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EJPAS

**Department of Political Science and Public Administration,
Edo State University, Uzairue.**

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Editorial Note

The EDSU Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies (EJPAS) is a double-blind peer review open access journal published annually by the Department of of Political Science and Public Administration, Edo State University Uzairue, Edo State.

Aim and Scope

The journal is multi-disciplinary in nature and is aimed at promoting robust intellectual and scholarly debates, theorizing and researching on issues in the gamut of the social and management sciences. The goal is to provide a platform for professionals and academicians all over the world to promote, share, and discuss various new issues and developments in diverse areas of study in Social and Management Sciences.

Each issue of the journal is designed to inform researchers, practicing managers and policy makers on current and emerging developments in the social and management sciences and their practical application to problems of the global world. Papers are carefully selected to provide readers with analytical, application-oriented approaches to managerial problems.

Guidelines for Authors

1. Papers are accepted all-year-round;
2. Only papers not previously published or under consideration for publication elsewhere will be considered for publication;
3. Papers submitted should be accompanied by an abstract of not less than 200 words with at least five key words. The papers should not exceed 8000 words (including references) and should be typed using Times New Roman style, 12 font size and double linespacing. The references must be presented in accordance with the 7th edition of APA;
4. All manuscripts must have the title of the paper, name of the author(s), institutional affiliation, GSM No and email address and should be submitted to edsujpas@edouniversity.edu.ng manuscripts submitted must first undergo an initial screening by the editorial team. Those cleared by the team are then sent to at least two experts for a blind peer review;
5. The peer reviewers scrutinize the quality of the manuscripts and make their comments/recommendations to the editors as to whether they be published with major or minor corrections effected;
6. All papers are subjected to plagiarism checks to ensure that the authors submit original papers for publication;
7. The editorial team considers all feedbacks from the peer reviewers and make an informed decision to accept or reject the manuscript. The decision of the editorial team is then conveyed to the authors/contributors by the board;
8. Authors of published papers are entitled to one hard copy

Table of Contents

Editorial Board	ii
Editorial Consultants	iv
Editorial Notes	v
Aims and Scope	vi
Guidelines for Authors	vii
POLITICAL PARTY POLITICS AND ELECTIONEERING CAMPAIGN IN NIGERIA: AN EVALUATION OF THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN EDO STATE	1
EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PENSION SCHEMES IN MEETING THE HEALTHCARE NEEDS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT RETIREES IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE, NIGERIA.....	13
MACHINE LEARNING ALGORITHM PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT IN STOCK PREDICTION WITH ADAPTED NONNEGATIVE DISCRIMINATIVE FEATURE SELECTION (NDFS)	21
NEPAD AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA: PROGRESS, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS	27
HERDERS-PEASANT FARMERS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA AND CHALLENGES OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	38
AN ASSESSMENT OF PRIVATE PRACTICE IN PUBLIC TIME IN NIGERIA	44
KWAMEH NKRUMAH'S VISION ON PAN- AFRICANISM: RECONCILING THE DREAM OF AFRICAN UNITY WITH 21ST CENTURY REALITIES	51
POVERTY AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF PRESIDENT BUHARI ADMINISTRATION	62
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP AND THE PROVISION OF ELECTRICITY IN EDO STATE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BENIN ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY AND CCETC-OSSIOMO POWER PLANT	73

POLITICAL PARTY POLITICS AND ELECTIONEERING CAMPAIGN IN NIGERIA: AN EVALUATION OF THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN EDO STATE.

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KEY WORDS

*Party Politics,
Electioneering, Political
party, Campaign and
Governance.*

ABSTRACT

All over the world, electioneering campaign activities play significant role in the creation of the much needed atmosphere through which the electorates partake in the political processes. It also link electorates with the government procedures and processes, as well as aggregate diverse political interest. This paper examined the impact of political party politics on electioneering campaign in Nigeria with a view to ascertain the extent political party politics influenced the 2023 presidential election results in Edo state and to examine the various specific purposes for expressing political speeches, party slogans and campaign expressions. To en-focus this study hypotheses were formulated, questionnaire and survey methodology were utilized to elicit data from randomly sampled respondents from the three Senatorial Districts in Edo state. The data collected were analyzed and interpreted using the Pearson's Product Movement Correlation Coefficient (r). It was found out among other things that there is a positive correlation with political party politics and electioneering campaign. Another finding was that the election result was influenced by party politics activities. It is therefore of the recommendation that political party aspirants and party members should endeavor to exhibit a high degree of patriotism, truthfulness and considerable level of sincerity when informing and educating the general public. Rather than mislead them with enticing words. Also Political candidates and political party members should learn to adapt to the simple expression of communicating their political agendas in a more acceptable language. Finally the government should further strengthen the legal pathways of the Electoral Acts, which regulates the affairs of political party campaign activities. The implication of this is that it will create for a healthy campaign and political arena for good governance.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In every democratic system of governance, according to (Albert, 2011) the main objective for the existence of any political party is to struggle and compete for political power. For this to be achieved a political party must be able to publicize their ideologies, principles, idea, missions and visions, as well as creating the policy framework to achieve their goals and objectives. The ability to realize this is dependent upon its capabilities to sell out and be able to convince the electorates on how best in achieving its goals. This is made possible during the electioneering campaign (Albert, 2011). Electioneering campaign has become the major instrument of communication for both the electorates and the political aspirants evidently, in the developing and advance democracies of the world.

Electioneering campaign activities play important role in creation of the much-needed atmosphere through which the electorates partake in the political processes. They can as well play vital role in the aggregation of diverse political interest.

In the developed societies campaign activities are essentially determined by the party's manifestos which will further manifest into policies formulation and implementation. Unlike in the developing democracies where campaign activities become clear manifestation of disarticulation of campaign speeches often times a mere hollow speeches of hate and antagonism. In most cases, ignoring issues fundamental to the promotion of sustainable economic, political and social development. They find it easy to manipulate religion, sectionalism, ethnic and other primordial

sentiments as a take for sale point to the electorates (Albert, 2011) further explained.

In Nigeria, Electioneering activities are vital to political parties and for the entrenchment of democratic governance. These vital roles are further strengthening by the Nigeria Electoral Acts of 2010 and 2022, mandated to regulate the affairs of political party campaign activities devoid of electoral violence and electoral malpractices. Section Sections 95, 96, 99, 100 - 102 of the 2010 Electoral Law provides for decent electoral campaign devoid of bad language Oni (2017). No usage of language by politicians is neutral he asserted further that "It is of interest to note that language choices by politicians, no matter how innocuous the context may appear, tend to be politically clouded. The interesting thing is that even those making use of such language may consider what they are doing as being within reason".

The United Human Rights Council (2019) had severally discussed the power of political language during campaign and debates/interview, the way it results in particular social cognition. Daniel (2018) opined that the social cognition can be so insidious that it could make people act in particular ways as designed by the power holders in the society .The way and manner political influencers use language to dominate the thinking of the people and make them do what they want them (the populace) to do.

According to (Omodia, 2018), "the use of political debates/interview during campaigns has become increasingly popular and is very important to the electoral process and voting behavior because it bridges the communication gap between political parties, political candidates and electorates. Hence, the study tends to fill the gap in literature by examine the impact of party politics on political campaigns in Nigeria, with specific emphasis on the 2023 presidential election in Edo state".

The number of political parties and their spread seems to give the impression that representation has become an important requirement for the existence of political parties (Omodia, 2018). For example, one of the requirements stipulated for the registration of political parties in the political transition dispensation that characterized the Nigerian Fourth Republic was that aspiring political associations or political groupings are needed to garner at least ten percent of the votes in twenty four out of the thirty six states to qualify for permanent registration (Aina, 2015). In the assertion by (Feyipitan, 2015), "the ultimate goal of almost every political party campaign is to win election and to offer promises to the people in order to secure votes in return". Some of the major forms of political campaigns are political rallies, political debates, political interviews and political advertisements etc (Opeibi, 2019).

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The advancement in Internet accessibility like the Social media networks, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have enabled candidates aspiring for particular posts to use their Facebook pages and Twitter accounts for campaigns among others are commonly used by political parties during electioneering campaigns in canvassing for votes to win elections and in educating the voters to vote wisely.

Also, the use of appropriate language calls for the proper identification of the kinds of electorates targeted for mobilization during or after a political campaign according to a report by the EU on the campaigns preceding the Fourth Republic (2007).

It is imperative to note also according to (Oyeleye, 2014), that "there are specific purposes for expressing political speeches, party slogans and campaign expressions. This action may be to inform the electorates about the intention of a political aspirant and/or express the manifesto of a political party. It may also be intended to persuade or convince the consciences of the electorates to vote in favor of a candidate or a political party.

Every electorate has expectations which may be clearly expressed or otherwise but such expectations are usually measured against certain symbols particularly, language expressions, which may present different meanings in the context of political campaigns and electioneering campaign". (Oyeleye, 2014), went further to notes in his article, that "The Power of words and the Techniques of Public Communication" that the situation, audience and purpose of communication integrate to determine the function and choice of language to use in exchange. Extent to which these could be actualized is dependent upon the usage of political slogan in their activities as well as hate speeches in campaigns become vital to this study. Therefore the following research question becomes useful to this work;

To what extent party politics influenced electioneering campaign in Edo state?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

To examine to what extent party politics impacted electioneering campaign in the 2023 presidential election in Edo state.

To proffer solutions that will address the issue of party politics with its attendant effects on our electioneering campaign in Nigeria.

1.4 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES:

H₀¹: There is no significant relationship between political party politics and electioneering campaign in the 2023 presidential election in Edo state.

H_r¹: There is a significant relationship between political party politics and electioneering campaign in the 2023 presidential election in Edo state.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Political Party Politics and Electioneering Campaign in Nigeria: Patterns and Dynamics

Party politics are the various activities of political parties employed in a democratic environment to seek for the control of political offices through the stated norms of elections (Olaniyi 2017).To this end, he stated further that "party politics exist when elective principles are present in a state and by implication under a democratic regime which recognizes the legitimate choice of the citizens to select or elect those to represent them in governmental

offices. For example, in the pre-independent era in Nigeria, party politics was not in existence until 1922, when the Clifford constitution was introduced with its principles”.

In the words of (Okoye, 2020), party politics therefore are “activities of formal structure, institution or organization which compete through electoral process to control the personnel and policies of government, and with the aim of allocating the scarce resources in a state through an institutionalized means or procedure. Hence, the primary objective of party politics is directed toward a single goal of wrestling for government or political power”.

However, despite the fact that party politics serve some other numerous purposes, outside the primary objectives, such as integrative mechanism, feedback mechanism, aggregative machinery or tool, regulatory and promotional roles, its roles are punctured and truncated by various negative activities such as polarizing and widening gap between and/or among ethnic groups, unhealthy rivalry, marginalizing tool, exploitative mechanism and expropriatory role, apart from undemocratic rule (Azeeze, 2012).

Party politics is the politics engaged in by, expressed through the channel of and or considered from the ideal of political parties as opposed to national interest (Nwankwo, 2021). More so, party politics are activities of formal structure, institution and organization which competes through electoral mechanism to influence people policies and programmes as well as allocation of public wealth through a stipulated and articulated procedure (Okoye, 2021). Though, party politics is ordinarily directed towards ensuring Checks and balances in governance, strengthening the democratic institution and serve as feedback mechanism, however, its activities have been extremely abused through political rivalry, ethno-religious sentiment and making it undemocratic (Philip, et al, 2014).

The reality is and can be much different, because of the constricting effect on the choice of the electorate of (i) contradictions such as oligarchic and undemocratic tendencies in political party organization; and (ii) market imperfections and structural distortions in the economic organization of the liberal democratic state (Adeyi, 2011).

Campaign is the principal institution that links politicians and the electorate and at the same time provides a critical link between citizens and government. This assertion is justified in the words of William Riller (Geer, 1998): Campaigns are a distinguishing feature worldwide, of modern representative democracies. But never the less, there are some other factors that need to be addressed and tackled because they remain a clog in the progress of Nigerian politics and constitute a threat to electioneering.

There are five methods of electioneering campaigns that are used by political parties according to (Ojo, 2010), they include: national tours, state tours, local rallies, house to house canvassing and advertisements in the media. Firstly, national tours are usually led by the party's chairman or presidential candidate. Apart from explaining the programme of the party, national tours are opportunities for showing the electorate the national officers of the party. State tours serve a similar purpose. Thirdly, rallies are organized in the various districts by local party organs after official

permit has been obtained from the Divisional Police Officer. Fourthly, house to house canvassing is done by female party cadres who go into homes to explain party manifestoes to female voters in Moslem dominated electoral districts and, fifthly, the mass media are the popular form of campaigns. Advertisements are placed in the major newspapers.

Similarly, advertisements are placed in many weekly magazines. Television and radio advertisements are also extensively used. The advancement in technology as a result of the growth of Internet accessibility like the Social media networks_Facebook, Instagram and Twitter_enable candidates aspiring for particular posts to use their Facebook pages and Twitter accounts for campaigns. Moreover, political parties during electioneering campaigns play important roles in canvassing for votes to win elections and in educating the voters to vote wisely. The nexus of political parties and electioneering campaigns is very crucial due to the fact that their indispensability remain a known fact for thought. In the light of the above, political system which does not select its leaders under the banner of political parties and carries out healthy campaigns for their success at polls can hardly be considered as a democratic government.

Patterns and Dynamics of political parties' activities and Practices in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023.

According to (Adele, 2011), in his words, “many political parties are central to the prospects of future electoral and political violence. At present there appear to be greater risks of intra party conflict than inter party tensions that characterized the 2015 elections. Political party primary and nomination processes are subjected to internal crises and violence. Violence has become common feature during and after election (for example, in Ekiti State, during the gubernatorial primaries held in June 2018). Many respondents were concerned about party's sustainability in terms of structure and crises control, particularly the ruling APC, as evidently shown in the public domain especially in their ability to effectively resolve internal rivalries and crises which, potentially could subject the parties open to fragmentation. There are no major conflict resolution mechanisms amongst political parties in Nigeria. Despite the different Reconciliatory committees that are in existence, but they are hardly able to reconcile aggrieved members.” Other views have pointed to a limited culture of internal party democracy as being a destabilizing factor, exacerbated by the rematch of old allies and adversaries across the country (Adele, 2011).

He went further to explained of the opinion that the “Independent Electoral Commission INEC as the political umpire has the responsibility to monitor party primaries and could impose sanctions on parties that violate regulations; in practice INEC is sensitive to involvement in internal party processes, which often lack transparency. This means that many disputes may end up as protracted legal battles. Since the primary responsibility of INEC is to organize the election, its role as a political party regulator may be an undue burden. The Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), supported by INEC, is the standing mechanism to resolve interparty disputes and to implement the political parties' code of conduct”.

The controversial and sudden death of General Sanni Abacha (the then head of state) according to (Bello, 2008), signaled the commencement of the fourth republic. Upon his sudden death, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, as it was alleged, who was to have been retired by General Abacha, along with other senior military officers on June 8, 1998 (Bello, 2008), emerged as the new Head of State on June 9, 1998? He was essentially preoccupied with organizing another transition to civil rule while attempting to re-enact a collaborative foreign policy with countries that had regarded Nigeria as a pariah state (Fawole, 1999 and Adebajo, 2006).

In line with the above,(Simbine,2013), stated as saying that; stating the premises upon which he arrived at a conclusion for dissolving all the five political parties, former Head of state, General Abdulsalami Abubakar stated that, “in particular, democratization was marred by maneuvering and manipulation of political institutions, structures and actors. In the end, we have only succeeded in creating a defective foundation on which a solid democratic structure can neither be constructed nor sustained (Gen. Abubakar, 1998)”. Thus, he doubted that the parties could be the strong pillars and instruments through which democracy can be cultivated and entrenched, maintaining that these qualities were certainly lacking in the Nigerian political space (Simbine, 2013). Abdulsalami’s transition programme essentially threw up three major political parties: Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) (Momoh2013).

In the march towards the Fourth republic, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as quoted initially granted provisional registration to nine (9) political parties in 1998 (Simbine, 2013), “the 1999 elections ushered in the Fourth Republic. Three political parties contested the elections. These were the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), the All Peoples Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD)”. The political parties that had sought to engage the emerging democratic order were 24 (Abutudu 2014), however, only three were registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission to assume the status of political parties. This was with the condition that after the local government elections of that year, those that had 10% votes and above in at least 24 states of the Federation would qualify to contest the subsequent State and Federal elections (Simbine, 2013).

In the words of (Agbaje,et al 2007) as quoted “ this was after supposedly surmounting the constitutional huddles of showing that they were not sectional, ethnic, or religious party and that their membership and support bases were sufficiently reflective of the diversity of the country. The empirical test of this national spread requirement was the nationwide local council elections conducted in 1998. Actually, the AD did not exactly pass the test but was nevertheless registered. The government felt this was the only way that the South West which had sustained the pro-democracy agitation since 1993, would participate in the transition programme, thereby lending it credibility” (Agbaje, et al 2007).

A major feature of the Fourth Republic according to (TMG, 2003), “is the proliferation of political parties, that primarily do not seek to contest elections, but which are in more ways limited and self-serving in roles and interests. Though the number of political parties

was 30 in 2002, 33 in early 2006 and 50 in 2007, only 16 fielded candidates in the 2003 General Elections while only 26 contested the 2007 General Elections. Even the parties that contested the elections were merely “temporal machines for electoral contests” (TMG, 2003).

Thus, the major parties; Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alliance for Democracy (AD), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), and All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) have been plagued by deep internal crises, disorder, recurring tensions and turmoil manifested in factional fighting, expulsions and counter-expulsions, multiple executives and dual offices. There is a high level of money politics, political vagrancy, indiscipline and in-cohesion (Omotola 2009). Some months into the Fourth republic, according to (Simbine, 2013), with Obasanjo as President, politicians began to clamour for the registration of more parties. The federal government initially refused to register more political parties, a development that forced the unregistered associations to seek redress in court (Simbine, 2013).

As of April 2013, only 25 political parties are recognized by the election management body (Simbine, 2013). With the registration of the new political parties; All Progressives’ Congress (APC) which is a product of a Merger from the three main opposition parties: Action Congress of Nigeria, All Nigerian people’s party, Congress for progressive Change and factions of two other parties) People’s Democratic Movement (PDM), Independent Democrat (ID) the number of the political parties still stand at 25 (Aduku and Umoru, 2014). However, the Fourth Republic has been characterized by numerous internal crises, godfather politics and fractionalization within political parties (Momoh, 2013).

