politicians. The aspirations to attain a political office or a higher political office cause politicians to make various forms of "investment" into their parties. However, the moment it becomes apparent that a politician cannot realize the contemplated political ambition on the platform of a particular political party, the politician along with his supporters may choose to pursue the political ambition in another political party that provides a ready platform for the actualization of the ambition. As Chioma Gabriel (2018) puts it, the "line that separates one politician from the other is so thin that some politicians have practically traversed all political parties in a bid to satisfy their burning interests. This may explain the possible reason surrounding the constant defection by Atiku Abubakar from party to party in a bid to secure a presidential ticket.

Another possible reason for inter-party defection can be attributed to lack of transparency and internal party democracy in the affairs of the party. This is often the case during party primaries, especially where candidates are handpicked by party leaders without providing a plain-level ground for all the aspirants. Where a political party fails to achieve internal unity or some party members feel that they have been marginalized or ostracized from party affairs, they will naturally want to seek better opportunities and relationships in other political parties.

Omilusi (2015), Mbah (2011) identified the need by politicians to stay connected to the party in power as another possible reason why there is usually a mass defection to the ruling party by the members of the opposition parties. In this respect, the "possession of state power leads directly to economic power, and those who hold positions in the power structure determine the location and distribution of economic resources and political rewards". The implication of this is that disconnection or exclusion from the source of political power in Nigeria may be very expensive and may mean an "outright ruin" to any politician who desires to "avoid economic discrimination as a political weapon in the hands of the ruling party".

Moreover, the fear of avoiding persecution or prosecution by the government in power have been speculated to be a contributory reason why some staunch party stalwarts may defect from their initial political parties to the party in power. For instance, Chioma Gabriel (2018) stated that there were speculations that the main reason why Senator Akpabio may have defected to APC from PDP in 2018 was to avoid criminal prosecution by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

However, Malhotra (2005) observed that in some nations party defections are not taken seriously, whereas, in some countries, such actions are seen as threat to democratic stability. This threat prompted the enactment of laws against defection in some countries. For instance, India enacted laws against defection in 1973, 1983 and 2003. The law provide that a person can be disqualified from serving in parliament for withdrawing membership of his original political party (Janada, 2009). The law reduced cases of inter-party defection in Indian polity since it was difficult for Indian public office holders to forfeit their positions (Lawrence I. Edet 2017).

In Nigeria, there exist also laws aimed at checkmating the rate of defection in sections 68 and 109 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended). For instance, section 68 (19) of the law states: A member of the Senate or the House of Representatives shall vacate his seat in the House of which he is a member, if being a person whose election to the House was sponsored by a political party, he becomes a member of another political party before the expiration of the period for which the House was elected. Provided that his membership of the latter political party is not as a result of a division in the political party which he was previously a member or of a merger of two or more political parties or factions by one of which he was previously sponsored (Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999:34) cited in Lawrence Edet, 2017)

Nwanegbo (op cit) observed that the fluidity in formation, mergers and demergers including the orchestration of internal party crisis has made this section difficult in application as the boundaries between mergers and demergers in Nigeria party politics appear too thin thereby creating justification for parliamentary defections. In the other vein, it is imperative to note that in most developing political system especially in Latin America and Africa, inter-party defections seem not to be motivated by ideological consideration but several other mundane factors not unconnected with the foundation of party politics in the regions. For instance, in most post-colonial states, parties emerged within the context of religion, ethnic consideration and the financial capacity of few elites. In fact, many of them are driven by such considerations and are ultimately seen as devoid of ideological coherence, heavily personality-driven and relying on an ethnic support base (Carothers, 2006). Ideology plays a pivotal role in prolonging the life span of a political party. It neutralizes or reduces internal conflict thereby serving as a binding force. Nnoli (2003) explained that ideology is a very crucial aspect of politics not only by serving as a cognitive aspect of looking at society generally and providing a perspective formula, that is a guide to individual action and judgement, self-identification popular mobilization and legitimization.

In fact, intra party crises in Nigeria underlies the burgeoning state of inter-party defections in Nigeria. These cases have corresponding impact on the political system, and sometimes ensure in members defecting to other parties. Essentially, internal party democracy is a sine qua non for redressing deep rooted animosity among members and reactivating the fortunes of these parties, since they have lost ideological content. It is through this that parties would be able to select candidates that are capable and alluring for elections. To Scarrow (2004) in fact, internal party democracy would serve as a veritable platform for mediation and conflict resolution among party faithfuls. Following from the above, it could be hypothesized that there are serious ideological poverty in virtually all Nigerian political parties which appeared to have generated into intra party conflict and in turn increased the rate of inter-party defections.

Parties in Nigeria lack ideological foundation. Political parties in Nigeria are virtually the same in terms of attributes and characteristics. For political party to promote democratic sustainability, it must be rooted in clear ideology. The act of inter-party defection in Nigeria is traceable to the

emphasis on the primacy of political power. Easton (1965) sees politics as an avenue for authoritative allocation of value for the society. People struggle for political power so as to be able to preside over the allocation of resources for the society. This is because the possession of state power directly gives access to economic power. By implication, those who hold political positions determine the allocation and distribution of economic resources and political reward.

The ideological bankruptcy has reduced Nigerian political parties to a mere organization that survive on monetization as the basis for loyalty and support. In Nigeria, politicians only defect from one party to another to contest elections or get favor not on the basis of party ideological differences.

The trends of baseless defections among Nigerian Politicians makes mockery of Nigerian democracy, negates the values of opposition parties in democratic system, invalidates opposing views and reduce the efficacy of alternative democratic choices. Inter-party defections, if not checked, could move Nigeria into a system without viable opposition to serve as watchdog to the ruling party.

The constitution seems to be explicit on the condition that could warrant or would demand forfeiture of one's seat in the Nigerian parliament. However, the constitution created gap in the second part which states that such forfeiture is legitimately mandatory "provided that his membership of the latter political party is not as a result of a division in the political party of which he was previously a member" (section 68(1) of 1999 Nigerian Constitution). Considering the nature of of Nigerian political parties and perhaps more importantly, the character of Nigerian politicians and the fact that no individual or agency is saddled with the responsibility of determining when a party is divided or not, makes this section more complex and ambiguous (Nwaegbo, op cit.).

No doubt the role of political ideology would stem the gale of inter-party defection. A party that is fundamentally built on ideology possesses the capacity to democratically manage conflicts of interests. Omotala (2009), Iyare (2004) identified ideological deficiency as a major challenge toward consolidating our democracy as a party that is fundamentally built on ideology possesses the capacity to democratically manage conflicts of interests. Party system that is not institutionalized and lacked the spicy, needed basic ingredients for regulating conduct, aggregate opinion may definitely lack the capacity to sustain itself and the entire political system. In this condition inter-party defections occur and may persist.

Wanjohi, 2003: 239 forcefully averred that a party's sustainability can be measured by its level of adaptability, its resource adequacy, the presence of mechanisms of internal conflict resolution, and the extent to which the party evolves a continuous process of self reincarnation through the positive leadership recruitment and injection of new ideas. And this can be measured in terms of of the size of its core members as well as the character and organizational capabilities of its core leadership.

The next problem is the challenge of resources. The culture of having "party financiers" as few members of the party who by that status almost take over the party structure makes it difficult for one to conclude that any political party in Nigeria has a sustainable base. If these financiers decide to withhold their support and finances, the finance of the party crumbles. Sometimes, these party financiers tend to dictate for the parties and this may lead to clash of interests. And those who feel short-changed may defect to other parties to test their political fortunes.

There are clearly two ways defection occurs:

- a. Great movement of politicians from different political parties into the ruling party towards the time of the general elections, so as to participate in party primaries of the ruling party.
- b. After the party primaries, whereby the losers in the party primaries move to their former party Under which they intend to contest the coming elections(CUJPIA, 2013: 13). Refer to the following sources for abridged catalogues of political defections in Nigeria: This day, May 26, 2002; The Guardian, July 5, 2002; Thursday, November 30, 2003; The Guardian, January 11, 2003; New

Nigeria, May 17, 2002, Weekly Trust, November 15, 2002; Daily Trust, February 21, 2003; This Day, February, 2017, etc (Lawrence Edet, 2017:8).

The Effect of Inter-Party Defection and Nigeria Democratization Process.

Incessant inter-party defections clearly reveal a problem of lack of political philosophy and integrity by Nigerian politicians. This can make people to lose confidence in the country's political process as many politicians consider political parties merely as a vehicle for realizing their selfish political gains and ambitions.

Secondly, widespread inter-party defections, especially from the opposition parties to the ruling party have the potentials of destroying a viable and strong opposition, which could provide effective checks and balance against the ruling party's dictatorial and suppressive tendencies. Thus, the absence of a strong opposition party can lead the country to a one party state which may not be healthy for Nigeria's democracy.

Thirdly, there is the fear that constant inter-party defections from opposition parties to the ruling party may lead to an establishment of a one party system is the fact that such defections can equally lead to the creation of weak multi-party system which cannot provide effective opposition to the government in power.

Inter-party defection may also seriously undermine and threaten the consolidation of democratic gains in Nigeria.

Factors Against Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria.

Several factors militate against democratic consolidation in Nigeria, including :

- a. Lack of Accountability: the public sector is not accountable to the people. Nigeria has a large amount of natural resources, but lack proper accountability measures.
- b. Lack of strong government agencies to enforce laws and rules: this creates opportunity for public officials to embezzle fund without fear of repercussions or punishment. In Nigeria, any one that is favored in political patronage can basically get away with most crimes. Enforcement agencies need to be equipped to enforce laws and be given the authority to persecute anybody regardless of his positions.
- c. Another major challenge and threat to democratic consolidation in Nigeria is corruption. Transparency International in 2004 projected Nigeria as the second most corrupt country in the world (132nd out of 133 countries surveyed) (Akinyemi, 2008). Nigeria has also been ranked as the third most corrupt country in the sub-saharan Africa and 143rd out of 183 countries surveyed around the world in 2011 (Transparency International 2011). It has been argued that the war on graft has been difficult to win because the act is perpetuated by policy makers themselves.
- d. God-fatherism: many public officials are indebted to their political God-fathers because of their rise in politics and they are expected to repay the debt during their stay in office. The implication of this is the draining the meager resources which could have been used to address the basic problem of the masses. God-fatherism has frustrated the democratic process since it retards the selection of credible leaders, thereby jeopardizing democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Achieving Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria.

- a. Nigeria should propagate democratic rule; this is necessary because it seeks to ensure that democratic consolidation is attained. Nigeria must respect and uphold laws embodied in the constitution. A clear hierarchy that is interpreted by an independent judiciary and strengthened by the legal culture in the civil society must be put in place.
- b. Political Arena: Nigeria's political arena includes core institutions of the society such as political parties, electors, electoral rules, legislature etc. In recent time, the political arena has lost public confidence. To attain consolidated democracy, a workable agreement on the myriad ways in which democratic power will be created and exercised must be put in place.
- c. The role of the civil society group which consists of social movements such as religious groups, associations, trade unions, journalists etc, cannot be discountenanced. This is because of its capability to mobilise the opposition as seen in many countries in Eastern Europe.
- d. The last paragraph of section 68(1)(g) of the 1999 constitution the Federal Republic of Nigeria should be amended and restructured to solve the ambiguity caused as a loophole for politicians to defect. Proper interpretation is required on the concept of “division”. In line with the solution to constitutional ambiguity, there is need for independent candidacy in any election. Section 7 (4), 65 (2) (b), 106 (d), 131 and 177 (c), of the Constitution of Nigeria 1999, prohibits independent candidacy in elections. For a vibrant democracy, independent candidates should be allowed.

Conclusion

As Nwanegbo et al (op cit) conclude, the major challenges for sustaining Nigerian democracy in the Fourth Republic is the perennial defections arising from internal party crisis. With huge number of defections, the present republic is facing the problem of stability. This is mainly because of ideological deficiencies among parties and the drive by influential individuals to privatize a political party. Resolving the current defection among party members or ending the persistent defection would demand rethinking and a paradigm shift from the hitherto amalgam of political profit making allies representing political parties to electing party system that are ideologically rooted. More importantly, is the critical role the Civil Society Groups and state agencies in reversing the present abnormality. Sustaining Nigerian democracy demands a sustained radical, social re-engineering, re-orientation and mobilization that would be directed towards inculcation of new values and essence of entrenching acceptable philosophy in Nigeria's party system.

Huntington (1991) postulates a “two turnover” thesis as an indicator of democratic consolidation. He argues that democracy becomes consolidated when an entrenched regime delivers free, fair and competitive election by which the party that win power at the initial elections during the transition phase loses in subsequent elections and handover power to the winning party and when the winning party also in turn hands over power peacefully, to another party at subsequent elections. Yes, we have civilian rule but far from achieving democracy. If we adopt Huntington's (1991) “two- turnover” thesis, Nigeria regrettably is yet to achieve democratic consolidation, the best she has attained is a “one turnover”, so we are still at the half-way mark after twenty-four years of civil rule.

Recommendations

1. There should be a complete revitalization of democratic practice in such a manner that would leverage the potentials for democratic consolidation.
2. Democratic practice should be deepened in Nigeria. This is because true democracy entails strict

- adherence to the rule of law, respect for human rights and protection of life and property.
3. Nigeria's electoral system should be strengthened. The people should be allowed to elect leaders of their choice. Elections should be free, fair and credible.
 4. Nigeria's economy amidst the present economic recession must be institutionalized through a socially and politically regulated market, etc

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ETHNIC POLITICS, JUDICIAL INFLUENCE, AND THE 2023 KOGI STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS.

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Abstract

The Nigerian federation is a marriage of over 500 ethnic nations whose consents were not sought in its formation. This fundamental error is further deepened by the fact that these ethnic groups have very striking differences ranging from language, population, level of education and geographical locations which was not considered during the crafting of the Nigerian State. This exercise undertaken by the British colonial master was mainly for administrative and commercial interest. However, politics and ethnics rivalry of the Nigerian State continued to be punctuated by ethnic related crises that threaten its continued existence as a Nation. Ethnicity constitutes one of the major factors determining voting behavior and the perception of the citizens in Nigerian elections. These different ethnic nationalities in the nation was now dominated by fear, suspicion, domination and the acts of scheming, manipulating for juice positions and recognitions, so as to take a leadership role and control of resources through political power in the nation. The paper recommends further studies in this direction, and also a systematic change in altitude, behavior and conduct toward these ethnic groupings, to a more inclusive, open, transparent and credible political process to accommodate all in the Nigerian political atmosphere for peace, progress and a sustainable democratic culture in the country.

Keywords: *Ethnicity, Federation, Resources, Nigerian Politics, and Political Power*

Introduction

Nigeria at the age of sixty-four (64) is still searching for a new political order. The full realization of this objective has been made impossible because of the dominance of ethnicism, religion and political factors. These factors which has affected the survival of democratic rule and national development in Nigeria has a reflection in the pattern of voting and the outcome of 2023 Governorship election in Kogi State. Federalism is arguably the suitable framework for addressing ethnic, cultural and religious pluralism in a complex society like Nigeria. In such system, each region or state is allowed to control its resources and develop at its own pace. However, Nigeria who claims to run a federal system of government operates the opposite and does not recognize the identities, interest and needs of the people especially the minorities. The nation's constitution does not reflect the wishes of the people; most government policies are anti-people and do not engender national integration and cohesion (Ilesanmi, 2014). The Nigerian government remains distant from serving the interest of its people. Politics at the federal, state and local levels of the Nigerian federation are dominated by the powerful mandarin who built vast patronage networks during the military days and who now use political office to expand these networks and their personal fortunes. Moreover, many of these so called 'godfathers' have been cultivating, prompting a local arm race in some regions even though several governors are under indictment for money laundering abroad and others are being investigated at home, the bonanza continues at public coffers for these power holders, while basic infrastructure in many parts of the country remains as dilapidated as it was under military rule (Kew, 2006 cited in Fagbadebo, 2007).

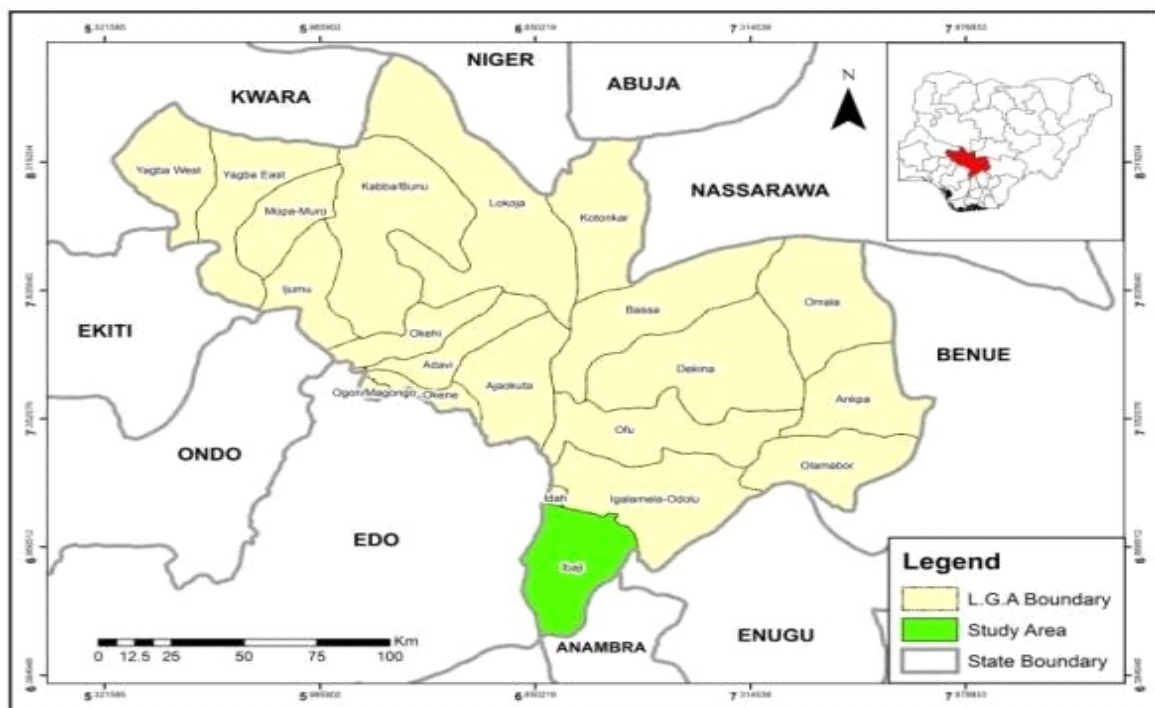
Politics today in Nigeria is a 'do or die' issues. The struggle for political power and control at the centre has over-heated the nation's polity and created unnecessary tension which has resulted to bigotry between and among regions. Political thugs are recruited and armed by these same politicians who at the end of the day loose grip of these thugs and these arms are used on defenseless citizens (Ilesanmi, 2014). The current democratic dispensation since inception has been besieged with unprecedented vice disturbance and social insecurity resulting in massive destruction of property and loss of lives. The religious and ethnic dimension to these upheavals makes them a serious threat

to national security. The tension and uncertainties in the country today is not conducive for democratic process and national development. Nigeria in recent times has witnessed a lot of violence eruption and general insecurity in nearly all the states of the federation. Prominent among such is the Boko Haram which has been attributed to the political rivalry between the north and the south towards controlling the political power in the country. It must be realized that, the sudden and apparent emergence of the Boko Haram sect at this period in the history of the country is meant to destabilize the Jonathan's Administration as well as the equilibrium the country has been brought to by the government (Ogoloma, 2012). In addition, kidnapping and all forms of maladies, militia groups exist in all geopolitical zones. This has resulted in a lot of bloodsheds, senseless killings, destruction of property, social and economic dislocation and its attendant poverty, insecurity and unemployment (Ilesanmi, 2014).

Brief History of the State

Geographical Location: Kogi State is located in the North Central region of Nigeria, bordering ten other states. It was formed on August 27, 1991, by merging portion of the Kwara and Benue States. And Kogi is known as the "Confluence State" due to the confluence of River Niger and River Benue at its capital Lokoja, which holds significance as Nigeria's former administrative capital during colonial era.

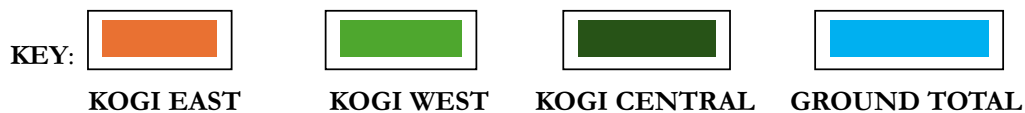
Map of Kogi State Showing Numbers of Local Government in the Three Zones.



Ethnic Composition: Kogi shares borders with Benue to the east, Edo and Ondo to the south west, Anambra and Enugu to the south east, Niger to the west, Nasarawa to the north east, Ekiti and Kwara to the west and FCT to the north. Kogi state is politically divided into zones which are Kogi East (Igala people), Kogi West (Okun people) and Kogi Central (Ebira people). The state has a population of over 3million and is home to many ethnic groups with roughly 45% identifying as Muslims and 40% as Christians and the remaining 15% practicing various traditional based religions.

Population of Kogi State and Sex as at 2006

LGA	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Adavi	217,219	108,891	108,328
Ajaokuta	122,432	62,995	59,437
Ankpa	266,176	133,705	132,471
Bassa	139,687	70,293	69,394
Dekina	260,968	131,394	129,574
Ibaji	127,572	64,423	63,149
Idah	79,755	40,141	39,614
Igalamela-Odolu	147,048	74,489	72,559
Ijumu	118,593	59,582	59,011
Kabba/Bunu	144,579	72,639	71,940
Kogi	115,100	58,864	56,236
Lokoja	196,643	101,145	95,498
Mopa-Muro	43,760	22,311	21,449
Ofu LGA	191,480	96,671	94,809
Ogori/Magongo	39,807	20,051	19,756
Okehi	223,574	112,879	110,695
Okene	325,623	163,935	161,688
Olamabolo	158,490	78,439	80,051
Omala	107,968	54,366	53,602
Yagba East	147,641	74,619	73,022
Yagba West	139,928	71,071	68,857
Kogi State	3,314,043	1,672,903	1,641,140



Economic Overview: Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, with crops like maize, rice, yam, palm oil, and minerals like coal, limestone, and iron being produced. The Kogi people's primary occupations are farming, industrial activities, and mining.

Elections Pattern Analysis

The 2023 governorship elections in Kogi State promises to be direct confrontation between the three major ethnic nationalities in the state. This is novel, though not totally new to Kogi politics. Since the creation of the state in 1991, there have always been ethnic contests between two major tribes while the third tribe and minorities become beautiful brides.

In the highly divisive governorship contest, the biggest issues dominating the campaigns loudly are ethnic leaning, which the campaigns clearly show up to be a tribal contest, a three-horse race among the Epira, Okun, and Igalala ethnic nationalities. In the primaries held for the 2023 gubernatorial elections for the state, we witnessed a deviation from the usual pattern of two major tribes facing each other and using the third tribe as bargaining chip. PDP produced Dino Melaye from Okun tribe, APC produced Usman Ododo from Epira tribe while the SDP held up Murtala Ajaka, an Igalala, as its candidate. This is the first time since the state was created that the three major tribes and highly influential personalities will engage in battle for the number one seat in the state (The Lugard House). However, all three major ethnic groups must rely on the minority for vote to be able to come out victorious in November 11, 2023.

Election Violence and Lack of Issue Based Campaigns

Incidences of violence have become one of the characteristics of elections in the state. In 2019, the entire nation learnt a new slogan for political violence, 'tatatatata'. The barbaric killing of a woman, Salome Abuh, who was burnt alive in her house at Ochadamu in Ofu local Government Area of Kogi State shortly after the announcement of the results of the governorship election on November 18, 2019, saw Kogi's rating in political absurdities rise. Recent developments show 2023 may not be different from previous election years. On June 3, 2023, there was a clash of convoys between Murtala Ajaka and Governor Yahaya Bello. Speaking of the convoy attack, Governor Bello said: *“A lion is returning to his dain and an antelope crossing his way. Let it be the first and last time an antelope will cross the lion's way. Next time, there will be no warning”*. Yahaya Bello also said: *The November election was going to be a tough battle and if he see any monkey hand, O my God!*. Not long after that, suspected political thugs invaded and vandalized the SDP campaign office in Lokoja, the state capital. After accusations and counter-claims, the hoodlums returned to same campaign office and set it ablaze. Also, “there was a report of unrest in Ayingba in Dekina LGA of Kogi East, when the SDP candidate went to commission his campaign office. The office was allegedly vandalized on separate occasions, with one person reported dead from the incident. There have also been reports of attack on APC secretariat in Igalamela-Odolu local government. An APC chieftain Khadijat Yahaya allegedly lost her life after a clash between supporters of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and those of the APC in Kotonkarfi which made the APC suspend its campaign by a day, this could lead to retaliatory attacks. An attack was also lunched on Kabiru Bala (Okwo) from Kogi East which also fueled political violence in the state. The signs are ominous and if allowed to fester, it will surely affect future elections with the possibility of low turnout of voters.

- **Anti-Party Activities**

ADC won two House of Representatives seats in Kogi state during the February 2023 elections due to anti-party activities. The fallout from primary elections has led to politicians leaving parties in

anger at both state and national levels. The contentious primaries may lead to more anti-party activities before the governorship election.

- **Power of Incumbency**

The ruling APC party has the advantage of incumbency with federal and state powers in the state. The APC and its candidate, Ododo heavily rely on the influence of the incumbent governor, Yahaya Bello. Both Bello and Ododo hail from the same Okone community and share close ties. The APC's significant representation in Kogi State's federal and state legislative bodies underscores its influential position., six out of eight Federal House of Representative members, and twenty-two out of twenty-five State House of Assembly members in their fold. Opposition faces a tough battle. And ahead of the 2023 elections, the Kogi State Government blocked a road leading to the strong hold of the PDP's senatorial candidate.

- **Controversial Endorsement and Defections**

Political parties in Nigeria have experienced recent controversial endorsements and defections. For instance, the ADP candidate endorsed SDP's Murtala Ajaka, but later the party supported APC's Usman Ododo. The ADC Idah chapter endorsed Dino Melaye but the party denied it, claiming the officials were impostors. Additionally, the ruling party announced defections from SDP, but SDP denied it, accusing the APC of being scammed.

- **Insecurity**

The off-cycle elections may have been influenced by security concerns in Kogi State, where there have been reports of kidnappings and alleged attacks on political figures. The use of political thugs and security officials for electoral violence was well entrenched in the state during and after the poll. The elections held earlier in 2023, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) threatened to cancel the polls in Dekina local government due to violence. Political violence in Kogi State largely dovetails with a dangerous level of inter-ethnic, social and resource based contestations.

- **Poverty/Economic Crisis**

The removal of fuel subsidies has increased the economic hardship in the country. With the increase in transportation, food items and other basic amenities, citizens having difficulties coping with the current realities. The increasing economic hardship has created a more vulnerable system susceptible to vote buying and inducements by politicians which can be exploited during the upcoming off-cycle elections.

Factors That Amplified Ethnicity and Ethnic Politics

Various factors continued to amplify ethnic and political tensions in Nigeria particularly and in Africa in general most of these are inherent in the composition and cooperate existence of the various nation in Africa due to the colonial experience in the past and subsequent political arrangement that later followed after independence. Azeez (2004) views ethnicity as a sense of people hood that has its foundation in the combined remembrance of past experience and common aspiration. These in many ways contradict the reality on ground. Many countries on the African continent have people who do not share common goals and aspiration with their fellow compatriots, there are constant agitating for self-determination and independence because of marginalization and segregation in the same country, again major factors that amplified ethnicity and ethnic politics can be said to include:

Political Patronage/Ethnic Politics

This particular factor had been one of the major causes responsible for the fueling of ethnicity and ethnic politics in the system and in many African nations. The quest for political power had created a higher degree of contestation among the various ethnic groupings in nations across the African continent, particularly in Nigeria, these ethnic extractions are always in perpetual suspicion of one another, fear and constant doubts, thereby creating tension and deep resentment. Power struggle among and within the various ethnic nationalities creates deep hostility, hatred and resentment that will eventually result to violence and war in the system. The implication of this was that Nigerian federalism lacked the requisite foundation for a formidable federal system, the resultant effect of which is loyalty to ethnic groups rather than loyalty to the nation. In a circumstance of mutual suspicion and fear of domination, competition for power among ethnic groups becomes unavoidable. And it is on the basis of this fear of domination that formation of political parties in Nigeria always reflects a strong dose of ethnicism. Colonialism left behind for Nigeria a non-hegemonic state that further aggravated the crisis of ethnicism in the nation as contended by Salawu and Hassan 2010. This is clearly pointed out by Osaghae (2001) when he writes that: ...the pervasiveness of ethnic politics in the country is taken to be symptomatic of aggravated crisis of legitimacy that has engulfed the state, and is explained in terms of the proven efficacy of the ethnic strategy, the weakness of alternative identities and political units, the prevailing milieu of lawlessness that has enveloped the country's political landscape, and the inability of the state to act as an effective agency of distributive justice. In essence therefore power struggle is at the heart of ethnicity and ethnic politics in the Nigerian state and instrumentality of its propagation is the platform of the political parties. In a similar work, Aluko (2003) identifies the Legacy of Colonialism and monopoly of power by the major ethnic groups and their consequent marginalization of the minority groups as major factors promoting ethnic nationalism in Nigeria. Other causes of ethnicism identified include poverty of leadership in terms of forging national integration among the multiple ethnic nationalities in the country (Babangida, 2002). Babangida argues further that mass poverty and unemployment creates alienation and insecurity, which in turn encourage Nigerians to experience and prefer accommodation within the social insurance system of ethnic nationalities. Further identified causes of ethnic problems in Nigeria have to do with competition for employment and political exploitation. The former has been caused by the ever increasing number of school leavers who now troop to the urban centre in search of jobs, which many a time are not found. And where such jobs are found they are given according to ethnic affiliation. The latter has to do with politicians who manipulate ethnic loyalties in order to increase their winning chance at the polls. This aspect of ethnicism in the Nigerian situation has set one ethnic group against another with immeasurable consequences. manifestation of ethnic politics has grave Implications for the survival of Nigerian state the effort made so far in this paper has been to show that the inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria has been one of conflict largely caused by ethnic chauvinism, which manifests in form of ethnic nationalism. There is no doubt that this has implications for the survival of democracy in Nigeria and indeed in the African continent in general. The question to answer here is how does ethnicity and the resultant ethnic politics affect political parties in the Nigerian state, the simple answer is power struggle among these ethnic grouping. Each seeking to undo and outdo each other in the bid to secure power at the detriment of one another.

Unbalance Structural Distribution

In any society ethnicity and ethnic politics thrive effectively when there are structural imbalances in that society particularly in areas such as population, distribution of economy wealth, political positions, ethnicity divide anation, its create segregation and separation instead of integration of the various ethnic grouping in the society, the detrimental effects of ethnics division that slow undermine the progress of any society. Ethnic group is an informal interest group whose members

are distinct from the members of other ethnic groups within the larger society because they share kinship, religious and linguistic ties (Cohen, 1974). This means that ethnic groups are social formations, which are distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries (Nnoli, 1978). Hence imbalance exist between and among these ethnic setting and each group seek to protect and guide their respective interest at the expense of the other, thereby creating socio cultural and political distinction to the detriment of the larger community. In all political activities in Nigeria and most of the African state, the factor of ethnicity is reflected. It is particularly obvious in areas like voting, distribution of political offices, employment and government general patronage of the citizens, even in education, they seek to regulate the amount and the number slot allocated to a particular ethnic grouping in the university and other institution of higher learning.