At the 1999 Presidential election, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of PDP had contested against a coalition of two other parties (APP and AD) which had brought forward Chief Olu Falae as presidential candidate (Momoh, 2013) as quoted in his words, “the election was however not free and fair while traces of ethnic politics still manifested in the creation of political parties as AD had its main followership in the south west. But while the 1999 elections were not free nor fair, the 2003 General Elections were characterized by fraud, miscounting, rigging, and malfeasance”. In addition, the election was not issue-oriented, the political parties lacked well-thought out programmes and manifestos, the executive lord over the other two arms through actual disrespect of ruling or threat of impeachment and blackmail, (Momoh, 2006).

According to (Ibeanu,2009),the 2007 General elections could best be described as electoral Tsunami or what have been euphemistically referred to as Direct Capture (DC), within the overall strategic framework of Primitive Accumulation of Votes (PAV). In early stages of PAV political parties rigged elections and although the state was generally not neutral, its institutions were used for the purpose of achieving PAV “In other words, state institutions were first captured by private interests, particularly political parties, and then deployed for PAV”.

Political parties in Nigeria are not keen about deepening democracy; rather they are more preoccupied with the crude capture of power. They have abandoned their traditional role of membership

recruitment and mobilization, and political education (Momoh, 2013). With the emergence of godfathers, owners and joiners, political nomads and the use of uncivil means to win elections, Nigerian political parties have continued to contribute to de-democratization. The central challenge of party system dwells on party processes, inter-party relationship, violence, and other ecological factors (Momoh, 2013).

In contra-distinction, (Jinadu, 2013) rising to the defense of political parties in Nigeria especially in the fourth republic contend that:

“This is not to say that all has been bad or that all has not been well since May 1999. It is only to point to creeping and indeed deepening contradictions, which require urgent policy action. The action is urgent, if the considerable and obvious progress the country has made towards deepening democratic transition since 1999 in the following areas is not to turn into a fleeting mirage: (i) continuing commitment to federalism; (ii) the political succession, in line with constitutional fixed term limits and/or through democratic elections, at the federal and state level, even if still problematic and controversial in several respects; (iii) the ebb and flow in the watchdog role of the legislature and judiciary especially at the federal level, under the separation of powers; (iv) the apparent subordination of the military to civilian control; (v) the vibrancy of the Civil Society as democratic sentinel; and (vi) the limited, though not inconsequential, success of democracy-promoting institutions”. Such as, the Independent National Electoral Commission, the National Human Rights Commission and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Aduku and Umoru, 2014) further expressed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Rational Choice theory was used. Its relevance was to direct the focus of this study in order to bridge the gap between party politics and electioneering campaign within the ambit of the stated objective. It is “a popular theory that is used to explain the actions of voters as well as politicians (Edwards III, (2002). Its basic assumption is that the individuals act in their own best interest, such an individual carefully weighs the costs and benefits of possible alternatives.” Hence, the theory is used to understand human behavior.

It therefore, has long been the dominant paradigm but most recently, since the behavioral revolution it has become more widely used in other related disciplines to explain social phenomena (Green, 2002).

The essentiality is centered on the fact that all action is fundamentally ‘rational’ in character and that every person decides on the likely costs and benefits of any action before deciding what to do, and its application to social interaction takes the form of the exchange theory. This is further expressed in the following words “political parties compete, at least in theory, as in a market place, a party is in the market for votes. Its products are its candidates and policies. In the context of our analysis, the Rational Choice Theory seeks to explain political processes and outcomes as consequences of purposive behavior”. Political actors are assumed to have goals they can pursue sensibly and efficiently (Downs, cited in Edwards, 2002) argues that voters want to maximize the chance that the

policies they favour will be adopted by government, and parties they want to vote into office. Thus, in order to win, the wise party selects policies that are widely favoured. Parties and candidates may do all things to win, but they will primarily use their accomplishments and policy position to attract votes (Ogu, 2013).

To win election, attention must be paid to those problems that affect the voters most in their campaigns. If voters are worried about insecurity issues, like in Nigeria at present, parties must put in their campaign agenda the insecurity issue and how to address it to get the support of the voters and win the election. Hence, this theory explains the reality of the electioneering campaigns pursued by the political parties and their aspirants.

The survey research design was used with a population study of 4,235,800 of voting age (18 years and above) respondents from the eighteen (18) local government areas of Edo state. The cluster sampling technique was applied in this study, because of the homogenous yet internally heterogeneous population. The entire population was first broken into Senatorial Districts from Senatorial Districts to Local Government Councils from where a sampling size of 1,200 respondents was selected.

Table 1.1: Population of the three senatorial districts, local Government councils and Questionnaire Quota.

		POPULATION	QUESTIONNAIRE QUOTA
1	EDO CENTRAL		
a	Esan Central	137,900	40
b	Esan North East	159,800	46
c	Esan South East	217,900	62
d	Esan West	167,300	47
e	Igueben	92,100	26
		775,000	221
2	EDO NORTH		
a	Akoko Edo	342,600	97
b	Etsako East	193,000	55
c	Etsako Central	123,400	35
d	Etsako West	260,700	74
e	Owan East	202,600	57
f	Owan West	129,800	37
		1,252,100	355
3	EDO SOUTH		
	Oredo	490,600	139
	Orhionmwon	241,000	68
	Ovia North East	203,500	57
	Ovia South West	180,900	51
	Egor	445,800	126
	Uhunmwode	159,500	45
	IkpobaOkha	487,400	138
		2,208,700	1,200

Source: The National Population Commission of Nigeria (2018) and the National Bureau of Statistics (2017).

Table 1.2: Senatorial District, Population, and Sample Allocation (questionnaires) to each of the Three Senatorial District of Edo State.

AREA	POPULATION	SAMPLE ALLOCATION
Edo Central	775,000	221
Edo North	1,252,100	355
Edo South	2,208,700	624
Total	4,235,800	1,200

Formulae (A) used in arriving at the Total Sample Allocation of questionnaires for each of the Senatorial Districts is,

$$\text{Total No. of LGA Population in a Senatorial District} \quad \times \quad \text{Total Sample Size}$$

$$\text{Total No. of Population in the three Senatorial Districts} \quad \quad \quad 1$$

$$\text{For instance,} \quad 775,000 \quad \times \quad 1,200 \quad = \quad 221 \quad (\text{Edo Central})$$

$$4,235,800 \quad \quad \quad 1$$

Edo Central had a total number of 221 interview questions administered in the district, Edo North 355 were administered while 624 were also administered in the Edo South senatorial district. A total of 1,200 questionnaires were received and administered to respondents.

Formula (B) for arriving at the total number of 1200 respondents (sampling size) is by adding up of the total numbers of samples allocated to each of the senatorial districts.

Table1: Frequency distribution of responses to questionnaire item 1 that the choice of language during electioneering campaign impacted the 2023 presidential election in Edo state.

Question 1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	90	5.9	5.9	5.9
	Disagree	50	15.1	15.1	21.0
	Undecided	146	10.6	10.6	31.7
Valid	Agree	424	40.4	40.4	72.0
	Strongly Agree	490	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

5.9% strongly disagreed, 15.1% disagreed that the choice of language during electioneering campaign impacted the 2023 presidential election in Edo state. 10.6%, undecided, 40.4% agreed, 28.0% strongly agreed that the choice of language during electioneering campaign impacted the 2023 presidential election in Edo state.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of responses to questionnaire item 2 that political debate and interview impacted the choice of elected candidate during the 2023 presidential election in Edo

Question 2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	80	10.4	10.4	10.4
	Disagree	40	17.6	17.6	28.0
	Undecided	158	17.6	17.6	45.6
Valid	Agree	428	332	29.2	74.8
	Strongly Agree	590	25.2	25.2	100.0
	Total	1200	100.0	100.0	

Table. 3: Frequency distribution of responses to questionnaire item 3 that the different strategies adopted i.e. slogan / propaganda during the electioneering campaign impacted the 2023 presidential election in Edo state.

Question 3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	154	10.6	10.6	10.6
	Disagree	120	19.4	19.4	30.0
	Undecided	86	18.6	18.6	48.6
Valid	Agree	34.2	34.2	82.8	82.8

Strongly Agree	488	488	17.2	100.0
Total	1200	100.0	100.0	

Table 3.shows the frequency distribution of the different strategies adopted e.g. political slogan during the electioneering campaign impacted the 2023 presidential election in Edo state. 10.6% of 154 of respondents strongly disagreed 19.4% of 120 of respondents disagreed that the different strategies adopted e.g. political slogans and propaganda during the electioneering campaign impacted the 2023 presidential election.18.6% were undecided. 34.2 % and 17.2% strongly agreed that the different strategies adopted during the electioneering campaign impacted the election.

Testing of Hypothesis

In testing the relationship between party politics and electioneering campaign question one was utilized.

Question One

That choice of language impacted the 2023 presidential election in Edo state.

Statement of Hypothesis

H01: There is no relationship between political party politics and electioneering campaign.

H-R1: There is a relationship between political party politics and electioneering campaign.

Table 4: Regression analysis between political party politics and electioneering campaign.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
1	.848a	.719	.718	.000b

Regression is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4 showed that there was a positive relationship (Pearson R = 0.848) between the party politics and electioneering campaign, where p-value (Sig. = 0.000) is less than 0.01, this means that the research hypothesis is been accepted which stated that there is a relationship between the between party politics and electioneering campaign and the null hypothesis is rejected which stated that there is no relationship between party politics and electioneering campaign. Therefore there is a clear evidence to reject the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant and positive relationship between political party politics and electioneering campaign leading to the overwhelming victory in the 2023 presidential election in Edo state by the Labour Party (LP) having the majority votes against the other political parties of the people's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Peoples Congress (APC) among others.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Pearson's r of = 0.848 at α 0.01 showed a high positive relationship between party politics and electioneering, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis which stated that there is no relationship between the party politics and electioneering campaign. The findings concerning party politics and electioneering campaign vis a vis impacting the election a causative factor in impacting the 2023 presidential election has a direct replica in (Feyipitan, 2015), "the ultimate goal of almost every electioneering campaign is to win election and to offer promises to the people in order to secure votes in return".

This is further accentuated in the Assessment of the Role of Citizens Participation in the Electoral Process in Nigeria: A Study of the 2016 Governorship Election in Edo state which had posited that the political stability and development of any political system is a function of the awareness and positive involvement of the citizens in civic and political matters (Mustapha and Ebomoyi 2017).

Also added to the above facts (Olaniyi 2017) is of the view that Party politics are activities of political parties in a democratic environment to seek for the control of political offices through stated norms of elections. Such norms of good conduct by the political aspirants / electorate was completely ignored neither was Sections 95, 96, 99, 100 - 102 of the 2010 Electoral Law which provided for decent electoral campaign devoid of bad language Oni (2017) was evidently absent in the 2023 president election.

As they were more concerned with the desperation of winning the election, this fact is further given credence to by what the concept of what political party is, as organizations' whose members have values, ideals and aspirations in common and at Least participates in the organized contest/struggles for political power. Coleman & Roseberg (cited in Smith 1996). This is further supported by the theory adopted in this work the Choice Theory, the Rational Action Theory or the Theory of Reasoned Action. It is "a popular theory that is used to explain the actions of voters as well as politicians Edwards III (2002).

CONCLUSION

Electioneering campaigns are important attributes for democracy. In Nigeria, the context of politics and electoral competition for power have necessitated all kinds of undemocratic, extra-legal and unbecoming abuses of the legal framework governing political party activities. One of the difficult circumstances created by the pattern of political party politics in Nigeria is the betrayal of the very basis of the campaign as a process of interest articulation and aggregation (Gambo and Ribadu 2017)

It can justly be concluded from the research so far that political party politics pre-dominates as well as determine the electioneering campaign arena in Edo State politic. And the activity of the politicians cannot be over emphasized in this regard. This role is further worsened by the choice of language used by Politician's that are clouded in the political expediency of ethnicity, religion and sectional appeals. Baseless campaign promises made by them not only create fear and apprehension about the future of democracy in the country.

But also expressing the difficult circumstances in which the democratic process is conditioned as expressly manifested in political debates/interview that proved as a major causative factors that have impacted the 2023 presidential election in Edo State. Political education is therefore highly required to empower and to educate the uninformed electorates on how to determine who to vote, campaign for and why. Not until this is done with other issues mentioned in the discussion of electioneering campaign are addressed and translated into policy action by relevant agencies or authorities ethnic politics, vote buying and personality attacks will continue to dominate electioneering environment in Nigeria.

It is however, good to be said that voters were able to vote their conscience {rather than engaging in vote selling that has predominated elections in the past} irrespective of the content and manner or pattern of campaigns. But the sustainability of this paradigm shift will be determined by the upcoming and subsequent elections in the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were reached:

1. Political candidates as well as party members should be more concerned with the business of persuading electorates for their votes rather than mislead them with enticing words or making hate speeches capable of disrupting the electoral process and causing disenchantment among the electorates.
2. Political aspirants should communicate their political agenda without the use of force, destructive tendencies and unhealthy rivalries between party members and the electorates.
3. There is the need also for inter-party dialogue that can create for routines confidence among party members and party members and electorates.

4. The government on the other hand, should further strengthen the legal pathways in the Electoral Acts that regulates the affairs of political party campaign activities. The implication of this is that it will create for a healthy campaign and political arena for good governance.

5. They need to be re-engineered and re-focused from their mere role of being mainly institutions for the acquisition of political power through elections.

Finally, electorates should endeavor to exercise their political rights without fear or favor. As this in the long will help to develop and build upon their confidences and truth in the electoral processes.

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EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PENSION SCHEMES IN MEETING THE HEALTHCARE NEEDS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT RETIREES IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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KEY WORDS

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.

ABSTRACT

The original purpose of pension schemes was to ensure retirees basic needs are met. However, many individuals rely on their children for support in old age, rather than saving, which can lead to financial insecurity and limited wellbeing in retirement, especially when children face economic challenges. Therefore, this study evaluates the effectiveness of pension schemes in meeting the healthcare needs of local government retirees in Benin City. The specific objective to examine the effect of the pension scheme on the health care needs of Local Government retirees in Benin City. The cross-sectional study design was adopted to collect data from 332 local government retirees with the aid of semi-structured questionnaire. Data were analysed with tables, percentages, charts; and formulated hypotheses were tested with the chi-square inferential statistical technique. It was also found that there is a statistical significant relationship between pension scheme and the health care needs of local government retirees (p -value = 0.00 < 0.05). This study results indicate that local government retirees are largely responsible for their own healthcare, as pension schemes lack provisions for healthcare delivery. Therefore, stakeholders designing pension schemes must prioritize the well-being of local government retirees by ensuring timely and regular pension payments, providing subsidized medical services and establishing comprehensive healthcare support systems. This will enable retirees to enjoy a comfortable and secure post-retirement life.

INTRODUCTION

Retirement marks a significant transition in an individual's life, and access to quality healthcare is crucial for maintaining physical and mental wellbeing during this stage. Old age is usually considered to be closing period of an individual's life span (Jabin, 2016). One of the most significant markers of approaching old age is retirement from work. Many look forward to retirement as a time for increased freedom; others approach it with some degree of apprehension and fear since it may symbolize bringing one's life's work to an end (Andersen & Taylor, 2000). In Nigeria old people constitute one of the poorest groups and aging constitutes a painful process attended by poor health, poverty and helplessness (Asagba, 2005). Most retirees often face challenges in accessing healthcare services due to inadequate pension schemes. Benin City, the capital of Edo State, is home to a large number of Local Government retirees who may be vulnerable to healthcare disparities. Despite the presence of various pension schemes, many retirees in Benin City struggle to access quality healthcare services, leading to poor health outcomes and reduced quality of life.

Pension scheme is a type of retirement plan that provides a steady income stream to individuals after they retire from their employment. It is a financial arrangement that allows individuals to save for their retirement while they are still working, and receive a regular income after they retire. Pensions is a form of social security against old-age poverty and other uncertainties that have attracted great interest virtually everywhere in the world, both in developed and developing Nations (Idowu & Olanike, 2009).

Nigeria's pension system has undergone significant reforms in recent years, however, the effectiveness of this scheme in meeting the healthcare needs of retirees remains a subject of debate. Local Government retirees, in particular, face unique challenges due to their limited financial resources and restricted access to healthcare services. They often face challenges in accessing quality healthcare services due to inadequate pension schemes, leading to poor health outcomes and reduced quality of life. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of pension schemes in meeting the healthcare needs of Local Government retirees in Benin City, with a view to identifying areas for improvement and informing policy decisions

OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY

To examine the effect of the pension scheme on the health care needs of Local Government retirees in Benin City.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the effects of the pension scheme on the health care needs of Local Government retirees in Benin City?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

There is no relationship between pension scheme and the health care needs of local government retirees in Benin City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This article examines the effectiveness of pension schemes in meeting the healthcare needs of local government retirees in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The study explores various concepts, including pension scheme, retirement, healthcare needs etc.

Pensions help prevent old-age poverty by maintaining living standards and covering daily expenses. Nigeria needs effective social security programs to protect vulnerable citizens, as lack of support can lead to social vices and elder abuse. The elderly, who have contributed significantly to the nation, have been neglected by successive governments, but proposed bills like the National Centre for the Elderly Persons Bill and Social Security Bill may bring positive change (Eze, 2016).

Pension is the periodic payment granted to an employee for services rendered, based on contractual legal enforceable agreement, paid by an employer at the agree time of termination of appointment (Iwu, 2007). The different types of pensions are defined benefit plans, contributory schemes, defined contribution plans and Personal pension.

Nigeria's pension scheme has evolved over the years. The British colonial administration introduced the Pension Ordinance, applicable only to UK officials in Nigeria in 1951, the National Provident Fund (NPF) was established to provide retirement benefits for Nigerian citizens in 1961, the Pension Decrees nos.102 and 103 were enacted to regulate pension schemes in 1979, the National Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) Decree no.73 was established to replace the NPF in 1993, in 2004 the Defined Contributory Pension Scheme was introduced through the Pension Reform Act (effective July 1, 2004) and in 2014 the Pension Reform Act was amended to establish the Uniform Contributory Pension Scheme (effective July 1, 2014). Features of the 2014 Act includes: mandatory contributions for employers with 15 or more employees, minimum contribution rate of 18% of monthly emoluments (8% by employee, 10% by employer), private management by Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) and Custodians (PFCs), etc.

The National Pension Commission (PENCOM), saddled with the responsibility of regulating the activities of the Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) and Pension Fund Custodians (PFCs) lacks the regulatory capacity to check the excesses of the PFAs and PFCs, as Herskovit (2007) observed that with the level of corruption in the

country, it is doubtful that one regulatory body like PENCOM could check fraud by PFAs and PFCs. Oyedele, (2013) stated that though the reform has brought some improvements, but individuals who worked in the informal sector remain at the mercy of their children or other good Samaritans.

Studies have shown that terminal illness has a great impact on the economic well-being of elderly people. Most of them lost their savings accrued over a long period due to long term illnesses. Rowland (2011) stated that the need for retirees access to good health is very essential to their wellbeing.

The study conducted by Idris, Ibrahim, Sufiyan and Oladipo (2012) examined health problems and patterns of care for elderly people in the Richifa community, a rural settlement in the Soba local government area of Kaduna state, northwest Nigeria. The study Population was 7713, eligible elderly people (aged 65 years or older) were 118, interviewed participants was 94 (response rate of 80%) with 75 Men and 19 Women. They concluded that most elderly people in Richifa community had poor vision, poor health-seeking behaviour, and depended mainly on their children as caregivers. The study sheds light on the health challenges faced by elderly individuals in rural Nigeria and highlights the importance of addressing their specific needs.

In the same vain Odaman and Ibiezugbe (2014) conducted a study on the health seeking behavior of the elderly in Edo Central, Edo State, Nigeria, their study revealed where the elderly goes to seek medical care when sick, and those financially responsible for his/her medical needs. They concluded that the health care of the elderly must not be left alone for the less endowed children and few relatives of the elderly. They recommended that elderly people should be provided free, accessible and comprehensive health care in hospitals and health centers because they would utilize the health services when available, accessible and affordable.

Healthy ageing means that the young and the adults advance towards old age in good health bereft of physical difficulties and diseases, continues to enjoy living, and contributes to the happiness of others. Attaining this would enhance the health needs of the elderly (Ezema, Richard, Ifeanyi and Ugwuanyi, 2014).

Shofoyeke and Amosun (2014) conducted a study on care and support for elderly people in Nigeria, surveying 684 education administrators across 4 geopolitical zones (Bayelsa, Imo, Kogi, and Lagos). Their findings include: unique living patterns among elderly individuals, with some living alone or with relatives, and few aged care homes due to cultural norms and lack of facilities, widespread poverty among the elderly, and inadequate support and care from children, relatives, and the government. They recommended that existing population policy be reviewed to comprehensively address issues relating to elderly people's welfare, that the national assembly should sponsor and approve legislation mandating governments at all tiers to implement social security and welfare programmes for the elderly, programs such as monthly allowances, free medical services, accommodation, food, and recreational facilities. Also, there is need to encourage civil society, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) to create or increase welfare programmes for the elderly. There is need for the

re-evaluation of cultural traditions to preserve beneficial practices and eliminate harmful ones.

In order to ensure better quality of living for elderly people, government and political leaders need to evolve strategies that will promote the role of families and other informal support providers and participation of elders in local institutions for self-help, mutual assistance and outreach to others in their communities. Idris, et al (2012) recommended the need for the involvement of the local government in the care of elderly people through prompt payment of pensions to those who are retired and prompt monthly payment of welfare grants by the state government to those who are not the beneficiary of a pension. Also needed is the establishment of institutional homes for elderly people by the Federal government, especially for those elderly people who lack family support for survival and social care.

Retirement benefits to retirees will aid the retirees to sustain themselves when they are out of job or too old to work. This accounts for the importance government everywhere attaches to retirement benefits; at least to cater for the welfare of their retirees, who had spent the productive part of their life working for the growth and development of the country.

METHODOLOGY

The cross-sectional study design was adopted; this was based on number of contact and the study population. This design was useful in obtaining an overall picture as it stands at the time of the study. Survey method was adopted for data collection thus making this research work a cross-sectional survey that involve the collection of data at a single point in time from a sample drawn from the target population.

STUDY AREA

Benin City, located in the south-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria, is the capital of Edo State. The Local Government Staff Pension Board, responsible for local government retirees in Edo State, is situated here. Edo State was created in 1991 from the split of Bendel State. Historically, Benin City, formerly known as Ubinu, was renamed by the Portuguese in the 15th century. It was a significant destination for European explorers and is known for its rich cultural heritage, including bronze casting.

Geographically, Benin City is approximately 40 km north of the Benin River and 320 km east of Lagos. It lies at coordinates 6.3382° N latitude and 5.6258° E longitude. The city had an estimated population of 1,147,188 as of the 2006 census, with a population density of about 870 people per square kilometer. The median age is around 22.4 years, and the indigenous people are the Edo (Bini).

Benin City is a hub for Nigeria's rubber industry and processes palm nuts for oil. The study area includes the Local Government Areas of Oredo, Egor, and Ikpoba-Okha.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of this study was the total number of Local Government staff retirees in Oredo, Egor and Ikpoba-Okha that are

in the Local Government Staff Pension Board payroll as at April, 2016 {this article is built upon foundational research that was conducted in 2016, using the original data allows for a consistent and comparable analysis}. The total number of retirees in Oredo, Egor and Ikpoba-Okha as at April, 2016 were 1450, 532 and 408 respectively (Local Government Staff Pension Board, 2016). This formed the target population. The population of this study was 2390 Local Government staff pensioners from the three Local Government Area in Benin City.

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING DESIGN

The sample size of this research work was drawn from the sampling frame which includes total number (2390) of Local Government staff pensioners in the Local Government that are in Benin City.

Population size 2390, the sample size was 332, this was obtained by using a margin error of 4.99% and a confidence level 95% (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). 332 structured questionnaires were administered in the three Local Government Areas.

Table 1: Sample Frame

S/N	LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	QUESTIONNAIRES	PERCENTAGE
1	Oredo	200	60.6% of 1450
2	Egor	74	22.3% of 532
3	Ikpoba-Okha	58	17.1% of 408
	Total	332	100%

Source: researcher's compilation, 2024

The study had a total sample size of 332, drawn from 3 Local Governments in Nigeria: Oredo (200), Egor (74), and Ikpoba-Okha (58). Convenience sampling was used to collect data from readily available participants, specifically Local Government staff pensioners who attend monthly union meetings. This method was chosen due to the ease of access to the study population through these meetings.

INSTRUMENT OF DATA COLLECTION

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, consisting of two sections: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and impact of pension scheme on local government retirees' wellbeing. The questionnaire was hand-administered to respondents and designed to elicit responses that align with the research objectives.

Method Of Data Collection

This research work made use of two sources of data collection (primary and secondary data). The main source of data collection was the primary method of data collection through the questionnaire (quantitative method of data collection). The secondary data was used in sourcing for literature related to the study from journals of social sciences, pension board archives, online articles and materials etc.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The method of data analysis that was adopted was in line with relevant sociological research statistics. Data were presented in tabular form; variables were generated which were analyzed using frequency and percentages. The chi-square inferential statistical technique was used to test the relationship between variables in the formulated hypotheses. The benchmark used for deciding significant statistical relationship or not, between variables was p-value of 0.05. The quantitative data were coded and analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This article analyzes the collected data to achieve the study's objectives, focusing on respondents' background, the pension scheme's impact on healthcare needs, and hypothesis testing results.

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequencies (n= 332)	Percentages	Cumulative Percentages
Gender			
Male	234	70.5	
Female	98	29.5	
Age Groups			
50 – 59 years	13	3.9	3.9
60 – 69 years	175	52.7	56.6
70 – 79 years	58	17.5	74.1
80 – 89 years	82	24.7	98.8
90 years and above	4	1.2	100.0
Marital Status			
Never married	17	5.1	
Married	275	82.8	
Divorced	4	1.2	
Widow/Widower	36	10.8	
Highest Educational Qualification			
University degree	146	44.0	
Diploma/NCE/A-Level	146	44.0	
Secondary school certificate	16	4.8	
Primary school certificate	16	4.8	
None	8	2.4	
Religion			
Christianity	319	96.1	
Islam	5	1.5	
African Traditional Religion	4	1.2	
Others	4	1.2	
Level at Retirement			
Senior staff	296	89.2	
Junior staff	32	9.6	
Contract staff	4	1.2	

Source: field survey, 2024

Among the respondents of this study, there were more males than females, as the male respondents were in the majority with 70.5 percent, and the females were 29.5 percent (Table 2). Reasons for the preponderance of male over female among the local government

retirees who constituted the population of the study could be attributed to the fact that during the era which these persons got employed into the local government service males were then highly regarded as the bread winners of their families hence more males were seeking for employment over thirty years ago in Nigeria. An implication of this finding in which males constituted the majority of retirees, is that the number of families or homes affected, positively or adversely, by the pension scheme will be more, since most families in Nigeria still depend on the male parent as major bread winners.

Table 2 reveals that the majority of respondents (52.7%) fell within the 60-69 age range, followed by those in the 80-89 age range (24.7%). The 90 years and above age group had the smallest representation, with only 1.2% of respondents. Notably, a significant majority (70.2%) of respondents were between 60 and 79 years old, reflecting the local government service's retirement age. This highlights the need for a viable pension, as majority of retirees are elderly and physically weaker, relying on it for survival.

EFFECT OF THE PENSION SCHEME ON THE HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT RETIREES

Studies have shown that terminal illness has a great impact on the economic well-being of elderly people. Most of them lost their savings accrued over a long period due to long term illnesses. The need for retirees' access to good health is very essential to their wellbeing; life will be extended and death postponed, the retirees (elderly) will live longer (Rowland, 2011). Old age is respected and seen as a treasure though healthy old age have not been attained in Nigeria because several health-related variables such as inadequate health facilities, poor environmental health conditions, growing increase in preventable diseases among others contribute in many ways in the low life expectancy and unhealthy ageing (Nweke 2015). Good health means that people remained healthy, have free access to effective and efficient health care, better nutrition, improved living conditions, useful health information and absence of avoidable premature deaths. For retirees, healthy ageing means that the young and the adults advance towards old age in good health bereft of physical difficulties and diseases, continues to enjoy living, and contributes to the happiness of others. Attaining this would enhance the health needs of the elderly (Ezema, et al 2014).

Table 3: Perception of direct effect of pension on health

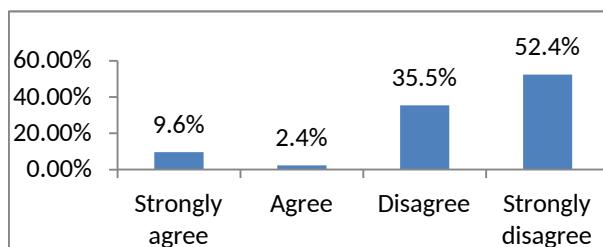
Variables	Frequencies (n= 332)	Percentages
Retirees enjoy free health care through the pension scheme		
Strongly agree	32	9.6
Agree	8	2.4
Disagree	118	35.5
Strongly disagree	174	52.4
Total	332	100.0
Pension fund is sufficient in the		

payment of your medical bills		
Agree	4	1.2
Neutral	12	3.6
Disagree	151	45.5
Strongly disagree	165	49.7
Total	332	100.0

Source: field survey, 2024

Perceptions of whether retirees enjoy free health care lack uniformity among observers and stakeholders. This study thus attempted to obtain the true state of things regarding this perception and from the retirees themselves. Accordingly, Table 3 shows that with 35.5 percent simple disagreement and 52.4 percent of strong disagreement, a majority of the respondents were of the perception that retirees did not enjoy free health care through the pension schemes. However, a cumulative percentage of 12 percent of the respondents admitted that retirees enjoyed free health care through pension scheme. This result reveals that local government retirees are on their own in terms of caring for themselves health wise. Also, the result indicates that pension do not have provisions for health care delivery.

Figure 1: Bar chart showing responses on the perception that retirees enjoy free health care through the pension scheme



It shows that from table 3, retirees were not enjoying free health care. It therefore follows that retirees pay for their medical bills themselves. This then engendered the need to ascertain if the monthly pension sum retirees receive is adequate to cover their medical expenses. Along this line of contingency, it was found that respondents in their majority (cumulatively 95.2%) did not subscribe to the notion that monthly pension was sufficient in the payment of retirees' medical bills (Table 3 and Figure 1). Nevertheless, a cumulative 4.8 percent of the respondent were in agreement that monthly pension was sufficient in the payment of their medical bills. These responses imply that the local government retirees are having a hard time covering their medical bills; and it also denotes that they are not getting adequate medical care as obtaining such is quite expensive and way out of their reach.

Table 4 Perception of direct effect of pension on health

Variables	Frequencies (n= 332)	Percentages
Level of satisfaction with access to health services		
Very satisfied	4	1.2
Satisfied	18	5.4
Dispassionate	91	27.4
Dissatisfied	88	26.5
Very dissatisfied	131	39.5
Total	332	100.0
Retirees are able to get around for their medical treatment		
Strongly agree	13	3.9
Agree	33	9.9
Neutral	33	9.9
Disagree	118	35.5
Strongly disagree	135	40.7
Total	332	100.0

Source: field survey, 2024

As a foundational information through a finding of this present study, local government retirees were not having monthly pension that was adequate for their medical expenses. Nevertheless, they still access health services. How satisfied they are with this, required empirical evidence. In view of that, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their access to health services. Deducing from the responses as indicated in Table 4 all forms of dissatisfactions were expressed by cumulative percent of 66 percent and a majority of the respondents in relation to the level of their satisfaction with access to health services. Respondents with all forms of satisfaction with their access to health services were 6.6 percent. Also, 27.4 percent of the respondents were dispassionate about their rating of their level of satisfaction with access to health services. This finding points to the fact that local government employees are not empowered to getting adequate and quality medical service given their retirement status.

Moreover, whether retirees were able to get around for their medical treatment was examined. As such Table 4 indicates that a majority of the respondents were in opposition to the notion that retirees were able to get around for their medical treatment. However, a cumulative 13.8 percent of the respondents were in support of the perception that retirees were able to get around for their medical treatment. Also, 9.9 percent of the respondents were undecided on the notion that retirees were able to get around for their medical treatment. A deduction of this finding is that local government retirees are not finding it easy to access medical treatment on their own. This finding corresponds with the report of Odaman and Ibiezugbe (2014) who conducted a study on the health seeking behavior of the elderly in Edo Central, Edo State, Nigeria; their study revealed that when the elderly are sick, they usually contact their children or relatives for assistant; and they usually do not respond satisfactorily.

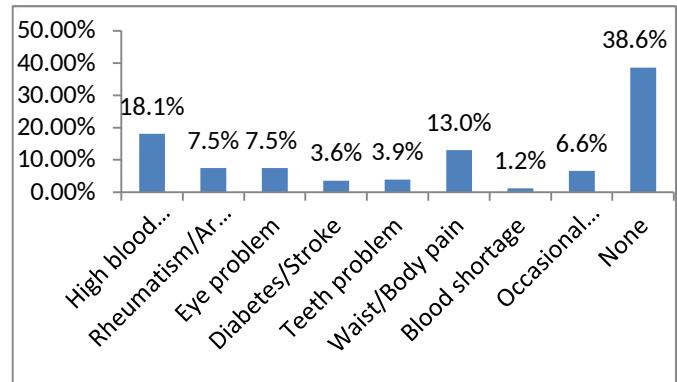
Table 5: Common ailments of retirees

Variable	Frequencies (n= 332)	Percentages
Most common health related problems		
High blood pressure	60	18.1
Rheumatism/Arthritis	25	7.5
Eye problem	25	7.5
Diabetes/Stroke	12	3.6
Teeth problem	13	3.9
Waist/Body pain	43	13.0
Blood shortage	4	1.2
Occasional fever/Headache	22	6.6
None	128	38.6
Total	332	100.0

Source: field survey, 2024

An overwhelming majority of retirees are above 60 years of age; hence it could be concluded that retirement comes with being elderly. Given the fact that retirees face enormous challenges in accessing quality health care, it was essential that the common ailment they experience be identified. In this wise data was collected. Top on the list of ailments respondents submitted (their most common sickness) was high blood pressure as attested to by 18.1 percent of the respondents. This was followed by waist/ body pain with 13 percent of the respondents opted for it. Eye problem, and rheumatism/arthritis were separately submitted as the most common problem respondents experienced as admitted to by 7.5 percent for each ailment, by the respondents. Occasional fever/headache was the most common ailment that 6.6 percent of the respondents claimed. That diabetes/stroke was their most common sickness was the position of 3.6 percent of the respondents; while another 3.9 percent of the respondents admitted that teeth problem was their most common ailment (Table 5 and Figure 2). A very few of the respondents, that is 1.2 percent, affirmed that their most common health challenge was blood shortage. However, 38.6 percent of the respondents affirmed that they did not have any form of recurring health challenge, hence they had no common ailment to identify as their most common sickness.

The aforementioned findings are in line with the study conducted by Idris, Ibrahim, Sufiyan and Oladipo (2012) who examined health problems and pattern of care for elderly people in rural Nigeria by attempting to identify common health problems of elderly people in Richifa community. They concluded that most elderly people in Richifa community had poor vision.

Figure 2: Bar chart showing responses on the most common health related problem**Table 6** Meeting health care needs

Variable	Frequencies (n= 332)	Percentages
Retirees have challenges in meeting their health care needs		
Strongly agree	158	47.6
Agree	94	28.3
Neutral	13	3.9
Disagree	24	7.2
Strongly disagree	43	13.0
Total	332	100.0

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 6 shows that a majority (47.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they had challenges in meeting their health care needs; while 28.3 percent simply agreed to this perception. Nonetheless, 7.2 percent disagreed with the perception that retirees had challenges in meeting their health care needs; and 13 percent of them strongly disagreed with the perception. Besides, 3.9 percent of the respondents were undecided regarding the notion that retirees have challenges in meeting their health care needs. This finding conforms with findings of Idris, Ibrahim, Sufiyan and Oladipo (2012) that elderly people had poor health-seeking behaviour, and depended mainly on their children as caregivers due to the challenges they encountered in meeting their health care needs.

Retirees experience various challenges in accessing healthcare and meeting their medical needs, despite receiving a pension. Overall, majority of the retirees agree that they face challenges in meeting their healthcare needs.