Arbitrary Use of Ethnicity by Greedy Political Leaders

As noted earlier most of the political leaders and politician alike use ethnic politics and indeed ethnicity as an instrument of political advancement, ethnic sentiment is usually deployed to win votes and other political consideration as the expense of the nation. The use of ethnicity as a political tool had long history in Nigerian political experience, elites vis-a-vis politician capitalize on the frosty relationships among the various ethnic groupings in the system to advance their political career. These groups of people use ethnicity and ethnic politics to systematically divide the people against so as to remain in power. Another interesting manifestation of ethnic politics in Nigeria is the administrative division of the country into three regions. Each of these regions is dominated by one of the three ethnic groupings thereby reinforcing the popular philosophy of three-player of ethnic game. Many things have been affected by this tri-polar pattern. Particularly interesting was the move for self-government, which if attained would usher in a democratic government in Nigeria. The north was unwilling to see a self-rule at the centre. The position taken by the north on this issue was indeed another expression of fear of domination. The north then felt that the enlightened south could use their advantage position to marginalize its people to extent they delayed self rule until independence in 1960. The whole point here therefore ethnic remain a major challenge in the advancement and development of the Nigerian project. Fear and domination of the major tribe in Nigeria still remain a major challenge to the full and proper integration of the Nigerian state.

Implications of Ethnicity

A nation like Nigeria does not need to be told the implications of ethnicity in its political, social, and economic life or other areas of endeavor. The nation will suffer more losses than it did last time in terms of destruction of human being and properties, it was reported that over one million Nigerians died during the Biafra war on both side therefore, politician and other stake holder must be held accountable in word and deeds particularly in governance and politics. Eradicate ethnic sentiment and manipulation from the fabric and the body politic of the Nigerian society. Ethnicized Nigeria will be underdeveloped and will stall every developmental initiative and effort by successive government administration, it will create rancor, nepotism, hatred, cultural and integration barrier in the nation and many more set back associated with ethnicity. It is noted here as ethnicity had been the primary sources and causes of political violence and war in many nations particularly in Africa. its negative consequences as observed by Babangida (2002), are wastage of enormous human and material resources in ethnically inspired violence, encounters, clashes and even battles, heightening of fragility of the economy and political process, threat to security of life and property and disinvestments of local and foreign components with continuous capital flight and loss of confidence in the economy; and increasing gaps in social relations among ethnic nationalities including structural suspicions and hate for one another these has been the hindering factors of production and political integration of the various ethnic nationalities in the nation.

Arguably, trend of this nature cannot but have serious implications on a country's body politic. Consequently, this section examines the implications of ethnic politics on the Nigerian political system and summarizes as follows;

- a) It has institutionalized corruption in public offices in Nigeria. This has led to the debasing of common values and zeal among the various ethnic groups to fight corruption. This has robbed the nation of the much political will needed to combat corruption that has put Nigeria's name on the list of the world's most corrupt countries.
- b) It has also led to electoral irregularities, as ruling ethnic groups continue to involve themselves in power not minding the eventuality of their actions
- c) Ethnic politics is partially responsible for the absence of accountability and transparency in governance as leaders continue to play the ethnic card to cover their lack of dedication to good and accountable governance.
- d) It has over the years since independence created instability and tension that sometimes led to military takeover like it was the case during the first republic
- e) It has also introduced ethnic nepotism into the Nigerian polity as leaders are sometimes accused by rival ethnic groups, of placing their ethnic brothers in strategic positions of government at the expense of other ethnic groups within the nation
- f) Ethnic politicization has also brought about a situation whereby people of different groups engage themselves in the struggle for power and economic hegemony.
- g) Ethnic politics has arrested the development of the land as the Nigerian nation battles with leadership crisis due to the artificial pattern of producing political leaders in Nigeria. Lack of leadership competence has retarded the socio-political and economic development of the nation.

Managing Ethnicity in Nigeria Society

Ethnicity can be managed and curtailed particularly in Nigeria and in other African countries where there are multi-ethnic groupings in language, culture, and social differences. One particular way of managing ethnicity is through the formation of a broad-based political parties and government in the nation, uniting them under one common goal, objectives, and purpose, another major way is through the provision of good governance and equality in the distribution and allocation of basic social amenities in all strata of the society. More so effective and efficient management of scarce resources is also a better way of creating a sense of belonging, security, peace and the spirit of inclusion rather than exclusion in the minds of all the ethnic groupings in the society and giving all the ethnic groupings equal treatment in the scheme of things in the society, and this will eradicate social, political and economic crisis and unnecessary contestation and competition among them. It is noted here, that most of the social conflicts, wars and political violence experienced in some of the African countries today stem from the poor management of all the ethnic groupings across the continent either in deliberate deprivation of basic social amenities, sidelining them appointment/allocation of political offices and outright promoting division and suspicion through nepotism and as a pattern of leadership failure, thereby creating conflict in the society. Another cause of conflicts be it social, economical, political or religious also stem from the poor management of resources such as gold,

Judicial Supremacy and the Modest Constitution

Judicial supremacy is under attack. From various points on the political spectrum, political actors as well as academics have challenged the idea that the courts in general and the Supreme Court in

particular, have a special and preeminent responsibility in interpreting and enforcing the Constitution. Reminding us that treating Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution as supreme and authoritative has no grounding in constitutional text and not much more in constitutional history, these critics seek to relocate the prime source of interpretive guidance. The courts have an important role to play, these critics acknowledge, but its a role neither greater than that played by other branches, nor greater than the role to be played by the people themselves. The critics' understanding of a more limited function for the judiciary in constitutional interpretation appears to rest, however, primarily on a highly contestable conception of the point of having a written constitution

In the first place. According to this conception, a constitution, and especially the Constitution of the United States, is the vehicle by which a democratic polity develops its own fundamental values. A constitution, therefore, becomes both a statement of our most important values and the vehicle through which these values are created and crystallized. Under this conception of the role of a written constitution, it would indeed be a mistake to believe that the courts should have the preeminent responsibility for interpreting that constitution. For this task of value generation to devolve to the courts would represent not only a perversion of constitutionalism, so the argument goes, but would also signal an abdication of democratic governance itself.

Although such a conception is not without merit, it must compete with an alternative and arguably superior understanding of the *raison d'être* of a written document called a "constitution." Under this alternative understanding, the constitution incorporates a series of rules that impose second order constraints on the first-order policy preferences of the people and of their elected representatives and executive officials. Precisely because these second-order constraints limit (in the service of longer-term or deeper values) the rational and usually well-meaning first-order preferences of those who are to be constrained, it would be anomalous to place too much hope or trust in those whose constraint is the whole point of the constitutional limits. Under this alternative view of constitutionalism, judicial supremacy emerges not because of any nostalgic or unduly idealistic view about the capacities of the judiciary. Nor does it flow from contempt for the decision-making capacities of ordinary people. Rather, external constraint on those who are to be constrained from effectuating even their rational, well-meaning, and good-faith policies and preferences is the natural concomitant of the external nature of the constitutional norms themselves.

In this Reply I seek to explicate and defend this latter version of constitutionalism and thus to show that the judicial role labeled "judicial supremacy" is the natural partner of constitutionalism itself.

Conclusions

This study advanced the argument that ethnicity and politics, as operated in Nigeria has retarded the integration of the country and has continued to impede the attainment of national unity and development, as centrifugal tensions, resource control and self-determination, ethnicity based identity politics and religious cleavages have enveloped national development process in Nigeria. These social dynamics have weakened and hampered the development of institutions necessary for nation building. The study has revealed through its perceived findings that ethnicity, and politics have a negative effect on national development in Nigeria. Therefore, if there must be national development in our country, Nigeria must develop a supra-national consciousness and Nigerians must shift their loyalties from their ethnic and regional cum religious groups to a new Nigerian nation. This does not in any way imply a strategy that denies the socio-cultural or ethnic roots of Nigerians, but taking advantage of our multiculturalism, multi-religiosity and multiple identities, all Nigerian must contribute to create one nation which all nationalities (majorities, minorities and sub-minorities alike).

Sadly, violence and electoral malpractice will still play a part in the outcome of the elections.

Incumbency powers, at different levels, and control of certain key strongholds are likely to make or mar the elections and affect how the outcome of the election will be accepted.

Recommendations

If Nigeria must exist as a nation, due regard must be given to the plurality of our ethnic nationalities in which case, principles of true federalism must be adhered to. Political power has to be shared satisfactorily among the component ethno-cultural communities and resources for development distributed equitably. The nation needs a purposeful leadership that has a vision of how to place its citizens at the centre of political project without recourse to ethnic chauvinism and sees acquisition of political power as not an end in itself but a means for serving the collective welfare of its people regardless of their ethnic origin.

The leaders of the various religious groups and their membership are urged to embrace dialogue, tolerance and respect for each other and also embrace the tenets of their religion which advocates peaceful co-existence, love and brotherhood of all mankind. The content and dictates of Nigerian constitution should be strictly applied, practiced and utilized as provide. This will go a long way to strengthen and empower the potency of government in the act of governance in Nigeria.

The paper further recommends the adoption and creation of a credible electoral process to accommodate people of all creed, race, ethnicity, religious, economic, political, and social standing in the society. These will among other things, allow for peace, stability, and tranquility in the nation as a whole, it will also eliminate poverty, underdevelopment, corruption, economic depression, political instability and social insecurity.

Furthermore, Nigerian should learn how to put the interests of the country first before their parochial, tribal, ethnic interests because the country is for all of us. The leadership of Nigeria headed by Bola Ahmed Tinubu should as a matter of fairness keep to their electoral promise by putting in place electoral reforms that would enable Nigerians have free and fair election that had eluded the country for decades.

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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION (SBCC) IN MANAGING CRIMINALITY IN JOS SOUTH LGA, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Crime continues to bedevil the existence of humankind. As an early threat to survival and instinct, it derails calmness which leaves citizens to the echoes of fear and uncertainty. These crimes which include robbery, theft, internet fraud, farmers/herders clash, sexual harassment, domestic violence, kidnapping, amongst others, causing fear and instability in society. This study examined the Role of Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) in Managing Criminality in Jos South LGA Plateau State, Nigeria. It assessed the depth of criminality and its management using community participation strategy. The paper is anchored on the theory of Persuasion for effective conveyance. It adopted survey research design. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 45 respondents who are residents in Jos South. 45 copies of questionnaire were distributed, filled and 43 returned valid for constructive analysis. Data collected was analyzed and captured in tables using simple percentage. The study findings discovered that SBCC plays a significant role in creating excellent communication channels and a conducive environment that is safe and interactable. As a tool for improving the community it encompasses understanding values, thought processes, beliefs and cultural norms that influence behavioral patterns towards crime. The people understand the risks of crimes and how to prevent them for a stable environment that attracts growth and socioeconomic development.

Keywords: Behavior Change Communication (BCC), SBCC, Criminality, Prevention, Communication.

Introduction

Globally, criminality of any form is a serious blow to a society particularly in developing countries that lack technical dimensions in addressing emerging trends. In recent times, the rise in crime has led to higher death tolls and associated psychological trauma. Sadly, the security of life and property is essential for socio-economic growth. According to Chacos (2015), the government has the responsibility of adequately providing security in each social formation. Security invariably becomes the most vital element in human life and an absence of it hampers social, economic, and political achievements.

Criminality, which is the state of being criminal, entails all forms of illegal acts or behaviors that are detrimental to social beings and society. Supporting the above, Andiyani (2022) opines that crime is a social phenomenon caused by normative derivations that are detrimental. The study supports this as criminality is antisocial behavior highly characterized by impulsiveness, irritability, aggression, and an overall inability to accept basic social norms. This leads to a deviation and causes individuals to continuously commit criminal acts. These triggers include economic decline, poverty, unemployment, moral decay, juvenile delinquency, social problems, religious segregations and etcetera. UNICAF (2024) urges all stakeholders to strongly invest in a system that focuses on crime prevention, restorative and a more holistic intervention that addresses the root causes of criminality. In the publication of African Organized Crime index 2023, Nigeria ranks second on its outburst of organized crime registered to be on an increasing phase with no minute sign of slowing down. Every Nation struggles to protect and deepen core values that aimed in preserving National interest, identity and sovereignty which provides a state of National security. First, it deals with the state as the most important object to security or traditional security, later metamorphosis to non-traditional security which deals with humans as referent objects to security (Bawdin, 1997).

In very recent times, alarming incidences of criminalities have been a bloodstream in the veins of Jos South LGA, Nigeria which places her citizens on a constant jumping verge of seeking for self-

protection and migration to other regions and subsequently other countries. As a society, religious dimensions are prone to craving monstrous claws that birth grievous acts of inhumanity to man and nature. Ethnic tensions, land grabbing, kidnapping, herders/farmers clash, social and political grievances are enzymes towards societal breakdown and unrest. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) the prevalence of criminality in Nigeria is driven by diverse and complex factors. Though their individual importance cannot be easily weighed, together they constitute fertile ground for organized crime groups (2022).

In Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State Nigeria, the increasing level of criminality is becoming alarmingly for all and sundry, questioning the incapacitation of the various security agencies in putting efforts towards effective management. A peculiar line of criminality are multi-dimensional crises existing within ethnic, political, and religious groups which are intertwined with banditry and kidnapping. To compound the issues of criminality is the prospect of the instrumentalization of these criminal networks by political actors (Global Initiative, 2022).

In crime, the behavior portrayed is a response to stimuli which is either intrinsically motivated or extrinsically motivated due to their thought pattern. Social Behavior Change Communication is an interactive process to understanding behavior, develops approaches and communication channels to encourage and sustain positive and appropriate actions; a path towards promoting positive behavior (Bassey and Duke, 2018). It typically employs the usage of participatory approaches that target the individual towards a development process that ensures messages are culturally appropriate, dependable, effective, and relevant to their needs. Impeding channels of crime initiation caused by idleness, substance abuse, poverty, deficit in social provisions by the government and self-questions on life achievements. The study seeks to employ SBCC as a large package, employing theories, techniques, and participatory procedures to contend the problem of crime as it promoting effective communication in managing criminality in Jos South LGA, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Criminality

This connotes a quality or state of being criminal, committing an action that is against socially accepted norms and values. It is a behavior that uses force, coercion, fraud, or stealth to obtain resources from others (Wormth, 2016). On legal terms, crime or criminality can refer to an individuals' failure to comply with slated laws and regulations that govern the lives and action of a society. A bridge to these laws can attract various forms of punishment anchored by the legal system of a given community. Scholars argue that there are two dimensions to which an act can be a crime. Crime, according to a legal point of view, is an action that does violate the criminal law. From the sociological point of view, any act that violates the norms prevailing in society is a crime (Bartol & Bartol, 2017). For this study, criminality is any action that debunks the accepted laws and norms in a society which can cause harm and unrest. As acts forbidden by law, they are also punishable by imprisonment or other correctional approaches. Examples of criminality include murder, theft, internet fraud, kidnapping/banditry, domestic violence, sexual harassment, religious segregations, etcetera. Hirschi (1969) affirms that criminality is a style of strategic behavior characterized by self-centeredness, indifference to the suffering and needs of others and low self-control.

Behavior

Behavior simply refers to the way and manner an individual acts and invariably reacts to issues and actions of others within society. According to Larson (1992), psychologists and sociologists believe that human behavior whether positive or negative are influenced by social agents which comprise of the first place of socialization which is the family, peer group, school, media, religious bodies, and the environment. These are social constructs that dictate human behavior in society which have affected individuals either positively or negatively (Bwakan, 2021). This study postulates that behavior

consists of human products of attitudes and actions; behavior reflects attitudes and actions, encompassing both negative and positive aspects. The negative constitutes anti-social behaviors and criminal acts such as environmental desecration, sexual harassment, domestic violence, farmers/herders clash, kidnapping and amongst others. Aching needs to bring change to the above societal ills, necessitates the employment of behavior restructuring using communication.

Change

This is a process of transformation from the former to the latter. One thing that remains constant is change. As a necessary phenomenon, it's influenced by persuasion. Iyorza (2015) states that the concept of change is dynamic and unpredictable but certain. According to the Health Promotion Unit (2017), change consists of six (6) stages: pre-contemplative, contemplative, preparation, action, and maintenance. In pre-contemplative stage, people are not contemplating change. For the contemplative stage, people are ready to change their behavior for good. In the preparation phase, seriousness of the situation is realized and commitment birthed. This prompts them to take further steps towards affecting change which is the action. At the last stage, people surge to remain steadfast in sustaining the developed new attitude geared towards overall growth. Change encompasses the continuous modifications and alterations that an individual, society or organization undergoes overtime. Change here modifies behavior and the corresponding actions and attitudes as it pushes to improve overall behavioral patterns that align with improving society and curbing criminal acts.

Communication

This is an integral point of every facet, spanning from an individual to an organization and society at large. As an interactive construct, it constitutes the process of sharing information, feelings, beliefs, values, ideas, approaches between two or more people within the context of an understood language, body sign, code, or symbol. Asemah (2011) states that communication process includes all acts of transmitting messages to channels which link people to the languages and symbolic codes used to send messages. It includes how messages are received and stored as the rules, customs, beliefs, and conventions which define and regulate human relationships and events. Communication is the transfer of information from the sender to a receiver who must understand the information being received (Onah cited in Wehrich and Koontz, 2015).

In managing criminality using SBCC, communication is engaged to transmit change in behaviors by positively influencing knowledge, attitudes, and social norms for community members and the society at large. Communication becomes an effective channel that entails an exchange of information, thoughts, perceptions, etcetera through verbal and non- verbal channels from a sender to a receiver with to create better understanding and knowledge.

Overview of criminality in Plateau State, Nigeria

Nigeria's North Central region which consists of the country's capital city Abuja, Plateau and five other states, is home to minority ethnic groups with more than two hundred languages spoken there. The region is vulnerable to forms of criminality- between ethnic and religious groups which has led to continuous loss of lives and properties. According to the National Bureau of Statistics in the last decade, there were 1,412 incidents of criminalities reported in the region with 7,399 deaths across the north central regions which includes states of Benue, Plateau, Kogi, Nasarawa, Niger, Kwara and the Federal Capital Territory (Ojewale, 2021),

No doubt, societal insecurity is ubiquitous, gradually feeding on the very roots that hold the safety of the community. Escalating criminal acts sporadically affect the agricultural sector which is a vital contribution to the region's GDP. Abraham & William (2023) agree to the above by opining that crime rates have increased due to weak governance, rapid population, economic inequality, law enforcement incapacity, etcetera. Criminality is continually a humungous threat to lives and properties without sparing other spheres of livelihood. The inability of authorities to address these

challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities have increased criminal activities (Nwagbosa, 2012). Jos south has witnessed unprecedented reculant activities overtime. Right from the 2001 ethno-religious crises, the years after having experienced acts of criminality, continually leaving the region in perpetual fear. Some parts of the city are perceived to be unsafe (Armitage, 2014). Criminality records in 2017 set Plateau State on the 10th level with 2,607 cases (Sasu, 2022). This has sporadically grown as Plateau State records one of the places with elevated levels of criminality such as kidnapping, rape, ethnoreligious crisis, banditry, theft, and other vices (Riko, Namo, Danfulani, Ididiong and Pwajok, 2022).

Addressing Criminality Using Social Behavioral Change Communication Model

Social Behavioral Change Communication is an interactive process for developing messages and approaches using a mix of communication channels to encourage and sustain positive and appropriate behaviors. The main thrust to SBCC is to change human behaviors, particularly ill patterns with a view to bringing about transformation in societal system through human and collaboration. It intensely requires adequate deployment of communication at all levels as it creates awareness, promotes and proffer solutions to insecurity issues eating up our country.

According to C-Change's report, Social Behavioral Change Communication is the art and practice of informing, influencing and motivating individuals, communities, institutions, and the public on development issues. Okunna (2002) outlines steps which a change agent can adopt canvass for positive behavioral change.

- i. Start with pre-project research.
- ii. Design relevant messages.
- iii. Conduct information campaign.
- iv. Market the project through advocacy.
- v. Elicit proper participation.
- vi. Achieve attitude and behavior change.

For addressing the high rate of criminality in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria, the following Social Behavioral Change Communication approaches will be executed from the individual level to the community and finally to the society (Basse-Duke and Ineji, 2018).

- i. **Identify Community Problem:** In the identification, participation is paramount as the people are carried along in the process where issues of criminality and causes are discussed. It is important to note that in this phase 'talking with' and not 'talking to' is vital in affecting the desired change. Contribution to problem identification by the community places them on a pedestal towards learning and shaping ill attitudes and thought processes. Addressing the need for families to ensure that children are given the right and proper orientation on acceptable norms is particularly important as it imbibes durable attitude formation and presentation. Issues of early education will be discussed as they constitute triggering components of criminality.
- ii. **Setting Smart Objectives:** One key feature of Social Behavioral Change Communication (SBCC) is clarity of purpose. Clear-cut objectives which are realistic will be constructed. Humanization of the idea gives a better understanding and assimilation. Creating small lines of objectives gives the activity purpose and a driving push. An objective can be learning to respect religious differences in beliefs which becomes an antidote for peaceful coexistence and societal development. Learning to embrace peace and not war builds emotional stability.
- iii. **Conduct audience analysis:** Here, meeting the people physically on a one-on-one basis is highly applauded as it gives space for interactive communication. It enables the change agents to understand the dynamics of the community's environment and populace. It affords the

opportunity to understand the culture, language, and available accessible channels of communication. In cases where there is a barrier in language, a translator can be useful in decoding tribal lines. Benjamin and Udeh (2023) explain that it involves the identification of those you want to reach. Those you want to persuade to alter their behavioral patterns, is performed through communication and not performed forcefully. Information is created on the glaring effect of insecurity on our present time and the future. The opportunities lost and a chance for the government agencies to make life-changing policies that gear the society towards peace and development.

- iv. **Design campaign message for social mobilization:** Considering the people culture, dominant attitudes and accepted values comes into light. The language for Social Behavioral Change Communication should create awareness, build confidence, and carry with it an immense ability to promote the people's consciousness towards working hard in ensuring traits that boost societal peace. These messages can be passed across in their language and made remarkably simple for effective comprehension. Disadvantages of criminality can be aired using local languages and graphical illustrations that respects their cultural lines and color signification.
- v. Conduct media selection analysis and execute campaign while also ensuring that appropriate channels of communication that are used in the community are efficiently utilized so messages created, transmitted and received is not misunderstood nor lost.

An advantage to starting the change process from the individual level to the society level creates effective communication. Stimulation of change will occur at the mentioned three (3) stages to proffer solutions from the individual level that looks at the residents of Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria using people skills to encourage positive actions that are development oriented. At the second stage is the community level which employs social mobilization with target audience the traditional rulers and ward leaders of Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. Here, interpersonal communication, advocacy meetings, and periodical meetings will be employed to mobilize and educate community members on the importance of stopping criminal acts but work towards self-development and growth. The last stage is the societal level where policy makers use advocacy to make effective policies that are people centered and have participative communication. Community dialogue, townhall meetings and collaborations are employed.

Theoretical Framework

The paper is anchored on the Persuasive theory.

The persuasion theory which focuses on attitudinal change using communication to create changes in behavior was propounded by Earl I. Hovland. Here, persuasive message content is displayed to modify behavioral traits (positive or negative) towards a preferred perspective that aligns with issues of public importance. This theory draws its strength from understanding the dimensions of message transmission and its immediate cause and effect. Persuasion in this study is defined as an attempt to change behaviors of an individual or group of people without using coercion or deception. Persuasion is typically defined as human communication that is designed to influence others by modifying their beliefs, values, or attitudes (Simons, 1976). O'Keefe (1990) argued that there are requirements for the sender, the means, and the recipient to consider something persuasive. First, persuasion involves a goal and the intent to achieve goal on the part of the message sender. Second, communication is the means to achieve this goal and thirdly the receiver must have free will. Here, persuasion is inherently communicational where elements of the message for effective impact need to be clear, compelling, concise and convincing. In managing criminality using SBCC, it is essential to establish credibility in the communication process and make the community members envisage the information provided to be reliable which creates a connection and understanding of the causes of

criminality and workable ways in achieving them by altering behavioral patterns; a call to action. This theory is applicable in addressing criminality as it indulges in communication, withholding coercion as information is provided on the negative threat to both self and the community by all acts of crime while also inculcating positive behaviors that foster peaceful coexistence for growth and sustainability.

Persuasion theory provides the framework where communal problems and triggers of criminality are identified and approaches drawn for effectual change. Some of the motivations of criminal behavior can be biological risk factors, adverse childhood experiences, negative social environment, substance abuse, financial crisis, isolation, and etcetera. Understanding these motivators equip one with the right persuasive message content on managing criminality using SBBC in Jos South LGA, Plateau State Nigeria. Participatory communication becomes an integral part in the theory.

Statement of Problem

Acts of criminality places every society at a phase of unproductivity and lamentation especially when such society is still in the phase of developing. A land that is blessed with natural resources yet hunger and poverty prevails. Leaving the mind at a place for reaching out to any means that can bring fulfillment. Nigeria is currently caught in the web of crime dilemma, manifesting in the convulsive upsurge of both violent and non-violent crimes (Nwankwo and James 2020). This phase is characterized by behavioral deficit as people are prone to indulge in all acts of criminality such as child abduction, commodification of the body, murder, cyber fraud/bullying, and etcetera. Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria has had its own share in acts of criminality that are becoming more intense. According to the crime statistics report in Plateau State, crimes committed against persons stands at 736, offences against property at 1,869 and crimes against lawful authority at 2, at a total of 2,607 (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The high rate of poverty and the inability of the government to provide basic amenities such as food, health services, unemployment, long queues at the fuel stations amongst others are contributing factors to the everyday crime that has no respect for gender type nor age grade. The communication gap between the government and citizenry is immeasurable where events of hardships create instability which in turn causes social chaos and an absence of political stability impedes societal development. Studies have researched on the rate of criminality in Jos, Plateau State, assessing their perceptions and how population increase can be a corresponding factor on crime rate. Peter, Idiong and Iyabude (2022) conducted a research on the Consequences of Poverty and Youth Criminal Behavior in Jos South Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria where it examines the vicious cycles of causes of poverty and parental responsibilities that are downplayed which exposes them to hazards and risks of criminal behaviors. The place of using participatory approaches in communication to push change in individual behavior and society in Jos South is not clearly interrogated. Thus, the concern of this study is to assess the most sustainable communication approach that is applicable beyond theoretical walls but is functionally practical. It further emphasizes the need for an employable result-oriented participatory communication SBCC mechanism that has its core foundation in society building.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study is established to:

1. Determine the level of criminality in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria.
2. Identify if the causes of criminality in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria are socio-economic, political, or cultural.

3. Ascertain the efficiency of a people centered communication model for governance in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the current level of criminality in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria?
2. Are the causes of criminality in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria socio-economic, political or cultural?
3. Can a people centered communication strategy for governance be effective in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria?

Methodology

The study adopted survey research method. The method utilizes purposive sampling techniques to assess the place of Strategic Behavior Change Communication in Criminality Management in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. According to McCombes (2023), survey research means collecting information about a group of people by asking them questions and analyzing the results. The appropriate method to be used is survey method because it guarantees effectiveness and reliability of data collected from the sample size. The respondents were selected from four districts in Jos South Local Government Area. The districts are Du, Gyel, Kuru and Vwang Districts.

A total of forty-five (45) residents were purposively selected in Jos South Local Government Area. They were selected based on their level of knowledge and involvement in the subject matter. Questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection for this study. It was used to collect quantitative data. A total of fifty (45) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the target population of the study to examine the strategic place of SBCC in criminality management in Jos South LGA of Plateau State. Out of the forty-five (45) copies administered to the respondents, forty-three were validly filled and returned. One (1) was not validly completed and one (1) missing. Hence, forty-three copies were found to be valid for this study. Responses to the questions were collected and computed using simple percentage.

$$\frac{NR}{TR} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

TR 1

Where NR Number of respondents

TR Total number of responses

100 Is the percentage

1 Is constant

Data Presentation

Demographic Data (Source: Field Survey, 2024)

Chart 1: Age

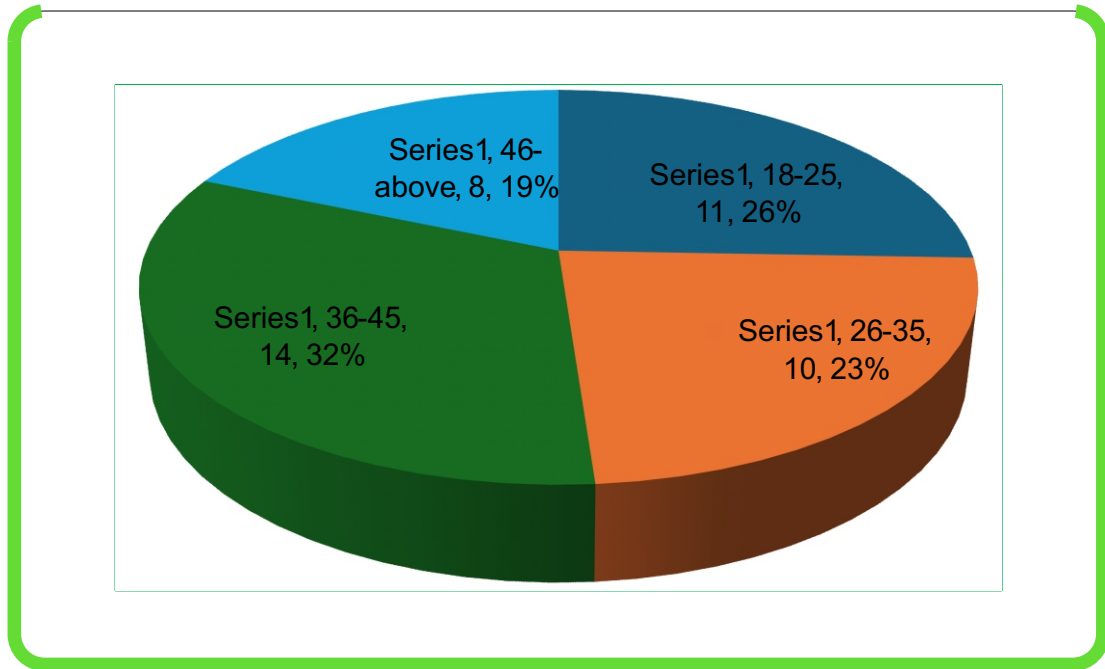


Chart 2: Gender

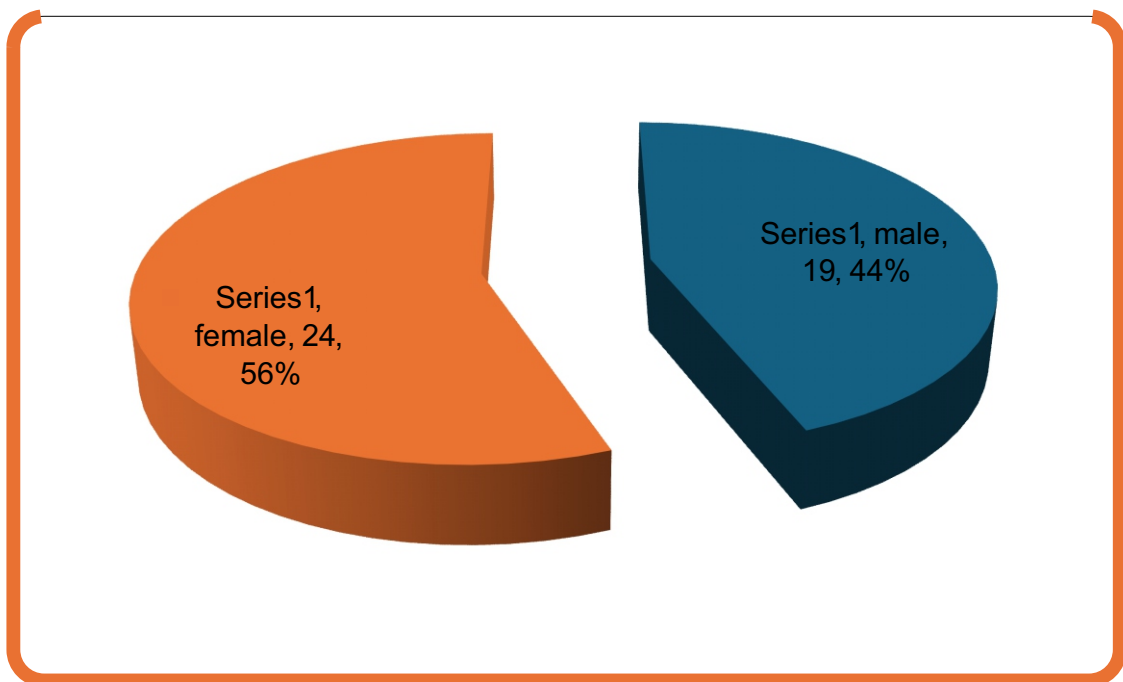
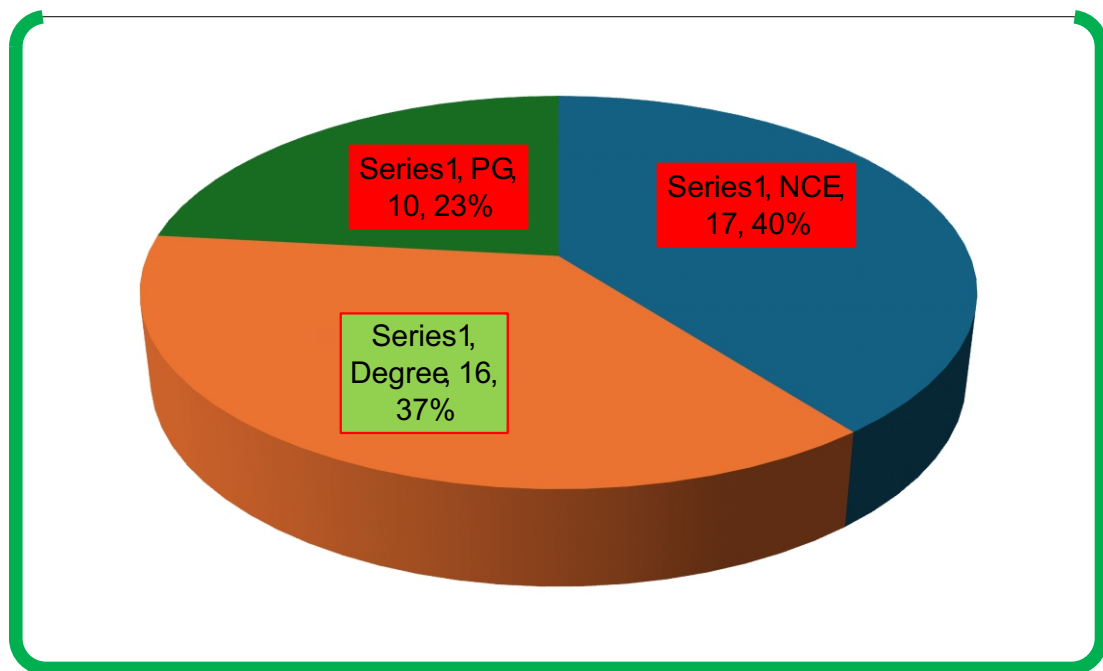