CONCLUSION

This study found that Local Government retirees in Benin City, Edo State face significant challenges in meeting their healthcare needs due to the following: inadequate pension provisions for healthcare, high medical expenses, reliance on children as caregivers etc. As a result, retirees experience difficulty covering medical bills and experience limited access to quality medical care. The study further highlighted the need for improved pension provisions and healthcare support for Local Government retirees in Benin City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion which evolved from the findings, the following recommendations are made:

All concerned stakeholders should put adequate preparation in place so as to ensure prompt gratuity payment to local government retirees to enable them to execute investment plans and enhance their financial well-being.

To ensure seamless pension administration, the Local Government Staff Pension Board should adopt the 2014 Pension Reform Act, which introduces the Uniform Contributory Pension Scheme. This scheme requires joint contributions from employees and employers during their service years. Furthermore, a specialized Pension Fund Administrator and a trustworthy Pension Fund Custodian should be appointed to manage the funds and guarantee timely pension payments to retirees.

Legislation(s) should be enacted that entitles retirees to access subsided or if feasible free medical care from government owned hospital.

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MACHINE LEARNING ALGORITHM PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT IN STOCK PREDICTION WITH ADAPTED NONNEGATIVE DISCRIMINATIVE FEATURE SELECTION (NDFS)

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KEY WORDS

Fundamental information, technical information, Feature selection, Spectral analysis, Laplacian graph
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ABSTRACT

Feature selection algorithms lie at the heart of machine learning, playing a crucial role in identifying and prioritizing essential attributes within datasets. By refining sample attributes, these algorithms aim to elevate classification performance and pinpoint the most relevant features associated with distinct data classes. The primary objective is to optimize classification and prediction by selecting features based on their effectiveness. This study introduces a novel feature selection algorithm, Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection (NDFS), incorporating spectral analysis and multi-variate regression into stock price trend prediction. The chosen characteristics using NDFS are evaluated for classification prowess with three different classifiers. Furthermore, the performance of NDFS is benchmarked against three feature selection algorithms from existing literature. The findings indicate that NDFS emerges as a competitive technique capable of improving the efficiency of machine learning algorithms, particularly in stock price trend prediction. The adopted feature selection method performed well, achieving an accuracy of 85% in the Naïve Bayes model and an F1-score of 83%, indicating a balanced measure of precision and recall. The receiver operating characteristics curve reveals an optimal model with performance surpassing 80% when utilizing features selected by Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection.

INTRODUCTION

Stock market data has been characterized by researchers as chaotic and highly stochastic, leading to a significant level of uncertainty and making accurate stock price forecasts challenging (Aleyani, Tang, & Liu, 2019). Despite substantial progress in prediction and trend forecasting within this field by statisticians and computer scientists, achieving consistent accuracy remains difficult. The availability of powerful computing resources and machine learning algorithms has facilitated advancements, yet the unpredictable nature of the stock market persists (Sachdeva, et al, 2019). To address this challenge, this study aims to identify optimal features for stock trend classification through an effective feature selection technique (Xia, 2018). Acknowledging the market's erratic and unstable nature, the research leverages historical stock data,

recognizing the hidden correlations. Raw historical data, including opening/closing prices, low/high prices, volume, and occasionally adjusted closing prices, form the basis. However, the accuracy of categorization and forecasting using raw data is limited to machine learning algorithms adept at interpreting time series data (Zheng, et al, 2020).

To overcome these limitations and enhance accuracy, the study introduces feature engineering, wherein various functions are applied to the raw historical data to unveil concealed relationships and patterns. Enhancing predictive performance is achieved by reducing feature dimensions through feature selection, thereby reducing calculation time and addressing overfitting concerns in classification problems (Hartman, & Hlinka, 2018). Predicting stock price movements is inherently challenging due to the non-linear and

highly erratic nature of stock data. Feature engineering for stock prediction is widespread, but not all features are equally crucial. The goal of this study is to develop a novel feature selection algorithm that combines filter and embedded selection approaches to derive a feature subset, ultimately improving stock trend prediction accuracy. The current challenge lies in determining the most effective feature combination within a stock dataset. Numerous researchers have explored aspects of this issue, designing new features and employing diverse feature selection techniques. Some have focused on constructing subsets from available features to optimize predictive performance. Additionally, efforts have been made to enhance machine learning algorithms through ensemble approaches and different types of neural network models (Devi, & Seelammal, 2018). The collective aim is to identify a set of features that best contribute to accurate stock trend prediction (Alsubaie, Hindi, El, & Alsalmam, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The domain of stock price prediction captivates both social scientists and information scientists due to its intrinsic associations across various data categories. Fundamental data, comprising financial ratios and declared assets from annual or quarterly financial statements, constitutes the first type of structured data in stock market research. The second category, technical information, involves analyzing market behavior and is considered by technical analysts as already integrated into demand and supply curves, reflecting traders' sentiments. Technical indicators, formed from past prices, capture recurring price patterns (Devi, & Seelammal, 2018). Numerous studies emphasize the role of effective feature selection algorithms in enhancing the accuracy of stock market price trend forecasts (Hu, et al, 2020). Over time, researchers have explored feature selection techniques from filter, wrapper, and embedding methods. This study delves into various feature selection methods, aiming to identify features for stock market price trend prediction using a novel algorithm specific to stock price prediction.

A comprehensive overview of state-of-art feature selection techniques including mathematical formulas and fundamental algorithms to facilitate understanding was done by Amir Moslemi in 2023. This survey includes different approaches to variable selection which can be grouped into five domains: A) information theory which covers multi-label neighborhood entropy, symmetrical uncertainty, Monte Carlo and Markov blanket, B) sparse representation learning which includes compressed sensing and dictionary learning, C) subspace learning which involves matrix factorization and matrix projection, D) reinforcement learning techniques and E) evolutionary computational algorithms including Genetic algorithm (GA), particle swarm optimization (PSO), Ant colony (AC) and Grey wolf optimization (GWO). This survey helped us in this study to gain valuable insight and to acquire a deep understanding of feature selection techniques.

A related investigation in the domain of unsupervised classification was done by Jundong L. et al in 2019. They studied how to harness the tie-strength information embedded in the information network structure to facilitate the selection of relevant attributes belonging to different nodes. They adopted a principled unsupervised feature selection framework ADAPT to find informative features that can

be used to regenerate the observed links and further characterize the adaptive neighborhood structure of the network. An effective optimization algorithm for the adopted ADAPT framework was also presented in the work. Experiments were performed on several real-world attributed networks and the results proved the superiority of the adopted ADAPT framework.

In the study done in the renewable energy domain, by Malakar, et al (2021, a special combination of deep-learning-based sequence model Bidirectional Gated Recurrent Unit (BGRU) with a new augmented and bidirectional feature representation was used for the first time in the solar energy domain to capture the complex weather conditions which lead to uncertainty in photovoltaic (PV) systems which often complicates solar energy prediction. The used BGRU network which proved to be more generalized as it can handle unequal lengths of forward and backward context, produced 59.21%, 37.47%, and 76.80% better prediction accuracy compared to traditional sequence-based, bidirectional models, and some of the established states-of-the-art models. The result of this study validates our concept and adopted work.

In a bid to achieve a balance between speed and accuracy. Garcia-Ramirez, I.-A. et al constructed a framework that consists of a novel combination of Approximated and Simulate Annealing versions of the Maximal Information Coefficient (MIC) to generalize the simple linear relation between features for the selection of relevant features in supervised datasets based on a cascade of methods where speed and precision are in mind. This process is performed in a series of steps by applying the MIC algorithms and cutoff strategies to remove irrelevant and redundant features to achieve balance between accuracy and speed. The adopted framework was tested in a series of experiments conducted on a large set of datasets from SPECTF Heart to Sonar data. The results show the balance of accuracy and speed that the adopted framework can achieve. This study also supports our effort to adopt an existing algorithm in the new domain because algorithms are mostly constructed to meet certain objectives and for specific domains.

In this study, the authors used the clustering part of Nonnegative discriminative feature selection, our adopted algorithm to handle the often redundant and noisy high-dimensional features in many image processing and pattern recognition problems. A novel unsupervised feature selection scheme, namely, nonnegative spectral analysis with constrained redundancy, by jointly leveraging nonnegative spectral clustering and redundancy analysis was adopted. The adopted method can directly identify a discriminative subset of the most useful and redundancy-constrained features. Nonnegative spectral analysis is developed to learn more accurate cluster labels of the input images, during which the feature selection is performed simultaneously. The joint learning of the cluster labels and feature selection matrix enables the algorithm to select the most discriminative features. Row-wise sparse models with a general ℓ_2 , p -norm ($0 < p \leq 1$) are leveraged to make the adopted model suitable for feature selection and robust to noise. Extensive experiments on nine diverse image benchmarks, including face data, handwritten digit data, and object image data showed that the adopted method achieves encouraging experimental results relative to several representative algorithms. This algorithm was specifically constructed for this kind of data. Our study deploys the algorithm in

a completely new domain with the inclusion of multivariate regression to further reduce the dimensionality of the feature space

The quest for a feature selection method contributing to heightened accuracy in stock market prediction has driven extensive experimentation with algorithms in the filter, embedded, and wrapper categories. Notably, wrapper algorithms exhibit low convergence rates, susceptibility to local optima, and reliance on machine learning algorithms for feature selection (Li, Du, & Nian, 2014). This study introduces a novel filter category feature selection algorithm previously unexplored in the stock market. For the first time, it will be compared with algorithms in the filter and embedded categories, to discover a new feature selection algorithm in the stock market domain that can significantly enhance prediction accuracy.

The Adopted Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection (NDFS)

This work introduces a feature selection approach for unsupervised learning, termed Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection (NDFS), based on spectral analysis. Utilizing cluster indicator labels derived from the intrinsic structure of stock data, NDFS identifies relevant features within the dataset. Spectral analysis-driven feature selection has found application in various domains, including image and microarray datasets. Experimental results indicate that features chosen by the NDFS algorithm enhance prediction performance compared to similar algorithms (Li, et al, 2012).

NDFS employs a constructed Laplacian graph in spectral analysis and a robust multivariate regression method to select pertinent features. The L_{2,1}-norm regularized spectral regression model's sparse solution helps to reduce the selection of irrelevant features that could lead to overfitting in prediction tasks (Shi, & Liu, 2014). In the NDFS algorithm mechanism, spectral analysis learns cluster labels that effectively describe class labels, guiding the construction of the feature selection matrix. This process identifies features most relevant to class labels through a linear transformation between features and labels. The subsequent section employs specific notations to express mathematical aspects of the Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection model, supported by the following assumptions for clarity.

Let $X \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times m}$ denote the data matrix from a dataset of n number of samples and m number of features in which $x \in \mathbb{R}^d$ is the feature descriptor of the i -th sample. Suppose these n samples are sampled from c classes;

$$Y = [y_1, \dots, y_n]^T \in \{0, 1\}^{n \times c} \quad (1)$$

where $y_i \in \{0, 1\}^{c \times 1}$ is the cluster indicator vector for x_i (Li et al., 2012), which approximates the scaled cluster indicator matrix F defined as

$$F = [F_1, \dots, F_n]^T = Y(Y^T Y)^{-1/2} \quad (2)$$

where F_i is the scaled cluster indicator of x_i . and is the target or classes of the data sample (Li et al., 2012). The algorithm presented concurrently learns the scaled cluster indicator matrix and the feature selection matrix. The steps are as follows: First, the sample

similarity matrix is established from dataset sample pairs utilizing the Gaussian radial basis (RBF) kernel function, a widely-used similarity measurement, particularly when class information is absent in the relation (Zhao & Liu, 2017).

$$S_{ij} = \exp(-\|x_i - x_j\|/2\delta^2) \quad (3)$$

This pairwise sample similarity is extensively employed in both supervised and unsupervised learning to characterize relationships among samples. Its utility extends to accurately portraying cluster affiliations or class affiliations within the sample set. In the sample similarity relation mentioned earlier $\exp(\cdot)$ is the exponential function, and δ is the parameter for controlling the width of the region of similarity. When the value is large, even points farther apart can be deemed similar, whereas a small value implies that points must be near to be considered similar. In this context, the objective is to guarantee that samples within the same cluster exhibit a large similarity value, while samples from different clusters possess a small similarity value.

LAPLACIAN GRAPH

Following the feature selection method, the subsequent step involves creating a Laplacian matrix derived from the similarity matrix. This Laplacian matrix is pivotal in generating eigenvectors, renowned for their remarkable properties that ensure consistency in spectral clustering (Zhao, & Liu, 2012). The spectrum of the Laplacian matrix provides insights into the structural information of the graph from which it originated and facilitates the assessment of feature relevance in spectral feature selection.

Multivariate Formulation for Spectral Feature Selection.

In Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection (NDFS), a spectral clustering criterion represented by $J(\hat{Y})$ is jointly optimized with the multivariate L_{2,1} regression model of a feature selection matrix of the given sample data to obtain the objective function for Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection (NDFS). The joint optimization relation is given as:

$$\text{Min}(Y, W) J(\hat{Y}) + \alpha(\|X^T W - \hat{Y}\|_1 + \beta\|W\|_2) \quad (4)$$

subject to $\hat{Y} = Y(Y^T Y)^{-1/2}$ where α and β are parameters, and $J(\hat{Y})$ is the objective function of spectral analysis which can be represented as:

$$\text{MinTr}(\hat{Y}^T L \hat{Y}) \quad (5)$$

where \hat{Y} is the cluster indicator matrix and L is the Laplacian matrix constructed from the similarity matrix as shown above. The optimization in spectral analysis is addressed through the eigen-decomposition of the Laplacian matrix L . To eliminate redundant features, the L_{2,1}-norm regularization term is applied to ensure sparsity in the rows of matrix W (Li et al., 2012). The resulting sparse matrix W assesses the correlation between pseudo labels derived from the solution in the term $J(\hat{Y})$ and features from the data matrix. This joint minimization of the regression model and

L2,1-norm regularization term enhances the suitability for feature selection.

Methodology

To assess the effectiveness of the features selected by Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection (NDFS), three classification algorithms, Support Vector Machine (SVM), Naïve Bayes, and Neural Network were used to construct classification models. Additionally, two feature selection algorithms, Information Gain (from the filter category) and Recursive Feature Elimination (from the wrapper category), were used as comparative benchmarks to evaluate NDFS. The features chosen by NDFS were utilized to predict the stock dataset price trend, and the outcomes were compared with those of the selected competitors to confirm the anticipated higher prediction accuracy associated with features selected NDFS.

The prediction algorithm derives the target or class from the stock price using the following relation:

$$R_t = \frac{\text{closePrice}_t - \text{openPrice}_n}{\text{openPrice}_n} ; |C_t| = \begin{cases} 1, & R_t > 0 \\ 0, & R_t \leq 0 \end{cases}$$

Where R_t is the result from the expression for the trading day(t), C_t is the class or label for the same trading day, and closePrice_t is the close price for the trading day, for example, the first row in Table 1 (*) and openPrice_n is the first open price in a chosen number of days before the trading day. The next-day prediction will be one day before the trading day for example the second row in Table 1, the one-week prediction will be the seventh day

Table 1 Apple historical datasets

Table 1 Apple historical datasets

Date	Open	High	Low	Close	0.79	0.77	0.73	0.75	0.76	0.72	0.67	0.69
*10/25/2019	243.16	246.73	242.88	246.58								
**10/24/2019	244.51	244.8	241.81	243.58								
10/23/2019	242.1	243.24	241.22	243.18								
10/22/2019	241.16	242.2	239.62	239.96								
10/21/2019	237.52	240.99	237.32	240.51								
10/18/2019	234.59	237.58	234.29	236.41								
#10/17/2019	235.09	236.15	233.52	235.28								
10/16/2019	233.37	235.24	233.2	234.37								

Numerous studies on various feature selection algorithms have demonstrated that a successful feature selection method can significantly improve the prediction accuracy of stock market price trends (Hu, J., Li, Gao, & Zhang, 2020). This assertion is further corroborated by our work, where the accuracy and F1-score were evaluated in our experiments, as depicted in Table 2, particularly when utilizing all features without feature selection. In this study, the adopted feature selection strategy, Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection (NDFS), was assessed in terms of accuracy and F1-score, representing the harmonic mean of recall and precision values. As detailed in Table 2, the adopted feature selection method performed well, achieving an accuracy of 85% in the Naïve Bayes model and an F1-score of 83%, indicating a balanced measure of precision and recall. This balanced approach is justified by the relatively balanced nature of the stock dataset used in the experiment. The Apple dataset, with 2,458 instances, exhibits only a seven-unit difference between positive and negative outcomes, resulting in an equal weighting of precision and recall.

In comparison with selected benchmarks, our observations indicate that the adopted feature selection algorithm, Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection (NDFS), outperformed the two competitor feature selection algorithms, Information Gain and Recursive Feature Elimination, on average across the three classifiers employed.

Table 2 Accuracy, precision, recall, and f-measure from all features, and NDFS algorithm

Information Gain				Recursive Feature Elimination			
Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
0.80	0.79	0.75	0.76	0.78	0.75	0.69	0.74
0.84	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.76	0.71	0.62	0.63
0.72	0.70	0.62	0.67	0.73	0.70	0.70	0.71

Table 3: Accuracy, precision, recall, and f-measure from information gain, and NDFS recursive feature elimination algorithm

Feature Selection Algorithm	All features				NDFS			
Classification Algorithm	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
NB	0.54	0.53	0.12	0.19	0.85	0.86	0.80	0.83
SVM	0.50	0.46	0.45	0.45	0.83	0.81	0.83	0.82
NN	0.59	0.52	0.23	0.34	0.75	0.76	0.66	0.70
Average	0.54	0.50	0.26	0.32	0.81	0.81	0.76	0.78

The Receiver Operating Characteristics Area Under the Curve clearly showed that the three models—Naïve Bayes, Support Vector Machine, and Neural Network—performed well with the features selected by the three feature selection algorithms. This reinforces the existing claim by researchers that feature selection helps remove irrelevant features from datasets without incurring a loss of information, thereby improving prediction performance.

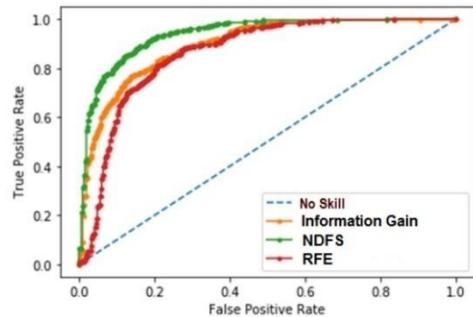


Figure 1: ROC curve for all features and selected features

Figure 1 demonstrates that including relevant and irrelevant features severely hampers model performance, to the extent that the model hardly deviates from a random estimation, indicating a lack of discernible skill or intelligence. This decline in performance is attributable to the presence of irrelevant features in the dataset. To showcase the impact of feature selection, the baseline classifier Naïve Bayes, which outperforms other classifiers in this study, was employed to illustrate the performance of a model using only selected relevant features. In Figure 1, the receiver operating characteristics curve reveals an optimal model with performance surpassing 80% when utilizing features selected by Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection, Information Gain, and Recursive Feature Elimination. Notably, Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection outperforms the two competing methods. The discernible conclusion is that feature selection significantly improves model

performance, as evidenced by the stark contrast in performance observed in Figure 1 when using all features.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we explore three feature selection methods from the filter and wrapper categories—Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection, Information Gain, and Recursive Feature Elimination—in predicting stock price trends. We introduce Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection as a novel method for feature selection in stock price prediction. Empirical results based on Apple stock data from the Nasdaq Stock Exchange indicate that our adopted method, Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection, enhances the accuracy of stock price trend prediction and outperforms selected competitors. In Figure 1, the receiver operating characteristics curve reveals an optimal model with performance surpassing 80% when utilizing features selected by Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection,

To validate the efficacy of the feature selection methods, we employed three models—Support Vector Machine, Naïve Bayes, and Neural Network—to assess their ability to select relevant features from the introduced fifty-two features with a binary class. Evaluation metrics such as accuracy, F1-Score, and the Receiver Operating Characteristics area under the curve confirmed that our adopted feature selection method surpasses the chosen competitors. As detailed in Table 2, the adopted feature selection method performed well, achieving an accuracy of 85% in the Naïve Bayes model and an F1-score of 83%, indicating a balanced measure of precision and recall. The ROC AUC metric underscores the importance of feature selection in constructing optimal models, while also revealing that a model's performance can be significantly compromised in the presence of irrelevant features in datasets.

Future work will explore the application of Nonnegative Discriminative Feature Selection in other domains, comparing its performance with other competitors, and assessing how it can enhance accuracy and return on investment through a profitable trading strategy with the adopted model.

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NEPAD AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA: PROGRESS, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS

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KEY WORDS

*NEPAD, Sustainable
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ABSTRACT

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are essential frameworks for advancing sustainable development in African nations, including Nigeria. NEPAD, initiated in 2001, seeks to tackle the continent's developmental difficulties by stimulating economic growth, alleviating poverty, enhancing infrastructure, and advocating for good governance. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations in 2015, outline a worldwide framework for attaining a more equal, inclusive, and sustainable future by 2030. This article examines Nigeria's advancements, obstacles, and potential in executing NEPAD's programs and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It evaluates Nigeria's progress in poverty alleviation, healthcare, education, infrastructure enhancement, and gender equality, while emphasizing significant obstacles such as political instability, insufficient budget, ineffective governance, and security issues. The document examines options for utilizing regional integration, technological advancement, and private sector participation to address these obstacles and expedite progress. This study seeks to elucidate Nigeria's trajectory towards sustainable development and the attainment of NEPAD and SDG targets via the analysis of these frameworks.

INTRODUCTION

NEPAD, or the New Partnership for Africa's Growth, was established as a continental initiative to boost the continent's socioeconomic development. In order to promote economic integration, reduce poverty, and foster sustainable growth through regional cooperation, NEPAD was founded in 2001. It is crucial to Nigeria's development goal, especially in view of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN, which provide a framework for addressing global concerns like poverty, inequality, environmental sustainability, and peace (Oweibia, et al 2024).

The SDGs have been successfully incorporated into national development goals in Nigeria. NEPAD's integration with Nigeria's national goals, such as Vision 2020 and the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), has led to advancements in infrastructure, governance, health, and education. The country still has a long way to go before fully accomplishing the SDGs, notwithstanding these

efforts. These challenges include those that obstruct egalitarian advancement and sustainable development, like political unpredictability, environmental deterioration, inadequate infrastructure, and corruption.

NEPAD represents Africa's commitment to self-reliant development as a continental strategy that integrates the goals of economic growth, poverty eradication, and sustainable development (Royo, et al & Parikh, 2022). By placing a strong emphasis on regional cooperation, efficient governance, and strategic partnerships with the public and commercial sectors, NEPAD aims to advance the development of the African continent. NEPAD's institutional framework ensures that African countries remain dedicated to pursue their shared objective of long-term development and global economic integration, even in the face of persistent challenges.

The SDGs can effectively address Nigeria's development challenges, but achieving them will require addressing systemic

issues such as governance, infrastructure, and security (Abdulyakeen & Nurain, 2024). Although Nigeria has achieved significant progress, there are still numerous challenges to overcome. By strengthening its institutions, improving resource management, and leveraging its young population and regional alliances, Nigeria could make great strides toward achieving the SDGs and ensuring a sustainable future for its citizens. Under the context of NEPAD, this study examines Nigeria's progress toward the SDGs by looking at the noticeable improvements in key sectors. It also highlights the challenges that remain in the way of accomplishing these goals and the chances to overcome them. In doing so, it assesses how NEPAD supports collaboration between the Nigerian government, regional organizations, and international entities in order to achieve the country's development objectives and further Africa's overarching objective of sustainable growth. The specific objectives are:

To determine and examine the main obstacles preventing Nigeria from successfully implementing the SDGs and NEPAD.

To assess how external elements like foreign investments, international assistance, and world economic conditions affect Nigeria's attainment of the SDGs and NEPAD.

To investigate the possibilities and chances for improving NEPAD and SDG implementation in Nigeria.

To offer policy suggestions aimed at strengthening Nigeria's strategy for accomplishing the SDGs and NEPAD, with an emphasis on resilience, sustainability, and inclusivity.

NEPAD: ORIGINS, OBJECTIVES, AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

In response to Africa's persistent problems with poverty, underdevelopment, and socioeconomic development, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was formally established in 2001 (Aguene, 2021). A comprehensive, self-driven development strategy that would address Africa's fundamental problems and promote sustainable growth was what gave rise to the project. African leaders, including Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, and then-South African President Thabo Mbeki, worked together to create NEPAD after realizing that Africa needed to take charge of its own development path.

The program was created to support the African Union (AU) and was a follow-up to the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) Lagos Plan of Action (1980) and the African Economic Community (AEC) (Alaye & Fakoya, 2024). The establishment of NEPAD was also in line with the AU's overarching objectives, which included encouraging greater collaboration and solidarity among African nations. The collaboration signalled a change to a more inclusive and market-driven approach to development, highlighting the significance of infrastructure, human capital development, and sound governance for Africa's economic success.

OBJECTIVES OF NEPAD

NEPAD's main goals stem from the aim to reduce poverty, promote sustainable economic growth, and integrate Africa into the global economy. According to (Amfofo & Laari, et al, 2023; Arif, et al 2019). The NEPAD framework, which addresses the continent's short-term and long-term problems, lays out these objectives. Important goals consist of:

Encouraging Sustainable Economic Growth and Development: With an emphasis on important industries including agriculture, energy, education, and technology, NEPAD seeks to guarantee that African nations implement growth plans that may yield long-term advantages.

Ending Poverty and Raising Living Standards: One of NEPAD's main goals is to lower poverty rates throughout the continent by expanding access to basic services like clean water, sanitation, healthcare, and education. It also aims to promote economic growth and job creation.

Promoting Regional Integration: Through programs including regional trade agreements, infrastructure development, and intra-African trade facilitation, NEPAD promotes greater economic and political integration among African nations.

Fostering Peace and Good Governance: By tackling conflicts that impede development and highlighting the significance of open governance systems, NEPAD aims to fortify democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in African nations.

Improving Global Competitiveness: NEPAD seeks to increase Africa's competitiveness in the global market by enhancing its infrastructure, human capital, and technological capabilities, hence enhancing its involvement in global investment and trade flows.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF NEPAD

According to Anyanwu and Daru (2021), NEPAD's institutional framework is made to guarantee efficient project and program governance, coordination, and execution. Several important institutions make up the structure:

The Agency for NEPAD Planning and Coordination (NPCA): The technical organization in charge of carrying out the NEPAD program is the NPCA. It coordinates the efforts of the different entities participating in the development agenda and offers strategic direction. To supervise the execution of NEPAD's programs, the NPCA collaborates with regional economic communities (RECs), African governments, and foreign partners.

The AU, or African Union: In the political and governance facets of NEPAD, the AU is essential. Since NEPAD is an AU project, its development is monitored by the continent's decision-making organizations, including the AU Assembly and the AU Executive Council, which also make sure that the program's aims complement the larger political and economic goals of the African Union.

Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) of NEPAD: This body is NEPAD's decision-making body and is made up of African heads of state and government. It offers strategic

leadership, direction, and supervision to guarantee that NEPAD's goals are in line with Africa's more general development objectives.

RECs, or regional economic communities: NEPAD's programs are implemented at the regional level with the help of the RECs, which include organizations like COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa), SADC (Southern African Development Community), and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). They guarantee that NEPAD's programs are customized to meet the unique requirements and difficulties of various African regions.

To help with the funding and execution of NEPAD initiatives, private sector stakeholders are brought together via the NEPAD Business Group (NBG). The NBG seeks to establish public-private collaborations, support business development, and stimulate investment.

The AfDB, or African Development Bank: NEPAD's projects are heavily financed by the AfDB, especially in the fields of energy, agriculture, and infrastructure. In addition to offering financial assistance and technical know-how, the bank makes sure that initiatives are in line with Africa's development priorities.

SDGS AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO NIGERIA

Established by the United Nations in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a comprehensive framework designed to address the most important issues facing the world today, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, peace, and justice (Amfofo & Laari, Ware & Shaw, 2023). According to Arif, et al (2019), these 17 goals and 169 targets are intended to help nations work toward a sustainable and inclusive future by 2030. The SDGs provide Nigeria, a nation with enormous economic potential but also a number of development obstacles, a vision and a set of realistic goals to raise the standard of living for its people. Nigeria has a significant stake in achieving the SDGs because it is the most populous country in Africa and has one of the biggest economies. Poverty, extreme inequality, poor infrastructure, environmental deterioration, and security issues are only a few of the nation's many problems. In light of these conditions, the SDGs are an essential national instrument for attaining sustainable growth and development in addition to being a global agenda.

Goal 1: No Poverty One of the most urgent issues facing Nigeria is poverty. More than 40% of Nigerians, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), are below the poverty line (Asaju, 2023). In Nigeria, reducing poverty has long been a top governmental priority, and there has been a growing movement to link national initiatives with SDG 1. The National Social Investment Program (NSIP) and other government initiatives to increase access to social safety nets are described in the literature. However, obstacles like inadequate funding, political corruption, and poor implementation restrict the advancements made in this field.

Goal 2: Zero Hunger: Millions of Nigerians suffer from hunger and malnutrition, despite the country's status as a major agricultural powerhouse (Abdulyakeen, 2022). Research highlights the significance of raising access to wholesome food, decreasing post-harvest losses, and increasing agricultural productivity. Initiatives

like the Agricultural Transformation Agenda and the Green Revolution are positive moves. However, obstacles to attaining food security include poor infrastructure, the effects of climate change, and security concerns (particularly in the north).

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being: Inadequate financing, a lack of healthcare personnel, and poor infrastructure are some of the issues facing Nigeria's health industry. Significant worries include the burden of non-communicable diseases, the presence of infectious diseases like malaria, and high rates of mother and infant mortality. According to studies like (Mabuuze & Mabuze, 2020; Lami & Meca, 2020), despite initiatives like the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) initiative and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) to improve healthcare delivery, systemic problems like underinvestment in the health sector and poor governance make it difficult to achieve SDG 3.

Goal 4: Quality Education: Given Nigeria's issues with high dropout rates, subpar education, and limited school facilities, education is another crucial area for achieving the SDGs (Okonkwo & Obidebube, 2022). The literature emphasizes the necessity of educational reforms to provide access to high-quality education, especially for underprivileged populations such as girls, children with disabilities, and rural populations. Although national programs like the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program seek to address these problems, significant advancements in the efficacy and quality of education delivery are still needed to reach SDG 4 targets.

Goal 5: Gender Equality: In Nigeria, gender inequality is still a major problem since women and girls are discriminated against in the workplace, in schools, and in healthcare. To address these concerns, a number of measures have been implemented, including the National Gender Policy and programs to prevent gender-based violence. However, advancement is hampered by ingrained patriarchy, cultural values, and lax enforcement of the law. To guarantee that women's rights are completely realized in Nigeria, literature highlights the significance of a multipronged strategy that includes campaigning, legal reform, and awareness initiatives.

Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation: In Nigeria, access to sanitary facilities and clean water is a significant problem, especially in rural and informal settlement areas. According to the literature, the nation continues to face challenges related to poor water resource management, pollution, and insufficient infrastructure, despite modest progress in the delivery of clean water. Although initiatives like the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (RWSSP) have had some success, more coordinated efforts are needed to achieve SDG 6, especially when it comes to enhancing water resource governance.

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: Nigeria has had substantial economic growth, but it has not been equitable, and the nation has high unemployment rates, especially among young people. The economy is still largely reliant on oil, despite the proposals for industrialization and economic diversification initiatives. A more diversified economy, improved infrastructure, and greater investments in small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are all necessary to achieve SDG 8, according to studies. Economic diversification has been the goal of initiatives like the

Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), however obstacles like corruption, security concerns, and poor infrastructure prevent complete implementation.

Goal 13: Climate Action Desertification, deforestation, flooding, and the effects of climate change on agriculture are just a few of the environmental issues Nigeria faces. In keeping with the Paris Agreement, the Nigerian government has pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions; nevertheless, stricter environmental regulations and improved enforcement are required. The significance of tackling environmental degradation through policies that promote climate resilience, sustainable resource management, and enhanced environmental education is emphasized in the literature.

DEPENDENCY THEORY AS A CONCEPTUAL LENS ON NEPAD AND THE SDGS IN NIGERIA

An essential framework for comprehending the dynamics of global development, especially in the context of post-colonial countries, is dependency theory. It makes the case that the Global South's reliance on more affluent, developed countries impedes their ability to thrive economically and socially. According to this theory, which was first put forth by academics like Raúl Prebisch, Andre Gunder Frank, and Samir Amin, the underdevelopment of peripheral countries is a direct result of their incorporation into a global capitalist system that exploits peripheral (developing) countries while benefiting core (developed) countries. Dependency theory provides a critical lens through which to assess programs like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which both seek to improve the socioeconomic circumstances of the continent, when applied to Africa, and particularly to Nigeria. With an emphasis on how these frameworks either address or maintain Nigeria's reliance on outside forces, foreign investment, and international trade systems, this literature review explores how dependency theory might shed light on the role of NEPAD and the SDGs in the country's development trajectory.

Frank, André Gunder: Frank (1967), one of the leading proponents of dependence theory, maintained that underdevelopment was a direct result of the core's historical exploitation of the periphery rather than a phase in the development process. The phrase "the development of underdevelopment" was created by him to characterize the ways in which colonial and post-colonial economic structures maintained the periphery's underdevelopment. Another influential contributor in dependency theory, Samir Amin, highlighted the structural economic limitations that global capitalism imposes on periphery countries. He maintained that because the economies of peripheral nations are set up to meet the demands of the core, they will never be able to completely flourish under the current capitalism system. According to world-systems theory, the world is a single capitalist system that is separated into the periphery, semi-periphery, and core. The semi-periphery and periphery are influenced by and reliant on the core's actions, even while the core has economic dominance. We go into greater detail about dependence theory as a conceptual lens below. The division between the "core" (industrialized, developed nations) and the "periphery" (underdeveloped, frequently former colonies) is one of the main tenets of dependency theory.

While peripheral nations are economically dependent on the core, the core nations control capital, technology, and decision-making, hence dominating the global economic system. The periphery is exploited by the center for markets, cheap labor, and raw supplies. Santos (1971). Dependency theorists contend that uneven exchange characterizes the global economic system, with peripheral nations importing completed goods at high rates and exporting raw materials at low prices. Peripheral countries' dependence on core nations is strengthened by this structure, which restricts their capacity to industrialize and grow on their own. It highlights how colonialism historically contributed to the global South's economic and political reliance. Resources and riches were taken from colonized nations by colonial powers, leaving them with weak institutions and economies that hampered their post-independence growth. Dependency theory contends that exploitation within a global system that maintains peripheral countries in a subordinate position is the cause of underdevelopment rather than a state that is simply deficient in specific elements (such as capital or technology). Smith and Todaro (2011).

Modernization theory, which predicted that underdeveloped countries might industrialize and develop similarly to the West, was criticized by dependency theory. Dependency theorists, on the other hand, contended that the global economic system was set up in a style that maintained inequality and made developing nations reliant on it for their expansion and advancement. According to Roxborough (1979), this viewpoint holds that the exploitation of peripheral countries is inextricably tied to the wealth of core nations, resulting in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment and reliance. Because it offers a framework for comprehending the historical dynamics and structural injustices that continue to influence the continent's political, social, and economic institutions, dependency theory is still very relevant to Africa's development. Dependency theory, which emphasizes the lasting effects of colonialism, the role of outside powers, and the global economic system in sustaining these issues, can be used to analyze Africa's development challenges, which range from political instability and economic underdevelopment and poverty to economic underdevelopment and dependence on foreign aid.

The linkages between the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Dependency Theory

They are intricate, representing both continuity and shift in Africa's approach to development. Dependency Theory first appeared as a critique of the global capitalism system in the middle of the 20th century, mostly because to the work of academics like Samir Amin and André Gunder Frank. It made the case that colonial powers' historical exploitation of African countries and other former colonies, as well as the global economic system's continued reliance on rich countries, were to blame for their underdevelopment. In contrast, NEPAD, which was started in 2001, is an African-led program that aims to improve governance, promote economic integration within the continent, and create sustainable development. Instead of attempting to drastically change the global economic system, it attempts to address poverty, underdevelopment, and the legacy of colonialism within a framework that accepts it (Hilson, 2020). According to dependency theory, African countries must overcome external dominance by lowering their reliance on

international investment, commerce, and aid from the Global North. It promotes decolonization of economic systems and increased economic self-sufficiency. NEPAD, on the other hand, supports a more collaborative approach with industrialized countries while understanding the historical and current effects of global systems on African economies.