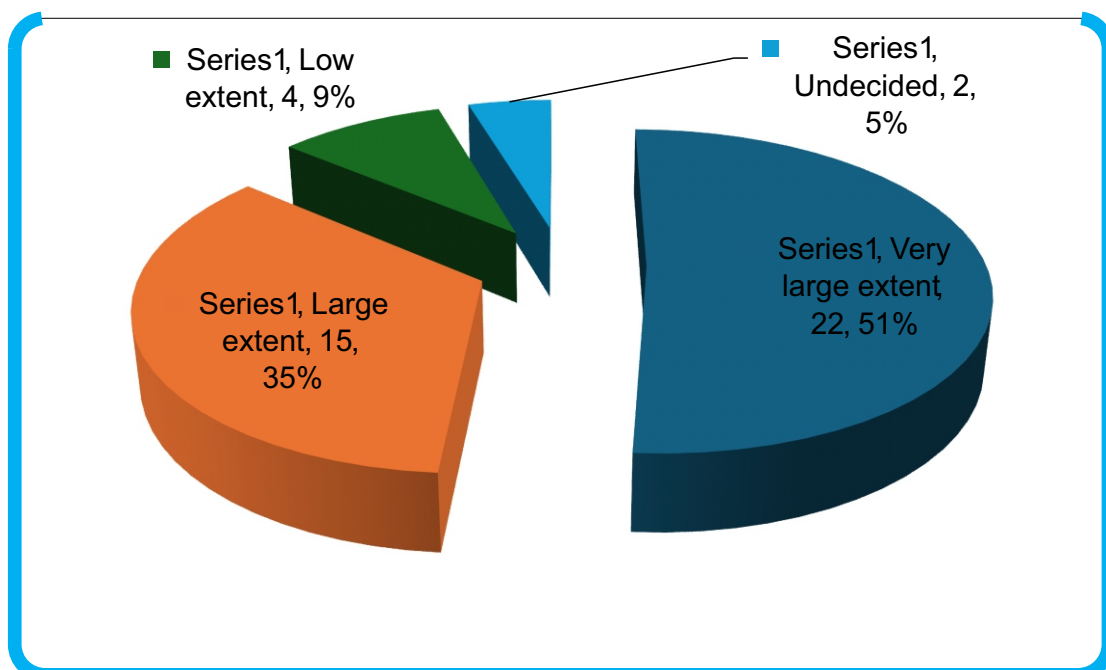
Chart 3: Educational Qualification



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Research Question 1: What is the current level of criminality in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria?

Chart 4: Level of criminality.



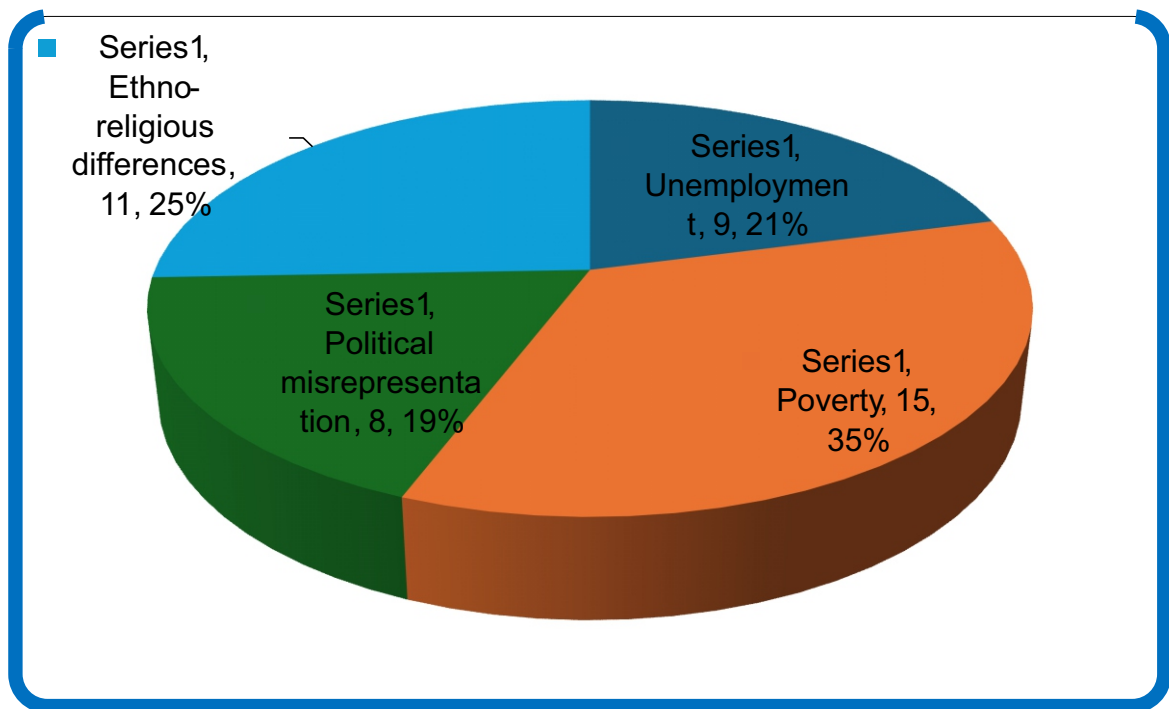
Source: Field survey, 2024

Analysis of chart 4

The implication of the above result is that respondents agree that there is a high level of crime in Jos South LGA which correlates with the statistics collated by the National Bureau of Statistics (2017) on the total level of crimes committed to be 2,607. This is significantly large and calls for immediate action at all levels.

Research Question 2: Are the causes of criminality in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria socio-economic, political, or cultural?

Chart 5: Causes of criminality.

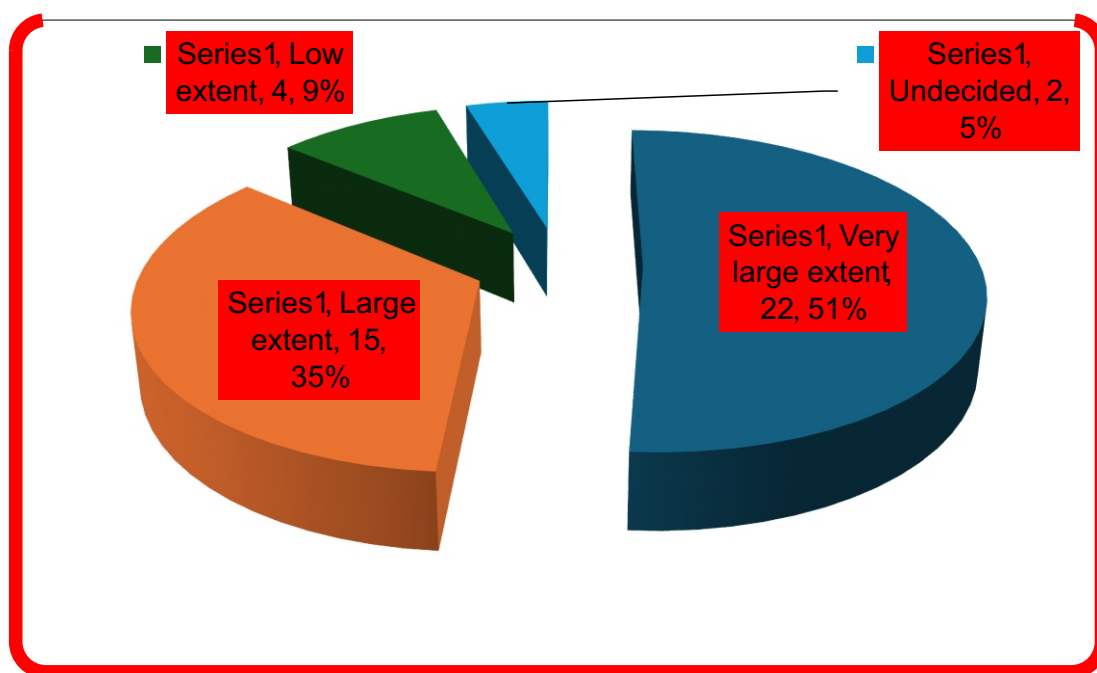


Analysis of chart 5

The data in above indicates that triggers of crime can be socio-economic, political and cultural. But the major cause of criminality here is socio-economic which is reflective on the level of poverty in the area under study. Measures on creating a shift on this level become paramount in order to drive development and socio-economic growth.

Research Question 3: Can a people centered communication strategy for governance be effective in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria?

Chart 6: Efficacy of participatory communication.



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Analysis of chart 6

Participation is a rich concept that varies with its application and definition. When applied towards communication to manage crime, it becomes a tool that is used to develop capacity and promote a people centered development. From the data, respondents agree that a governance of that is people centered pushes the community towards growth while also curbing all motivators of criminality. Plateau Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (PLASMEDA) over time has engaged in training idle youths in the region in order to curb criminality. This is achieved via communication that is people centered and oriented.

Discussion of Findings

In solving the statement of the problem of the study, three research questions were put forward to respondents using questionnaire to gather data for this study. The questionnaire was designed based on the research questions. The data gathered from the respondents were represented in the tables presented above. It is from the data research that questions are provided with corresponding answers in relation to the theory and literatures explored in this study. The findings of the study were discussed and presented in line with the research objectives.

Research Objective 1: Determine the level of criminality in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria.

When asked to what extent is the level of criminality in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria, 46.5% of the respondents opined that the level of criminality to be at a very large extent. 32.6% of the respondents opined that the level of crime is static at a low extent. Interestingly, 2.3% of the respondents remained indifferent in determining the level of criminality that is prevalent in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. From the responses above, the level of crime is progressing, stunting growth and socio-economic development. According to Adekoya

and Abdul-Razak (2017), crime is a major impediment to economic growth and development in Nigeria with a total crime rates from 201-2013 at 126385. The rate at which criminals operate unhindered in most societies especially in developing countries is worrisome. Crimes create fear and untold suffering among people (Adilbakirya, Mungadi, Akinwumi, Fofah, Adekola, Shittu & Onibiyo, 2022). Santana, Santos, Costa and Roque (2007) agree to the above by opining that fear of crime affect the mental and physical wellbeing of people, causing behavioral altercations with serious consequences for the whole community; resulting in the decline of quality of life. These altercations in behavioral patterns will need a communicable platform which the theory of persuasion drives using SBCC, evident beyond Jos South, Plateau State to the entire country Nigeria. In combating the abuse of alcohol which is a motivator for criminal acts, the government, organizations, traditional rulers and community members have assembled at several occasions to see how solutions can be reached in order to sustain a crime sanitized environment. In the month of July, 2024, women, youths and volunteers came out in mass with the approval of the traditional rulers in Jos South LGA to destroy alcoholic drinks and related substances that are abused by community members. Lamenting on how these have made them irresponsible and crime perpetrators. A youth in the community suggested that a most effective way of curbing this is an active engagement of the government by creating empowerment (Adama, 2024). The pragmatic engagement of SBCC which is a participatory process that uses communication to facilitate behavior change and support social change employs the use of interpersonal communication to understand the psychology on why crime is committed; understanding the neurocognitive and psychological drivers of human behavior becomes essential. Communication here becomes interactive and participative. The process might not seem easy, but it is a walk towards problem identification and a window open for change. Making community members aware of the pivotal place they stand in ensuring that change and development starts with intentional attitudes and actions, ownership of the process aided with communication that is interactively participatory is a win.

Research Objective 2: Identify if the causes of criminality in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria are socio-economic, political, or cultural.

Research question 2 is vital towards the achievement of this objective. When asked if the causes of criminality are socioeconomic, political, or cultural? 20.9% of the respondents stated unemployment, 34.9% poverty, 18.6% political misrepresentation and 25.6% attributed causes to ethno-religious differences. The presentation of these figures clearly places poverty as a major trigger criminality with other components in pursuit which all correlates together. This identifies the place of socio-economic development as badly hit through the impacts of all forms of criminality. Crime makes income stagnate or even diminish because it reduces production taking place in the country. Crime reduces standard of living and diverts funds from developmental programs, as funds are stolen through crime (Adilbakirya, Mungadi, Akinwumi, Fofah, Adekola, Shittu & Onibiyo, 2022). To affirm this, Mital, Goyal and Sethi (2019) opine that most often times, people indulged in acts of criminality to fulfill their daily economical needs. Economic crises and difficulties in getting a job have a significant impact on individual's moral perceptions and social values. This then causes someone to commit crimes with violence to get life fulfillment. Issues of ethno-religious disparities are very common in the country at large where violence erupts and the next man that is not of the same religious and cultural affiliation becomes an instant enemy. Government at all levels must become intentional with her policies and programs. Provide basic services that reduce economic pressures on citizens. A practical scenario here on the Plateau is the emergence of the Metro Bus transport services led by Barrister Caleb Mutfwang led administration that offer subsidized transport fares for all. In the process of this, new jobs are created and people empowered. Change mustn't be sudden but must emerge with an active action. Both governmental parastatals and private businesses will need to rise up and be engaging in policies and opportunities to get the people involved. Political parties need to stop playing victims and own up to electoral responsibilities that

unites her people and not destroy. Youths should be engaged and not used as vices to cause societal mayhem. Relating to this, Dung, Gwom and Rikko (2009) affirm that youths in Jos have been used in several crises to burn tyres, cause mayhem, and destroy lives and properties. This recurrent menace should be pegged while encouraging the development of artisan skills which aligns to societal growth and development.

Research Objective 3: Ascertain the efficiency of a people centered communication model for governance in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State Nigeria.

In achieving research objective 3, the respondents were asked how efficient is the employment of a people centered communication strategy for governance in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. 51.2% of the respondents rated it as “Very Large Extent”, 34.9% of the respondents rated it as “Large Extent”, 9.30% of the respondents rated it as “Low Extent” while 4.6% of the respondents were indifferent as to whether participative communication approach in governance education is effective or not. This implies that participatory communication is a pre-requisite for an all-inclusive governance and democracy. But for an achievement of this, deliberate policies and structures need to be in place. Inclusive processes increase the legitimacy of and effectiveness citizen and civil groups, and imbue in the citizens a feeling of ownership. Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State focuses on improving the lives of rural dwellers that constitute the majority of the state's population and LGA under study by engaging United Nations on Sustainable Development. The objective he noted is to capitalize on the state's unique climatic advantages to attract global investors for economic growth. He pushes to ensure better communication of government policies, effective representation and an inclusive governance structure (This Day, September, 2024). On the part of the government, engaging fully with the citizen helps to access knowledge about needs together with potential solutions and their possible impacts (Fagbohun, 2016). It becomes imperative and ideal to transform governance using the platforms of interactivity, collective behaviors, a stance for resource mobilization and empowerment in order to achieve a system that is accountable, compliant and engaging; critical indices for progressive growth and development.

Conclusion

Crime is an act that brings about offences which are hinderances towards a society achieving growth and experiencing development. In putting this under check, participatory communication becomes imperative as it creates an indispensable role towards crime reduction and prevention. It creates space for open dialogue, fosters conversations, drives effective information sharing, establishes change motivates behavioral patterns, and etcetera; making participatory communication a vital tool in the combat against all acts of criminality. Social Behavior Change Communication provides a model that gives relevant information and creates channels through which these acts of criminality such as rape, robbery, farmers/herders clash, terrorism, cybercrimes, bribery and corruption, kidnapping, etcetera can be efficiently managed. SBCC creates motivation through its effective strategies that are mapped out to bring criminality rates to a minimal and almost invisible level when effectively interrogated. Interactive/participative communication is paramount in creating clarity which in turn reduces causative factors of criminality tendencies. Here, the individual, community and society are encouraged to map out objectives and working platforms that will produce meaningful, result-oriented activities and an optimistic group of people that are ready to propagate social change and development.

Recommendations

- i. Community members should understand the place of self-development which is reflective in the community. Individual here need to be intentional on behavioral patterns and understand that the growth of a community is a collaborative effort spearheaded through participatory communication.
- ii. Community leaders should be deliberate in ensuring that norms are not taken for granted as they set the premise upon which other behavioral attitudes are built. In Jos South, Mungyel communities there are meetings held periodically to deliberate on issues and while also encouraging households to ensure their wards are put in the right path of guidance.
- iii. The Government should be deliberate in governance and make policies that are people and result oriented as this creates calmness and psychological conduciveness like the metro-bus services that has subsidized transportation fair and the PLASCHEMA medical policy that helps to create healthcare services at lower rates. More of these policies drive engagement and sustainability.
- iv. All acts of criminality should attract punishable follow ups with media programs advocating for peaceful coexistence at all levels.
- v. Participatory communication trainings should be organized for holders of leadership positions as participatory communications requires more than robust dialogues. It requires also skills, theoretical backings and research-driven dimensions.

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NIGERIA GOVERNANCE: ANALYZING THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper is on Nigeria Governance-Analyzing The Future Of Democratic Governance In Nigeria. Democratic governance is an inclusive government with popular participation especially as it affects Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The paper adopted a survey research designed with secondary data providing an additional information to the paper. The social liberal theory was used as theoretical framework for this paper, the theory holds that human liberty is a major pre-requisite for the feature of any democracy. From the field survey Nigeria Democracy has a feature, but that is not without challenges, it is based on the challenges that this paper by way of suggestions recommends that; There should be a deliberate effort using various electoral act to weed out selfish and greedy politicians who may want to emerge as leaders one way of achieving this is by making that there should be a platform grooming would be leaders and some of the citizen should be education, humanness, patriotism and discipline, Sovereignty at all time should belong to the people, meaning the idea of leaders assuming that their view is the majority view should be checkmated through "Town-Hall" meeting on monthly basis just to allow the leaders to be in touch with the people they lead to achieve popular policy, for the purpose of hastening the process of decision making.

Keywords: *Democracy, Governance, Good governance, Democratic governance and Transparency.*

Introduction

Democracy is regarded as one of the best forms of government in the globalized world order. This is partially due to the philosophy of majority rule which is associated with the practice in a particular political system which a country adopts. Democracy as a form of government was introduced to Africa in the last six decades not because Africa and in particular Nigeria does not have a particular form of government which she practices, but because capitalist Europe and America see democracy as one of the best form of government. They deem it fit to introduce and possibly forced democracy to Nigeria. Nigeria globally is regarded as a democratic country, but the kind of democracy being practiced in Nigeria has thrown up a lot of issues that need to be reflected upon to achieve good governance in the future.

Government of various countries all over the world tends to embrace democracy because of the importance it brings to both the people and the society but over the years democracy in Nigeria has been a suspect due to the absence of the desired significance it brings to the people of Nigeria. In its over twenty-five years of unbroken democracy in Nigeria, Nigerians felt surcharged by politicians who ought to be servants to the people but rather assume the position of a master. This necessitated the clamour to look at the feature of democracy vis-à-vis governance in Nigeria.

However, democracy being the government of the majority is one form of government that has been used in the recruitment of leadership for the purpose of governance in Nigeria. Since the emergence of the Fourth Republic, democracy has largely being responsible for determining who governs".

In the first place, what is democracy; secondly, what is governance within the context and content of the Nigeria's democratic future. Most countries in Africa prefer democracy as a system or form of government not because of is generally the best form of government but rather, it is perceived as one of the best form of government that is generally accepted globally, but the requirement for democracy is democratic governance and the catalyst for good governance has not been fully integrated because most leaders cannot sacrifice their immediate wants to achieve development with

democratic governance hence the quest to re-examine the future of democratic governance in Nigeria.

Statement of Problems

The perplexing problems that needs to be resolved by this study are;

- i. Whether Nigeria Democracy has a future.
- ii. Whether there are challenges associated with democratic governance in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Paper

The purpose of this paper among others is to:

- i. examine the future of democratic governance in Nigeria.
- ii. investigate the challenges associated with democratic governance in Nigeria.

Methodology

The survey research was used in this paper with secondary method of data collection playing an additional role in terms of data collection and gathering. Indepth interview was scooped from Gwagwalada Area Council precisely from the conference of Nigeria Political Party CNPP Gwagwalada Branch, on the topic under review, in addition to this the paper also achieve it collection of data using the secondary source in other to amplify what was discussed by the interviewee during the field study. There were nine (9) interviewees that was part of this interview, each representing a particular political party aside from the All Progressive Congress APC which was not part of those interviewed.

Conceptual Review

The concept to be review in this paper are Democracy, Governance, Good governance, Democratic governance and Transparency.

i. Democracy

Democracy is a form of government in which the people exercise their governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected them. Therefore, this informs us that democracy provides institutions for the expression and the supremacy of the people or popular will on basic issues bordering on socio-political decisions and policy-making (Alizade, 2021).

Again, the presenters see democracy as that form of government that help in recruiting individuals into leadership position(s), for the purpose of service to achieve quantitative and qualitative transformation of the society where such leaders are elected to serve. It is also one of the process of filling vacant positions in Police Service of a country that demand transparency and accountability, for example, the office of the President, Vice President, Governors and Deputy Governors etc (Asogwa, 2016).

The main characteristics of democracy within the context of god governance are:(a) Existence of more than one political parties

- (b) Free association and group
- (c) Free association and periodic election
- (d) Separation of power.

- (e) Supremacy of the Constitution
- (f) Independence of the Judiciary
- (g) Existence of the Rule of Law.
- (h) Respect for fundamental human rights
- (i) Press freedom
- (j) Provision of opportunities etc.

Moreover, what are the benefits of democracy within the context of good governance. The benefits, advantages or merits of democracy are:

- (i) Stability and legitimacy
- (ii) Opportunity for leadership recruitment
- (iii) Popular participation in government affairs
- (iv) Tolerance from opposition parties
- (v) Decision making etc.

The significance of democracy is that democracy ensure stability in the polity and provide recognition of the administration in power. It also affords the people the privilege and opportunity, the right to recruit among the qualified, those who will fill various leadership position across the country with the aim of ensuring popular participation in the government which they participated in installing in the running affairs of the government. Such government has a moral, political and constitutional burden to tolerate constructive criticism from other opposition parties. The essence of this is to check arbitrariness in power as democracy does not allow for the misuse of power because power ought not to be concentrated in the hands of one person or few persons. The essence of this is for robust decision making to be achieved because decision cannot be reached through coercion, rather decision can only be reached through discussions, arguments, disagreement and persuasion for the purpose of arriving at the best decision void of intimidation and suppression of the opinion of the majority (Schenkkan & Repucci, 2019).

Challenges of Democracy;

As good as democracy, democracy has its shortcomings; one of the consequences of democracy is that the best candidate in terms of quality may necessarily will not emerge rather candidates emerge on the basis of popularity determined by the public. Secondly, because democracy leverages on consultation, discussions, argumentation and persuasion.

Thirdly, democracy is very expensive to operate especially in Nigeria with a bogus legislature and a broad executive. About one third of the national budget is used to service leadership recruited through democracy and during the process. The essence of good governance is lost as rather than achieving development, money meant for capital projects end up in taking care of politicians (Zechmeister & Lupu, 2018).

Thrown up by democracy democracy create a situation where selfishness and greed pervade the land. (Alizade, 2021).

ii. Governance

The concept of "governance" is not new. It is as old as human civilization. Simply put "governance" means: the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance (Odah & Nosaze, 2022). Since governance is the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making

and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision (Schenkkan & Repucci, 2019).

Government is one of the actors in governance. Other actors involved in governance vary depending on the level of government that is under discussion. In rural areas, for example, other actors may include influential land lords, associations of peasant farmers, cooperatives, NGOs, research institutes, religious leaders, finance institutions political parties, the military etc. The situation in urban areas is much more complex. Figure 1 provides the interconnections between actors involved in urban governance. At the national level, in addition to the above actors, media, lobbyists, international donors, multi-national corporations, etc. may play a role in decision making or in influencing the decision-making process (Zechmeister & Lupu, 2018).

All actors other than government and the military are grouped together as part of the "civil society." In some countries in addition to the civil society, organized crime syndicates also influence decision-making, particularly in urban areas and at the national level (Alizade, 2021).

iii. Democratic Governance

Democratic governance simply means inclusivity in participation, existence of effective and efficient institution that recognizes humanity and give values to human right in respect to equity, empowerment and accept criticism to ensure quantitative and qualitative transformation been the hallmark of democracy (Asogwa, 2016).

Again, democratic governance can be used to describe a focus on inclusive participation, responsive institutions and values regarding human rights and justice, gender equality and women's empowerment remains a critical and strategic part of the nature of the state. Both states and the people need to play their role in ensuring that human development becomes a reality for all. The state alone cannot be expected to deliver in an equitable, pro-poor and gender sensitive manner – but can citizens play their role effectively without an inclusive, responsive and capable state (Alizade, 2012).

The features of democratic governance are: Promotion of people to get involved in decision-making, Building accountability and transparency through democratic institutions, Providing development through transparent public expenditure management system, Enhancement of justice, rule of law and human rights, Promoting independence of the Judiciary.

Again, democratic governance is in the promotion of the majority of the citizens getting involved through their contribution by way of advice, criticism, symposium, demonstration as well as strike to help the leadership in decision-making. Democratic governance does not shut down the opinion of the citizens in a particular decision. Secondly, democratic governance ensures accountability and transparency in the day-to-day running of the government through workable democratic institution which it has built and promoted to ensure that public service to the people is not shrouded in secrecy. Ensuring that development is promoted by building transparent, responsive public expenditure management system that will make it difficult for public fund to be embezzled or mismanaged or misappropriated; then enhancement of justice because justice is a requirement for peace and peace is a condition for development. Peace cannot be achieved without upholding the rule of law and the rule of law provide an ambience for the dignity of human person to be respected and this translate to upholding Human Rights and finally is the independence of the judiciary (Zechmeister & Lupu, 2018).

Democratic governance ensure that the people have access to justice for the purpose of seeking redress to achieving justice to the accused, justice to the defendant and justice to the society in order to building a verile society (Asogwa, 2016).

iv. Good Governance

Good governance has eight (8) major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society (Odah & Nosaze, 2022).

v. Transparency

Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media (Schenkhan & Repucci, 2019).

Empirical Review

Sulaiman, (2022) interrogates the prospects of attaining democratic stability in Nigeria, via the instrumentality of electoral reforms, taking the Electoral Act 2022 into perspective. Electoral reforms have been generally observed to hold mixed (positive and negative) outcomes on the electoral process and democracy at large. Nonetheless, the case of the Electoral Act 2022 has not been examined to ascertain its prospects for improved electoral credibility and democratic stability, or otherwise, in the country. This is the primary objective of this paper. The paper relies on descriptive and explanatory research designs, using document analysis and desk review methods. It relies on secondary data sources. The paper finds, among others, that, the Electoral Act 2022 is capable of guaranteeing stronger financial independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission and addressing logistics challenges.

Sulaiman, was able to provide a review that electoral credibility helps in democratic stability and this is required to democratic governance, it did not however discussed the feature of democratic governance in Nigeria, even though its contribution to this paper.

Adeleke & Marcellinus, (2017), examined good governance manifesting in areas of rule of law, transparency, accountability, citizens participation among others are sine qua non for national peace and development. However, 'poverty of leadership' in most of the Nigeria's 57 years of existence has not only hindered the nation's development, but continued to threaten its peace and stability. While it is widely believed that bad governance is prevalent in autocratic and oligarchic systems, it is evident now that bad governance does exist much more in democracies. Therefore, the study analysed the twin concepts of governance and good governance; assessed the nature of governance offered by the nation's leaders; and its effects on the national peace and development. Using secondary data, the study revealed that, unethical practices, arbitrary rule and corruption which pervade public offices are products of bad governance. The study further revealed that, bad governance in Nigeria has brought about unemployment, poverty, crimes, internal violence, insurgents activities, diseases, loss of lives and properties, and underdevelopment of the country.

Adeleke & Marcellinus, 2017, were able to look at unethical practices that makes for bad governance, they did not however look at how these unethical practices impaign on the future of Democratic Governance in Nigeria and this is what makes this paper different from the present study.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Liberal Theory was propounded by Steger and Roy in 1953. The propositions of the Social Liberal Theory were to affirm the economic doctrine that was associated with Fredrich Von Hayek and Milton Friedman in 1949. The economic doctrine surrounding Social Liberal Theory sees Democracy as a political creed which perceive democracy has been hostile to government intervention as one of the interventions that shares a consensus with the main liberalism on the primary of individual liberty which democracy tend to promote (Igwe & Wordu, 2024).

The implications of the social liberal theory on the future of Democratic governance in Nigeria is one that strictly oppose to other liberal values such as equality, solidarity and social responsibility, rejecting modern governments as illegitimate for their use of “coercive” polices Hence, most subscribe to the utopian ideal of a loose “society” of autonomous individual engage in strictly voluntary form of exchange, and some go even so far as demanding the abolition of the state in its entirety as it affects Nigeria (Ihas & Ukpeli, 2021). However, in Nigeria the impact of social liberal theory is that it is foisted upon the permissibility of mutual tolerance of diverse lifestyle, for example in the Nigerian 4th republic which has witnessed of year irrespective of what may be adjudged unacceptable or morally defamatory among certain culture, same sex, marriage to non-human etc. The theory tends to support that Democratic Governance need to bring succour to the citizenry but those involved in governance wouldn't allow this.

However, the social liberal theory was adopted by this study because Democratic governance cannot be achieved without the peoples liberty, liberty here entails rights to life, rights to free speech, rights of association, rights of movement etc, which is associated with social liberal theory, meaning that for democracy to have a concrete feature this rights must not be violated, it therefore means that the future of Democratic governance in Nigeria largely depends on this in other to achieve good governance.

Body Of Work

Opinions of the Interviewee on the issue of the Feature of Democratic Governance in Nigeria.

Variables			Comments
i. Does Nigeria Democracy has a future?		Frq	%
	Yes	7	77.8
	No	2	22.2
Total		9	100%

Seven of the interviewee responded by saying that Nigeria Democracy has a future, this is because to them, Nigeria has had over twenty-five (25) years of unbroken democracy from 1999 to date, meaning the Nigerai Democracy is no longer Nacent as there is improvement on democratic practice in Nigeria, even though they agreed that there are challenges militating against Nigerians Democracy, this was noticed by the 22.2 percent of the Interviewees that responded to No, from the field work it is clear that Niger ian Democracy has a feature according to 77.8% responded to Yes with several reasons backing their choice of agreeing to the future of Nigeria Democracy.

ii. Whether there are challenges associated with democratic governance in Nigeria	Yes	6	66.7	There are no doubt that Nigeria Democracy has several challenges in the view of 66.7 percent of the interviewee, these challenges includes weak institution, corruption, poor political education, high cost of governance, etc. But 33.3 percent through their opinion may not see this as challenges and that is while this paper agree that Nigeria democracy has a feature, because there is no democracy in the world that is free from challenges.
	No	3	33.3	
TOTAL		9	100	

Source: Fieldwork Survey, December, 2024.

Data Interpretation

Countries all over the world tend to embrace democracy not because they want to do so on their own but because of the importance of democratic governance which to them is very attractive to Democratic system. The significance attached to democratic governance are: Confirmation of legitimacy to the political system, It reduces and check the misuse of power, Democratic governance enhance stability in a state, It encourages popular participation in governmental affairs, Democratic governance promote quantitative and qualitative transformation of the societ, One of the greatest importance of democratic governance is that it confirms legitimacy on the nation's leadership meaning because the government was elected by the people, the leadership does not need to embark of shuttle diplomacy to seek legitimacy out the shore of his country (Zeehmeister & Lupu, 2018). Secondly, democratic governance reduces the temptation of misuse of power as well as checking arbitrariness of the leadership that emerge through a legitimate process and the importance of this is that democratic governance has helped in promoting stability as a bad government or administration can be voted out in the next election by the people who sovereignty resides (Alizade, 2021).

Moreso, democratic governance has significantly helped in encouraging popular participation in governmental affairs and this has assisted in achieving inclusivity, accountability and transparency in governmental affairs (Odah & Nosaze, 2022).

The most significance of democratic governance is in his promotion of development because democracy itself is associated with quantitative and qualitative transformation of the society and that is why when development is absent in democratic governance, the people tend to raise questions not really to undermine democracy but a call for the leadership to sit up and reappraise itself (Asogwa, 2016).

Findings

There are two (2) major findings associated to this paper; and they are;

- a. Nigerian Democracy has a Feature; Meaning that Democratic governance in Nigeria has a feature
- b. There are challenges associated with democratic governance in Nigeria and these challenges ranges from:
 - i. Expensiveness on its operation: Democratic Governance in the last twenty-five years

involves many people and this many people cut-across sex, religion, ethnicity, education and exposure and decision-making process and make it very of consulting very wide for any decision to be taking, even at that the decision-making process are still manipulated to suit the political and economic elites at the detriment of popular expectation (Nik & Nik, 2022).

- ii. The emergence of ignorance and mediocre: One set back against democratic governance and the future of Nigeria is the consist emergence of the ignorant and mediocre as a leader or rulers of the country, one demerit of Democracy is that democracy does not throw up the best candidate to lead the country rather democracy allow the will of the people to emerge through sanctity of the ball of box, but this will of the people has always been manipulated by those who want to be leader of the country evidence are abound of unprepared individuals winning elections and becoming president of Nigeria. (Tar & Ayegba, 2020).
- iii. Emergence of Selfish and Greedy individuals: There are evidence where at different general elections held in this country from 1999-2023 expose the election hold in most cases are not free and fair and the consequences of this is leading to the enthronement of irresponsible, callous and self-minded individual who get into positions where governance are required but flop and this had negative impact on development and better life for future of Nigeria (Odah and Odosaze, 2022).
- iv. Docile followership: One of the ingredients for Democratic Governance is political education where the citizens who are the followership are sufficiently educated to appreciate and interrogate those feature associated with Democratic Governance but in Nigeria the followership are very docile, their docility manifest in insufficient on lack of education on matter affecting their role in interrogating and demanding for Democratic Governance and the absence of this has made Democratic Governance a future discuss (Zoaka, 2022).
- v. Absence of the rule by Majority: Democratic Governance never represent the rule by the majority because as a rule what is termed majority are people merely accepting the opinion and idiosyncrasy of their leader and this is one of the most dangerous challenges affecting Democratic Governance in Nigeria and this is a major setback to quantitative and qualitative transformation of the Nigeria society (Tar & Ayegba, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The future of Democratic Governance in Nigeria is expected to be good, blossom and great, but due to the challenges highlighted above, the future of Democratic Governance could be a disaster considering the fact that Democratic Governance has not been able to provide the more dividend to Nigerian citizens, the present protest on End-Bad-Governance is a pointer to this fact that Democratic Governance has not brought succour. Hence there is need to deal with the numerous challenges that could stand as a hindrance to Democratic Governance in the future it's base on this, that the following suggestion by way of recommendations are made to include:

- I. There should be a deliberate effort using various electoral act to weed out selfish and greedy politicians who may want to emerge as leaders one way of achieving this is by making that there should be a platform grooming would be leaders and some of the citizen should be education, humanness, patriotism and discipline.
- ii. The Political Education Department of INEC through the voter's educations units as well as National Orientation Agency must be up and doing in providing knowledge to the citizens of Nigeria to be politically informed to help prevent them from political manipulation from unscrupulous politician who sees polities as an investment instead of a call to serve or for service.

- iii. There should be deliberate Act by National Assembly to regulate the activities of Political Party (ies) on the “modus parandi” for dealing with interested politicians across all political parties, from registration, electioneering and recruitment the amount for these activities should be pegged at a particular amount and committee set-up from credible Nigerians effect this recommendation.
- iv. Leader of Nigeria should be taking very seriously the idea of saying that those that are pursuing electoral ambition should be able to read and write should be upgrade, the qualification should be up to university first degree or polytechnic HND or Nigerian Certificate of Education NCE, this is recommended to improve the quality of leadership and also strengthen the quality of followership as the follower may want to improve themselves for tomorrow's leadership.
- v. Sovereignty at all time should belong to the people, meaning the idea of leaders assuming that their view is the majority view should be checkmated through “Town-Hall” meeting on monthly basis just to allow the leaders to be in touch with the people they lead to achieve popular policy, for the purpose of hastening the process of decision making.

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MOTIVATIONS FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE ECOWAS: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF THE FREE MOVEMENT PROTOCOL

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Abstract

Intra-regional trade in Africa, especially in West Africa has never been without challenges. Scholarly accounts and explanations by public policy experts have traced the encumbered trade process in West Africa to several challenges. Taking cognisance of the numerous daunting challenges, the ECOWAS adopted the Protocol on the free movement of persons within its subregion. This paper examines the motivations behind regional integration through the instrumentality of the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons. Social constructivism was adopted as the theoretical framework underpinning discourses in the paper. The paper unveiled several motivations, such as the introduction of modern technologies, that orchestrated the ECOWAS to, in the first place, adopt its Protocol to ease and enhance the free movement of persons. The paper concludes that inadequate deployment of modern technologies such as the Smart Border Technology (SBT), the One-Stop-Border Post (OSBP) technology, etc. influences associated constraints the ECOWAS Protocol. The paper recommends that ECOWAS Member States should promote trade efficiency through adequate and appropriate deployment of modern technologies such as Smart Border Technology (SBT), the One-Stop-Border Post (OSBP) technology, Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT), etc., to accelerate the Protocol on Free Movement.

Keywords: ECOWAS Protocol, Free Movement of Persons, Motivations.

Introduction

Globally, attempts at regional integration have been encumbered by numerous daunting challenges (Plessz, 1968; Qobo, 2007; Ancharaz, Mbekeani & Brixiova, 2011). Regional integration in West Africa is no exception at all. The ECOWAS sub-region-specific hiccups have made it difficult to implement the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons (Aniche, Iwuoha & Isike, 2022). Several obstacles are frequently mentioned, such as the propensity to enact stringent national laws and policies that run counter to the Protocol's provisions and intent, the incomplete alignment of national laws with the provisions of the Protocol leading to uneven implementation, the importance of national interests over regional interests, the lack of political will on the part of ECOWAS member states, and the lack of a central mechanism to punish Protocol violators, which prevents the ECOWAS from penalising member states for noncompliance.

In addition to the foregoing, the issue of conflict management has dominated the West African regional integration agenda, or more specifically, the ECOWAS agenda. The region has been unable to escape a string of problems, including the conflict in Guinea-Bissau and Mali, since the unrest in Côte d'Ivoire at the end of 2010. These issues are of utmost importance to the subregion's principal regional political actor. While crises have repeatedly accelerated the integration process in Europe, West Africa's ongoing crisis appears to be impeding meaningful advancement. Indeed, certain actions have been taken, such as converting the ECOWAS Secretariat into a Commission in accordance with the EU model.

Despite this, developing effective policies remains a significant challenge to regional integration in the ECOWAS sub-region. A number of factors can be cited for this, including, first, the relatively low economic and political interdependence of West African states, which prevents interest in regional solutions; and second, lofty goals that are in stark contrast to a glaring lack of resources and capabilities. Furthermore, the little capacities frequently appear to be poorly managed and

disorganised. To exacerbate the situation, the ECOWAS Member States' vested interests and monopolistic decision-making process are frequently transferred to the regional level. This is also due to the fact that "political elites" have always been involved in the West African regional integration process (Vogl & Quattara, 2013; ADBG, 2013, 2014). The overwhelming majority of these objections suggests that the Protocol is still in draft form and cannot be used in real-world situations (Gerba & Yeboah, 2022; Agwu & Ogali, 2023).

In addition to the region-specific difficulties mentioned above, the ECOWAS subregion's goals for sub-regional integration are seriously threatened by issues outside of West Africa. A few of these external factors are; first, state agencies handling goods moving across international borders, duties, taxes, and regulatory controls by state customs administrations and agencies present at the border posts pose daunting threats; second, international borders are becoming more complex with a variety of interests. For instance, in Africa inadequate trade facilitation accounts for 75% of border delays, while inadequate infrastructure accounts for 25% of these delays. The high cost of transportation on the continent also has a detrimental effect on the competitiveness of African goods on the global market (World Bank, 2015/2016).

Though the previously mentioned internal and external factors interact in such a way as to render regionalism unsustainable, immediate action is required to bolster the incentives for regional integration within the ECOWAS subregion. The application of modern technology at border posts is one important step toward promoting regionalism in the face of several formidable obstacles to it. Modern technologies are unavoidably important since Africa, and particularly West Africa, must come to understand the advantages of less restrictions on cross-border trade and movement of persons, and they must advocate for less restrictive borders.

By enabling inter-state exchanges for the harmonisation of economic, social, and commercial policies within regional and intercontinental spaces, modern technology also gives African nations the chance to expand the scope of regional integration. Furthermore, an e-government system would facilitate faster digital information flow, communication and information sharing between central and decentralised departments, and the dematerialisation of some administrative processes, like tele-procedures, through specialised networks or the Internet, all of which would help African populations, institutions, services, and states become more effective, efficient, and communicate better with one another in order to better serve their citizens (Traore, 2019; AI, 2023). Realising this importance, a number of subregional organisations, notably the ECOWAS subregion, have implemented the One-Stop-Border-Post (OSBP) strategy as a means of enhancing the flow of people, products, and services across common international borders.

The objective of this paper is to examine the motivations for regional integration that could transform the ECOWAS through its Protocol on Free Movement into a more effective lever for the economic development of the region in a regional context fraught with daunting challenges. Thus, the motivations for the deployment of new technologies, amongst other motivations, in practice for customs services to decrease constraints on free movement of persons is examined in its merit as a paper. To undertake this task, this paper is structured into the following sections. Whereas Section II considers extant literature dwelling on social constructivism as its theoretical framework, regionalism, regional integration, etc., Section III explains the methodological underpinnings of the paper. Section IV examines the motivations for regional integration. Section V concludes the paper.

Review of Extant Literature

a. Social Constructivism

This paper adopts the theory of Social Constructivism (SC) as its theoretical framework. It views regionalism as "as a non-material interdependence move for integration and stresses actors

subjective and inter-subjective beliefs, focusing on the social construction of collective rules and norms that guide political behaviour” (Fjader, 2012, p. 93). Hence, rather than the economics of material forces, regional integration results from widely held beliefs.

According to social constructivism, boundaries between regions are ill-defined and constantly changing, and are determined by how people perceive their identities and meanings collectively (Vayrynen, 2003). According to this theory, the creation of regions or the integration of nations is cognitive and dependent on the idea of unity. This is the scenario where integration is sparked by "feelings" or perceptions of some similar features among nations. These similar characteristics could be shared through a common religion, culture, or history (Hurrell, 1995). It has to do with feelings of belonging and perceptions of local awareness. A social or sociological framework known as "social constructivism" examines how social norms and perceptions are created and how they contribute to both international cooperation and conflict (Yi, 2007; Ghica, 2013).

b. Regionalism

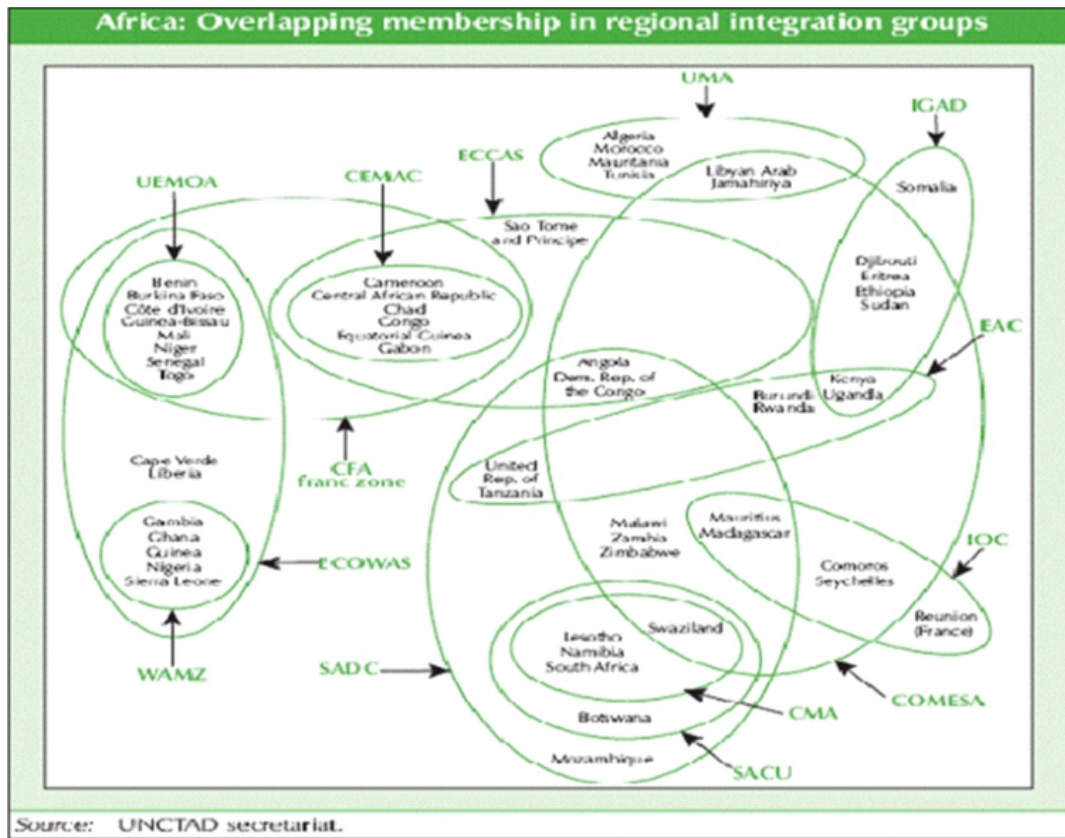
A plethora of definitions of region and regionalism have resulted in ambiguity in the way they have been conceptualised. However, making attempts at definition of these concepts is still apt. A region is a group of nations or areas of land with a similar geographic location (Sakyi & Opoku, 2014). It can also be understood in this sense as units based on states, territories, or groups whose members exhibit certain recognisable behavioural patterns (Fawcett, 2004). The term "regionalism" describes a process whereby power shifts from the central state to regional governments within it, allowing sub-state actors to become more powerful and autonomous. Stated differently, it designates an area that lies inside, occasionally outside, the boundaries of a nation-state (Gochhayat, 2014).

Regionalism is an ideology and political movement that aims to promote the interests of specific regions. Regionalism is the term used to describe a group of countries, such as Western Europe, the Western Balkans, or Southeast Asia, that are connected by geography, history, or economic features and considerations. It can also refer to transnational cooperation aimed at solving shared problems or achieving a common goal. When used in this context, regionalism describes initiatives aimed at strengthening ties between nations. Currently, the European Union (EU) is the most notable example of such an endeavour (Bevir, 2009).

Regionalism is the set of beliefs, principles, and goals that support the establishment, upkeep, or alteration of a specific geographic area or kind of global governance. It frequently results in the establishment of institutions and is typically connected to official projects and policies. The political and conceptual concept of creating regions is known as regionalism (Soderbaum, 2011). It describes the initiatives taken by a collection of nations to improve their social, political, economic, or cultural ties (Lee, 2002). According to Breslin and Higgot (2000), it is also known as the political process by which states derive cooperative initiatives.

Within the African context, regionalism can be understood in terms of proximity to one another, border sharing, and political cooperation through economic cooperation (ECA & AU, 2006). The African Union (AU) informally or formally recognises at least 14 overlapping Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa (see Figure 1), some of which share membership. The following RECs are geographically characterised, which is not surprising: AMU (Arab Maghreb Union), CEMAC (Communauté Economique et Monétaire des Etats de l'Afrique Central), CEN-SAD (Communauté des Etats Sahélo-Sahariens), COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa), EAC (East African Community), ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States), ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) (Chiumya, 2009; ECA, 2012; Sakyi & Opoku, 2014; Byiers & Dieye, 2022).

Figure 1 Overlapping Membership of RECs in Africa



Source: Geda & Seid, 2015, p. 21.

Figure 1 shows the numerous RECs in each African subregion with overlapping membership and comparable goals. Although, all members of the Mano River Union (MRU) and UEMOA are also members of ECOWAS, ECOWAS coexists with these organisations in West Africa. Similarly, members of the East African Cooperation (EAC) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) are all COMESA members in Eastern Africa. A significant obstacle to the sustainability of RECs in Africa is the multiplicity of these groupings (ECA, 1997).

a. Regional Integration

States have been searching more and more for effective ways to work together to expand peaceful relations with their neighbours and provide more opportunities for their citizens. Integration into the region is one such method. According to Okanike et al. (2015), regional integration is broadly understood to be the process of strengthening and expanding ties between states. It is generally understood to mean that nation-states within a territory willingly cede sovereignty to supranational or intergovernmental organisations in order to work together to improve conditions for all. The goals of the agreement could be economic, political, or environmental, but historically, it has taken the shape of a political economy initiative, with the focus being on advancing commercial interests in order to achieve more general socio-political and security goals as stated by national governments.

States now increasingly accept interdependence after realising they cannot exist in isolation. The

current global trend of interdependence between and among states has encouraged the opening of borders between them (Okanike et al., 2015). The fact that nations with differing levels of socioeconomic, political, and cultural development are grouped together in some sort of regional arrangement has further contributed to the facilitation of transnational criminal activity. Regional cooperation involves cooperation among distinct countries with a shared interest in a particular issue; including “the execution of joint projects, technical sector cooperation, common running of services and policy harmonisation, and joint development of common natural resources” (Lee, 2002, p. 3).

Methodology

This paper adopted a mixed method approach (qualitative and quantitative methods) in data gathering. It made use of newspaper publications, journals and books on regional integration. It adopted a content analysis in analysing the data collected. These include the activities and programmes of ECOWAS and its relationship with external forces with a view at ascertaining their impact on advancing the ECOWAS protocol.

Motivations for Regional Integration in ECOWAS Sub-region

Regional integration in the ECOWAS subregion remains negatively impacted by several daunting encumbrances. The ECOWAS, as a subregional bloc, has adopted its Protocol on free movement of persons as a means of remedy. This section examines the different motivations impinging on the necessity to venture into regional integration, albeit largely influenced by the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons and goods.

a. The Motivation

Africa's desire for regional integration is a result of political rivalry that dates back to the colonial era. Artificial states with arbitrary borders and significant levels of ethnolinguistic diversity were established by colonialism. This has had a detrimental effect on communication and trade, but most importantly, it has caused multiple conflicts throughout the continent (Portugal-Perez & Wilson, 2009).

Adopted by the Heads of State and Government in 1980, the Lagos Plan of Action of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), presently known as the African Union (AU), marked the beginning of the integration process (De Melo & Tsikata, 2014). This framework, which divides the continent into Regional Economic Communities (RECs) that aim to promote economic integration was designed to achieve pan-African unity and accelerate industrialisation. Three RECs—the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)—were founded with assistance from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Later, the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) was founded (De Melo & Tsikata, 2014).

The impetus for this initiative stemmed from the advantages that nations experienced after founding organisations like the European Economic Community (EEC), the Caribbean Community (CAICOM), the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Central American Common Market (CACM), and cooperation agreements among African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) nations (Odock, 2010). Following the Second World War, collaboration under the aegis of these organisations lowered tension in some areas while promoting and facilitating free trade and the development of a common market (Adepoju, 2003).

On May 28, 1975, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea,

Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo signed a treaty in Lagos that established the ECOWAS (Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2018). The preamble to the ECOWAS Treaty emphasised and restated the necessity of removing barriers to the subregion's free flow of capital, people, and goods in order to promote economic development. More precisely, Article 27 states that the ultimate goal is to create community citizenship, which would be automatically granted to citizens of all member states. Stated differently, the vision was of a West Africa without borders (Adepoju, 2005). The ECOWAS Treaty was hailed as one of the world's most ambitious initiatives of its sort and as the most significant and comprehensive economic agreement in West Africa.

It was observed that:

In 1975, 15 West African States, conscious of the overriding need to accelerate, faster and encourage the economic and social development of their states in order to improve the living standards of their peoples; convinced that the promotion of harmonious economic development of their states calls for effective economic cooperation largely through a determined and concerted policy of self-reliance; recognizing that progress towards sub-regional economic integration requires an assessment of the economic potential and interest so each state decided to create an Economic Community of West African States which they signed on 28th May 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria. (Okom & Udoaka, 2012, p. 118)

Based on three key clauses from the Treaty that created the ECOWAS, the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Goods, and Services was adopted in 1979 with these goals in mind. The Protocol lays out Community citizens' rights to enter, reside in, and establish themselves on any member state's territory. Secondly, it was stipulated that these rights would be gradually established over a period of 15 years starting from the date the Protocol was ratified. It was anticipated that this would result in the removal of barriers to cross-border free movement of people. Third, it was intended that the implementation of the rights of entry, residence, and establishment would take place in three stages: Phase I would be the Right of Entry and Abolition of Visas; Phase II would be the Right of Residence; and Phase III would be the Right of Establishment

The Protocol called on member states to guarantee the removal of barriers to the free movement of people, capital, and services in order to ensure a borderless region, in accordance with Article 2(2) of the ECOWAS Treaty. The goal of the ECOWAS Community was for this to become an enormous, borderless region made up of people rather than countries. This was reiterated by suggesting that “the ECOWAS Commission has developed a vision to have an ECOWAS of peoples and a borderless region” (Okom & Udoaka, 2012, p. 121).

b. Intra-Regional Trade

Intra-regional trade is the exchange of goods and services between states that are part of the same geographic area is known as intra-regional trade. It is in consonance with ECOWAS' goal of promoting trade among its member states (ECA & ECOWAS, 2016). As it is shown in Tables 1 and 4, analysis of available data shows that intra-ECOWAS trade is minimal (see Tables 1 and 4) (Ngwu & Ojah, 2024). The intra-Community trade share of the member countries' global trade has even declined over time, falling from 9.6 percent to 7.8 percent for exports and from 8.1 percent in 2012 to 16.2 percent in 2001 for imports from ECOWAS member states. Given the significant steps ECOWAS has taken to boost sub-regional trade, this level is disheartening (ECA & ECOWAS, 2016).

Multilateral and bilateral agreements reached by and among member states govern trade between West African states and beyond. These agreements establish the terms and regulations governing traders and the flow of goods (Page, 2000; Dobler, 2016). Sectoral analysis indicates that, Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire account for 87 percent of transactions in ECOWAS, with Nigeria recording 77 percent

of regional exports and Cote d'Ivoire 11 percent. Ghana and Senegal, the two other top countries in the region, rank third and fourth with 4 and 2 percent, respectively. Mali, which accounts for 1.7% of regional exports, follows these established leaders. Each of the following five countries of Guinea, Niger, Togo, Burkina-Faso and Benin contributes 1% of regional exports (Olayiwola, 2012).

However, supply and demand factors (such as import quotas, anti-dumping laws, countervailing duties, border tax adjustments, and subsidies) and technical trade barriers (such as sanitary and phytosanitary measures, rules of origin, standards, and qualifications) usually hinder trade between nations and subregions (Geda & Seid, 2015).

Additional barriers to intraregional trade include inadequate infrastructure, a lack of human and institutional resources, an undeveloped and undiversified export base and services, and political instability (Lebrand, 2021); an excessive number of bilateral and multilateral agreements between states and partners that make it difficult for exporters and importers to comply with trade facilitation laws; excessive fragmentation of policies, legislation, and regulations that impede the free movement of people and goods throughout the continent; a lack of institutional policies and funding; an inefficient transport system that is highly unpredictable and unreliable; and high transportation costs that make it nearly impossible to conduct productive trade operations (Chibira & Moyana, 2017).

In West Africa, thick borders are another significant barrier to intraregional trade (Newfarmer, 2012). Thick borders, such as the physical separation between markets, are those that increase the cost of trade between two nations. By creating a "single window" for customs clearance and lowering tariffs, policy changes and reforms can alleviate the abstract concept of "thickness," which includes things like onerous procedures and inadequate logistics (Newfarmer, 2012). Trade costs related to logistics and transportation of goods are important determinants of border thickness. One sure way to reduce the problem of border thickness and the effects of distance is through the consummation of new regional trade agreements and strengthening of already existing regional trade agreements.

The foregoing constraints are deducible from Table 1 which illustrates various levels of integration among ECOWAS member states. Whereas all member states of the ECOWAS have attained number 1 rankings on the Protocol on free movement of persons, member states are varying rankings on sectors like trade integration, regional infrastructure, and productive integration. UEMOA and ECOWAS have taken the lead in the West African sub-region, facilitating trade, transportation, and harmonising customs procedures by developing Joint Border Posts (JBPs) and One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) at multiple border posts (AUDA-NEPAD & JICA, 2022). OSBPs are the legal and institutional framework, facilities, and related processes that allow people, goods, and vehicles to stop in a single location and undergo the required controls in accordance with relevant regional and national laws in order to leave one state and enter the neighbouring state. It is a border crossing where people, products, and vehicles only make one stop to complete the necessary procedures to enter one country and exit another. It is a "single, shared physical infrastructure in which the neighbouring countries' customs and border services operate side by side" (IOM, 2015, p. 1).

At the moment, work is being done on four OSBPs: Krake-Plage between Nigeria and Benin; Akuna-Noepe between Togo and Ghana; Malanville between Benin and Niger; and Cinkansé between Togo and Burkina Faso. In February 2010, the first ECOWAS JBPs (SéméKraKéPlage JBP between Nigeria and Benin) had their technical designs and physical infrastructure validated (CDC, ICA, EAC & JICA, 2011; Barka, 2012). Other JBPs are to be established on the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, and Niger, according to plans developed by UEMOA.

The goals and advantages of OSBPs include reducing traffic at current border facilities, cutting down on border delays, improving agency coordination, and streamlining border procedures. One-stop border post (OSBP) has significantly altered the processes that were previously duplicated on both sides of borders which involved government agencies as well. These procedures frequently

required a wait of two to three days to clear goods. Outside of West Africa, traders have long had to cope with traffic jams and delays at the busy border post through OSBP at the Chirundu crossing between Zambia and Zimbabwe (World Bank, 2010).

Table 1 Integration among Member States of the ECOWAS

	Overall Rank	Trade Integration	Regional Infrastructure	Productive Integration	Free Movement of persons	Financial & Macroeconomic Integration
Country	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
Cote d'Ivoire	1	2	12	7	1	7
Togo	2	7	3	2	1	6
Senegal	3	3	13	4	1	3
Niger	4	8	8	9	1	1
Ghana	5	4	2	3	1	12
Burkina Faso	6	9	6	14	1	2
Benin	7	11	14	8	1	8
Mali	8	6	15	12	1	5
Nigeria	9	1	7	10	1	13
Guinea Bissau	10	10	9	15	1	4
The Gambia	11	14	4	1	1	10
Cape Verde	12	12	1	13	1	9
Sierra Leone	13	5	11	6	1	14
Liberia	14	15	10	5	1	11
Guinea	15	13	5	11	1	15

Source: UNECA, AU & ADB, 2017, p. 20.

The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) Vision 2040 advocates for the establishment and operation of thirteen OSBPs in West Africa: Kaouara–Nian–goloko (Burkina Faso/Côte d'Ivoire), Koloko–Heremakono (Mali/Burkina Faso), Paga–Dakola (Burkina Faso/Niger), Diboli (Burkina Faso/Niger), Cinkansé (Burkina Faso/Togo), Kidira (Mali/Senegal), Gaya (Niger/Benin), Ganta (Côte d'Ivoire/Liberia), Maka (Liberia/Sierra Leone), Mano River (Sierra Leone/Guinea), Pamalap & São Vicente (Guinea/Guinea Bissau), Seleti (Senegal/The Gambia), and Rosso (Senegal/Mauritania).

Better and quicker regional and road transit, shorter border wait times, lower transportation costs, unrestricted exchange rates, increased security for freight and passenger movements, and increased trade volumes are some of the possible advantages of the JBPs (Barka, 2012; Lebrand, 2021). Trade is facilitated on a heavily travelled route from the Port of Lomé to Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger by the Cinkansé Border Post, which is situated between Togo and Burkina Faso. Presently, twelve agencies—six at each border—must be passed by both trucks and passengers (Police, Immigration, Customs, Water and Forestry, Veterinary and SPS, and Gendarmerie). Since the JBPs were built, trade goods have been cleared more quickly, and the concerned governments stand to gain from standardised control processes and higher revenue (administrative fees for using Cinkansé JBP, which were agreed upon with UEMOA, range from US\$ 4 for a vehicle carrying fewer than nine passengers to US\$ 100 for a vehicle carrying goods) (CDC, ICA, EAC & JICA, 2011).

a. Integration Schemes of the ECOWAS

The ECOWAS was formed for economic integration. Furthermore, as stated in Article 3 of Chapter II of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty, the goals of the organisation are to further foster cooperation and development in economic, social, and cultural spheres, with a focus on raising the standard of living for ECOWAS citizens, enhancing and preserving economic stability, fostering better relations among member nations, and generally advancing and developing Africa (Opanike, et al, 2015).

The fifteen member states of ECOWAS are an expression of pan-Africanism (Gambari, 1991; ECOWAS, 1993); however, the Francophone member countries were not given favourable treatment in these declarations of intent regarding the formation of ECOWAS. Nigeria and Togo had to put in a lot of work to alter their opinions about the concept of an ECOWAS Community (Anadi, 2005).

In order to improve the integration of West African states, the regional community has made significant progress since the creation of the ECOWAS. Current integration initiatives include trade liberalisation, the facilitation of movement for people, and the harmonisation of fiscal and monetary policies, the harmonisation of business law, the development of transportation, communications, and energy networks, and the participation of the private sector in the regional integration process (Keen, 2003; Opanike et al., 2015). As indicated in Table 1, the ECOWAS has undertaken specific infrastructure projects on road transport such as the trans-coastal highway linking Lagos and Nouakchott via Dakar (4,560km), the Dakar-N'Djamena trans-Sahelian highway (4,460km), the construction of the Lagos-Abidjan “toll” highway, with six lanes and separate dual carriageways; rail transport; air transport and maritime and inland waterway transport.