In order to promote development, it emphasizes the necessity of international collaboration, technological transfer, and foreign investment. Therefore, rather than attempting to topple the global capitalist order, NEPAD works within the current global system with the goal of increasing Africa's competitiveness (Odugbesan, et al, 2022). According to dependency theory, the unbalanced links between the core (developed countries) and the periphery (developing countries) are maintained as a result of globalization. It argues that this global system limits Africa's progress, with African nations reduced to supplying cheap labor and raw commodities (Owoeye, 2023; Abdulyakeen & Nurain, 2024). Understanding that Africa's growth is contingent upon its incorporation into the global economy, NEPAD functions within the framework of globalization. Increased trade, foreign direct investment, and strategic alliances with international organizations are all promoted by NEPAD. In order to guarantee that Africa gains more fairly from globalization, it also emphasizes the significance of African control over development goals. The political systems in developing nations are frequently criticized by dependency theory for their complicity in maintaining the dependent relationship. It believes that one element sustaining the current state of economic exploitation is corrupt or incompetent governance. In contrast, NEPAD highlights the significance of peace, security, and good governance as the cornerstones of development. A crucial part of NEPAD, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) pushes African countries to pledge to uphold human rights, democratic governance, and anti-corruption initiatives. By lowering internal development hurdles, this governance system seeks to address the root causes of dependency.

Because dependency theory sees collaborations with the Global North as fundamentally exploitative and unequal, it is naturally distrustful of them. However, NEPAD encourages strategic alliances with the commercial sector and both developed and emerging economies. NEPAD emphasizes African-led development and the need for improved conditions of interaction with foreign partners, even as it acknowledges Africa's need for international assistance. This strategy aims to strike a balance between internal agency and external support, representing a move away from total reliance and toward more active involvement in international affairs. NEPAD's detractors from a dependency standpoint: NEPAD's dependence on foreign investment and aid, according to some detractors, reinforces the very dependency that Dependency Theory criticizes. They contend that by interacting with international financial organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), NEPAD's strategy could result in more debt and economic servitude. Furthermore, detractors point out that NEPAD's reliance on the international market for trade and investment could not significantly alter the structure of global inequality or lessen Africa's dependency on outside forces.

Dependency theory criticizes the global economic system as exploitative, while NEPAD offers an alternative vision for Africa's development that emphasizes partnerships, self-reliance, and governance. Their mutual acknowledgment of Africa's historical marginalization and the necessity of development is what connects the two. The more drastic solutions put forth by dependence theory, which calls for distancing oneself from global systems in order to attain true development, contrast with NEPAD's strategy of interacting with them. Nigeria's reliance on international assistance and multilateral alliances has a big impact on the New Partnership for Africa's Development's (NEPAD) capacity to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) objectives, especially those pertaining to infrastructure, health, education, poverty alleviation, and climate change.

METHODOLOGY

The approach offers a thorough analysis of the integration of NEPAD and SDGs into Nigeria's development plan, evaluating both the successes and challenges encountered. It also provides practical advice on how Nigeria may overcome obstacles and take full use of the opportunities presented by NEPAD and the SDGs. Nigeria's implementation of NEPAD and SDGs will be thoroughly and robustly analyzed thanks to the mix of case studies, quantitative and qualitative research, and a review of the literature. In order to ensure alignment with NEPAD objectives and SDGs, this phase entails policy analysis examining Nigeria's National Development Plans, including the Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, Vision 20:2020, and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy - NEEDS. Global Reports: examining Nigeria's pledges and advancements toward SDG targets by analyzing information from the World Bank, African Union (AU), United Nations, and NEPAD. Government and Institutional Documents: Examining government publications to determine their coherence and alignment with the SDGs, including national SDG reports, NEPAD progress reports, and budgets.

Under the NEPAD framework, case studies are used to analyze particular projects or programs in Nigeria that are intended to accomplish the SDGs. For instance, examining Nigeria's initiatives to combat poverty and how NEPAD facilitates these initiatives through its trade, economic, and infrastructure policies. Healthcare Initiatives: Examples of how SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) has been implemented and how NEPAD's health initiatives have been incorporated into policy infrastructure initiatives by examining the ways in which NEPAD's transportation, power, and road projects support SDGs like SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). By looking at key performance indicators (KPIs) associated with particular SDGs, the evaluation framework below can be used to gauge the advancement, difficulties, and future possibilities of NEPAD and SDG implementation in Nigeria. A comparison with the goals outlined in the NEPAD framework and the National Development Plan. Determine the main obstacles, such as bad governance, limited capacity at the local level, political instability, corruption, and a lack of funds or infrastructure. Additionally, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis was used to comprehend Nigeria's implementation of the SDGs and NEPAD. The positives highlight effective NEPAD programs as well as robust industries (such as trade, youth

empowerment, and agriculture). Limitations point to financial difficulties and bureaucratic inefficiencies as examples of institutional limitations. Threats address issues brought on by political instability, environmental degradation, and insecurity, while possibilities highlight new prospects (such as regional integration, foreign investment, and digital change).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

With noteworthy advancements in education, entrepreneurship, and policy advocacy, NEPAD has made tremendous headway in tackling young empowerment throughout Africa. However, issues including gender inequality, the digital divide, political unpredictability, and unemployment still prevent young empowerment initiatives from reaching their full potential. NEPAD must keep promoting collaborations, utilizing technology, pushing for legislative changes, and making sure that young people especially the most vulnerable are at the center of Africa's development agenda in order to overcome these challenges. Africa's young have the potential to be a key player in the continent's long-term sustainable development if given the proper funding and strategic direction.

NEPAD'S ROLE IN REDUCING POVERTY IN NIGERIA

Launched in 2001, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) sought to accelerate Africa's development by promoting sustainable development, economic integration, poverty alleviation, and good governance within a comprehensive framework. Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, has participated in and benefited from NEPAD's programs. Through a variety of initiatives and calculated interventions, NEPAD has significantly reduced poverty in Nigeria, despite ongoing difficulties.

In Nigeria, agriculture continues to be a crucial industry that employs a sizable fraction of the workforce, especially in rural areas (Osimen, 2023; Ozili, 2022). The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), one of NEPAD's most important programs, seeks to increase food security, decrease hunger, and increase agricultural output. Through initiatives to raise agricultural investment, enhance agricultural methods, and increase food production, CAADP has helped Nigeria. Given that a large portion of the rural population in Nigeria depends on farming, NEPAD's emphasis on advancing agriculture as a means of reducing poverty is especially pertinent there. The program finally prompted investment in irrigation systems, rural infrastructure, and agricultural technologies by pressuring the Nigerian government to devote a greater portion of its budget to agriculture. Nigeria agreed to the CAADP compact, which included establishing national goals to enhance food security, agricultural expansion, and poverty alleviation. Nigeria consequently put measures into place to raise the output of important agricultural sectors like maize, rice, and cassava. Poor communities have benefited directly from these programs' contributions to increased food security, agricultural development, and job creation.

Economic development and poverty reduction are closely related, and NEPAD has played a key role in supporting Nigeria's infrastructure development. In order to increase economic prospects

for Nigerians, especially in rural and neglected areas, the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility (IPPF) has assisted in the planning and funding of important infrastructure projects. Through programs focused at enhancing energy generation, delivery, and access—all of which are vital for promoting economic growth—NEPD has assisted Nigeria's power industry. For small enterprises, industry, and agriculture to prosper and eventually reduce poverty by generating employment and opportunity, stable energy is essential. In order to improve connectivity, lower transportation costs, and promote trade, NEPAD's infrastructure initiatives have also concentrated on building road and rail networks. In rural areas in particular, improved transportation infrastructure stimulates economic activity by facilitating small-scale farmers' and companies' access to larger markets, which raises their revenue and lowers poverty.

Nigerian healthcare service has improved thanks in part to the NEPAD Health Strategy, which is crucial for reducing poverty. Because of the high prevalence of illnesses like HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria, poor health makes poverty worse by decreasing productivity and raising household expenses. Through initiatives to battle serious illnesses and enhance healthcare infrastructure, NEPAD has aided Nigeria in addressing public health issues. Initiatives to increase access to maternal health care, clean water, and sanitation have improved health outcomes and, eventually, population productivity. For Nigeria's human capital development, NEPAD's emphasis on education—including young skill development—has been essential. Programs for education and vocational training aimed at giving young Nigerians the skills they need for the workforce are essential for ending the poverty cycle.

A key component of NEPAD's development framework is good governance. NEPAD's assistance has improved governance procedures, decreased corruption, and promoted democratic accountability in Nigeria. Nigeria has taken part in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a vital NEPAD program designed to advance good governance throughout the continent. Nigeria has been urged to carry out changes in areas like institutional accountability, public sector openness, and anti-corruption through APRM. Improving transparency and lowering corruption contribute to the efficient use of public funds for initiatives aimed at reducing poverty. Nigeria has been able to resolve inefficiencies in its governance systems thanks to NEPAD's emphasis on bolstering public institutions. Public funds can be more effectively allocated to initiatives that reduce poverty, such as social protection, healthcare, and infrastructure development, when governance is strengthened.

As a major force behind Nigeria's economic expansion and poverty alleviation, NEPAD has supported the rise of the private sector. A thriving private sector generates employment, supports regional businesses, and draws in investments that open doors for the populace. Nigeria's investment climate has improved thanks to NEPAD, increasing its appeal to both domestic and foreign investors. Jobs have been created as a result, especially in the manufacturing, agricultural, and service industries. NEPAD has helped to reduce poverty and create jobs by promoting small enterprises and entrepreneurship. Nigerian public-private partnerships have expanded thanks to NEPAD, which has concentrated on important industries like energy, agriculture, and

infrastructure. These collaborations have provided much-needed funding and experience, resulting in the creation of jobs and economic prospects for Nigerians.

Nigeria's efforts to fight extreme poverty and inequality have been aided by NEPAD's poverty reduction initiatives. The goal of initiatives like financial inclusion, microfinance programs, and social safety nets is to help individuals escape poverty by giving them the money and encouragement they need to start earning a living. To assist Nigerian small business owners, NEPAD has promoted the growth of microfinance services. NEPAD has improved livelihoods and decreased poverty by giving people and small enterprises, particularly in rural regions, access to financing. NEPAD has helped Nigeria create social protection programs for disadvantaged groups, such as food aid and conditional cash transfers. The poorest communities in Nigeria have seen a significant decrease in poverty as a result of these initiatives.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION ON NEPAD'S CONTRIBUTION TO SDG 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

With noteworthy advancements in education, entrepreneurship, and policy advocacy, NEPAD has made tremendous headway in tackling young empowerment throughout Africa. However, issues including gender inequality, the digital divide, political unpredictability, and unemployment still prevent young empowerment initiatives from reaching their full potential. NEPAD must keep promoting collaborations, utilizing technology, pushing for legislative changes, and making sure that young people—especially the most vulnerable—are at the center of Africa's development agenda in order to overcome these challenges. Africa's young have the potential to be a key player in the continent's long-term sustainable development if given the proper funding and strategic direction.

A significant project, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) aims to reduce poverty throughout the continent, promote sustainable development, and accelerate Africa's economic progress. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8: "Decent Work and Economic Growth" is directly aligned with its primary objective of fostering inclusive, equitable, and sustainable economic growth. SDG 8 advocates for full and productive employment, decent work for everyone, and inclusive and sustainable economic growth. For Africa, where poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality continue to be major issues, this SDG is essential. As the African Union's (AU) overall development framework, NEPAD has contributed in a number of ways to the achievement of SDG 8. With an emphasis on its measures to foster inclusive development, decent employment, and sustainable economic growth, this debate will examine how NEPAD's programs and initiatives have helped Africa attain SDG 8.

NEPAD's Principal Approaches to SDG 8: NEPAD's emphasis on infrastructure development, economic integration, and regional cooperation directly supports inclusive economic growth, one of SDG 8's main tenets. Infrastructure Development: The NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility (IPPF) and other programs have been essential in advancing infrastructure projects throughout Africa, especially in the areas of electricity,

telecommunications, and transportation. These developments have made it easier for businesses to flourish by enhancing communication, transportation, and energy availability, which has increased economic growth and produced jobs. Additionally, increased market integration and commerce across African nations are made possible by improved infrastructure, which promotes regional economic growth (Derndach & Cheever, 2015). NEPAD has been a proponent of economic integration, which has led to the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In order to facilitate the free flow of people, money, and investments throughout the continent, this program seeks to establish a single, unified market for products and services. AfCFTA will greatly improve intra-African commerce, spur economic growth, and create job opportunities by lowering tariffs and removing trade barriers, all of which will directly support SDG 8.

Sustainable economic growth requires economic diversity, and NEPAD has emphasized industrialization as a means of achieving economic development. Initiatives for Industrialization: NEPAD has worked to encourage the growth of industrial sectors and lessen Africa's reliance on the export of raw materials through its Industrialization Strategy. This approach highlights the necessity of industrialization that produces goods with added value, boosts export earnings, and encourages the creation of jobs. Local entrepreneurship and economic diversification have also been stimulated by NEPAD's support of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). Agricultural Transformation: In many African nations, agriculture continues to be a major source of employment and economic activity. By boosting production, guaranteeing food security, and promoting rural development, NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) seeks to revolutionize agriculture. By generating sustainable livelihoods and jobs, these agricultural innovations—especially in the areas of food production and rural infrastructure—have greatly boosted rural economic growth and job creation, which helps achieve SDG 8.

Creating good work opportunities for all African inhabitants is one of NEPAD's main goals. In recognition of the vital role that employment plays in lowering poverty and promoting social stability, NEPAD has incorporated employment creation into its policies. NEPAD acknowledges that the youth population in Africa is expanding quickly and that creating jobs for them is essential to sustainable development. Through initiatives that emphasize entrepreneurship, skill development, and job creation in industries like renewable energy, ICT, and agriculture, NEPAD has responded by encouraging youth employment. For instance, NEPAD's Capacity Building and Skills Development Programs seek to provide youth with the necessary skills for developing industries, opening doors to respectable and fruitful employment. NEPAD promotes the expansion of SMEs, which are essential to Africa's job development. The NEPAD Business Foundation and the African Investment Promotion Agency seek to enhance the business climate for investments, especially in regions that have the potential to create significant employment. Thousands of employment have been created throughout Africa thanks to NEPAD's support of SMEs and encouragement of entrepreneurship.

In order to guarantee inclusive and long-term economic growth, sustainable economic policies are essential (Ndela & Worth, 2021; Bali & Yang Wallentin, 2020). NEPAD has aided in the creation of policies that balance social, environmental, and economic considerations while fostering sustainable growth. Especially in the energy industry, NEPAD has played a major role in advancing sustainable infrastructure initiatives. The development of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power, has been given top priority in its attempts to expand Africa's access to electricity. Economic growth depends on sustainable energy, and by preventing growth from coming at the price of the environment, NEPAD's focus on clean energy solutions directly supports SDG 8. The goal of NEPAD's African Climate Change Strategy has been to balance environmental sustainability with economic growth. Through its work on resilience and adaptation to climate change, NEPAD has made sure that economic growth is both environmentally sustainable and inclusive. NEPAD has helped create an economy that supports environmental sustainability and growth by encouraging climate-resilient sectors and green technologies.

Businesses, particularly SMEs, need to have access to financing in order to create jobs. For African business owners, NEPAD has aided in the growth of financial systems and credit availability. NEPAD has sought to increase access to banking services, credit, and financial resources for both individuals and enterprises through programs like the African Development Bank's (AfDB) Financial Inclusion Strategy. More jobs and chances for economic growth have resulted from these initiatives, which have aided in entrepreneurship and company expansion. Additionally, NEPAD has advocated for Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) as a way to fund development and infrastructure initiatives. By working with the private sector, NEPAD has been able to draw in investment that can lead to job creation and economic expansion in a number of industries, including transportation, agriculture, and energy.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION ON NEPAD AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS

Launched in 2001, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a strategy framework designed to solve Africa's problems with poverty, underdevelopment, and isolation. With a strong focus on accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and then the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), NEPAD aims to advance sustainable development throughout the continent. Since youth are viewed as essential to Africa's future development and prosperity, youth empowerment is a major part of NEPAD's plan. When it comes to empowering African youth, NEPAD has achieved significant strides in a number of areas.

Initiatives aimed at enhancing youth education and skill development have received assistance from NEPAD (Robinson & Stanley, 2019). Enhancing access to high-quality education throughout the continent has been the goal of the African Education Summit and collaborations with organizations such as the African Union (AU), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and other regional organizations. As a result of NEPAD's development projects, programs that emphasize STEM education have received more attention. Through technical

training and scholarships, NEPAD seeks to give young Africans the tools they need to succeed in the quickly evolving labor market.

In order to address young unemployment and promote economic growth, NEPAD has made youth entrepreneurship a priority. NEPAD promotes young people to start and run their own enterprises through programs like the NEPAD Business Foundation, the African Union's Youth Employment Strategy, and its collaborations with private sectors. The topic of financial inclusion is also crucial. The NEPAD Youth Entrepreneurship Program gives young entrepreneurs and start-ups access to capital, coaching, and capacity building. Young people now have more employment options thanks to NEPAD's dedication to infrastructure development, particularly in fields like information technology, renewable energy, and construction.

In order to ensure that governments throughout Africa develop policies that are inclusive of young people, NEPAD has tried to influence policy on youth issues. It has joined forces with the Youth Division of the African Union to promote the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and the African Youth Charter. In order to guarantee that youth concerns are given priority at the national and regional levels, NEPAD also uses the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which assesses nations' advancements in social policy and good governance. Notwithstanding the advancements, a number of obstacles still stand in the way of youth empowerment under NEPAD:

Youth unemployment is one of the biggest obstacles to NEPAD's youth empowerment strategy. Many young people in Africa, which has one of the youngest populations in the world, are still unable to find steady work. This problem is made worse by the dearth of sectors and enterprises that can take in so many young people. Even though NEPAD has promoted entrepreneurship, many youth-led businesses find it difficult to thrive or grow due to a lack of access to funding, business expertise, and suitable market infrastructure.

Despite NEPAD's assistance for educational reforms, access to and the quality of education remain major obstacles in Africa, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas. Insufficient educational infrastructure, a lack of trained teachers, and significant dropout rates are all present. There is still a problem with the skills that young people learn in school not matching the demands of the labor market. Although NEPAD's emphasis on STEM education is encouraging, it must be combined with initiatives to enhance technical and vocational education.

Initiatives for youth development are nevertheless hampered by political unrest, violence, and bad governance in a number of African nations. Young people's options are restricted in war-torn areas and politically unstable circumstances, particularly with regard to social mobility, work, and education. Furthermore, a lot of African governments give short-term political objectives precedence over long-term programs for young development, which results in uneven or inadequate support for NEPAD-related efforts.

The digital divide is still a major problem in Africa, despite the fact that technology has emerged as a major force behind economic emancipation. Many young people do not have access to computers, the internet, or digital literacy programs, especially those who live

in remote or underserved locations. Through its e-Africa Program, NEPAD has attempted to solve this issue, but much more has to be done. Due to inadequate infrastructure and restricted access, many African youth are falling behind in the global digital transformation, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought attention to the significance of technology for education and jobs.

CHALLENGES TO MEETING SDG TARGETS

Nigeria's dependence on outside assistance and collaborations offers both potential and problems for achieving SDG targets, despite the fact that NEPAD was created as an African-led program to encourage development and self-reliance. This dynamic unfolds as follows:

Foreign aid is crucial for financing vital sectors including infrastructure, education (particularly in rural regions), and health (e.g., fighting diseases like TB, HIV/AIDS, and malaria). Nigeria's reliance on help, especially for emergency and humanitarian relief, might support national initiatives to meet these urgent SDG goals. Nigeria frequently receives technical support and capacity building from international partners and multilateral aid organizations to fortify its institutions and governance frameworks. Achieving the SDG targets for infrastructure development (SDG 9) and good governance (SDG 16) depends on this. International collaborations, such as those with the World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB), and bilateral funders, support NEPAD's goals, which include poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, and regional integration. These collaborations provide the funding, resources, and experience needed to further NEPAD's mission. Although help can offer temporary respite, an excessive dependence on outside support can erode native institutions. Governments may prioritize fulfilling donor requirements above putting their own citizens' needs first, which can lower accountability. NEPAD's focus on African ownership and self-reliance, which is essential to its sustainable development goal, is compromised by this. Long-term, sustainable solutions are frequently not produced by an over-reliance on outside finance. For instance, while foreign aid can help with urgent needs, it frequently falls short in addressing the underlying causes of poverty or creating strong local economies. This undercuts SDG goals for sustainable economic development (SDG 9), high-quality education (SDG 4), and economic growth (SDG 8). Foreign aid is frequently erratic and susceptible to changes in the priorities of donors. A donor's internal policies or shifts in world politics may make aid flows less predictable and dependable, which may make it more difficult to meet long-term development goals. For nations like Nigeria, where assistance is frequently required to close gaps in sectors like health and education, this is especially troublesome.

In order to achieve SDG targets like affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9), and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), multilateral partnerships—especially those with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and other international institutions—are essential for funding infrastructure projects. To carry out massive infrastructure projects like electricity grids, transportation corridors, and digital connectivity throughout Africa, NEPAD's Regional Infrastructure Development Initiative (RID) is dependent on foreign and

international funding. Public-private partnerships (PPPs), which Nigeria uses to connect with foreign investors, aid in raising money for development initiatives. PPPs can, however, speed up infrastructure development and boost economic growth, but they can also put profit ahead of social goals, which restricts the wider inclusion required to achieve SDGs like lowering inequality (SDG 10). The diverse interests of NEPAD's member states, particularly Nigeria, may limit the organization's attempts at regional integration. Collective action under NEPAD may be weakened if certain African nations favor bilateral ties with international investors or funders over multilateral ones. Africa's Agenda 2063 and its connection with the SDGs, which depend on regional cooperation to solve concerns like climate change, peace, and security, may be hindered by these disjointed approaches. Inequalities within the continent may potentially be made worse via multilateral cooperation. For instance, bigger, wealthier nations like Nigeria might draw a disproportionate amount of foreign investment or help, leaving smaller, less developed nations with less assistance. This undercuts SDG 10's goal of lowering inequality within and between nations.

Good governance is highly valued by NEPAD, and its African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) seeks to encourage openness, responsibility, and democratic governance among African countries. Nigeria frequently faces governance-related conditionalities, like anti-corruption initiatives and changes to public financial management, as a result of its reliance on foreign aid and multilateral partners. These initiatives can help NEPAD achieve its goals of better governance and the SDG targets for justice, peace, and strong institutions (SDG 16). Nevertheless, these efforts may be hampered by corruption and inadequate governance systems. Nigeria's political environment may lessen the impact of outside aid and make it more difficult to accomplish SDG 16 because of issues like corruption, a lack of openness, and ineffective reform implementation.

CONCLUSION

With its emphasis on infrastructure development, industrialization, job creation, and financial inclusion, NEPAD has significantly aided SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. NEPAD has sought to promote sustainable development, inclusive economic growth, and good jobs through programs including the AfCFTA, NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility, and Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). But obstacles including budget constraints, political unpredictability, and structural problems in African countries still impede development. More domestic investment, stronger finance channels, and greater political commitment will be essential going forward if NEPAD is to reach its full potential in accomplishing SDG 8.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEPAD'S FUTURE

Strengthening Governance and Accountability: The AU's governance structures must be strengthened if NEPAD is to reach its full potential. Ensuring that African leaders follow democratic values and anti-corruption measures is necessary to increase the effectiveness of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

Member nations must be more politically committed to enacting reforms and holding governments responsible.

Strengthening Regional Integration: In order to promote regional integration, NEPAD must give top priority to the elimination of trade restrictions and the standardization of regulations. To increase intra-African commerce and establish a single market, the African Continental Free commerce Area (AfCFTA) must be strengthened. Additionally, cooperative economic policies and cross-border infrastructure projects should strengthen regional cooperation.

Expanding Domestic Financing: African nations ought to bear a larger share of the cost of funding NEPAD's projects. To finance projects, governments must give domestic resource mobilization—including through taxes—top priority. NEPAD ought to support laws that promote investments, savings, and the growth of regional capital markets. To draw in private sector investment, public-private partnerships (PPPs) might be investigated further.

Enhancing Project Monitoring and Implementation: NEPAD has to create precise structures for project monitoring and assessment. Frequent evaluations will facilitate improved progress monitoring, problem identification, and strategy modification. Overcoming implementation delays requires bolstering NEPAD's institutions' management capabilities.

Promoting Private Sector Development: NEPAD ought to establish a favorable atmosphere for the growth of the private sector. This entails lowering operating costs, streamlining corporate registration procedures, and enhancing the regulatory environment. It should also prioritize entrepreneurial initiatives and assistance for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) throughout the continent.

Addressing Sustainability and Climate Change: NEPAD should put more effort into addressing sustainability and climate change. Given Africa's extreme susceptibility to climate-related shocks, environmental preservation, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture should receive increased attention. For Africa's growth to be inclusive and sustainable, the program should be in line with the global sustainability agenda.

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HERDERS-PEASANT FARMERS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA AND CHALLENGES OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The core objective of this study is to examine the nexus between farmers-herders conflicts and the extent to which the crisis has impinged on adequate food crops production, as well as agricultural development as it relates to food security in Nigeria's north-central zone. The challenges of insecurity orchestrated by the eruption of conflicts between cattle nomads and rural peasants, to say the least, have been increasingly devastating. The issue of transhumant and crop farmers conflicts spirals across several states and communities ranging from Nasarawa, Niger, Kogi, Benue and Plateau states. The carnage caused by the conflict has continued to raise several concerns due to the dangerous impacts it has brought to bear on the socio-economic and development fabric of the affected communities. Conversely, there now exists not only the quagmire of escalation of food prices, but essentially, there are high risks of human insecurity, destitution, homelessness, inflation, poor agricultural crop production, and increasing death tolls arising from banditry. This paper is a theoretical exploration of existing works of experts in the broader field of conflict studies. The work relies on secondary methods for data collection. Findings reveal that due to the rising cases of conflicts in some of the affected states and peasant communities, there may be a prolonged food crisis, increased inflation, bloodbaths and homelessness over a long time. The paper therefore suggests that arresting this challenge requires adopting both horizontal and vertical conflict resolution mechanisms, including the role of government and other stakeholders in the region to stem the tides of conflicts. These holistic measures, it is hoped, can trigger the anticipated development required to bring succour and sustenance to food crop production in the affected states.

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts, and particularly, herders and crop farmer's conflicts have continued to pose serious concerns to experts and scholars in recent times in Nigeria. Conflicts manifest in Nigeria in form of ethnic/tribal crises, terrorism, banditry, sectional agitations, religious tensions and of late, crop farmers and herder's conflicts. All of these, to experts such as Udo (2021) and Adisa (2012) are attributable to contestation for land space and other natural resources such as access to vegetation's for grazing, water resources, amongst others. Udo (2021) argues that land resources and

competition for space account for majority of the increasing rates of conflicts recorded in Nigeria, and particularly, in the nation's north central geo-political zone.

From the classic works of Ogu (n.d), conflict between cattle herders and crop farmers has become a new norm, with devastating consequences in terms of loss of human lives and resources, food scarcity, inflation, low food supply chain, inadequate food production, among others. In terms of loss of human lives, the International Crises Group (2018) claims that several hundreds of

thousands of people have been killed, and many others, rendered homeless in the wake of conflicts.

In one of his studies on the impacts of crop farmers and trans-human conflicts in the north central Nigeria, Mustapha (2023) opines that the contradictions of conflicts in the region take the form of economic and resource interest, respectively. On the one hand, people must survive the harsh realities of global meltdown, orchestrated by rising cost of goods and services, inflation, disease pandemics (for instance, the COVID-19); climate change variabilities, changes of economic and political structures, etc. on the other hand, the population has constantly been on the rise, with attendant food scarcity and/or insecurity, shortages of farm lands, flooding, terrorism and insurgency, to mention but a few.

The report further states that of the 415 grazing reserves in Nigeria, only one-third is being put into use. The remaining 270 routes are either under cultivation by crop farmers, which is why the clashes between farmers and transhumance cattle grazers have remained unabated.

Given the foregoing, it is clear that agricultural production has been badly affected. Corroborating this view, Adisa and Adekunle (2010) in one of their pilot studies on conflicts between crop farmers and herders noted that the multiplier effects of these conflicts are ferocious, particularly on peasant households. For instance, Adisa and Adekunle lamented that during conflicts, farmers experience huge material losses, among others. All of these losses may have boomerang effects on food supply, while the few available food items continue to skyrocket in terms of price due to competing demands by the growing population. It is in light of this that successive governments over time have attempted to enunciate agricultural policies ranging from, among other things, the Green Revolution, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the recent RUGA system (though this was vehemently opposed by sections of the Nigerian Society based on ideological reasons), among others.

The problem of this study however, is that in spite of efforts being put in place by the government to arrest the raging conflicts, these strategies, one way or the other, have hardly succeeded in taming the tides of conflicts. This scenario therefore raises very fundamental questions to address the ensuing quagmire that has continued to grow faster, particularly in Nigeria viz:

What are the pre-disposing factors to farmers-herders' conflicts in Nigeria?

What are the drivers of conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria?

How does the conflicts affect food availability in North central region of Nigeria?

These questions have become important to be able to sufficiently resolve the lingering conflicts and food crises ravaging the nation's landscape.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this investigation is to examine the nexus between crop farmer's conflicts and the extent to which the menace

affects successful implementation of agricultural development in Nigeria. However, the specific objectives seek to examine herders-crop farmers conflicts and the extent it affects food production in selected geo-political zones in Nigeria

METHODOLOGY

This paper is an exploratory study. It therefore relies on existing works of experts and intelligentsias using secondary method of data collection. The work explores relevant research materials ranging from books, refereed journals, monographs and other relevant resource materials critical in the generation of information on herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria's north central geo-political zone.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

CONFLICT

Many scholars have looked at conflict in diverse ways, depending on the ideological leaning of the experts as well as the environment they find themselves.

Baba (2017) avers that Conflicts may take the form of friction, discord or disagreement. This occurs often when there is a clash of interest between one group of persons and those of the others. To a greater or lesser extent, this kind of conflict may become brutal and hence, involves expression of violence among contending groups. What is clear about conflicts is the fact that there exist animosity and antagonism with two or more parties competing for space or resources, these often results in fatalities and hence creates a sense of chaos in society. However, it can be said that all conflicts may not necessarily give rise to bloodshed. There could be ideological Conflicts such as those meant to address deep-seated disagreement over a set of belief systems. Conversely, ideological issues such as this tend to address complex political, economic, and cultural value systems either at the national or international levels, and define relationship between nation states in the international global market places. According to Stern and Jarret (2020), some of those conflicts take either symmetrical or asymmetrical postures and may become a source of peaceful resolution of divergent, but often mutual interest in the international system.

In the case of Nigeria's north central region, Conflicts often takes the form of violence. This state of affair tends to negate the opinions of Jarret and stern (2020) who merely present Conflicts as non-violent agitations between actors and or non-state entities in the international system. The nature of conflicts in north central Nigeria particularly in Benue Plateau, Nigeria and Nasarawa states over land resources and space has been extremely violent and destructive. From the studies carried out by Alston (2014) Bayed (2002) and Maun (2014), the struggle between herdsman and present farmers has given rise to several deaths. These scholars opine that conflict between the two steps is linked to competition for land control and ownership, which to a greater or lesser extent is defined by the extent to which each of the contending groups lay claims to either grazing route, water points and national vegetation for cattle and other livestock. Adisa and Adekale (2010) lamented that the increase arable land has most often resulted to serious hostilities and social friction between farmers and herders in north central Nigeria. This

conflict has not only worsened the level of insecurity, but has essentially demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the rising food crises currently being faced by Nigerian citizens, and particularly, north central geopolitical zone of the country.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Quite a number of scholars and intelligentsias have attempted to explain the lingering crises and conflicts between herdsmen and peasant using several theoretical models. From the works of Atelhe and Okoli (2024), conflicts between herders and farmers are essentially an off-shoot of the devastating effects of changes in the natural eco-system orchestrated by global climate change. To Atelhe and Chukwuma (2014), these changes have become a force that propels unintended movements of cattle herders from one region to the other thereby leading to conflicts. Again, Adibe (2020) in his study on farmers and herders violent conflicts examine the political undertone that has continued to shape conflicts in Nigeria, and particularly the role of push factors ranging from ethnic, religious and cultural, among others.

For the purpose of this study, however, the social conflict theory was used as basis for theoretical analysis. The major tenet of this theory finds expression in the fact that social life is a contest and competition for the distribution of power and natural resources. The struggle according to Karl Marx, revolves around the distribution of resources, which to him, is couched in inequality, oppression, subjugation and exploitation. The underlying assumption, to Marx, is that apart from the scarcity and uneven endowment of natural resources by different societies globally, the most ferocious of it all is the way and manner these resources are being manipulated by the power elites in the economic distribution scheme of things. This scenario may result in a stage where the lack of satisfaction by the impoverished section of society could result to social unrest, conflicts and violence. This inability or the lack of political will for efficient resource distribution that could cater to the growing needs of people is the direct consequence of the ravaging conflicts in the country today.

Pre-Disposing Factors to Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Nigeria's North Central Region

From what is available in the public research domain by different research experts, it can be said that the pre-disposing factors propelling conflicts between herders and farmers are multidimensional in outlook. In one of the studies carried out by Mustapha (2023) on the impacts of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria's north central zone, the author observed that the availability of lush vegetation, water sources and supportive weather conditions have continued to attract herders to the region in their droves. When this happens, there is the tendency for conflict to occur when the interests of herder's clash with those of the peasant farmers.

Again research findings carried out by Mustapha (2023) in Benue state about the frequency of occurrence of herders-farmers conflicts reveals that one of the major factors of clashes includes destruction of farm lands and crops by herders, contamination of water sources and streams that often serve source of drinking water for the

communities; overgrazing, lack of regards for laid-down rules by herders, sexual harassment by young herders as well provocative use of vulgar language and indiscriminate infliction of injuries on community members and even deaths. According to reports from Giza Development Area of Nasarawa State by one Mrs. Adi (2023) averred that:

The way and manner herders destroy my maize and groundnut farm is alarming. I have become a maiguard (local name for watchman) in my farm all these months, I need to be on the farm to stay around and drive away straying cattles from my crops so that they are not eaten up by cattles. Even as a widow, I know the level of harassment I have received from the herds-men, sometimes, all alone in the bus. On many occasions they threaten to beat me up if I dare open my mouth to ask them to leave my farm. At that point, I resolved that I was going to die with my crops rather than allow them (herders) to destroy my only source of food....(2023).

Aside these reasons, some experts and scholars such as Atelhe and Okoli (2014) maintain that changes in climatic conditions have proved to be one of the changes in climatic conditions have proved to one of predisposing factors to conflicts by herders and farmers. Climate-induced change, which is more of a global problem, has brought about eruption of inclement and an unfavorable weather condition. The adverse weather undoubtedly affects food production adequate enough for consumption by cattle and other livestock which is why conflict occurs (Atelhe & Okoli,2014).

Buttressing the fact, climate change and weather conditions across the globe have constituted challenge to conflicts due to scarcity of resources; Mnguashima and Olushola (2022) agree that the problem of desertification and loss of arable lands to expanding settlements as well as south wards migration by nomadic herders have constantly provoked violent competition over land resources with local peasants.

To be sure, most experts are of the view that the incidence of drought and desert encroachment here increasingly degraded foddars and pastors as well as divide up a wonder of national water resource in Nigeria north east geographical zone including Borno, Adamawa Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe States. Under this situation, majority of farmers have been forced to migrate with their cattles down south (including the north- central region). Added to this, there is also the factor of insecurity occasioned by Boko Haram terrorism and late, the widespread waves of banditry, that are actively engaged in killing, theft, and occupation of farm lands originally owned by local peasants as well cattle rustling, among others.

There is also the challenge of exponential growth of farmer settlement as a result of population exploitation of critical infrastructure by the government and the investment drives of private- sector developers. Awogbade (1987) earlier noted that a vast portion of grazing routes have been converted to residential areas, by private housing and real estate developers. This scenario has continued to put pressure on available land material meant for grazing and farming, which of course is one of the reasons for frequent herder-farmers conflict in Nigeria.

Scholars have argued that Nigeria's attempt to confronting food insecurity using agricultural production strategies dates lead to unit

history. Erunke (2017) in his investigation of the nature of bad Akashi administrations, both military and civilian advice, have gleaned through a retinue of reforms in the section, these include among other things, the national accelerated food production programme, whose larger interest was designed to abolish import duties on agricultural equipment as well as import duties on critical agricultural sub-sectors. The Nigerian government has also attempted the introduction of Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the Green Revolution, the agricultural transformation agenda, aimed at not only increasing agricultural productivity and food security but also to enhance and promote agribusiness development expansion drive among the teeming Nigerian rural populace.