Table 2 ECOWAS Infrastructure Development Projects

Project Title	Summary Description	Total Cost (US\$ Millions)	Location (Countries)
Abidjan-Lagos Coastal Corridor	Modernise heavily travelled ARTIN corridor in West Africa. Trade facilitation, OSBPs, capacity enhancement and implementation of PPP for five countries: Cote-d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria	290	Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Cote-d'Ivoire
Dakar-Niamey Multimodal Corridor	Modernise heavily travelled ARTIN corridor in West Africa. Trade facilitation, OSBPs, capacity enhancement and implementation of PPP) for four countries: Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger	590	Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger
Praia-Dakar-Abidjan Multimodal Corridor	Improve marine transport and the connection between island and mainland countries by creating a new maritime service between regional ports and a modern information system to link the maritime service with ports and roads in the Dakar-Abidjan Corridor. Would also modernise one of the most heavily travelled ARTIN corridors in West Africa. Trade facilitation, OSBPs, capacity enhancement (possibly through PPP) for eight countries: Cabo Verde, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea -Bissau, Guinea, Sierra -Leone, Liberia and Cote - d'Ivoire	150	Cabo Verde, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra- Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire
Abidjan-Ouagadougou/Bamako	Modernise and rehabilitate multimodal corridor damaged by civil war in Cote d'Ivoire.	540	Cote-d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali
West Africa Hub Port and Rail Programme	Address future capacity problems in West African ports with two components: a regional hub port and rail linkage master plan and port expansion	2,140	15 countries, PMAWCA
West Africa Air Transport	Increase air transport service levels in West Africa, which are currently limited by the lack of a regional air hub.	420	15 countries

Source: ECA & ECOWAS, 2016, p. 31

As it is shown in Table 2, ECOWAS member states have attained various stages of integration. In Trade Integration, Nigeria ranks no. 1, Cote d'Ivoire ranks no. 2, Senegal ranks no. 3 while Liberia ranks no. 15; in Regional Infrastructure Integration Cape Verde ranks no. 1, Ghana ranks no. 2, Togo ranks no. 3 while Mali ranks no. 15; and in Productive integration The Gambia ranks no. 1, Togo ranks no. 2, Ghana ranks no. 3, while Guinea Bissau ranks no. 15 and in Financial and Macroeconomic Integration Niger ranks no. 1, Burkina Faso ranks no. 2, Senegal ranks no. 3, while Guinea ranks no. 15. Interestingly, these integration initiatives support the ultimate goals of an

economic union and have a positive impact on the national economies of member states (Kouyate, 2013).

While still far short of the accomplishments of its European Union counterpart, the ECOWAS is, undoubtedly one of the most advanced regional organisations on the African continent. However, the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of people, goods, and services is thought to be extremely relevant to the overall goal of the ECOWAS integration policies, as true integration is impossible to achieve if the community's citizens—who are regarded as integration agents—are prevented from moving freely. As a result, the Protocol is central to the organizations' goal. However, the need to advance regional trade and foster regional integration ultimately gave rise to the Protocol's liberalisation of transborder mobility provisions. It is thought that the ECOWAS community's residents' lot is improved and wealth is increased by this economic integration. The primary motivation behind the enactment of the Protocol, according to the heads of the member states, was the desire to guarantee faster regional development through economic integration.

Therefore, the Protocol aims to eliminate any barriers to trade and the cross-border movement of its citizens (Opanike et al, 2015). Any regional agreement must inevitably go through several integration stages, such as a common market, custom union, and free trade area, before it can finally become a full economic union. Achieving free mobility is essential to achieving a full Economic Union because it permits the free movement of people, their goods, and services. The ECOWAS integration programs' evident relevance to the member states' present and future development priorities bodes well for how the regional integration process in West Africa will proceed in the future.

a. Border Security

The border between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin is one of the most important border areas in West Africa. Both legal and illicit cross-border trade is vital to the economies of both countries. It is a vital component of the Abidjan-Lagos migration and transportation corridor and a major transportation route in the ECOWAS area (Blum, 2014). However, this border post is frequently involved in a number of issues that hinder trade and the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement, including the large number of checkpoints (see Table 3), which have between 1.8 and 3.2 checkpoints per 100 km along West African corridors (Barka, 2012); poor road conditions and infrastructure; and administrative harassment wherein certain corrupt practices require that informal payments be made to government officials, especially on major transport routes. Administrative harassment by customs, police, gendarmerie, and other uniformed services for between US\$ 3 and US\$ 23 per 100 kilometers, which is almost US\$ 200 for an average trip. Checkpoints and bribery levels are highest along the Abidjan–Bamako corridor (Naudé, 2009; Walther, Dambo, Konà, & van Eupen, 2020).

Table 3 Location of Roadblocks on Some Regional Corridors in West Africa

Highways	Distance	Checkpoint	Checkpoint Post per 100 Km
Lagos-Abidjan	992 Km	69	7
Cotonou-Niamey	1036 Km	34	3
Lome-Ouagadougou	989 Km	34	4
Accra-Ouagadougou	972 Km	15	2
Abidjan-Ouagadougou	1122 Km	37	3
Niamey-Ouagadougou	529 Km	20	4

Source: ECA & ECOWAS, 2016, p. 71.

But what is a border post? It is simply defined as the point at which one nation's authority over people and goods ends and another nation's authority over them begins. In the past, borders have served as a symbol of the sovereignty of a state, and each state has made every effort to keep outsiders out of its defined territory (Gottmann, 1980). As a matter of fact, the European states converted their frontiers into combat zones, both for routine practice and actual combat. This is due to the fact that borders were first drawn to indicate the extent of a sovereign state's territory, which incentivised rulers to draw the border to indicate their domains. After Africa was divided by its colonial rulers, this was not an isolated incident (Brunet-Jailly, 2010).

Borders are crucial for distinguishing one nation from another. Insiders are shielded from outsiders by a properly drawn, functional border. The borders of a nation define its territorial limits and grant it sovereignty (Agnew, 1994). A border delineates the sovereignty of a state by delineating its territory and the boundaries of its administration and jurisdiction (Okumu, 2011, p. 2). Borders are used as corridors for a variety of reasons, including positive or negative cross-border flow. This is the reason that nations have, at various times, fiercely guarded their borders. The goal of border security is to regulate the flow of people and products; the degree of this regulation is primarily set by emerging threats; like the COVID-19 pandemic compelling African states to undertake indiscriminate restrictive health policies called pandemic nationalism (Aniche, Iwuoha & Isike, 2022).

A plethora of government agencies, including revenue authorities, customs, immigration, police, ministries of agriculture, health, and standards, among others, handle various documents and goods controls, compute and collect duties and taxes, and handle immigration at borders (Barka, 2012). A container or truck may have to wait anywhere from minutes to days to cross a border post in Africa due to the abundance of these agencies operating on both sides of the same border, which doubles the bureaucracy at border posts. A consignment frequently loses roughly USD 185 for every day of delay due to the onerous processes involved in customs processing (ESA BMO Network, 2010).

As a result of external colonisation, artificial borders were drawn in the late nineteenth century during the race for Africa (Alesina, Easterly & Matuszeski, 2011; Dowden, 2008; Englebert, Tarango & Carter, 2002; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2010, 2011). These borders were maintained with little regard for regional or ethnic history. African borders are, therefore, still brittle, according to some academics, who also point out that colonial powers drew borders dividing the continent's sovereign states without consulting or consenting from the African populace and in a manner that did not adequately reflect the sociocultural, political, and regional differences across the continent (Asiwaju, 1992). An example of this can be found in the Imeko/Ilara communities that are located along the border between Nigeria and the Benin Republic. Due to the arbitrary boundary that runs through both West African states, the indigenous people of these communities now belong to both states (Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2018).

The African Union Border Programme (AUBP) was established to address the issue of the continent's ill-defined borders. Its goal is to integrate and unite Africa through open, peaceful borders while safeguarding and advancing the interests of the local population. Established in 2007 and supported by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) from 2008 to 2015, the project helps 15 African partner countries with delineation and demarcation operations. It is creating operational support at the local, regional, and institutional levels (organisational development, skilled personnel) cross-border projects. A significant step toward acknowledging the necessity of enacting pertinent laws for the growth of cross-border activities was taken in 2014 when the Summit of Heads of State and Government adopted the Niamey Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (OECD/SWAC, 2017, p. 127).

In the context of trade, the cost of intra-regional trade in Africa is shocking when compared to other parts of the world (Afrexibank, 2024). As it is shown in Table 4, it is more abysmal when Africa's cross-border trade vis-à-vis other sub-region is juxtaposed.

Table 4 Cross-Border Trade Indicators in Selected Sub-regions

Region	Documents to export (number)	Time to export (days)	Cost to export (USD per container)	Documents to import (number)	Time to import (days)	Cost to import (USD per container)
SADC	7.3	31.2	1,856.3	8.4	38.0	2,273.3
COMESA	7.2	32.4	1,915.3	8.2	38.3	2,457.5
ECOWAS	7.6	27.6	1,528.1	8.1	31.6	1,890.9
CEMAC	9.0	35.2	2,808.8	10.8	44.0	3,721.4
M. East & N. Africa	6.4	20.4	1,048.9	7.5	24.2	1,229.3
East Asia & Pacific	6.4	22.7	889.8	6.9	24.1	934.7
South Asia	8.5	32.3	1,511.6	9.0	32.5	1744.5
Latin America	7.1	19.0	1,310.6	7.5	22.0	1,441.1
E. Europe & Cent r Asia	6.4	26.7	1,651.7	7.6	28.1	2,457.5
EU	4.5	11.5	1,025.3	5.3	12.1	1,086.5
OECD	4.4	10.9	1,058.7	4.9	11.4	1,106.3

Source: Barka, 2012, p. 5.

Table 4 clearly indicates a worrisome intra-Africa trade. Whereas the time to export (in days) from Africa's SADC, COMESA, ECOWAS and CEMAC ranges between 31.2 to 35.2, the time deployed in other sub-regions to export documents took between 20.4 to 10.9 days. Similarly, it costs higher in Africa to import a container when juxtaposed with other sub-regions globally. For example, shipping a container abroad from an African nation typically costs US\$2,000, but in Asia, the same amount is estimated to cost US\$900 or less. The infrastructure and labour force at border checkpoints in Africa are overextended (Barka, 2012). They face a number of challenges to the free flow of persons, services, and goods, despite their primary goal of being to stop the smuggling of illegal goods into the nation and the entry of undesirable people (such as criminals or other threats). One of the main obstacles to the free movement of goods across borders in West Africa is the region's inadequate and subpar transportation infrastructure. Moving goods across borders is extremely expensive and prone to long delays because of the poor road network in West Africa (where only 22.7% of roads are currently paved), the poor interconnectivity of rail networks, and the inability of small ports to handle the largest supersize container ships. These difficulties are brought on by the inadequate infrastructure, traffic volume increases that clog roads, dated manual procedures that cause delays, corruption, and illicit trade (OECD/SWAC, 2017).

Africa has shown to be a difficult continent for border security. The difficult task of managing borders requires nations to preserve their territorial integrity and sovereignty while making sure that borders serve as links rather than as obstacles for regional integration and cross-border cooperation (Okumu, 2011; OECD/SWAC, 2022). They are required to keep people and goods out of the country while preventing illegal entry and exit; they also have to make it possible for family members to visit their relatives and provide easy access for tourists, keeping out criminals like terrorists, drug traffickers, and people traffickers, among others.

These difficulties are made worse by globalisation, which is erasing national boundaries through the development of new technologies and altering international relations (Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2018). Crimes are committed without regard to national boundaries these days, and vast quantities of goods are sold online. The Internet has effectively dismantled borders by enabling imports without customs inspection, in addition to making border management and the fight against cross-border crimes more difficult.

However, it is impossible to overstate the financial advantages of joint border posts (JBPs). It is obvious that intraregional trade in Africa will be improved and enhanced by switching from two-control stops to a Joint Border Post, fully compliant with the regulatory requirements of the neighbouring countries. Additionally, it leads to increased cooperation, better resource utilisation, information and trade data sharing, and enhanced operational efficiency for customs and other government agencies. Clearance of goods through a single customs declaration discourages border officers from trying to bribe them and stops one set of documents from being substituted for another.

According to Barka (2012), the economic benefits of joint border posts, amongst others, include:

- a. Traders, companies, and national economies all benefit from increased customs efficiency, which calls for modernizing and harmonizing customs administrations through the simplification and streamlining of clearance procedures. Significant business and investment opportunities are lost as a result of lengthy and antiquated customs procedures, delays at borders, and a lack of transparency and predictability. Operational efficiency will rise with modernization and the adoption of ICT systems;
- b. Governments can reduce costs by streamlining administrative procedures, introducing computerised customs management systems, and sharing information between agencies and nations. This will reduce official workloads and free up skilled human resources for other tasks. Moreover, increased trade and revenues will guarantee fewer cross-border delays, and reduced rent-seeking by government officials will significantly lower the cost of trade transactions;
- c. Additionally, the presence of efficient border posts incentivises unregistered traders to transport and declare their goods via authorized channels, which lowers the amount of trade goods that are smuggled and increases trade flows. In addition to traders and businesses, the national and sub-regional economies gain from increased trade because of lower import prices for goods, which also benefit consumers at the end of the cross-border trade chain by streamlining customs procedures. Companies and traders can use the efficiency gains at borders to reduce the cost of trade transactions and then pass these savings on to consumers in the form of lower prices for imported goods; and,
- d. expansion and creation of jobs which guarantees that although the relationship between better customs processes and the creation of jobs is difficult to measure, empirical data indicates that higher trade volumes and lower product prices encourage consumer demand, which boosts the economy and the job market. Furthermore, the better facilitation of international trade ought to encourage unregistered vendors to formalize their operations. This facilitates their ability to expand their businesses, hire more people, and obtain better credit and training.

The necessity to overcome difficulties and to continue in increasing the economic benefits of joint border posts (JBPs), sundry measures have been adopted at regional, sub-regional and at continental levels. First, the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons, goods, and services was aimed to mitigate the disruptive effects of arbitrary boundary formations. The goal of the Protocol is to eliminate any restrictions on the right to free movement, and every member state has committed to helping make the Protocol a reality and fully implement it.

Second, the common determination to work toward border demarcation and delimitation as determinants of peace, security, and economic and social advancement at the continent level, as notably reaffirmed in Resolution CM/Res.1069 (XLIV) and the Memorandum of Understanding on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa, which was adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 2002 in Durban, South Africa. In accordance with the resolution passed by the 8th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, which was held in Addis Ababa in January 2007, the African Union Commission was tasked with pursuing its efforts to prevent conflicts structurally and established the

African Union Border Programme.

The Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Border Issues adopted the Declarations of the African Union Border Programme and its implementation modalities in 2007, 2010, and 2014. These declarations emphasise the necessity of implementing a new pragmatic approach to border management that will not only promote peace, security, and stability but also facilitate the integration process and sustainable development in Africa. Given the current challenges of integrated border management, it is also necessary to address development and security issues in the border areas holistically.

The African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (Niamey Convention, 2014) in Article 2(5) aims to "ensure efficient and effective integrated border management". The Niamey Convention established the legal foundation for cross-border collaboration at the local, national, regional, and continental levels. It defines Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) as any act or policy that aims to promote and strengthen good-neighbourly relations between border population, territorial communities and administrations, or other stakeholders with the jurisdiction of two or more states. It includes the conclusion of agreements useful for this purpose. By taking border governance to a new level—moving borders from being structural preventive of conflicts to being sites of proactive fostering of peace and good-neighbourly relations between states—it provides a practical approach to multifaceted aspects of cross-border cooperation and security.

The AUBP is now widely accepted by Member States and RECs, but the Niamey Convention has not yet come into effect. Decision-makers and leaders were well aware of the integration potential that borders offered. The implementation of common sectoral policies can be anchored from the frames provided by borders. As a result, borders serve as the links that hold states together while they carry out these policies. Five pillars form the foundation of the AU Border Governance Strategy, acting as fulcrums for the vision and mission of the strategy: The first pillar is the development of border governance capabilities; the second pillar is the prevention and resolution of conflicts, border security, and transnational threats; the third pillar is the facilitation of mobility, migration, and trade; the fourth pillar is cooperative border management; and the fifth pillar is borderland development and community engagement. The AUC, RECs, and Member States can create national and regional border governance strategies with the guidance of these five pillars (Africa Union Commission, 2020).

a. **New Technologies and the ECOWAS Protocol**

Supply and demand factors (such as import quotas, anti-dumping laws, countervailing duties, border tax adjustments, and subsidies) and technical trade barriers (such as sanitary and phytosanitary measures, rules of origin, standards, and qualifications) usually impede trade between nations and sub-regions. However, inadequate infrastructure, a deficiency of institutional and human resources, an undiversified and underdeveloped export base, political instability, and a lack of infrastructure are further barriers to intraregional trade (Barka, 2012). Due in large part to the fact that the majority of African nations are signatories to multiple regional trade agreements (RTAs) and are members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), tariffs and nontariff measures are not thought to be major barriers to intra-African trade.

Governments must step up efforts to upgrade "hard" and "soft" infrastructure in order to fully realise the potential of intra-African trade and increase competitiveness. Building strong ICT systems and services, assuring dependable and inexpensive power sources, and developing transportation networks (roads, railroads, ports, and airports) are examples of "hard" infrastructure improvements (Grainer, 2011). Simplifying and harmonising border and customs procedures, promoting the use of new technology by customs agencies, and doing away with corruption and illicit payments such as bribery of officials at borders and checkpoints are all necessary components of "soft" infrastructure measures.

By addressing these problems, we can improve the business climate on the continent, which in turn attracts investment from both domestic and foreign sources, in addition to facilitating intraregional trade and international exports (Trémolières, 2009). Additionally, "soft" infrastructure upgrades promote openness and encourage informal traders to formalize their operations—particularly in Africa, where the informal sector accounts for, on average, half of the country's official GDP.

The unimpeded movement of people and goods across borders is significantly hampered by the underdeveloped and substandard transportation infrastructure found in many African nations. Moving goods across borders is very expensive and can cause significant delays due to the poor state of road networks in Africa, where only 22.7% of the continent's roads are paved, the inadequate interconnectivity of rail networks, and the small capacity of many smaller ports to handle the largest supersize container ships (Barka, 2012). Both consumer demand and competitiveness are impacted by this, as high trade costs raise retail prices and reduce consumer desire to spend more (Trémolières, 2009). An estimate of the magnitude of the issue is that transportation costs in Africa are 135 percent greater than in other developing regions. Although it would cost USD 32 billion over 15 years (including maintenance) to upgrade the main intra-African road network, trade expansion worth roughly USD 250 billion would result, nearly eight folding the return on investment (UNCTAD, 2009).

The most common significant obstacle faced by most traders after overcoming the difficulty of physically transporting goods from one transit country to another is the time-consuming and expensive processes involved in clearing goods at border posts and customs. Twenty to thirty parties, forty documents, 200 data elements—thirty of which are repeated at least thirty times—and the rekeying of sixty to seventy percent of all data are involved in the average customs transaction in Africa (UNECA, 2010). The majority of African nations have two full sets of controls that must be finished, one on each side of the border post requiring the completion and clearance of numerous forms of documentation. The costs of trade are increased by these bureaucratic obstacles, particularly when each day that customs delays result in an extra 85 kilometers separating the trading nations. In order to avoid delays at customs and border posts, it also promotes illicit trade and corruption (Adepoju, 2009).

Nevertheless, the implementation of extensive automated systems for document checking and clearing could potentially alleviate the protracted processes associated with clearing goods at border posts. Modern information technology is not used by many border posts in Africa for both domestic and international trade transactions. Frequent electronic system failures and a lack of reliable power supply are two more challenges faced by the few border posts that do have integrated electronic devices for document logging (Adepoju, 2009). This increases the cost of exports from Africa and intraregional trade since customs clearance takes a long time and the assessment of taxes and duties is opaque. Enhancing the automation of customs services will help to expedite the process, regularize the procedures, and generate more revenue for the corresponding governments. For example, Angola has increased revenue from customs duties by 150 percent and significantly reduced processing times by using modern information technologies for customs procedures (UNCTAD, 2009).

Regretfully, the prevalence of corruption and illicit trade at most African border posts poses a more pressing challenge. Due to the lack of predictability and transparency in trade and business administration, the majority of customs officers, traders, and companies frequently engage in bribery and underreporting of goods in order to expedite payment. In addition to lowering trade costs, efforts to combat corruption and bribery would also enhance the business climate, attract both domestic and foreign investment, and increase government revenue (Adepoju, 2009).

Conclusion

This paper asks why regional integration in West Africa, through the ECOWAS, has never been hitch-free, even with the adoption of its Protocol on free movement of persons. The paper, having identified several hiccups to regionalism in West Africa such as corruption, bureaucracy in clearing process, time wastage in clearing of goods at border posts, etc., pinpointed several explanations. Amongst several explanations, the paper pinpointed the necessity for the introduction and operationalisation of new technology in the region. This the paper insists will facilitate and strengthen the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons. It suggested that appropriate measures must be adopted to douse and if not totally eliminate the different hinderances hampering regionalism in the ECOWAS subregion; a scenario, ab initio that has continuously undermined the goodwill, spirit and intentions behind the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement.

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WITCHCRAFT AND THE IGBO WORLDVIEW: TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS IN AFRICAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

In traditional Igbo worldview, the issue of witchcraft was not a major epistemological concern. However, in contemporary Africa, particularly within the Igbo worldview, belief in witches and witchcraft remains widespread despite advancements in science. While science provides explanations for many phenomena, certain experiences and events continue to elude scientific interpretation, reinforcing traditional beliefs. This paper examines how contemporary Africans, especially the Igbo, perceive and engage with witchcraft. Using historical, ethnographic, and content analysis methods, it finds that belief in witchcraft persists as a significant aspect of cultural and social reality. The paper argues that science does not provide answers to all aspects of human existence, and as a result, Igbo's belief in witchcraft, though not scientifically verified, cannot be dismissed.

Keywords: *Witch, Witchcraft, Tradition, Igbo, Africa, Society.*

Introduction

The Enlightenment and the rise of modern rationalism reshaped the Western worldview, replacing supernatural explanations with scientific reasoning. In the West, witchcraft is largely dismissed as superstition. However, this is not the case in Africa, where belief in witches—individuals believed to wield mystical powers to harm others—remains deeply rooted in cultural traditions. Kunhiyop (2004) affirms this, stating that "almost all African societies believe in witchcraft in one form or another," viewing it as a key explanation for misfortune, evil, and death. The African worldview is holistic, attributing all events—good or bad—to human actions or supernatural forces. Ancestors are believed to influence the living through blessings or curses, while witches are seen as malevolent forces intent on causing harm. When natural explanations are insufficient, witchcraft is often considered the underlying cause.

Witchcraft has been a central aspect of African societies for generations, shaping customs, religious practices, and community life. In Nigeria and across Africa, magic, sorcery, and witchcraft have long been intertwined with social and spiritual matters. Many phenomena remain unexplained by science, reinforcing traditional beliefs. Africans have historically accepted witchcraft as a reality without questioning its existence. Latour (1995) describes witchcraft as supernatural interference in the natural order, often with consequences. Scholarly literature confirms the persistence of these beliefs. Awolalu and Dopamu (1978) describe witches as anti-social figures blamed for various misfortunes, including accidents, sudden deaths, and infertility. Unlike in the West, where witchcraft is often dismissed as psychological or social distress, Igbos and the rest of Africans do not see its existence as an epistemological problem. Instead, they have their own ways of understanding the unexplained. When science fails to provide answers, traditional beliefs offer explanations that are deeply embedded in African culture.

This paper challenges Western perspectives that reduce witchcraft to mere superstition or psychological stress. Instead, it argues that belief in witchcraft remains a significant and functional part of African society, particularly among the Igbo.

The Concept of Witchcraft

The concept of witchcraft and the belief in its existence have existed throughout recorded history. They have been present at various times, and in many diverse forms, among cultures and religions worldwide, and have continued to have important role in many cultures today. Witchcraft is a complex concept that varies from culture to culture and from society to society. As such, the concept is difficult to define with precision and as a result, cross-cultural assumptions about the meaning or significance of the term should be applied with caution.

Hallen and Sodipo (1986) in their book *Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft*, have shown that the Westerners generally conceive a witch as a person who is quintessentially evil, anti-social and deliberately malicious to the people. To the Igbo, witchcraft is an art of those who have the “second sight”. The second sight means being able to grasp things hidden from the ordinary man through the power of a spirit and it may be negative or positive depending on the individuals possessing such second sight and the use of it. Middleton (1967) similarly describes witchcraft as an innate, mystical force that its possessor can use to harm others, shaping social relations and conflict resolution in many African societies. More recent scholarship continues to explore the persistence of witchcraft beliefs in contemporary African societies. Geschiere (1997) highlights how witchcraft remains deeply embedded in political and economic structures, influencing power dynamics and social cohesion. Ashforth (2005) examines the role of witchcraft in urban African settings, demonstrating how traditional beliefs adapt to modern environments, particularly in response to socio-economic challenges. Meanwhile, Niehaus (2012) discusses how accusations of witchcraft serve as mechanisms for addressing misfortune and maintaining moral order in communities. For Vinod et al. (2016), witchcraft is also known as witchery or spell craft and broadly means the practice of, and belief in, magical skills and abilities that are able to be exercised individually by designated social groups, or by persons with the necessary esoteric secret knowledge.

But then, although not all witches are quintessentially evil, in African and in particular in Igbo traditional belief system, there are two types of witches: the black witches and the white witches. The Igbo use the word *Amusu* to refer to both the black and white witches. The black witches fall within the description of witches by the Westerners as quintessentially evil, anti-social and malicious to the people. While the white witches known in Igbo societies to be benevolent. In the Igbo world-view, the white witches are believed to usually use their own vision and wisdom in different talents and in different fields to help neighbours and the community. Thus, in Igbo thought system, witchcraft is seen as an explanatory model of events, especially mystical or metaphysical events.

Belief in Witchcraft in Traditional African Society

The belief in witchcraft has been regarded by some scholars as a mere fantasy that does not relate to any tangible reality. Some Western writers even posit what they call “witchcraft fallacy” (Eyo, 1970) by arguing that witchcraft is psychic and its belief is caused by neurosis arising from social, economic as well as psychological stress. However, we must note here that the Western writers indeed view witchcraft from the perspective of their western culture and as such, we may conclude that they are not really referring to witchcraft in Igbo traditional belief system. This is because just like Prof Bolaji Idowu rightly pointed out, “In Africa, it is idle to begin with the question whether witches exist or not...To Africans of every category, witchcraft is an urgent reality” (Idowu, 1962). Hence the traditional African man has no doubt about the existence or belief in witchcraft. Thus, the belief in witchcraft is strong and widespread in Africa, particularly in Igbo traditional societies.

Who is a Witch?

The problem of who is a witch still remains unsolved despite philosophical arguments it has generated. This is mainly due to the fact that witchcraft is always associated with evil. Even though there are those who confess to being witches without coercion, the problem still remains unsolved because no one can openly accept or boast of being a witch. This is mainly because most people define and describe the witch in line with Isaac Funk, who sees a witch as “one who is supposed to have influence and dealings with evil spirits or the devil in order to work spells upon human beings or their property” (Funk, 1969). But one important question we need to ask is this: are all witches quintessentially evil, anti-social, and deliberately malicious people?

Geoffrey Parrinder - a British scholar and theologian best known for his work on African traditional religions and the study of African cultures - brought out some other problems associated with personality in his book *African Traditional Religion*. These problems include: is witchcraft associated with women alone? Has societal status anything to do with those accused of being witches? What has kiths and kins to do with those accused of being witches and their relationship in their overall evil activities. To answer the first question, Parrinder posits that most of those accused of being witches are women. He explains this by the fact that women are sociologically lower class of the society. He is trying to prove that belief in witches and their existence is fantasy and that those women are accused because they are the class of people that suffer mostly from poverty, desperation, frustration, and helplessness that are consequent to economic and political importance (Parrinder, 1954). Parrinder seems to be pointing out an important fact which those adherents of witchcraft belief should consider as he opines that those who confess without coercion are innocent of the offence and therefore, scapegoats of the society. Another reason why majority of those accused are overwhelmingly women as noted by Parrinder, can be attributed to the sociological position of women relative to men in the society. According to Parrinder, although men could become witches easily, the accusations are made against women because they are weaker than men making them more susceptible (Parrinder, 1954). But then, in Igbo traditional society, witchcraft accusations do not take into cognizance of the strata or sex of the individual in the society but is rooted in morality of the people as well as in the authority of the land called *Omenala*. Anybody who confesses willingly does so because he did something wrong and is being bitten by his or her conscience, the rightful judge of morality.

Also, in response to Parrinder, Thomas Reid in his book *Religion and the Decline of Magic* says that the members of the lower class generally made a distinction between the so called cunning men or women or white/good witches and the genuinely malevolent, anti-social witches. According to Reid, the task of “good witches” is to help the victims of malevolent witches as we can find some witch doctors do today in Igbo land. But the essence of the malevolent witchcraft is the ability to inflict damage by occult means, and the most important term here is “occult” which he describes as the power to mysteriously injure other people (Reid, 1973). This can only be a pointer to the fact that what is considered in the accusation and voluntary confession of witches is the evil and the gravity of the offence involved in relation to humanity and not the sex, age or societal class or status of the individuals involved. For the Igbo, life is sacred and any attempt to destroy life is a crime not only against the tradition but also against humanity.

The psychological and sociological explanation attached to the witchcraft personality can as well be viewed from another angle. If the women are accused because of their status in the society or relative to men and other psychological problems they have, could that not follow that the women embrace witchcraft as a means of mitigation? Also, it could be assumed that instead of succumbing to resignation and self-pity arising from their position in the society, embracing to be malevolent witches offers such hopelessly down-trodden individuals some hope of power and consequently vengeance on the society and its members. This can be seen by the fact that sociological and psychological oppression of any individual can lead the individual to take any type of action because

of internalization of intimation of inferiority in such individuals. Parrinder raised more questions with regards to witchcraft personality. Such questions border on the accusation made against individuals who are witches. According to Parrinder, the accusations made of those suspected to be witches are usually those of inimical acts against members' own family. Kwasi Wiredu highlights this more when he says:

The virtues of African extended family system are often praised and rightly so. It is possible to see in it, the seed of human society making man to realize his dignity and the value of life in his own community. But unfortunately, the family as of now is the witches' knowledge domain of operation. Witches are rarely credited with good work. Evil is their speciality and this evil they are supposed to visit exclusively on kith and kin within their own extended family (Wiredu, 1980).

Parrinder's argument is that belief in witchcraft is absurd because a house divided against itself is bound to collapse, but the Igbo world view transcends emotion because it is lived out of experience handed down from generation to generation. Life is sacred and the Igbo believe that relationships between individuals should foster posterity of life such that man is dignified and not destroyed in the family and in the community. Therefore, if a member of the family chooses to act on the ignorance of his kith and kin by using him for his own selfish end by destroying his or her life through occult means; he must be exposed to face the shame of it. Though he or she does it in secret, it would be exposed because to the Igbo man, whatever one sows is what he or she would reap. This means that the person involved does not matter but the crime committed and the accusation is made to anybody that is involved. But the question would be: how does one ascertain the certainty of those involved? How does one know that those accused actually are the witches since it is done in secret and with an invisible spiritual power? The answer is that some of them came out to confess without coercion, but does that solve the problem? What of those that accuse others out of malice and jealousy just to defame the individual by accusing him or her? Those are questions which generate controversy, but we may hold that witchcraft is a metaphysical as well as mystical activity and only those who are witches can explain the events very satisfactorily. The Igbo believe that man is not just a bundle of material intuition and impression. It is believed that even nature does have an evolutionist cum process language. For man, there is a constitutive 'inner side', a spiritual part that must be given a serious study that it deserves. It is not enough to say that sociological, economic problems should abound and are the causes of witchcraft belief and therefore, witchcraft is to be left unstudied. The Igbo believe that studying it must involve 'Omenala' which spells out the consensus of the living person on the group. This is handed down by the custom on how best a community would live their lives. It must be stressed that 'Omenala' is not a blind adherence to the past; it involves adjustments to new circumstances in view of making the person and the community survive and progress.

Parrinder finally sees witchcraft belief as a consequence of modernity and development. According to him, most Africans including the Igbo societies undergo rapid transformation and simultaneous social and industrial revolutions, according to him, rapid changes increase personal anxieties, promote accidental failure of ill health. The appeal to witchcraft can be used to rationalize and relieve any or all of these. Parrinder points out that witches serve as the scape goats for the neurosis of African societies (Parrinder, 1954). Parrinder uses Western cultural category to judge African culture, thereby leading to difficulties such as pointed earlier. Again, the word 'amusu' has been existing in Igbo thought system as well as in other African societies for a very long time. It has a long history.

In Igbo society, the belief in witchcraft is an integral part of both social and spiritual life, deeply embedded in the culture and worldview of the people. Witches are generally seen as individuals who possess supernatural powers that are often used for malevolent purposes, such as causing harm, misfortune, and disruption within the community. This belief is not only a reflection of the spiritual dimensions of Igbo cosmology but also serves as a mechanism for maintaining social order and moral discipline. Witches are typically viewed as those who use their powers to harm others,

particularly through illness, accidents, or even sudden death, thus disrupting the social harmony of the community (Evans-Pritchard, 1976).

The Igbo worldview is holistic, meaning that all phenomena—whether positive or negative—are traced back to human action and spiritual forces. According to Igbo beliefs, when misfortune occurs, particularly when natural explanations are insufficient, witchcraft often provides a way of making sense of these unexplained events (Uka, 1994). Witches are believed to be capable of causing harm because of their desire to destroy life or seek personal gain, often out of jealousy or resentment. This view reflects a broader African belief system where witchcraft is not merely a matter of supernatural power but also a social and moral issue, with witchcraft believed to be the ultimate cause of misfortunes such as accidents, stillbirths, and other calamities (Middleton, 1997).

Witchcraft, in the Igbo context, is not perceived merely as a threat to the individual but as a force that disrupts the entire social and spiritual equilibrium of the community. It is intertwined with notions of justice and moral order. Social and personal grievances can lead to witchcraft accusations, with the accused witches often seen as perpetrators of societal harm, whether in terms of economic misfortune, illness, or death. In these cases, the belief in witchcraft serves as a form of social control, regulating behaviors and providing explanations for hardship and suffering. The accusation of witchcraft is, therefore, not only a spiritual matter but a social one, representing a response to perceived moral transgressions (Mbiti, 1969).

One of the key aspects of the Igbo conception of witchcraft is the role of ancestors and the spiritual world. The Igbo cosmology emphasizes the importance of ancestral spirits, who are generally considered to be protectors of the living. However, some individuals, through malevolent practices, are believed to transgress these spiritual laws by using witchcraft to harm others. This use of supernatural power is thought to upset the balance of the spiritual ecosystem, leading to a breakdown of the social order. When individuals experience misfortune or death that defies natural explanation, the belief in witchcraft often provides a cultural framework for understanding and addressing these events (Okafor, 2012).

Despite the profound influence of modernity and scientific rationalism, the belief in witchcraft continues to persist in contemporary Igbo society. In modern times, witchcraft accusations are often linked to economic success or failure, with individuals in the growing urban elite or those perceived as having inexplicable wealth being accused of using witchcraft to acquire their fortunes. This modern adaptation of witchcraft beliefs reflects the ongoing relevance of traditional belief systems in explaining contemporary social and economic phenomena, as modern science often fails to provide satisfactory explanations for complex social realities (Abimbola, 2000).

The belief in witchcraft also serves as a mechanism for community cohesion in Igbo society. When an individual is accused of witchcraft, the community often responds by engaging in rituals or trials to cleanse the person and restore balance. These rituals may include the involvement of diviners, priests, or even violent methods of purification. While these rituals are intended to restore spiritual order, they also serve to reinforce social norms and expectations, acting as a form of communal justice. However, this process can also lead to fear and suspicion, as individuals may be falsely accused and subjected to harsh treatment, causing tension within the community (Meyer, 2012).

Witchcraft in Igbo society is not simply a supernatural phenomenon but a deeply embedded cultural and social practice. Witches are perceived as agents of disruption, whose actions are believed to harm the community both spiritually and socially. The belief in witchcraft provides a framework for understanding misfortune, justifying social control, and addressing grievances within the community. Despite the influence of modern science, witchcraft beliefs continue to play a significant role in shaping social relations and spiritual practices in contemporary Igbo society, highlighting the resilience of traditional belief systems in the face of modernization.

The Problem of Witchcraft Activities in Contemporary African Societies

Witchcraft in contemporary African societies, especially within the context of the Igbo worldview, is a multifaceted and complex concept. It encompasses a wide range of beliefs, practices, and social consequences, both metaphysical and social. This section aims to provide a clearer understanding of witchcraft practices and perceptions, using specific examples and integrating recent scholarship to shed light on the issue.

1. Cultural Beliefs about Witchcraft

In traditional African societies, witchcraft is often viewed as a supernatural power that can be used for malevolent purposes, such as causing harm to individuals or communities. Witches are believed to possess mystical abilities that allow them to cause physical and psychological harm to others. These powers are often used covertly, through nocturnal activities, and are typically linked to malevolent intentions. Common acts attributed to witches include causing illness, barrenness, death, and various forms of misfortune (Simpson, 1954). The activities of witches are described as 'secretive' and 'evil,' as they are believed to strike not only within the immediate community but also at distant locations, often in invisible forms (Simpson, 1954). Such powers are thought to be used for selfish gain or vengeance, making witches a threat to both individual lives and social harmony. In Igbo culture, the term "amusu" (witchcraft) can refer to both harmful and beneficial forms of witchcraft, distinguishing between "black" (malevolent) witches and "white" (benevolent) witches. The latter, in particular, are considered individuals who use their supernatural powers to benefit the community, such as through healing or prophecy (Sogolo, 1993). However, in practice, the negative connotation often outweighs the positive aspects, as witches are more commonly associated with harm and evil intentions.

2. Contemporary Witchcraft Accusations

In modern African societies, witchcraft accusations often intersect with social, political, and economic issues. Contemporary witchcraft is sometimes associated with extreme acts of violence, such as ritual killings, robbery, and the exploitation of others for personal gain. For example, sensationalized reports in newspapers across Nigeria often depict instances of murder, beheadings, and ritualistic practices, all of which are attributed to witchcraft in the traditional sense. These acts are often seen as manifestations of greed or power-seeking behavior, with individuals resorting to witchcraft for material gain (Meyer, 2012). Such violent acts, however, are framed within a metaphysical lens, with the belief that there is a hidden, supernatural force at work. The traditional African worldview lacks immediate rational explanations for these phenomena, and so witchcraft becomes a catch-all term used to explain the unknown (Meyer, 2012). The contemporary witch, therefore, is seen as a person capable of manipulating metaphysical powers to engage in destructive behaviors, such as exploitation, violence, and even public corruption. These acts are not only attributed to human actions but are believed to be guided by supernatural forces.

3. Gender Perspectives on Witchcraft

Witchcraft accusations in African societies, and particularly within the Igbo community, often have a gendered dimension. Women, especially older women, are disproportionately accused of witchcraft. This is linked to their social status, often as marginalized members of society or those who challenge traditional gender roles (Stewart, 1993). Women who have outlived their reproductive years or who are seen as undesirable or difficult may be more likely to be accused of witchcraft, as their perceived lack of usefulness to society makes them scapegoats for various social ills. This gendered aspect of

witchcraft accusations reflects broader patriarchal structures within the community, where women's power—especially their supernatural power—is feared and suppressed. A woman's power to influence others through witchcraft is often seen as a direct challenge to male authority, which can lead to social exclusion or even violence. This dynamic is evident in cases where women who are accused of witchcraft may be subjected to ritual purification, exile, or even violent punishment (Meyer, 2012).

4. The Intersection of Traditional and Modern Witchcraft

Witchcraft in contemporary African societies is not static but rather adapts to the changing social and political landscape. In recent years, witchcraft has become linked to modern economic activities and social behaviors. For instance, individuals who are perceived as successful in business or politics may be accused of using witchcraft to acquire wealth. These accusations often arise from envy or fear, particularly in societies where economic success is hard to come by, and witchcraft serves as a convenient explanation for sudden wealth or prosperity. Additionally, the modern world has introduced new forms of witchcraft, often involving the use of technology and new media to manipulate others. There are reports of individuals using social media to spread rumors or false accusations about witchcraft, further complicating the public perception of what constitutes witchcraft in the contemporary world (Abimbola, 2000). These new forms of witchcraft combine traditional beliefs with modern methods of communication, further blurring the lines between the supernatural and the material world.

Witchcraft in contemporary African societies, particularly within the Igbo worldview, is a complex phenomenon that encompasses various cultural, social, and gendered dimensions. It is not merely a matter of supernatural power but also a reflection of deeper societal issues, such as social hierarchy, economic disparities, and gender roles. While traditional witchcraft beliefs continue to play a significant role in explaining misfortune and social unrest, the rise of modern witchcraft practices highlights the adaptability of these beliefs in the face of changing societal contexts. Recent scholarship has provided deeper insights into the contemporary manifestations of witchcraft, recognizing it as both a social and spiritual issue that requires nuanced understanding. By considering cultural beliefs, contemporary accusations, and gender perspectives, we can better appreciate the ongoing relevance of witchcraft in African societies and its role in shaping the social and moral fabric of the community.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the problem of witchcraft in contemporary African societies. By combining historical, ethnographic, and content analysis methods, the study was able to draw on a range of sources and perspectives, offering a nuanced and multi-dimensional understanding of witchcraft in Igbo culture. The use of diverse methodological approaches ensured that the study captured both traditional and modern interpretations of witchcraft, shedding light on its cultural, social, and gendered dimensions in contemporary African life.

Conclusion

This study has examined the enduring belief in witchcraft within African societies, particularly from an Igbo cultural perspective, and has highlighted the role witchcraft plays in explaining human suffering, pain, and metaphysical phenomena. It is evident that for many Africans, witchcraft serves as a framework for interpreting experiences that lie beyond the reach of scientific understanding.

While witchcraft is seen as a destructive force, incompatible with ethical principles and societal well-being, it remains deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of African communities.

The research reaffirms that, despite the growing influence of science and technology, witchcraft continues to occupy a significant place in contemporary African life. Its existence cannot be dismissed as a relic of the past or as mere superstition. Instead, witchcraft beliefs provide insight into the complexities of human relationships, power dynamics, and existential concerns in African societies. The ongoing belief in witchcraft, therefore, necessitates further academic exploration to fully understand its social, psychological, and cultural implications. Understanding witchcraft through a culturally relativistic lens is essential, as it allows for a deeper appreciation of its role in African cosmologies and its impact on community life. By situating witchcraft beliefs within their specific cultural and historical contexts, scholars can avoid imposing external interpretations that may overlook the nuances of African worldviews. This paper therefore, underscores the importance of continued research into witchcraft, particularly in its modern manifestations. Future research should explore how witchcraft interacts with contemporary issues such as modernization, globalization, and the influence of Western religious and scientific paradigms. Further ethnographic studies across different African communities, along with a focus on gender and social power dynamics within witchcraft beliefs, would provide valuable insights into how witchcraft continues to shape both individual lives and broader societal structures.

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THE IMPACT OF BANDITRY AND INSURGENCY ON FOOD SECURITY IN NORTHWEST NIGERIA: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract

Banditry and insurgency are the primary security challenges that have affected the northwest geopolitical zone for the past decades. Banditry and insurgency have affected all facets of human life among which is food security. The objectives of the article are to assess the causes and consequences of banditry and insurgency and its impacts on food security on the Northwest geo-political zone of the country. The research design is descriptive and the framework of analysis adopted is the Frustration-Aggression Theory. The methodology adopted to generate data is secondary sources. Causes of banditry and insurgency include, climatic conditions, disappearance of grazing land and routes caused by the indiscriminate allocation of lands and poor implementation of urban and regional development plan across the Northwest, others are Ethno-religious conflicts, Weak Security system, Unemployment, Poverty, Porous Border, Systemic and political Corruption. Banditry and Insurgency have had negative implications on food security in the geopolitical zone. These include killing and kidnapping of farmers, chasing of farmers out of their farmlands, destruction of farmland, seizing of farmlands, theft of cattle, burning and raiding of grain silos, and blocking of local trade routes. Both the Federal and State Governments are making efforts towards tackling banditry, insurgency and ensure food security. These efforts are still on-going and have not achieved the desired objectives. The paper therefore recommends local government, Non-Governmental Organisations, and community leaders, in the peace process in the northwest should intensify efforts to ensure that peace is restored in the zone by doing the following: provide employment for the youths, embark on education campaign especially in the rural areas, provide forum for interaction between the farmers and herders so that conflicts can be resolved before it gets out of hand and government should listen to and address grievances from both the farmers and herders to ensure lasting solution and food security will be restored

Keywords: *Banditry, Insurgency, Insecurity, Food Security, Security Challenge, Northwest*

Introduction

The Northwest is one of the largest geopolitical zones in Nigeria in terms of landmass and population. The zone covered 192, 689 km equivalent to 83, 415 sq mi of land with a combined population of about 40 million of Nigeria's 200 million people (NPC and ICF, 2014, NBS, 2017). The zone comprises up to seven states of Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Katsina, Kaduna, Kano, and Jigawa. A significant part of Northwest is dry land, but the land is fertile and agrarian for farming and livestock development. North West is presently affected by banditry, insurgency, cattle rustling and kidnapping which started from 2009 in Zamfara State and spread to other parts of the zone. Therefore by the year 2010, banditry had started in Katsina State primarily in the seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) that shared boundary with Zamfara state namely Jibia, Batsari, Safana, Danmusa, Kankara, Faskari and Sabua. Banditry and insurgency involved acts of violence on the people particularly rural dwellers who mainly engaged in farming, cattle rearing and other food production activities it is bound to have impacts on food security.

Methodology

Traditional qualitative research method of the social sciences was adopted. **The research design is descriptive and methodology adopted to generate data is secondary sources which include Newspapers, Journals, textbooks etc and content analysis is used to analyse the data generated. The framework of analysis adopted is the Frustration-Aggression Theory.**

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on frustration-aggression Theory. It was propounded by Dollard et al (1939). The major assumption of the Theory is that “aggression is always a consequence of frustration”, and “that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression”. They also defined frustration as “interference with the occurrence of instigated goal response at its proper time in the behaviour sequence” (Dollard et al., 1939).

According to Berkowitz (1989) aggression can be driven by inherent personal benefits to the aggressor and not necessarily by past wrongdoings and that people are more akin to attack when they discover that they are willfully sabotaged or denied what it's legitimately theirs than when the interference is an accidental occurrence. He surmised it as “frustrations are aversive events and generate aggressive inclinations only to the extent that they produce negative effect”. The unending attacks between pastoralists and sedentary farmers across the northwest Nigeria are largely driven by frustrations and struggles to protect the economic assets of land, cattle and farm products. Applying this to the study, banditry and insurgency in the country have resulted in abject poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, injustice, absence of infrastructure, ethnic conflicts, and militancy. Thus, the ensuing cattle rustling, physical attacks and encroachments on farms bred frustrations between the two groups, which got effused in violent clashes and the manifest weakness of the state in curbing the menace made resort to self-help fashionable.

Conceptual Analysis

Banditry is a term used to refer to acts of robbery and violence in areas where the rule of law has broken down (Collins, 2000). Banditry consists of the organization of armed bands for the purpose of attacking state or social institutions or enterprises or individual persons (Collins, 2000). Conceptually, banditry is a derivative of the term bandit meaning an unlawful armed group terrorizing people and confiscating their properties. It is synonymous with the establishment of gang groups who used small and light weapons to carry out attacks against people. In this regard, banditry could mean a set up criminal activities deliberately designed and carried out for personal gains. Egwu (2016) describes banditry as a practice of stealing cattle and animals from herders or raiding of cattle from their ranches. Thus, bandits are gang groups terrorizing local people or travelers of their valuable items or properties such as merchandize, money, cattle, camel, sheep, etc. According to Odinkalu (2018) banditry refers to the incidences of armed robbery or allied violent crimes, such as cattle rustling, village or market raids. It involves the use of force, or threat to effect, or to intimidate a person or a group of persons in order to rob, rape or kill.

The concept of insurgency has been defined by O'Neal (1990) insurgency is organized movements aimed at the over throw of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. In addition to the above O'Neal (1990) gave additional elements that are common to all insurgencies in varying degrees. These elements are ideology, organization and goal, environment and geography and external support, etc. The combination of these elements determines the overall effectiveness of an insurgency and provides likely targets for counter insurgency efforts. Bernard (2005) maintains that insurgency is the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection. It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from danger. According to Chalk, Byran et al (2001) certain conditions can transform a dissatisfied future of the population into an insurgency, people revolt because of the government inability to meet the legitimate needs of the population. Economically, banditry and insurgency discourage farming activities as many farmers are afraid or reluctant to go to farm for fear of losing their lives or properties. In the view of Mungadi et al (2020) this is the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, challenge or nullify political control of a region.

Food security according to the World Food Summit 1996 “exists when all people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life” (FAO 2008). The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 2010) simply defines food security as the availability of food in terms of production, distribution and consumption.

Causes of Banditry, Insurgency and Food Security

Banditry, insurgency and its impacts on food security do not just happen there are factors that encourage its emergence. These factors include among others:-

Environmental and ecological changes

Conflicts between farmers and herders, sparked by disputes over land and water resources, have long been part of life in northwest Nigeria, but have reached critical levels in recent years. A surge in banditry attacks began in northwest as a reflection of violent competition for scarce resources, mainly between farmers and herders. Land and water became precious commodities especially due to environmental and ecological changes in the area, including desertification, conflict over resources including livestock, farmer/herder clashes and fighting between armed nomadic Fulani herders and armed sedentary Hausa/Non-Hausa farmers. Unresolved legal issues of land and grazing rights, limited security and administrative presence that failed to provide security in the area, has further intensified the crisis and led to the emergence of fringe groups who now attack communities (ICG2020; The New Humanitarian 2018). The Northwest has, at different point been affected by drought, food insecurity, flooding and shrinking of rivers due to changes in climatic condition. Diminishing water sources and an increase in desert or semi-desert conditions have shrunk both arable land and pasture. The region's rapidly growing population has meanwhile increased demand on available land (ICG2020). In the absence of more efficient methods of both crop and livestock production, the desertification and the population growth have intensified competition for territory suitable for farming and grazing.

Economic factors

According to Egbejule (2018) farmers and herders conflicts arising from loss of farms and/or cattle as well as inter-tribal rivalry turned to bandits and resort to indiscriminate kidnapping, murder and abducting women as well as forcing them into sex slavery. Some people in northwest geo-political zone have an insatiable desire to acquire wealth at all cost even if it means committing heinous crimes. The Fulani bandits fall into this category as they steal the cattle of other people in a bid to acquire wealth or to be seen to be wealthy. Based on the Fulani tradition, a person is considered wealthy and influential when he owns large herds of cattle. According to Okoli and Okpaleke, (2014) cattle rustling that occurs in some LGAs of Katsina State is motivated by quest for capital acquisition.

Political factor

Each of group accused leadership of one another of maltreatment and outright discrimination on matters involving land and cattle ownership. State governors who are constitutionally responsible for land allocation and development blatantly abused and misused such powers for political benefits. Some state governors in the northwest moved around with land titles and certificates as a political tool to generate support from elites and the electorates. Political patronage, tribute and prebendalism guide the allocation of lands and development in most part of the Northwest (Ladan, 2019).

Elite Conspiracy

Another factor which sustains rural banditry is elite conspiracy influenced by the quest for primitive accumulation of power and wealth. Political elites across political parties who lost election and are dissatisfied with the state leadership support and conspired with bandit groups to discredit political leadership and erode its legitimacy in the eyes of the electorates. Empirical evidence showed that some traditional rulers provide safety to bandits groups to carry out their illicit operations. They were accused of blatantly refusing to take action against rural bandits' activities in their communities. Some bandits enjoyed unprecedented immunity from traditional rulers and were seen around local markets working freely with dangerous weapons. In some cases, traditional rulers appoint their agents to negotiate terms and conditions of collaboration with the bandits on their behalf (Egwu, 2016).

Corruption/Misappropriation and out-right Embezzlement of Funds

Public officials in state security institutions are also becoming part of the conspiracy throughout right misappropriation of funds meant for the welfare of security personnel and supply of arms to fight banditry and insurgency in the Northwest, this is evident in the series of allegation cases of misappropriation and out-right embezzlement of funds meant for military and police operations across Northwest (Ladan, 2019). This was further compounded by the failure of the Nigerian police and military leadership to monitor their operations in areas devastated by rural banditry closely. Most senior military officers in charge of field operations hardly go to the field to have an on the spot idea on welfare, operational and technical challenges affecting their personnel, instead, they were mostly lodged in hotels and government guest houses at the instance of the state. This idea of using hotels and guest houses as control centres of the army affects command, control, and operations of the war against banditry and insurgency in the Northwest. It also denied the military hierarchy opportunity to have transparent and credible intelligence that would improve military and security operations in the affected areas (Ladan & Matawalli2019).

Poor Inter-agency Collaboration

Closely connected to the foregoing is a poor inter-agency collaboration between the major segments of the army on one hand and other security agencies such as the Nigerian Police and Department of State Services (DSS) on the other ((NSCDC, 2020). There were reported cases of lack of information sharing and poor coordination between the land army and air force in most areas affected by rural banditry in northwest Nigeria. This poor handling of the conflict coupled with the terrible working condition under which officers and men prosecute the war has raised capacity and credibility questions on the sincerity of political leadership in dealing with the conflict (Crisis Group interviews, security officials, researchers, former vigilantes, civil society activists, Sokoto and Gusau, September 2019 to January 2020). There is no co-ordination between the various security agencies such as the Police, Army and Air force that are fighting against the bandits. The result is that at one time only one security agency is fighting the bandits instead of calling for support or reinforcement from the other agency which will make the fight effective (Landan ,2019).

Poverty

According to the United Nations,(2015) statistics on multi- dimensional poverty index 80.9% of people in the Northwest Nigeria lives in absolute poverty which is higher than those of the southern region and national average (UN, 2015). According to Jibrin and Musa (2020) the rate of kidnapping is alarming in the northwest especially in Katsina State because of high rate of poverty. Large proportions of the youth in the zone have no access to quality education and are without any

meaningful employment. Some of these desperate youth transform themselves into rural bandit groups. Mostly the illiterate youths are lured to work for the bandits and even some of the bandits themselves lack the basic education that would enable them to distinguish between what is right and wrong. These dastardly acts further compound the problem of food security across local communities in the zone and the country at large.

High Rates of Drug Abuse

There is high rate of drug abuse in the North West geopolitical zone. Many youths in the zone engaged in the abuse of drugs which affect their health and push them to commit crimes which bring insecurity. According to a national survey Katsina State ranked second after Kano State in terms of drug abuse nationwide with 2,173 cases of arrest by National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA (Jibrin and Musa 2020). Even the bandits that engaged in banditry and kidnapping took drugs, in fact one of the victims kidnapped in May 2019, in Kurfi LGA revealed that he was able to escape when the bandits became intoxicated after taking drugs (Jibrin and Musa 2020).

The Incidences of Banditry and Insurgency and its consequences on food Security in Northwest Nigeria

Farming is the mainstay of the local economy, any disruption in farming due to banditry and insurgency attacks affect agricultural productivity with serious implications on food security. Majority of the farming communities were forced to abandon their farms especially areas in proximity to the forest, as bandits exploited these locations to attack communities (FRCN, 2020). Few farmers who stayed behind were subjected to taxation by the bandits before accessing their farms. About 30% of agricultural land in Kaduna State was abandoned by affected communities, while farming activities in Zamfara and Katsina States were restricted to few areas thus resulting in a decline in food production by 60%. In Kebbi State, over 350 rice farmers were affected with farmlands abandoned as a result of bandit attacks (Sardauna (2020). Farmers in the zone warned that banditry and insurgency if not properly tackled by security agencies and various state governments in the zone, would create unprecedented food crisis (Sardauna, 2020). The President of All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), on the occasion of World Food Day identified the challenges of attaining food security as a result of banditry and insurgency in the North West (FRCN, 2020).

Killing of farmers

This is one of the most devastating impacts of banditry and insurgency in the zone whereby farmers were killed by the bandits. Example of killing of farmers by bandits took place at Yargamji village of Batsari Local Government Area of Katsina State where on 6th July 2020, farmers who were on the farm working attacked by the bandits numbering over 200 shot and killing 15 farmers and injuring several others (Aminu, 2020). On 10th September, 2020, three farmers were also killed by bandits in Dandume Local Government Area, one of the most agrarian areas of the same state (Erezi, 2020). WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS2020) indicated that armed banditry recorded a death toll of over 1058 people in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina and Sokoto States. The former Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Abubakar, reported a total of 6,319 deaths including women and children (WANEP NEWS 2020). Targeted attacks on farmers throughout the zone have made cultivation and harvest impossible. Bandits have warned farmers to stay away from their farms, and about 26 farmers who ignored this order were killed in Batsari Local Government Area of Katsina state (BBC /2020). According to World Food Programme (2019) and UNHCR (2019) such attacks had internally displaced over 160,000 people and produced more than 41,000 refugees.

Kidnapping of farmers

This is another devastating impact of banditry where farmers were kidnapped when they go to the farm to work. In case where farmers were kidnapped, they were taken to the forest and would not be released till large sums of moneys are paid as ransom. This payment of ransom impoverishes the farmers and in some cases the farmers had no option but to sell their properties including their farmlands to get money to pay ransom. In Dandume Local Government Area some of the farmers in the villages sold their farmlands to buy a house at Dandume town to escape kidnapping. In October 2020, 22 farmers who were working on the farmlands in Mallamawa village of Jibia Local Government Area were kidnapped, while some managed to escape. One of the farmers that narrowly escaped lamented that (Ibrahim, 2020):

In these villages, we depend mostly on two things as source of livelihood farming and cattle rearing. Farming has become difficult due to insecurity. Domestic animal rearing has also become difficult as bandits have rustled our cattle and presently they are abducting us on our farms. Am calling on the government to come to our aid as we cannot migrate to the cities since we have no job to do in the cities and all that we have are in the villages. Anybody that is used to village life cannot stay in the city as the city consumes wealth (Ibrahim, 2020 P;7)

Farmers have been kidnapped for ransom, while bandits have demanded payments of up to \$1,100 before farmers can access their farmlands (HumAngle 2020).

Theft of cattle

Cattle rustling have recently become a major internal security concern in northwest Nigeria. Reports of bandits with automatic weapons storming herders' settlements and farms with the mission of killing people and pillaging cows proliferate. Ahmadu Suleiman, chairman of the Kaduna State chapter of the Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, between October 2013 March 2014 approximately 7,000 cattle was rustled from commercial livestock farms and traditional herders in Northern Nigeria (Bashir 2014). In Safana Local Government Area area of Kastina State, for example, the bandits rustled 110 cows and 350 goats and sheep during series of attacks in the month of July 2020 on the village of Kunkunna in June and July the same year (Channels TV (2020)). There is also intensification of cattle rustling in States like Katsina, Kaduna and Zamfara, particularly since 2010, resulting to the lost over 10,000 cattle as at 2020 (WANEP NEWS 2020). Cattle rustling have also hampered animal husbandry in these areas. According to Rufai (2018) in Mada district, Gusau local government area of Zamfara State, over 12 different attacks by bandits were recorded and 1500 herds of cattle stolen at different times from 2014 to 2016. Tony Akowe and bodunrin Kayode (2014) reported that several villages in the areas lying between the four northern states of Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, and Niger have been under siege from cattle rustlers who freely unleash terror on herders and cow farmers, resulting in the loss of 2,501 cows. Bandits engage in theft of cattle or cattle rustling in all the six states of the zone. It deprives the farmers of source of farm labour use to make ridges to plant crops. Large farmlands in the zone were cultivated with the use of oxen and since they were rustled such large farmlands were left uncultivated. Theft of cattle also deprives the farmers' of the source of manure for their farmlands. Cattle rustling have also hampered animal husbandry in these areas.

Chasing Farmers out of their Farms

Bandits chased farmers out of their farms when they saw them working there. As the bandits were well armed they ran after the farmers on their motorcycle with the intention to hurt or kill and the farmer had no option than to run since the farmers were not armed. In 2020 some farmers in Kastina State who were on their farmland in preparation for the farming season were chased out by the

bandits telling them “who told you there would be farming this season?” In certain instances it was the sound of gun shots coming from the forest or sound of gun shot in the air that chased farmers out of their farmlands, 2,688 hectares of farmlands and 10,000 houses were destroyed within 2011 and mid-2018 in Zamfara State (WANEP NEWS 2020, Ladan & Matawalli 2020). The bandits seize the farmlands and use them as grazing fields for the large number of cattle they acquired through cattle rustling. In some cases the bandits drove their cattle into the farmlands to eat up crops that have started to germinate.

Burning and Raiding of Grain Silos

The bandits engaged in the burning of local grains silos (called rumbu in Hausa language). These grain silos contained foodstuffs that were stored by the farmers which could last for many months but were burnt by the bandits which created lack of food for the villagers. In some cases, the grain silos were raided and the food stolen by the bandits creating a food scarcity in the households. The bandits also burgled local shops that sold foodstuffs and stole the food items which made foodstuffs to be scarce even in the local shops of the villages. These kinds of attacks were recorded on Dankar and Tsauwa villages of Batsari and other Local Government Areas of Zamfara and Katsina States (Ladan & Matawalli 2020)..

Blocking of Local Trade Routes

These groups often ambushed travelers on highways, killing those who resisted or whose families failed to meet their demands. They also raided and pillaged villages, razing houses, burning down barns (The Nation, 8 May 2019). In some cases, they wrote letters to village heads demanding that residents pool money and pay them to be spared deadly attacks or imposed tolls on farmers as a condition for gaining access to their fields ((Ladan & Matawalli 2020). The insurgency has a significant impact on other economic activities in the region, as a number of major local markets such as Iella, Dandume, Maidabino, Kankara (Katsina State) and Bardoki, Shinkafi (Zamfara State) markets have been shut down due to incessant attacks (WANEP NEWS 2020). (Daily Trust (2020) reported that in Katsina State 'trailers of foodstuff at the market reduced from eight (8) trailers weekly to half a truck in two months', while the revenue earning reduced from 500,000 naira to less than 100,000 naira (Daily Trust 2020) . The bandits snatched foodstuffs intended for sale at the markets; money meant for the purchase of foodstuffs or even kidnapped the traders till large sums of monies were paid. The bandits mounted a road block along Runka to Marina road in Safana Local Government Area to rob travelers of their money and cell phones. On 20th October 2020 the bandits again blocked the Danmusa to Runka road to rob traders coming to the weekly market (Daily Trust 2020).

Loss of sociological and communal value system

History bears record of a time when the traditional value system of the Nigerian society as multi-ethnic as it is, was characterized by collectivism, loyalty to local authority and community, hard work, mutual harmony and coexistence, abhorrence for theft, and high value for life. Most of these communal values which made society safe and made citizens feel secure have been lost gradually over time with the penetration of western culture. In the face of these security challenges, economic growth and development cannot be sustained.

Governments Response to Banditry and Insurgency in Northwest

The formation of a special unit of Agro Rangers Corps

The Federal Government having realized that banditry and insurgency have posed a serious threat to farming communities in the northern parts of the country. Therefore the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in conjunction with the Minister of Interior initiated the formation of a special unit of Agro Rangers Corps to protect farmers and farming investments throughout the country (The Sun, 2017). On the June 12 Democracy Day, the Federal Government announced the deployment of 5,000 Agro-Rangers to offer protection to farmers and farming investments across the northwest (Oyeleke, 2020). The use of the Agro-Rangers was expected to forestall attacks on farmlands and boost farmer's confidence to work on their farms without fear of attacks, thereby guaranteeing the Federal Government avowed food security plans (NSCDC, 2020).

Counter banditry and insurgency

The Federal and state governments' counter banditry and insurgency interventions were based on the deployment of Police and Military operations to the troubled States under several operational codenames. According to Mustapha (2019) the Federal Government ordered a Military crackdown on bandits operating in rural communities in northwest zone in a renewed operation-HARBIN KUNAMA, due to attacks on some communities in Shinkafi and Maradun Local government areas. To enable the Military carry out this new mandate, the military stationed full Battalion of Special Forces in Zamfara State, and operationalized the newly established 8 Division of the Nigerian Army in Sokoto and 1 Brigade of the Nigerian Army was moved from Sokoto to Gusau. Also additional troops and mobile police men were deployed to the zone, and another operation code named "OPERATION-DIRANMIKIYA" was also launched by the Nigerian Air force which has led to heavy bombardment of the bandits' hideouts in sububu forests with many of bandits killed and their camps destroyed (Daily Trust 2020).

Peace deal and Amnesty

To alternatively manage the situation, the idea of peace deal and amnesty was initiated between the governments of the geo-political zone and the leadership of these bandits. The State governments, having reviewed the impacts of the coercive measures especially the use of Military and Mobile Police, come to the conclusion that, the operation has not yielded the much desired result in spite of huge amount of funds expended. In July 2019, the North-Western State Governors began negotiating with a number of armed bandits operating in the zone to curb the menace and further boost internal security in the affected States. The peace initiatives developed by the State Governments have the potential to reduce the escalating threats to food and human security. The peace dialogue initiated by State Governors in the North-West region however yielded positive results, as kidnapped women and children were released by the bandits in Katsina and Zamfara States (Premium Time2020). In spite of all these measures by both the Federal and state governments the incidences of banditry and insurgency have continued unabated with the attendant impacts on food security.

Conclusion

This paper examined banditry, insurgency and food security in the Northwest geo-political zone of Nigeria. The study identified the causes of banditry, insurgency to include environmental forces, elite conspiracy, gradual disappearance of grazing land and routes, poor inter-agency collaboration etc. Targeted attacks on farmers have made cultivation and harvest impossible. Bandits have warned

farmers to stay away from their farms, and many farmers who ignored this order were killed in Batsari Local Government Area of Katsina state. Farmers have also been kidnapped for ransom. Cattle rustling have also hampered animal husbandry in these areas. Banditry and Insurgency have left the zone with serious impacts on food production both for subsistence and commercial purposes thereby causing food insecurity for displaced and non-displaced populations. The paper concluded that banditry and insurgency have negative consequences on food security. The security forces have been unable to subdue the vast array of armed groups. The available manpower, logistics and equipment are insufficient to respond promptly to armed groups' attacks. Troops lack the logistics they need to travel on roads that are impassable for cars and trucks. The army also lacks sufficient helicopters to deploy troops rapidly to remote locations. Military operations expelled many criminal groups from their forest camps but, the army failed to consolidate those gains and hold territory, enabling the bandits to regroup. Many vulnerable rural communities are far from any military post, resulting in late responses to their distress calls, with soldiers sometimes reaching them many hours after attacks.

The governments of the zone should address the major triggers of banditry and insurgency which include among others, environmental factor, youth unemployment and poverty. The federal government and governments of the Northwest states should continue to seek resolution to the conflicts between herders and farmers that have been the engine of instability in the zone, including through negotiated settlements that build upon previous state-level disarmament efforts to ensure food security.

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ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN ABUJA

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Abstract

This study investigates influence of social media platforms on community engagement and development initiatives in Abuja. The transformative impact of social media on enhancing community engagement and participation in development projects in Nigerian communities need to be investigated. The study therefore assessed how platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp were effectively used by community members to access information, provide feedback, and mobilize collective actions and implementation of developmental projects. The study was anchored on Social Capital Theory. Data were generated from both primary and secondary sources. Samples of 385 respondents were interviewed through the use of questionnaire format. Respondents, reaction range from strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (DA) and strongly disagree (SDA). Data collected were analyzed using tables of frequency and percentage for objective one (1). The mean and standard deviations was applied for objective two and three (2, 3, 4 & 5) using means of 2.50 of Agree (A). The study found that social media provides platform for the people to discuss community development challenges, government development programmes and engaging community development projects such as the construction of roads, health sensitization etc. The study also uncovered challenges, such as misinformation, digital divides, and varying levels of digital literacy, which impeded meaningful engagement and participation. In conclusion, the study emphasized the dual role of social media as both an enabler and a potential obstacle to effective community participation, which is dependants on its usage. Based on the findings, the study recommended the development of a structured social media strategies, addressing challenges related to digital divides, fostering an inclusive approach to engagement, and regularly evaluating and adapting social media strategies to better align with community needs. These recommendations were aimed at optimizing the use of social media to support and advance development projects in Abuja.

Keywords: *Impact, Social Media, Community, Engagement, Participation and Development*

Introduction

Social media encompasses digital platforms and tools designed for user-generated content and interaction (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These platforms have revolutionized community engagement and participation, especially in development projects. Community engagement involves involving local populations in decision-making and activities affecting their lives, while participation refers to active contribution toward project goals (Wright & Street, 2015). The expansion of social media platforms presents new opportunities for enhancing community engagement in development projects. In Abuja, leveraging social media may enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of these projects. (Nguyen & Sim, 2021). This study seeks to explore how social media influences community involvement, providing valuable insights into optimizing its use for development purposes.

In Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, development projects are essential for managing urbanization and enhancing living standards (Oni & Oke, 2019). Social media has become a key instrument in this environment, potentially transforming how communities interact with and contribute to these projects. Given the rapid growth of Abuja and its increasing digital connectivity, it is crucial to understand how social media impacts community engagement in this context (Adedokun & Olaniyan, 2020).

Understanding social media's role in community engagement and participation is critical for policymakers, development practitioners, and community leaders. This research can guide strategies to boost public involvement in development projects, ensuring they better meet community needs

and aspirations (Ojo & Alabi, 2019). Additionally, the study contributes to broader discussions on digital tools' role in societal development, offering lessons applicable to similar contexts. Despite its growing influence, social media's effectiveness in fostering genuine community engagement and participation is under scrutiny. Challenges such as the digital divide, misinformation, and varying levels of digital literacy can limit social media's benefits for development projects (Aderinto, 2021; Okunoye & Adomi, 2018).

Development in any community is determined by the level of involvement of the immediate citizenry who come together as a community to achieve common goals. Community development involves bringing people together with the common goal of improving their social, economic, political, educational and cultural wellbeing for a better living livelihood. Thus, peoples' participation is an indispensable element for effective community development. Community participation is indispensable in development efforts. (Mohammad, 2010). Hence people's participation in community development is gaining momentum in the process of human empowerment and development. Participation, as the term implies is considered as a central role in the execution of community development programme. Participation and other related concepts like sustainability and empowerment are at the center of development discourse (Blackman, 2003) and it may be argued that participation is as old as democracy itself.

Until recently, the belief among most Nigerian communities was that it was the sole responsibility of the government and its agencies to provide the needs of their communities. In other words government should develop the community by providing the entire necessary infrastructure and social and physical amenities (Bappi, Singh & Dahiru, 2018). Consequently social amenities are lacking in most communities. However the degree or level of poor infrastructure facing communities varies from one place to another. It's evident today that most people don't want to participate in community development programme due to some negative factors such as cultural, socio- economic, lack of awareness and religious factors among others. However empowering individuals to be conscious of the effect of community participation will help in reducing the compelling factors which social media is now being leverage for such purposes.

Although social media holds significant promise for enhancing community engagement in urban development projects, its effectiveness is hindered by several challenges, especially in rapidly growing cities like Abuja. One major issue is the digital divide, which leads to unequal access to technology and the internet, thereby marginalizing certain segments of the population. Furthermore, the spread of misinformation on social media platforms can distort public perceptions and erode trust, complicating efforts to engage communities effectively. Varying levels of digital literacy also exacerbate problems of exclusion and miscommunication. While social media provides dynamic platforms for interaction, feedback, and collaboration, there is a notable gap in comprehensive studies that address how these challenges impact the successful use of social media in development projects. This research seeks to explore these issues, offering insights into both the opportunities and limitations of social media for community engagement in Abuja's urban development initiatives. Therefore, this paper explores these challenges by investigating social media platformsn impact on community engagement and development initiatives in Abuja, aiming to identify both opportunities and limitations.

The aim of the study is to evaluate the impact of social media platforms on community engagement in development initiatives within selected communities in Abuja. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the nature of social media use for engagement in community development initiatives in Abuja.
- ii. Assess the extent to which social media platforms facilitate community involvement in development initiatives in Abuja.
- iii. Examine the impact of social media tools in promoting active engagement in community

development initiatives.

- iv. Identify the challenges and barriers faced by community members in using social media for engaging in development activities.
- v. Make useful recommendations on how social media can enhance community engagement in community development in the study area.

Literature Review

Intersection of Community Development

A community may be defined as a group of people living in a geographical area, who have identical culture, beliefs, values, traditions and are united with common interest. It is this common interest that brings them together to share a territory. According to Anyanwu (2009), a community is a social group, occupying a more or less defined geographical area, and based on the feeling that people have for one another. Such feeling can accommodate: the facility to identify a common sentiment, the ability to share a recognized way of life and the possibility of living wholly within such groups. Bray (1996) presents three different categories of communities based on his research on community funding of education. The first category is the geographical community defined by the place of residence, like a rural community or an area. The second category is that of tribal, racial and religious communities where membership is based on ethnic, cultural or religious identity and membership generally overlapped on the basis of geographical location. The third category refers to communities based on common family or educational backgrounds, including parent associations and similar organizations based on the common interest of the families for the benefits of students.

The concept of development is a difficult one. There are as many views on the notion as there are scholars. It is a “term” that is overloaded. It is commonly seen as nearly an alternative word for improvement. Development is being used in various ways, including social, economic and political. UNDP (2004) noted that development is a form of social change involving new concepts in a social system to improve people's livelihoods. According to Oduaran (1994), development implies some form of change usually from a prior bad or poor condition to a better one. Development implies change in different capacity, Nyerere (1978), maintained that development is summed up as man's capacity to expand his own consciousness, and therefore, his power over himself, his environment and his society. To him, man is the central peg around which development revolves. Hence, he concluded that development is for man by man and of man. This means that man is not only the recipient or beneficiary of development effort but must also initiate the effort to develop himself. In other word; the opportunities created by development are generated or induced through human efforts. Man must show the desire to develop before development can come. Beside, true development is that which leads to expansion and growth of man's inner qualities. Put in another way, development must raise mans' ability to dominate himself, become less dependent and more proficient in what he is doing as well as become critical in outlook. Community development amount to the optimal consideration, realization of the wellbeing, of persons or individuals in their community for development, the emphasis of development is on people, as it is the people who are stimulated, motivated, helped or encouraged to adopt new method and learn new skills for the attainment of their wellbeing, When we consider these definitions, it becomes easy to see that no one can live alone in this world.

Social Media Roles in Community Development

Social media platforms have fundamentally transformed the dynamics of community interaction and societal engagement in this digital age. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as digital platforms that enable users to create, share, and exchange user-generated content, fostering an

interactive and participatory communication environment. This definition emphasizes how social media has evolved from traditional communication channels to become a crucial facilitator of dynamic interactions among users.

The influence of social media extends far beyond mere conversation; it actively empowers individuals by enhancing their ability to participate in decision-making processes. Smith (2014) highlights that social media provides platforms for users to voice their opinions, engage in discussions, and contribute to collective decision-making. This empowerment is evident in various aspects of social life, where social media users can mobilize support for causes, participate in public debates, and influence policy decisions. By democratizing information and providing a space for diverse voices, social media enables individuals to have a more substantial impact on societal processes.

While social media offers valuable opportunities for enhancing community engagement and improving development project outcomes, its effectiveness is constrained by challenges such as misinformation and digital literacy gaps. Addressing these issues is crucial for harnessing the full potential of social media in development efforts.

Previous Studies on Social Media and Development Projects

Brown and Houghton (2020) conducted a detailed examination of social media's role in development projects in Abuja. Their research highlighted that social media platforms significantly enhance community participation and feedback mechanisms. By providing a space for community members to express their opinions, share insights, and engage in discussions, social media facilitates a more inclusive and interactive approach to development projects. The study found that platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp enable real-time communication, which can lead to more substantial community involvement and a more responsive development process. **These platforms allow for rapid dissemination of information and can rally support across wide geographical areas.**

The use of social media by AMAC illustrates the potential for digital tools to bridge the gap between local government and residents. By providing a platform for real-time communication, feedback, and issue reporting, social media enhances the efficiency of governance and fosters a more engaged and informed community. The direct interaction afforded by these platforms allows for more responsive and adaptive governance, which is particularly crucial in rapidly urbanizing areas like Abuja.

Similarly, Lee and Chang (2018) explored the utilization of social media tools in development projects across various regions. Their research emphasized that social media is increasingly being leveraged to improve project outcomes and stakeholder engagement. By integrating social media tools into project management and communication strategies, development practitioners can enhance transparency, foster stakeholder collaboration, and streamline project implementation. The study showcased examples where social media facilitated better coordination among project stakeholders, leading to more effective and timely project execution.

Despite these advantages, the effective use of social media in development projects is often hindered by several challenges. Roberts and Dutton (2017) addressed the issue of misinformation, noting that the rapid spread of false information on social media can undermine project credibility and effectiveness. Misinformation can create confusion among community members, distort project goals, and erode trust in development initiatives. The study emphasized the need for strategies to combat misinformation and ensure that accurate and reliable information is disseminated.

Additionally, Green and Keohane (2019) highlighted the impact of the digital divide and varying levels of digital literacy on the success of social media in development projects. Their research

pointed out that disparities in access to digital technologies and varying degrees of digital skills among community members can affect their ability to effectively engage with social media platforms. In regions where digital literacy is low, community members may struggle to utilize social media tools for participation and feedback, limiting the overall effectiveness of these platforms in development projects. The study highlighted the importance of addressing these digital divides through targeted training and infrastructure development to maximize the benefits of social media.

Theoretical Framework

Social Capital Theory by Bourdieu (1986)

Social Capital Theory, as articulated by Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (2000), provides a framework for understanding the role of social networks and relationships in community engagement. This theory emphasizes that social capital involves resources and benefits derived from social connections, such as trust, reciprocity, and cooperative norms. When applied to Abuja's development projects, Social Capital Theory offers insights into how social media influences community dynamics and social networks.

In Abuja, social media do play a crucial role in building and strengthening social networks among residents and between the community and development organizations. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter facilitate collaboration on project initiatives, resource sharing, and mutual support, fostering a cooperative environment essential for successful project implementation.

The theory illustrates how social media can bridge gaps between different social groups and connect community members towards achieving development initiatives. By linking local residents with development organizations, government officials, and experts, social media fosters a more integrated and supportive development environment. This connectivity enhances transparency and accountability in development projects by strengthening networks that facilitate community participation and hold stakeholders accountable. Thus, Social Capital Theory helps assess whether social media contributes to or detracts from effective community engagement and collaborative project execution.

Methodology

This study adopted quantitative survey research design to investigate the impact of Social Media on community engagement and participation in development project among youth in AMAC and Bwari Area Councils of FCT, Abuja. Survey research was considered most appropriate in this study because it allows us to investigate the problem that has to do with eliciting large amount of data from the respondents in the study such as this. Through this design, we were also able to examine the “interrelationships among variables and to develop explanatory inferences” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014) on the use of social media among youth in AMAC and Bwari Area Council of the FCT, Abuja. The population of this study comprised all the youth in Abuja Municipal Area Council and Bwari Area Council, FCT, Abuja.

According to the statistics obtained from the Worldometre (2024), Abuja Municipal Area Council has a total of approximately 925,936 youths, while Bwari Area Council has 261898 youths respectively. Put together, the study population is 1,187,834 youths. The sample size is 385 youth determined using an online based sample size determination software-SurveyMonkey (2024) within the confidence level of 95%, error margin of 5%, and population size of 1,187,834 (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/>).

The study adopted a multistage sampling technique. First, purposive sampling technique was used to select four towns from Abuja Municipal Area Council and three towns from the Bwari Area Council

respectively. Consequently, seven major towns were sampled in the study. The reason purposive sampling technique was used than others was to enable towns that were more prominent and have more population of youths. A total of three hundred and seventy-three (373) respondents filled the questionnaire and were found useful for the analysis. Descriptive statistics were employed for data analysis. Thus, data collected were analyzed through the use of univariate frequency distribution tables and simple percentages. SPSS was used as statistical tool for data analysis to avoid the mistakes arising from manual calculations.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group		
Less than 31 years old	127	34.0
31-40 Years Old	91	24.4
41-50 years Old	124	33.2
Above 50 years Old	31	8.3
Total (M=33.1, SD=8.4, Min =19, Max=62)	373	100.0
Gender		
Male	219	58.7
Female	154	40.3
Total	373	100.0
Education Completed		
Secondary School	15	4.0
Diploma/NEC	89	23.8
HND/Bachelor Degree	137	36.7
Post Graduate (PGD, MSc & PhD)	132	35.4
Total	373	100.0

Source: Researchers field work, 2024

The respondents in this study are evenly distributed between digital natives and digital immigrant, and digital settlers though with some degree of overlap. For gender, male respondents were slightly ahead of female and majority of the respondents have attend some level of tertiary education.

Research Question 1: What is the extent to which social media platforms facilitate community involvement in community development in Abuja?

The first objective is to assess the extent to which social media platforms facilitate community involvement in development in Abuja. Table 2 provides the details.

Table 2: Patterns of Social Media Usage for Community Development

Patterns of Social Media Usage	Frequency	Percentage
Social Media use the Most		
Facebook	205	55.0
Twitter	105	27.0
Others (Whatsapp, Telegraphs, Youtube etc)	67	18.0
Total	373	100.0
Number of Day(s) following social media Per Week		
0 day	6	1.6
1 day	10	2.6
2 days	23	6.1
3 days	42	11.2
4 days	56	15.0
5 days	91	24.3
6 days	18	4.8
7 days	127	34.0
Total (M= 5.40, SD=1.74, Min=0 day, Max= 7day)	373	100.0
Level of Exposure to Social Media		
Little Exposure	81	21.7
Much Exposure	147	39.4
Very Much Exposure	145	38.8
Total	373	100.0
Time Spent on Social Media		
Below 30 Minutes	79	21.1
30 Minutes – 1 Hour	147	39.4
2 Hours – 3hours	98	26.2
4 Hours and Above	49	13.1
Total (M=2.01, SD= 0.77, Min= below 1 h, Max = 4hours)	373	100.0
Attention Given to community development Post		
No Attention	80	21.4
Some Attention	53	14.2
Moderate Attention	97	26.0
Much Attention	143	38.3
Total	373	100.0
Importance of Community Development Post		
No Importance	94	25.2
Little Importance	80	21.4
Much Importance	106	28.4
Very Much Importance	93	24.9
Total	373	100.0

Source: Researchers field work, 2024

The data on table 2 shows that over half of the respondents have facebook account and they used it the most and over one third are on Facebook daily, while averagely they spent 2 hours on social media. Similarly, more than one third have very much exposure to community development projects on social media and same gave much attention to such stories on community development. Similarly, about half of the respondents gives community development projects post much importance. It therefore, means that the respondents were averagely exposed to community development project stories on social media.

In exploring social media usage patterns, the study reveals Facebook as the most frequently used platform, with many respondents accessing social media daily and spending an average of two hours. The findings here are well-supported by quantitative data, showing substantial engagement with community development topics. Nevertheless, the study could have benefited from further segmentation of social media platforms, especially given the potential differing roles that platforms like Twitter or WhatsApp might play in civic engagement versus information dissemination.

Research Question 2: What are the nature of social media use for engagement and participation in community development in Abuja?

The second objective identify the nature of social media use for engagement and participation in community development projects in Abuja. This involves the use of various social media outlets for discussion and participation in community development projects. Table 3 provides the details.

Table 3: Respondents Views on nature of social media use for engagement and participation in community development in Abuja.

Community Development	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	OVERALL (%)
People support and participate in projects invariably	5.1	8.4	6.8	24.1	55.7	4.17	1.18	83.4
People discuss on government development initiatives	5.1	7.8	6.2	26.2	54.6	4.17	1.17	83.4
The people provide feedbacks to the development Programmes in the community	4.6	8.1	5.7	33.8	47.8	4.12	1.12	82.4
There is equal participation in providing locally available materials (stones, poles, water etc.) in ongoing projects	4.6	10.0	10.3	30.8	44.3	4.00	1.17	80
Participation is by invitation and all are usually invited to participate	5.9	6.8	5.4	37.0	44.9	4.08	1.14	81.6
People are given the chance to contribute their own quota in participation	0.0	19.5	8.9	23.0	47.8	4.02	1.38	80.4
Communities select projects of their choice.	13.2	13.8	15.1	28.9	28.9	3.46	1.38	69.2
Communities are involved in the planning of projects.	9.2	14.9	7.8	29.7	38.4	3.73	1.35	74.6
Communities are involved in executing the projects	6.2	8.9	10.5	33.2	41.1	3.94	1.20	78.8
Communities are integrated in monitoring and evaluating of the projects	8.1	6.5	8.1	25.1	52.2	4.07	1.26	81.4
Communities design proposed plan for sustaining any project of their choice	5.9	6.8	5.4	37.0	44.9	4.08	1.14	81.6
TOTAL						3.98	1.12	71.18

Source: Researchers field work 2024 Note: 2.5 is the cut-off point between agreement & disagreement on table

Generally, majority of the respondents (71.18%) agreed on their engagement and participation on the different community development projects in their respective communities in Abuja (M=3.98, SD=1.12). Specifically, People discuss on government development initiatives (M=4.17, DS=1.18). The people provide feedbacks to the development Programmes in the community (M=4.12, SD=1.12). Communities are integrated in monitoring and evaluating of the projects (M=4.07, 1.26). There is equal participation in providing locally available materials (stones, poles, water etc.) in ongoing projects (M=4.00, SD=1.38). This means through social media people engage and participate in community development projects.

Research Question three: What is the impact of social media tools in promoting active engagement and participation in community development initiatives?

The third objective provides respondents views on the impact of social media tools in promoting active engagement and participation in community development initiatives in Abuja. Table 4 provide the details

Table 4: The impact of social media tools in promoting active engagement and participation in community development initiatives

Impact	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	OVERALL (%)
Social media provides opportunity to discuss government project in the community	9.2	14.3	7.6	30.3	38.6	3.75	1.34	75
Social media platforms are used to engage with the government on the community projects.	6.2	8.9	10.0	33.8	41.1	3.95	1.19	79
Social media makes the people to be carried along on government development projects	7.8	6.5	7.8	24.3	53.5	4.09	1.25	81.8
Information about agricultural Programmes are discussed	7.8	15.1	10.3	19.7	47.0	3.83	1.36	76.6
Social media is used to get update on health progrmmes	6.5	14.3	5.1	24.1	50.0	3.97	1.31	79.4
TOTAL						3.92	1.29	78.4

Source: Researchers field work 2024 Note: 2.5 is the cut-off point between agreement & disagreement on table

Overall, the impact of social media tools in promoting active engagement and participation in community development initiatives (M=3.92, SD=1.29). Specifically, Social media platforms are used to engage with the government on the community projects (M= 3.95, SD=1.19). Social media provides opportunity to discuss government project in the community (M=3.75, SD=1.34). Social media makes the people to be carried along on government development projects (M= 4.09, SD=1.25).

Research Question 4: What are the challenges and barriers faced by community members in using social media for engaging with and participating in community development?

The fourth objective identify the challenges and barriers faced by community members in using social media for engaging with and participating in development projects. Table 5 provides the details.

Table 5: Respondents view on the challenges and barriers faced by community members in using social media for engaging with and participating in community development.

Challenges and Barries	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	OVERALL (%)
Poverty level affects people's participation in community development project	4.6	8.1	5.7	33.8	47.8	4.12	1.12	82.4
The level of education affects people's participation in community development project	4.6	10.0	10.3	30.8	44.3	4.00	1.17	80
Commercial activities affects people's participation in community development project	5.9	6.8	5.4	37.0	44.9	4.08	1.14	81.6
Incentive affects people participation in community development project	0.0	19.5	8.9	23.0	48.6	4.02	1.18	80.4
proliferation of misinformation, which can distort public perceptions and undermine trust in the information shared	4.6	8.1	5.7	33.8	47.8	4.12	1.12	82.4
Political affiliation affects people's participation in community development project	13.2	13.8	15.1	28.9	28.9	3.46	1.38	69.2
Women seclusion affects their participation in community development project	9.2	14.9	7.8	29.7	38.4	3.73	1.35	74.6
Ethnic differences affects peoples participation in community development project	6.2	8.9	10.5	33.2	41.1	3.94	1.20	78.8
Indigenization affects people participation in community development project.	5.9	6.8	5.4	37.0	44.9	4.08	1.14	81.6
Lack of skill for computer affect people engagement in community development project	0.0	19.5	8.9	23.0	47.8	4.02	1.38	80.4
High Cost of Data limit people involvement in community development	13.2	13.8	15.1	28.9	28.9	3.46	1.38	69.2
Lack of Time to Search for Information	9.2	14.9	7.8	29.7	38.4	3.73	1.35	74.6
Resistant to Change affect people use of social media for community development	6.2	8.9	10.5	33.2	41.1	3.94	1.20	78.8
TOTAL						3.91	1.22	78.14

Source: Researchers field work 2024 Note: 2.5 is the cut-off point between agreement & disagreement on table

Generally, the study shows that majority of the respondents (78.14%) agreed on the challenges and barriers faced by community members in using social media for engaging with and participating in development projects (M=3.91, SD=1.22). Specifically, Poverty level affects people's participation in community development project (M=4.12, SD=1.12). High Cost of Data limit people involvement in community development (M=3.46, SD= 1.32)

Research Question 5: What useful recommendations on how social media can enhance community engagement and participation in community development?

The fifth objective examine useful recommendations on how social media can enhance community engagement and participation in community development projects in the study area. Thus, table 6 provides details.

Table 6: Recommendations on how social media can enhance community engagement and participation in community development projects.

Recommendations	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	OVER ALL (%)
There should be an increased level of awareness and enlightenment about the positive effect of communal participation on community development through social media	4.6	9.7	10.3	22.2	53.2	4.1	1.20	82
Government, Non-Governmental Organisations, Community Based Organisations, traditional institutions among others should adopt social media in engaging the people	4.3	10.8	6.8	25.7	52.4	4.11	1.19	82.2
Government should fix a regular online and offline meeting with traditional authorities and the religious bodies of the affected communities to enhance the creation of awareness in all the nook and crannies of the state	3.8	10.3	6.5	33.8	45.7	4.07	1.13	81.4
involvement of rural people in project formulation, planning and implementation should be encouraged	3.2	11.9	10.5	35.7	38.6	3.95	1.12	79
the government should create enabling environment where the people at the grass-root will participate actively in decision-making process that affect their condition of living and by so doing	4.9	6.8	12.4	35.9	40.0	3.99	1.11	79.8
The people need to be empowered on the use of social media for community development	0.0	18.4	14.1	21.6	46.0	3.96	1.17	79.2
Social media should serve as synergy between government and Community people as partners in progress.	13.0	13.8	13.5	30.3	29.5	3.49	1.38	69.8
TOTAL						3.95	1.19	79

Source: Researchers field work 2024 Note: 2.5 is the cut-off point between agreement & disagreement on table

Generally, respondents level of agreement on the recommendations for the use of social media to engage and participate in community development is high ($M=3.95$, $SD=1.19$). Particularly, There should be an increased level of awareness and enlightenment about the positive effect of communal participation on community development through social media ($M=4.1$, $S.D =1.20$). Government, Non-Governmental Organisations, Community Based Organisations, traditional institutions among others should adopt social media in engaging the people ($M=4.11$, $S.D =1.19$). Government should fix a regular online and offline meeting with traditional authorities and the religious bodies of the affected communities to enhance the creation of awareness in all the nook and crannies of the state ($M=4.07$, $S.D =1.13$). The people need to be empowered on the use of social media for community development ($M=3.96$, $S.D.=1.17$). Social media should serve as the synergy between government and Community people as partners in progress ($M=3.49$, $S.D.=1.38$).

Discussion of Findings

The findings on Research Question 1 suggest that social media platforms do facilitate community involvement to a moderate degree. High engagement levels, particularly with community development stories, are evident, reflecting an interest in civic matters. The descriptive statistics on platform use and attention given to posts are useful, though it would strengthen the analysis if this section included more in-depth qualitative insights or examples of how engagement translates into tangible community outcomes, such as project mobilization or policy influence.

Social media facilitate real-time communication, allowing community members to track progress on projects such as infrastructure development and waste management initiatives as captured in table 3. This increased connectivity and information flow enable residents to contribute their perspectives on how these projects impact their daily lives, thereby fostering greater involvement (Table 3).

Regarding the nature of social media use for engagement (Research Question 2), Table 3 captures how respondents perceive social media's role in fostering community dialogue. High mean scores for statements like “people discuss government development initiatives” and “communities participate by providing locally available materials” indicate an active online civic presence. However, the data only partially convey the quality of these interactions. Further interpretation of what constitutes “participation” could deepen the discussion, as the definition of engagement is critical in understanding the practical outcomes of these interactions.

The impact of social media tools (Research Question 3) shows positive responses, with social media significantly promoting active community engagement. The quantitative findings suggest social media provides valuable opportunities for residents to engage with governmental projects and hold stakeholders accountable. Still, the study could benefit from comparative analysis—such as examining engagement levels on community projects that had social media presence versus those without—to quantify social media's direct impact on project outcomes.

Social media tools are effective in promoting active participation and gathering feedback from community members. They offer channels for residents to voice their opinions and participate in discussions, which can directly influence project planning and execution. The ability to provide feedback through these platforms ensures that community perspectives are considered, enhancing the responsiveness and relevance of development initiatives. However, the effectiveness is contingent upon the quality of engagement and the clarity of communication facilitated through these tools.

The challenges and barriers section (Research Question 4) is well-documented, identifying issues like misinformation, digital literacy gaps, and socioeconomic factors that hinder effective participation. This part is critically important, and the study successfully highlights the barriers to social media efficacy. However, deeper examination of how these barriers vary among different demographic

groups, such as younger versus older users, would provide nuanced insights for targeted interventions.

Social media plays a significant role in enhancing transparency and accountability in the execution and management of development projects in Abuja. By providing a platform for open communication and feedback, social media helps to foster a more transparent process where community members can hold stakeholders accountable. The ability to quickly disseminate information and receive feedback contributes to greater accountability and oversight, which is crucial for effective project management and ensuring that initiatives align with community needs and expectations.

The recommendations section (Research Question 5) presents a solid foundation for policy implications. The suggestions—such as increasing awareness of community benefits and establishing structured offline engagement channels—are actionable. Yet, this section could be enhanced with more specific strategies on combating misinformation and addressing digital literacy disparities, as these challenges emerged prominently in the findings.

Conclusion

The conclusion reinforces the study's central thesis that social media has positively influenced community engagement in Abuja's development projects, offering a powerful communication medium that bridges gaps between residents and authorities. The study underscores the need for ongoing improvement in digital access and literacy to fully harness social media's potential. However, to strengthen this section, a summary of specific recommendations and future research directions, especially regarding rural areas or other Nigerian states, could add to the study's overall value and applicability.

1. There should be development of structured social media strategy that includes regular updates on project progress, provision of opportunities for community feedback through interactive elements like surveys and discussion threads, and maintains consistent communication channels to keep community members informed and engaged.
2. There should be strategic utilization of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp to cater to different segments of the community based on their preferences and usage patterns.
3. There should be fostering of inclusive approach by engaging marginalized and less digitally connected groups through tailored communication strategies, and by organizing offline events or workshops alongside online activities to ensure participation from those with limited access to digital platforms.
4. There should be a regular assessment of the effectiveness of social media initiatives and adjustment of strategies based on community feedback and engagement metrics.

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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AND THE BALANCE OF POWER WITHIN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Abstract

This research explores the role of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in shaping peace and security dynamics in the Middle East. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study investigates key research questions pertaining to UNSC interventions; what have been the primary motivations and objectives behind the UNSC's interventions in Middle East conflicts since its inception? How have the geopolitical interests of the permanent members of the UNSC influenced its decisions and actions in the Middle East? Is there any relationship between the successes and failures of United Nations Security Council resolutions and peacekeeping missions in the Middle East? Geopolitical interests, successes and failures of resolutions, regional responses, and impacts on the balance of power. Findings reveal diverse perspectives on the motivations behind UNSC actions, in respect to the influence of geopolitical interests, vis-à-vis pursuant of the economic ends of the Security Council Members that define varying degrees of success in conflict resolution and complex interactions with regional powers. The study contributes to scholarly understanding of international peacekeeping efforts and offers insights for policymakers and practitioners contending mostly with the Middle East challenges.

Keywords: *United Nations, Security Council, Balance of Power, Middle East, Peacekeeping*

Introduction

The Middle East has long been a region of strategic significance, characterized by complex geopolitical dynamics and persistent conflicts. Central to the management of these conflicts is the role of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), a principal organ of the United Nations charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. Understanding the dynamics of the UNSC and its engagement with Middle East politics is crucial for comprehending the broader balance of power in the region.

The perennial crises revolving around Political Economy within the states in the Middle East, provoked the attempted annexation of Kuwait by Iraq under Saddam Hussein, but for the quick intervention of the United States and her allied forces, a new world map would have surfaced with Iraq controlling the affairs of Kuwait. In the same vein, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), under the five permanent members (United States, United Kingdom, Russia, China and France) all have interests in reinstalling peace and tranquility in the Syrian political instability which has lasted close to two decades.

Established in 1945 by the UN Charter, the UNSC is comprised of fifteen member states, five of which are permanent members with veto power—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The remaining ten seats are filled by elected non-permanent members, serving two-year terms. The UNSC holds primary responsibility for determining the existence of threats to international peace and security and devising appropriate responses, including the authorization of military action, imposition of sanctions, and deployment of peacekeeping forces.

The Middle East stands out as a region fraught with conflict, shaped by a myriad of historical, religious, ethnic, and geopolitical factors. The Arab-Israeli conflict, ongoing tensions between Iran and its neighbors, the rise of non-state actors such as ISIS, and the protracted civil wars in Syria and Yemen are just a few examples of the complex challenges facing the region. These conflicts have profound implications not only for regional stability but also for global security, necessitating international intervention and diplomatic efforts to mitigate violence and promote reconciliation.

Throughout its history, the UNSC has been actively involved in addressing various crises in the Middle East. One of the earliest instances was the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, which led to the establishment of the State of Israel and triggered decades of conflict with its Arab neighbors. Subsequent conflicts, including the Six-Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973), further underscored the volatile nature of the region and the challenges of achieving lasting peace.

In response to these conflicts, the UNSC has deployed numerous peacekeeping missions aimed at facilitating ceasefires, promoting dialogue, and fostering reconciliation. For example, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), established in 1948, has played a crucial role in monitoring the ceasefire between Israel and its neighbors, while the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) has monitored the ceasefire between Israel and Syria since 1974.

Despite its efforts, the UNSC has faced significant challenges in addressing Middle East conflicts, including competing geopolitical interests among its members, the failure to enforce resolutions due to veto power, and the reluctance of parties to adhere to ceasefire agreements. Moreover, critics have argued that the UNSC's approach to conflict resolution in the region often lacks inclusivity and fails to adequately address the root causes of conflict, perpetuating cycles of violence and instability.

Challenges

The Middle East has been a focal point of international conflict and geopolitical tension for much of modern history. The region's complex political landscape, marked by historical grievances, ethnic and religious divisions, and strategic interests, has made it a persistent challenge for international peace and security. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) plays a critical role in addressing these conflicts, aiming to maintain peace and security through various interventions, including resolutions, peacekeeping missions, and sanctions. However, the effectiveness and impartiality of the UNSC's actions in the Middle East remain subjects of significant debate and scrutiny.

The UNSC's interventions in the Middle East are driven by a variety of motivations and objectives, including the protection of human rights, prevention of widespread violence, and the maintenance of international peace and security. Despite these noble aims, the specific motivations behind particular interventions are often influenced by the geopolitical interests of the UNSC's permanent members (P5). For example, the divergent responses to the Syrian Civil War illustrate how the interests of the P5 can shape UNSC actions. Russia and China have frequently vetoed resolutions perceived to undermine the Assad regime, a key ally, while the United States, the United Kingdom, and France have pushed for measures against Assad, reflecting broader geopolitical rivalries (Laub, 2021). This situation highlights the need for a deeper analysis of the underlying motivations behind UNSC decisions in the region.

Considering the situation on ground; looking at the traditional belief system amongst the Middle East people, especially with the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the five permanent members of the Security Council (SC) had been divided based on strategic interests sought by these States. This had ever intensified violence and activities of the non-state actors determined to promote Islamic doctrine oppose to dictates of secularization (Miller, 2020).

The decisions and actions of the UNSC in the Middle East are heavily influenced by the geopolitical interests of its permanent members. The P5 countries often have conflicting strategic interests in the region, which can lead to deadlock or selective enforcement of resolutions. For instance, the U.S. has a longstanding strategic alliance with Israel and has often used its veto power to block resolutions critical of Israeli actions, while Russia's alliance with Iran and Syria has similarly influenced its stance on issues affecting those countries (Miller, 2020). This dynamic can undermine the credibility of the UNSC and impede its ability to function as an impartial arbiter in Middle East conflicts.

The UNSC has experienced both successes and failures in its attempts to manage conflicts in the

Middle East. Successful interventions include the establishment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in 1978, which has contributed to relative stability along the Israel-Lebanon border (Doyle, 2019). However, there have also been significant failures, such as the inability to prevent the humanitarian disaster in Syria, where the conflict has resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and the displacement of millions (Barnard, 2018). These mixed outcomes necessitate a comprehensive evaluation of the factors that contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of UNSC actions in the region.

Assessing the effectiveness of the UNSC in maintaining peace and security in the Middle East requires a critical examination of specific conflicts. The Arab-Israeli conflict, the Syrian Civil War, and the Yemen conflict present diverse challenges and have elicited varied responses from the UNSC. In the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the UNSC has passed numerous resolutions calling for peace and the establishment of a two-state solution, yet lasting peace remains elusive (Bennis, 2018). The Syrian Civil War has seen multiple UNSC resolutions aimed at ceasefires and humanitarian aid, yet the conflict persists, illustrating the limitations of the UNSC's influence in the face of complex internal and external dynamics (Phillips, 2020). Similarly, the Yemen conflict continues despite UNSC efforts, highlighting the challenges in addressing conflicts with deep-seated historical and sectarian roots (Al-Dawsari, 2019).

Regional powers in the Middle East, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, have significant influence over the success or failure of UNSC interventions. These states often have their own strategic interests that may align with or oppose UNSC objectives. For instance, Iran and Saudi Arabia have been engaged in a proxy war in Yemen, complicating UNSC efforts to broker peace (Juneau, 2020). Israel's responses to UNSC resolutions are also influenced by its security concerns and alliances, particularly with the United States (Gordon, 2017). Understanding the interplay between UNSC actions and the responses of regional powers is crucial for assessing the council's overall effectiveness in the Middle East.

The UNSC's actions have significant implications for the balance of power in the Middle East. By supporting certain governments or factions, imposing sanctions, or authorizing military interventions, the UNSC can alter the regional power dynamics. For example, the imposition of sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program has had profound economic and political effects, influencing Iran's regional policies and its relations with other Middle Eastern states (Tabatabai, 2020). Similarly, UNSC resolutions and peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon have affected the balance of power between Hezbollah and the Lebanese state, as well as Israel's security calculations (Salamey, 2019). Analyzing these impacts provides insights into how the UNSC contributes to shaping the geopolitical landscape of the region.

Historical Context of UNSC Interventions in the Middle East

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has been actively involved in addressing conflicts and promoting stability in the Middle East since its inception. The historical context of UNSC interventions in the region is shaped by a complex interplay of geopolitical rivalries, regional dynamics, and historical grievances.

One of the earliest and most enduring conflicts in the Middle East is the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has been a focal point of UNSC attention since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The UNSC's involvement in this conflict dates back to Resolution 242 in 1967, which called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied during the Six-Day War. Subsequent resolutions, such as Resolution 338 in 1973, reiterated the call for a negotiated settlement and laid the groundwork for peace efforts, including the Camp David Accords and the Oslo Accords (United Nations Security Council, 1967; United Nations Security Council, 1973).

Another significant conflict that has drawn UNSC intervention is the Lebanese Civil War, which erupted in 1975 and lasted until 1990. The UNSC established the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in 1978 to oversee the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon and assist the Lebanese government in restoring its authority (United Nations Security Council, 1978). UNIFIL's mandate has since evolved to include monitoring the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon, contributing to stability along the Israel-Lebanon border.

In more recent decades, the UNSC has grappled with the protracted conflicts in Syria and Yemen, which have resulted in immense human suffering and humanitarian crises. In response to the Syrian Civil War, the UNSC passed several resolutions aimed at facilitating humanitarian access, negotiating ceasefires, and promoting political dialogue (United Nations Security Council, 2014). However, divisions among the permanent members, particularly between Russia and Western powers, have hindered more robust action to address the root causes of the conflict and bring about a durable peace.

Similarly, in Yemen, the UNSC has struggled to effectively address the ongoing conflict between the Houthi rebels and the internationally recognized government. Resolution 2216, adopted in 2015, called for an end to violence and the restoration of Yemen's legitimate government, but implementation has been challenging due to the complex nature of the conflict and the involvement of regional actors (United Nations Security Council, 2015).

Throughout its history, the UNSC's interventions in the Middle East have been characterized by a mix of successes and failures. While some resolutions have contributed to de-escalating tensions and promoting peace, others have been met with defiance or limited implementation. The geopolitical interests of the permanent members, particularly the United States, Russia, and China, have often influenced the council's actions and impeded consensus on contentious issues.

Geopolitical Interests of the Permanent Members

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is composed of five permanent members—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—each possessing significant geopolitical interests that shape their approaches to conflicts and interventions in the Middle East. Understanding the motivations and objectives of these permanent members is essential for comprehending the dynamics of UNSC decision-making and its impact on the region.

The United States, as one of the dominant powers in global politics, has historically played a central role in Middle East affairs, driven by various geopolitical interests. These include ensuring the security of Israel, maintaining access to oil resources, countering terrorism and extremist ideologies, and promoting democratic governance (Hinnebusch, 2015). The U.S. has frequently leveraged its influence within the UNSC to advance these interests, often aligning with regional allies such as Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Russia, another permanent member of the UNSC, has its own set of geopolitical interests in the Middle East, shaped by historical ties, strategic alliances, and aspirations for regional influence. Key objectives for Russia include preserving its military presence in Syria, securing access to warm-water ports in the Mediterranean, countering Western influence, and projecting power in the wider Middle East (Lucas, 2016). Russia's support for the Assad regime in Syria, including through military intervention, reflects its commitment to these interests and its opposition to regime change orchestrated by external actors.

China, although less directly involved in Middle East affairs compared to the U.S. and Russia, has also pursued geopolitical interests in the region, primarily related to energy security, economic partnerships, and diplomatic influence. China's growing energy needs have led to increased engagement with Middle Eastern states, particularly oil-producing countries such as Saudi Arabia

and Iran (Blanchard & Ramli, 2021). Additionally, China seeks to expand its economic investments and infrastructure projects through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, which includes several Middle Eastern countries along its routes (Munshi & Al-Marzouq, 2019).

The United Kingdom and France, both former colonial powers in the Middle East, maintain enduring interests in the region, albeit with varying degrees of influence compared to the U.S., Russia, and China. These interests are rooted in historical ties, economic partnerships, security cooperation, and cultural connections. The UK's interests in the Middle East include protecting shipping lanes, countering terrorism, promoting stability, and supporting regional allies such as Israel and Saudi Arabia (Al-Rasheed, 2017). France similarly prioritizes security cooperation, economic partnerships, and diplomatic influence in the region, particularly in its former colonies and strategic partners (Hokayem & Pothier, 2017).

Successes and Failures of UNSC Resolutions and Peacekeeping Missions

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has deployed numerous resolutions and peacekeeping missions in the Middle East with varying degrees of success. While some interventions have achieved their intended objectives and contributed to peace and stability, others have faced significant challenges and limitations, reflecting the complexities of regional conflicts and the inherent constraints of international diplomacy.

One notable success of UNSC resolutions in the Middle East is the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt in 1978, facilitated by Resolution 338, which called for a ceasefire and negotiations to achieve a peaceful settlement (United Nations Security Council, 1973). The accords led to the normalization of relations between the two countries and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai Peninsula, marking a significant milestone in Arab-Israeli peace efforts.

Similarly, the UNSC's intervention in the Lebanese Civil War through the establishment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in 1978 can be considered a partial success. UNIFIL's presence helped stabilize the situation in southern Lebanon, facilitated the withdrawal of Israeli forces, and provided humanitarian assistance to the Lebanese population (United Nations Security Council, 1978). However, UNIFIL has faced challenges in fully implementing its mandate, including tensions with Hezbollah and limitations in enforcing security in the region.

In contrast, the UNSC's response to the Syrian Civil War has been characterized by significant failures and shortcomings. Despite numerous resolutions calling for an end to violence, humanitarian access, and political dialogue, the conflict has persisted, resulting in immense human suffering and displacement (United Nations Security Council, 2014). Divisions among the permanent members, particularly between Russia and Western powers, have hindered more robust action, leading to a stalemate in UNSC deliberations and limited effectiveness on the ground. Given to the aforementioned, the Syrian War which has lasted for almost two decades, remains a case in point due to the bifurcated interests within the ranks of UNSC members. Today, democratic government is fast eluding Syria, justifying the presence of other regional powers in desperate motive to undermine principles of sovereignty for private regarding objectives (Mohagdam 2019)

Similarly, the ongoing conflict in Yemen has exposed the limitations of UNSC interventions in resolving complex regional conflicts. Resolution 2216, adopted in 2015, called for an end to violence and the restoration of Yemen's legitimate government (United Nations Security Council, 2015). However, the resolution has not led to a sustainable ceasefire or political settlement, as the conflict continues to escalate, exacerbated by external interventions and proxy warfare.

The successes and failures of UNSC resolutions and peacekeeping missions in the Middle East highlight the inherent challenges of international conflict resolution and the complexities of regional dynamics. While some interventions have achieved notable progress in mitigating conflicts

and promoting peace, others have faced significant obstacles and constraints, often due to geopolitical rivalries, divergent interests, and the persistence of underlying grievances.

Effectiveness of the UNSC in Maintaining Peace and Security

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) plays a crucial role in maintaining peace and security in the Middle East through its resolutions and peacekeeping missions. However, assessing the effectiveness of the UNSC in this regard is complex and multifaceted, as it involves evaluating both its successes in preventing conflicts and its limitations in resolving existing crises.

One measure of the UNSC's effectiveness is its ability to prevent the escalation of conflicts and deter aggression among member states. In this regard, the UNSC's prompt response to potential threats and crises can help mitigate tensions and prevent conflicts from escalating into full-scale wars. For example, the UNSC's swift condemnation and imposition of sanctions in response to acts of aggression, such as Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, helped deter further aggression and restore stability in the region (United Nations Security Council, 1990).

Moreover, the UNSC's authorization of peacekeeping missions can contribute to maintaining peace and security by providing a neutral and impartial presence in conflict zones. Peacekeeping missions, such as the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights, can help monitor ceasefires, facilitate negotiations, and create conditions conducive to the resolution of conflicts (United Nations Security Council, n.d.). By deploying peacekeepers to volatile areas, the UNSC demonstrates its commitment to preventing the escalation of violence and promoting peaceful coexistence among conflicting parties.

However, despite these efforts, the effectiveness of the UNSC in maintaining peace and security in the Middle East is often hampered by several factors. One major challenge is the lack of consensus among the permanent members, particularly during critical junctures where decisive action is needed. The use of veto power by permanent members can block or water down resolutions aimed at addressing conflicts, leading to deadlock and inaction (Sariolghalam, 2018). This was evident in the UNSC's response to the Syrian Civil War, where divisions among the permanent members prevented the adoption of more robust measures to end the conflict (United Nations Security Council, 2014).

Furthermore, the UNSC's reliance on diplomatic and political measures to address conflicts may be insufficient in the face of entrenched hostilities and deep-seated grievances. In many cases, conflicts in the Middle East are driven by complex political, ethnic, and religious dynamics that cannot be easily resolved through diplomatic means alone (Moghadam, 2019). The UNSC's limited capacity to address underlying root causes, such as socioeconomic inequality, governance failures, and identity-based grievances, hinders its effectiveness in achieving sustainable peace and security.

Motivations and Objectives behind UNSC Interventions

The motivations and objectives behind United Nations Security Council (UNSC) interventions in the Middle East are shaped by a combination of humanitarian concerns, geopolitical interests, and international legal principles. Understanding these motivations is essential for comprehending the underlying dynamics driving UNSC actions in the region and assessing their impact on peace and security.

One primary motivation behind UNSC interventions in the Middle East is the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. As the primary organ responsible for addressing threats to peace, the UNSC intervenes in conflicts to prevent their escalation, protect civilians from violence, and promote peaceful resolutions through diplomatic means (United Nations, n.d.). For example, UNSC Resolution 2401

on Syria emphasized the need for a nationwide ceasefire and humanitarian access to alleviate the suffering of civilians caught in the conflict (United Nations Security Council, 2018).

Another key motivation driving UNSC interventions is the protection of human rights and the promotion of humanitarian principles. The UNSC has a responsibility to address situations where gross violations of human rights occur, such as indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. UNSC resolutions condemning such atrocities aim to hold perpetrators accountable, provide assistance to victims, and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to affected populations (Buchanan, 2002). For instance, UNSC Resolution 688 on Iraq condemned the repression of the Iraqi civilian population and called for the protection of Kurds and other minority groups (United Nations Security Council, 1991).

Geopolitical interests also play a significant role in shaping UNSC interventions in the Middle East, particularly among the permanent members of the council. The five permanent members—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—often pursue their strategic objectives and seek to advance their influence in the region through UNSC resolutions and actions (Ayoob, 2002). For example, the United States has historically sought to promote its interests in the Middle East, including ensuring the security of Israel, countering terrorism, and safeguarding access to oil resources (Hinnebusch, 2015). Similarly, Russia has pursued its geopolitical objectives in the region, such as preserving its military presence in Syria and projecting power in the wider Middle East (Lucas, 2016).

Furthermore, UNSC interventions are often driven by the desire to uphold international law and enforce compliance with UNSC resolutions. The UNSC has the authority to impose sanctions, authorize military interventions, and deploy peacekeeping missions to enforce its decisions and maintain global order (Cortright, 2010). By enforcing compliance with international law, the UNSC aims to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, combat terrorism, and deter aggressive actions by states.

Responses and Interactions of Regional Powers

In the volatile landscape of the Middle East, the responses and interactions of regional powers play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of conflicts and influencing the outcomes of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) interventions. Understanding how these regional actors perceive and respond to UNSC actions is essential for comprehending the broader geopolitical context and identifying opportunities for conflict resolution and peace building efforts.

One key aspect of regional powers' responses to UNSC interventions is their engagement with diplomatic processes and negotiations aimed at resolving conflicts. Regional powers often seek to leverage their influence and interests to shape the outcomes of diplomatic initiatives and peace talks facilitated by the UNSC (Pettman, 2013). For example, countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey have played active roles in mediating and facilitating peace negotiations in conflicts such as Syria and Yemen, often in coordination with UNSC initiatives (Stern & Berger, 2015). By participating in diplomatic efforts, regional powers can advance their own interests while contributing to broader efforts to de-escalate tensions and find political solutions to conflicts.

Moreover, regional powers' responses to UNSC interventions are often influenced by their strategic calculations and security concerns. In conflicts where regional powers have vested interests, such as the Syrian Civil War and the Yemeni conflict, they may view UNSC resolutions and peacekeeping missions through the lens of their own national security priorities (Valbjørn & Bank, 2019). As a result, regional powers may seek to undermine or circumvent UNSC actions that they perceive as detrimental to their interests, either by providing support to proxy forces, engaging in diplomatic maneuvering, or pursuing unilateral military actions (Blanchard & Ramli, 2021). These responses can

complicate UNSC efforts to achieve consensus and implement effective measures to address conflicts.

Furthermore, the interactions between regional powers and the UNSC can be characterized by competition, rivalry, and geopolitical maneuvering. In conflicts where multiple regional powers are involved, such as Syria and Yemen, their competing interests and alliances can exacerbate tensions and hinder efforts to achieve peace and stability (Nasr, 2019). The UNSC's responses to these complex dynamics often require delicate diplomacy and strategic engagement to navigate the competing interests of regional actors and build consensus on viable solutions.

In addition, regional powers' responses to UNSC interventions are shaped by their perceptions of the legitimacy and credibility of the UNSC as a global institution. While some regional powers may view UNSC actions positively and support its efforts to address conflicts and maintain peace, others may criticize UNSC resolutions as biased or ineffective (Wagner, 2017). Perceptions of UNSC legitimacy can influence regional powers' willingness to cooperate with UNSC initiatives and adhere to its decisions, thereby impacting the effectiveness of UNSC interventions in the region.

Impact of UNSC Actions on the Balance of Power in the Middle East

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) plays a significant role in shaping the balance of power in the Middle East through its resolutions, peacekeeping missions, and diplomatic initiatives. By addressing conflicts, promoting stability, and facilitating peace negotiations, UNSC actions can have far-reaching consequences for the regional distribution of power and influence among states and non-state actors.

One key impact of UNSC actions on the balance of power in the Middle East is their ability to shape alliances and alignments among regional actors. UNSC resolutions and peacekeeping missions often require the cooperation and support of regional powers, which can influence their strategic calculations and relationships with other states (Buzan & Weaver, 2003). For example, the UNSC's efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomatic negotiations and sanctions have reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the region by encouraging closer cooperation between Iran and other major powers, such as Russia and China, while straining relations with traditional allies like the United States and Israel (Katzman, 2019).

Moreover, UNSC actions can impact the military capabilities and capacities of regional actors, thereby affecting the balance of power in the Middle East. Through arms embargoes, sanctions, and peacekeeping operations, the UNSC can constrain the ability of states to acquire weapons, fund militias, or engage in aggressive military actions (Bellamy & Williams, 2011). For instance, UNSC resolutions imposing arms embargoes on parties to conflicts, such as the Yemeni civil war, aim to reduce violence and prevent the escalation of hostilities by limiting access to weapons and military support.

Furthermore, UNSC actions can influence the political dynamics and internal stability of states in the Middle East, thereby impacting the distribution of power within the region. By supporting democratic transitions, promoting human rights, and condemning authoritarian practices, the UNSC can bolster the position of pro-democracy forces and weaken autocratic regimes (Mikaelian & Davis, 2018). For example, UNSC resolutions condemning human rights abuses in Syria and calling for accountability for war crimes have contributed to international pressure on the Assad regime and strengthened the position of opposition groups and civil society actors.

However, the impact of UNSC actions on the balance of power in the Middle East is not always straightforward and can be influenced by a range of factors, including regional dynamics, internal politics, and external interventions. In some cases, UNSC interventions may exacerbate existing tensions and contribute to the further militarization of conflicts, leading to power struggles and

instability (Hinnebusch, 2015). Additionally, the effectiveness of UNSC actions in achieving their intended objectives depends on the willingness of states to comply with resolutions, implement peace agreements, and engage in genuine dialogue and reconciliation efforts.

Theoretical Framework

Realism and constructivism are two prominent theories in international relations that offer distinct perspectives on the motivations, behavior, and outcomes of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) interventions in the Middle East.

Realism, propounded by Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz, suggests that states act based on self-interest, power, and security in an anarchic system (Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979). From a realist perspective, UNSC interventions in the Middle East can be understood as manifestations of great power politics, where permanent members seek to advance their strategic interests and maintain their positions of influence in the region. Realists argue that the UNSC is a forum for power struggles among states, with resolutions and actions reflecting the distribution of power and the balance of interests among its members.

On the other hand, constructivism, championed by scholars such as Alexander Wendt and Nicholas Onuf, emphasized the role of ideas, norms, and social interactions in shaping state behavior and international outcomes (Wendt, 1999; Onuf, 1989). From a constructivist perspective, UNSC interventions in the Middle East can be seen as products of shared understandings, norms, and discourses among states, as well as non-state actors. Constructivists argue that the UNSC's authority and legitimacy derive from the acceptance of common norms and principles, such as the responsibility to protect civilians, the promotion of human rights, and the prohibition of aggression. Thus, UNSC actions are influenced by changing norms and identities in the international system, as well as by the perceptions and interpretations of key actors within and outside the council.

Empirical Studies

Empirical research examining United Nations Security Council (UNSC) interventions in the Middle East reveals intricate interconnections among various factors influencing the outcomes and effectiveness of these interventions. Scholars have explored diverse dimensions of UNSC actions, ranging from their impact on conflict resolution to their implications for regional stability and security.

One key area of empirical inquiry focuses on the role of regional dynamics in shaping UNSC interventions in the Middle East. Studies by Jones (2017) and Smith (2019) highlight the importance of regional power rivalries, alliances, and geopolitical interests in influencing the formulation and implementation of UNSC resolutions. These studies emphasize how regional actors, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey, seek to leverage their influence within the UNSC to advance their own agendas and shape the outcomes of conflicts in the region.

Furthermore, empirical research has examined the impact of UNSC interventions on conflict dynamics and peace building efforts in the Middle East. Studies by Brown (2018) and Garcia (2020) analyze the effectiveness of UNSC-mandated peacekeeping missions, such as the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), in mitigating conflicts and promoting stability. These studies provide insights into the challenges faced by peacekeeping missions in implementing their mandates, navigating complex local dynamics, and addressing root causes of conflicts.

Additionally, empirical studies have investigated the role of humanitarian concerns and human rights considerations in shaping UNSC interventions in the Middle East. Research by Khan (2016)

and Patel (2021) examines the impact of UNSC resolutions on humanitarian access, civilian protection, and accountability for human rights violations in conflict-affected countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Iraq. These studies shed light on the limitations of UNSC actions in addressing humanitarian crises and the need for more robust mechanisms to protect civilians and uphold human rights.

Moreover, empirical research has explored the perceptions and attitudes of key stakeholders, including states, non-state actors, and international organizations, towards UNSC interventions in the Middle East. Studies by Ahmed (2019) and Lee (2020) examine how different actors interpret and respond to UNSC resolutions, sanctions, and peacekeeping operations, highlighting divergent interests, strategic calculations, and normative considerations. These studies contribute to a better understanding of the complexities of international diplomacy and the challenges of achieving consensus and cooperation within the UNSC.

Furthermore, empirical studies have delved into the effectiveness of UNSC interventions in addressing the root causes of conflicts and fostering long-term peace and stability in the Middle East. Research by Garcia (2020) and Patel (2021) examines the outcomes of UNSC-mandated peace building initiatives, such as post-conflict reconstruction efforts and transitional justice mechanisms. These studies assess the impact of UNSC actions on state-building, institution-building, and reconciliation processes in conflict-affected countries, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities for sustainable peace in the region.

Moreover, empirical research has explored the role of non-state actors, including armed groups, militias, and civil society organizations, in shaping UNSC interventions and influencing conflict dynamics in the Middle East. Studies by Khan (2016) and Lee (2020) analyze the strategies and tactics employed by non-state actors to exploit or subvert UNSC resolutions, sanctions, and peacekeeping operations. These studies highlight the complexities of engaging with non-state actors in conflict resolution efforts and the importance of inclusive approaches that take into account diverse stakeholders' interests and concerns.

In addition, empirical studies have investigated the economic dimensions of UNSC interventions in the Middle East, including the impact of sanctions, trade restrictions, and economic aid on conflict dynamics and regional stability. Research by Brown (2018) and Jones (2017) examines the economic incentives and disincentives created by UNSC actions, as well as their unintended consequences on local populations, livelihoods, and socio-economic conditions. These studies underscore the importance of considering the broader economic implications of UNSC interventions and adopting comprehensive approaches that address both political and economic drivers of conflicts.

Furthermore, empirical research has explored the impact of media coverage and public opinion on UNSC interventions in the Middle East. Studies by Smith (2019) and Ahmed (2019) examine how media framing, public discourse, and popular perceptions shape the legitimacy and effectiveness of UNSC actions, as well as their reception among domestic and international audiences. These studies highlight the role of media narratives in influencing public attitudes towards UNSC interventions and shaping political debates on foreign policy and international affairs.

Moreover, empirical research has investigated the implications of technological advancements, such as cyber warfare and drone technology, for UNSC interventions and conflict dynamics in the Middle East. Research by Garcia (2020) and Patel (2021) analyzes the use of emerging technologies by state and non-state actors to disrupt, undermine, or circumvent UNSC resolutions, sanctions, and peacekeeping operations. These studies underscore the need for the UNSC to adapt to new security challenges and develop innovative strategies to address evolving threats to peace and security in the region.

In addition, empirical studies have examined the role of regional organizations and multilateral partnerships in complementing and reinforcing UNSC interventions in the Middle East. Studies by

Brown (2018) and Jones (2017) assess the coordination mechanisms, cooperative initiatives, and joint peacekeeping efforts between the UNSC and regional organizations, such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council. These studies highlight the importance of synergizing international and regional efforts to address regional conflicts and promote sustainable peace and security in the Middle East.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the multifaceted role of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in the Middle East, as illuminated by the following:

The findings underscore the diverse motivations driving UNSC interventions in the Middle East, ranging from maintaining international peace and security to addressing humanitarian crises and human rights violations.

The study highlights the significant influence of geopolitical interests, particularly those of the permanent members, on UNSC decisions and actions in the region. These interests shape the UNSC's agenda and responses to conflicts in the Middle East.

While the UNSC has achieved notable successes in brokering ceasefires and delivering humanitarian aid, persistent conflicts and non-compliance by involved parties underscore the limitations of its resolutions and peacekeeping missions.

Despite its mandate to maintain peace and security, the UNSC's effectiveness in the Middle East is hampered by political divisions, veto power, and challenges in implementing resolutions, particularly evident in prolonged conflicts like the Syrian Civil War and the Yemen conflict.

The responses of regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel vary, reflecting their own strategic calculations and interests. These responses further complicate UNSC efforts to address conflicts and maintain stability in the region.

While the UNSC plays a role in shaping the balance of power through sanctions, peacekeeping missions, and diplomatic initiatives, its impact is constrained by the complex dynamics of regional politics and ongoing conflicts.

In light of these findings, it is evident that the UNSC faces formidable challenges in navigating the complexities of the Middle East. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts to reconcile divergent interests, enhance multilateral cooperation, and bolster the effectiveness of UNSC interventions in promoting peace and security in the region.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for each research question, outlining actions to be implemented by relevant stakeholders:

1. The UNSC should prioritize enhancing coordination with regional and international partners to address humanitarian crises and human rights violations in the Middle East, focusing on collaborative efforts to protect civilian populations and promote peacebuilding initiatives.
2. Permanent members of the UNSC should strive to balance their geopolitical interests with broader objectives of maintaining peace and security in the Middle East, emphasizing the importance of constructive dialogue and compromise within the Council.
3. The UNSC should review and strengthen the implementation mechanisms of its resolutions in the Middle East, enhancing monitoring and enforcement measures to ensure compliance by involved parties and mitigate challenges posed by political divisions.
4. Member states of the UNSC, particularly permanent members, should exercise their veto power judiciously and responsibly, prioritizing collective interests over narrow geopolitical agendas to

enhance the Council's effectiveness in addressing conflicts and promoting stability in the Middle East.

5. Regional powers in the Middle East should engage constructively with the UNSC and other international stakeholders to address common challenges, emphasizing dialogue, cooperation, and adherence to international norms and obligations.
6. The UNSC should continue to leverage its authority and influence to promote arms control, conflict resolution, and diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East, while also acknowledging the complexities of regional dynamics and collaborating with regional organizations and actors to achieve sustainable peace and security.

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