According to Sonny (2023) noted that the APC-led government's attempted to declare a state of emergency on food security recently. This measure is a fall-out of the incessant attacks by herders on farming communities and rural farming settlement across the country (including north central geopolitical zone). Undoubtedly, the heightened and increasing attacks on farmers by not only bandits, but also the clashes between herdsmen and farmers have had untold influence on food availability in the region and elsewhere. This step taken by the federal government, to Sonny (2023) appears inadequate, and therefore has hardly addressed the challenges of agricultural production and food security. According to Critics, Nigeria should have gone beyond window-dressing approaches in her efforts to address insecurity, which appear to be the major driven of food shortage, citing instances from major food supplies globally it has been reported that developed countries such as United States, China, India, etc.; have for several decades, formulated strategic plans and policy frame works that have seen millions of their citizen out of fond shortages, insecurity, starvation and excruciating multidimensional poverty. All of these have been made possible using appropriate and pro-poor models and guaranteeing best practices in agriculture and food production for instance, Sonny (2023) opine that China, which is the largest food producer globally has achieved this feat through a combination of several strategies. These strategies, among other cement in agricultural technology through effectives use of improved agricultural seedlings, farm inputs, mechanization and lot automation of agricultural production practices and zero-tolerance for corruption.

In another dimension, it has been reported that China has not implemented modern farming techniques, such as formulation of improved on irrigation system. Fertilizer and pesticides, provision of beans and genuine supports to farmers free from undue political interference. The Chinese government has also increased her drive for research and development to improve crop yield introduction of high-yielding crop varieties. The same case is time of India and the USA. The duo has gone several steps ahead to implement policies and programmers in the agricultural sector namely, enhancement of provision of agricultural subsidies, credit facilities and agricultural extension agencies; enhancement of precision agriculture, mechanization as well as deliberate use of agricultural biotechnology. More, these countries in a view to upscale food security, have gone ahead to create well-developed infrastructure for food storage, transportation and distribution to final consumers in their various communities across the nation.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined herder's farmers conflict in the north-central geographical zone of the Nigeria state using agricultural development strategies as a point of departure. The paper is a theoretical exploitation of some of the issues that were continued to initiate against food security in Nigeria generally and particularly in some part of the North Central State such as Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Niger State, among others. One major discovery in this work is the fact that banditry and undue clashes by herdsmen with peasant farmers in a major undoing in the propagation of conflict and food shortage in the country, the study uses social conflict thesis as theoretical stand prompt to underpin the increasing conflict revenging the affected geopolitical entities. The theory presupposes that at the heart of divergent political social economic and cultural ideology lies the cattle for supremacy and conflicts in every society. The study X-rayed some of the strategies that have been applied by other nations of the world and the level of success recorded. The attempt is to see how the Nigeria state and some of the conflict zones can interline these strategies so as to ensure maximum success in militating not only insecurity and conflict but majority to guarantee adequate food security.

In line with the finding made in this study the Nigerian state can achieve greeter feats given that conflicts are inimical to socio-economic and human development and security. In view of this the following recommendations, if properly deployed could assist in Nigeria guest to food sufficiency and peaceful coexistence among its teeming population. They are the following:

First, there is a need to re-configure the nation's security architecture, employ the necessary political will to trade insecurity and address the lingering squabbles between transhumant herder and famers in the country. The growing policing of human life and the politics of grand standing, sectionalism, stereotypes and religious bigotry should be discarded while insecurity should be seen and treated as collective pandemic rather than sectional interest.

Again, there is the need to confer and discuss further the plan to effectively ranch live stocks-cattle's, goats and sheep, by the government into confined environments while essential supports are created for the herders in their respective reaches this is to avoid encroachment into farms and cause destruction to crops.

Moreover, the Nigeria government must as a matter of responsibility engage in research and development in the agricultural sub-sector in the country. This can be done by allocating adequate resources to agricultural seed production and monitoring the level of compliance by beneficiaries to ensure probity and accountability.

Training and retraining of farmers can also be of help in a bid to improve food security. Farmers should be trained in modern agricultural practices and effective use and application of technology go as to improve inter- personal skills, thereby improving on productivity and better-quality produce. Encouraging farmers to employ modern machinery and agricultural equipment such as factors, harvesters and irrigation system can no doubt improve food production and food supply. There is also the need to ensure that farmers in north central regions can easily access credits out zero interest rates from banks and other financial institutions in

the country. This will enable farmers invest in modern farming techniques for crop production, animal breeding, hatchery, building of silos, purchasing of improved variation of crops and animals, among others.

Government should also encourage and enhance private-sector participation and investment in agricultural sub-sector. Government can apply soft-landing strategies such as granting of tax incentives, land reforms, granting market access and development of efficient market linkages nationally or across international boundaries.

The Nigerian government can also improve on its policies on food production through enhanced diversification, invest in agro-processing and adding value to existing crops produced locally. Some of the produce such as groundnut, millet, soybeans, sesame seeds, tomatoes if allowed to experience value-addition can further enhance the nations agricultural value chains, thereby enhancing adequate food production and food security.

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AN ASSESSMENT OF PRIVATE PRACTICE IN PUBLIC TIME IN NIGERIA

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KEY WORDS

Private practice, Public time and Organization..

ABSTRACT

The issue of public or government employees using office time for personal purposes has become common practices in public organizations' settings. The aim of this paper is to provide a thorough understanding of the phenomenon of private practice in public time in the context of public service in developing countries, with focus on Nigeria. This is with a view to ensuring an efficient and effective public service to help translate government policies to meaningful actions for the benefits of the citizens in the country. The specific objectives were to conceptually assess forms of private practice in public time, prevalence of private practice in public time, drivers of private practice in public time, consequences of private practice in public and curbing private practice in public time. A theoretical approach is employed in the exploration of the subject through library type of research. Assessment of various studies showed some divergence and indicated that public service employees' indulgence in private practice in public time is growing daily and could have implications for both employees and public organizations. The study recommends the need to increase wages in the public service to encourage workers to be dedicated to duty in order to discourage them from private practice in public time. On the other hand, there should be a development of the informal sector to accommodate other individuals in order to reduce dependence on the public sector employment which is fundamental in developing countries like Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

A common phenomenon among employees in the public service is their involvement in private practice in many developing and advanced countries (Ferrinho et al., 2004). On one side of the divide, the management, such a practice symbolizes a conflict of interest, while on the other, the employees, it is a coping strategy to improve income (British Medical Association, 2021: Guo & Parlance, 2023). The notion of the full-time civil servant exclusively dedicated to his/her public sector job is disappearing (Ferrinho et al, 2004).

The debate as regards private practice in public time continue to rage as to the desirability of those indulge in such a practice. There is evidence that private practices set up in public time especially in public hospitals tend to be a privilege geared towards senior, more experienced, consultants to attract and retain these high-profile professionals (Guo & Parlance, 2023; Queensland Government 2024). Though private practice in public time is more pronounce in the health (hospital) as a way to retain professionals (Cheng et al., 2013; Guo & Parlance, 2023). More worrisome is its possible effect on service delivery in public organizations and the society in particular. There are widespread perceptions that engaging in private

practice in public time can have significant negative effects; though other arguments support private practice in public time (Berman & Cuisson, 2004).

This paper examines private practice in public time. The objective is to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within the context of public service, particularly in developing countries. This is with a view to ensuring an efficient and effective public service to help translate government policies to meaningful actions for the benefits of the citizens in those countries (developing countries). In this context, it is hoped that management in the public service organizations and indeed, policy makers (government) will take appropriate steps to addressing the factors that predispose or motivate employees in the public service to engage in private practice.

The paper is theoretical in nature. However, it will form the basis for future empirical work by anyone interested in the subject. The first part is introduction. The remaining parts are structured as conceptual review of literature and conclusion.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Private Practice

Most authors on the subject provide different definitions of the term – private practice. These definitions appear to be contextual in nature. Mosby (2008) opined that private practice is the engagement in one's profession as an independent provider rather than as an employee. On his part, Hornby (2005:1155) explains that it is the fact of working on one's own or in a small independent company rather than an employee of the government or a large company. Badejobi (2007) defines private practice in the context of the 1979 Nigerian Federal Constitution. Thus, according to her, part 11 of the fifth schedule of the constitution indicates that private practice is the rendering or order to render to any other person (not being the employer or any other person entitled in the course of his official duties) to receive such services – any service relative to the profession concerned whether or not it is executed after normal working hours or on work free days, for money's worth or for any other valuable consideration. This means that any public sector employee who offers his professional service for money consideration or money's worth to anyone outside his official duty is involved in private practice.

However, we will differ slightly from this definition. Thus, we may refer to private practice as the engagement of a public service employee, in a personal business in his/her formal organisation or external organisation, not being part of his formal organisation (while still in public employment) for either profit or non-profit. Indeed, as would be seen later, not all private practice activities are commercially oriented. The benefit of this definition is that it is not restrictive, ambiguous and provides a lead way to the discussion on the topic - private practice in public time. Note also that we do not consider only those who are deemed to be professionals.

The time of employment covers both the normal working hours and the total working life of the individual in the public organisation. We

exclude individuals who are formally in private organisations either as employees or self-employed, and have other jobs in the public service. Also, nothing suggests that this applies only to public health worker, though the latter is part of it.

However, Meriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary (2013) simply says that the term “public time”, is an objective time – time that is an objectively determinable order in which durations are measured and absolute presence is indifferent. This implies that public time is an identifiable period that is specifically determined over a certain range that governs activities or an activity. One can say that it is an institutional time/period within which activities are carried out – an ordered time period. This differentiates it from private time – time that is available to an individual determined by him subjectively (that is to say, subject to change). Formally, we may define public time as a dimension of period that is institutionally determined that can be taken as given. It thus becomes uncontrollable on the part of the other individual(s).

Most extant studies, for example, Ferrinho et al (1998); Dickey et al 2009), and Asma and Ahmed (2011) impliedly use the terms dual practice, multiple jobholding, or moonlighting. In this paper, private practice in public time is referred to as a phenomenon in which a full-time public service employee or worker engages himself or herself in a private or personal business for profit as well as nonprofit. This means that the practitioner may or may not derive additional incomes from the secondary employment to the incomes accruable from his primary job. Similarly, private practice in public time, dual jobholding or multiple jobholding here would be used interchangeably.

FORMS OF PRIVATE PRACTICE IN PUBLIC TIME

Private practice in public time can take on several forms. Eggleston and Bir (2006) noted that various forms of private practice in public time include:

Using public facilities to attend to private interest: When public offers use government facilities in their care for example, a computer operator in an office, uses the system to do private work at a profit during or even after office hours, this represents private practice in public time. Public officers also are known to use government vehicles for domestic assignments such as carrying their children to schools and or wives to markets and bringing them back.

Indeed, according to Eggleston and Bir (2006) and Biglaiser and Ma (2003), dual practice is not confined to physicians alone. They note that such a practice applies to other public officers such as public law enforcement officers working for private security firms or consumers, public school teachers offering private tutorial services, individual nonprofessional employees who are engaged in personal trading or other kinds of business services.

Public servants referring customers of their formal employers (governments) to their private businesses. In the case of physicians, they may choose to treat their own patients in government owned hospitals or refer government hospital patients to their own clinic (Biglaiser & Ma, 2003

Using government time to do private business: For example, some physicians are known to first attend to patients in their private clinics before reporting for work in their formal employment, while very skilled managers and technicians have private businesses offering services to clients during public time. But a report produced by the British Medical Association (2021), in the UK this privilege of private practice in public time especially in the hospital is based upon the consultant's ability, experience and references - and it must generally be approved by the hospital's Medical Advisory Committee

Engaging in noncommercial activities: This may include gratuitous or peer group social services such as women plaiting colleagues' hair, cracking of melon, gossiping, sleeping and playing all manners of games, drinking of beer, reading of novel, television viewing etc. This author has personally observed all these forms of activities taking place in several public institutions in the course of private visits at one time or the other.

Religious practices/worships: Particularly in modern times, it is being observed that religious activities are common phenomena in most public organisations for considerable periods in the course of official works.

PREVALENCE OF PRIVATE PRACTICE IN PUBLIC TIME

Although, private practice in public time is a common life feature in many countries of the world (Biglaiser & Ma, 2013; Ferrinho et al, 2004; Asma & Ahmed, 2011), official permit (legal authority) varies from some countries to another (Berman & Cuisin, 2004). In Nigeria, there are divided opinions in some circles over the prohibition or non-prohibition of private practice among some categories of public officers. For example, some public university law lecturers, contend that they are exempted from the provisions of the 1979 Federal Constitution that restricts private practice (Badejobi, 2006). These groups and their supporters are relying on the 1992 Regulated Profession (Law lecturers Exemption) Decree promulgated by the military in the wake of mass exodus of some professionals, to abroad when the government of the day tried to enforce the provision of the law (now, an Act) (Ketefe, 2008).

The other opinions say that the Decree frequently being referred to as the basis for argument in favor of private practice by some categories of individuals is ousted by the 1999 Nigerian Federal Constitution. Indeed, the 1979 constitution provision on private practice by all public officers is repeated in the 1999 constitution (as amended). Both opinions are contained in varying responses by samples of law lecturers in some Nigerian public universities in an interview conducted by Ketefe in 2008. A question then arises 'Which law is supreme in regulating private practice among public service employees in the country?' According to Ketefe, the issue of whether law lecturers could engage in private practice or not, is settled by the Fifth Schedule of the 1999 Nigerian Federal constitution – which is in the negative (that is, the section prohibits them since the constitution is supreme).

Part 1 section 2(b) of the fifth schedule of the code of conduct for public officers in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, bans public officers from carrying out private practice apart

from farming (Badejobin, 2007). The section states as follows: "Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing paragraph, a public officer shall not, except where he is not employed on full-time basis, engage or participate in the management or running of any business, profession or trade, but nothing in this subsection shall prevent a public officer from engaging in farming". This provision notwithstanding, many professionals (for example, lawyers, teachers) including other public sector officers can be said to still engage in private practice while in public employment. We contend therefore that law lecturers in public universities are prohibited from engaging in private practice.

Berman and Cuisin (2004) indicate that private practice in public time is legal and thus prevalent in countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Poland, Egypt, Kenya and Mexico; but not sure in Zambia, just to mention a few. In Germany, there is evidence of private practice in public time. Rich and MacGuire (1999) point out how physicians, for example, admit patients into their private hospitals, charge them fees and then reimburse public hospitals.

At the individual levels, the phenomenon is widespread among the following groups of workers (Biglaiser & Ma, 2003):

Public law enforcement officers. These officers even while they are in public employment, offer private services to other security firms.

Public school teachers offering private tutorial services or working for private test preparation firms.

Academicians in public universities consulting for private firms and the government.

Business professionals: These are managers in public employment who offer private consultancies or work for other private agencies (Asma & Ahmed, 2011).

Engineers who are in public employment but have their own workshop and do consultancy services for other firms.

DRIVERS OF PRIVATE PRACTICE IN PUBLIC TIME

Many studies have been done by a number of researchers on the motives or underlying reasons why some public sector employees engage in private practice. Biglaiser and Ma (2003) studied moonlighting activities of public service physicians in the United States of America; Berman and Cuisin (2004) examined multiple public-private jobholding of health care providers in developing countries; Theisen (2006) explored multiple jobholding in Africa using Tanzania as a reference point. Dickey et al (2009) also carried a study in the United Kingdom to find out why public officers engage in private practice. Although their researches focus primarily on the physician's dual practice, we contend that there are no fundamental differences between the employment conditions of public service employees call them lawyers, teachers, pharmacists, engineers e.t.c and the physicians, particularly in developing countries. This point is already highlighted in the ongoing discussions (see Biglaiser & Ma, 2003, Eggleston & Bir, 2006).

There are thus varieties of drivers/motives for practice by employees in the public service (Asma & Ahmed, 2011; Ferrinho et al 1998; Ferrinho et al 2004; Chue, 2007; Theisen 2006; Dickey et al, 2009)

The drivers are examined as following:

Pecuniary Motive. One of the frequently cited causes of private practice by public employees is the need for the workers to earn extra income to support their living(British Medical Association, 2021). This is also referred to as coping strategy. Ferrinho et al (1998), observe that monthly public sector salaries are well known to be grossly inadequate in many African countries (but also a common feature in the world over). The employers deliberately offer lower wages since they believe that they can provide incentives for employees' experience through regular training as a compensation for the low wages.

Lerberghe et al (2002), in a survey conducted among a sample of workers (physicians) from various low and middle-income countries, note that dual practice would generate additional 50 to 80% to their public sector salaries. However, this pecuniary motive to engage in private practice by public service employees is strongly criticized by Asma and Ahmed (2011). In their analysis of the dynamics of moon lighting in Pakistan, they observed that those who engage in secondary jobs to earn extra income almost earned the same amount of money as those who do not. We also observe that the introduction of minimum wage in Nigeria few years ago have not discouraged public service employees from engaging in private practice.

However, it is to be noted that the minimum wage in Nigeria is not across the board and even then, it is marginal to have any desirable effect on the beneficiaries.

Hour(s) constraint: This is the earliest and traditional view of why private practice occurs among some categories of public sector personnel. It is based on the dynamics of the labour market. According to this explanation, there are individuals who ordinarily would want to work longer hours but are constrained institutionally. In order to maximize their utility (satisfaction) through obtaining higher incomes in addition to their current jobs, they now decide to engage in a secondary job (Moses, 1962; Perlman, 1966).

Berman and Cuisin (2004), however differ on this driver of private practice in public time. To them, practically, there may not be monitoring of actual hours worked and a relationship between hours worked and payment of workers. However, the hour(s) constraint may be relevant in the developed countries where there is strict control on working time for individuals and hence, individuals who prefer extra time for extra income, would decide to engage in dual job practice. But whereas in the developing countries such as Nigeria, the same cannot be said to be true where public service workers do not have sufficient time to engage in meaningful extra jobs, even when they choose to. For example, the institutional time of opening for work is fixed for 8 O' clock in the morning and closure, 4pm in the evening; some closing unofficially 5pm and beyond. It is unlikely that any substantial benefit would be derived from engaging in private practice in public time.

We observe that, in spite of this obvious limitation on the part of the public sector workers in Nigeria, in terms of workers (teachers, physicians and lots more), still take out time during the working hours to engage in private practice as evidenced in their lateness to work, absenteeism, and irregularity at work. Perhaps further research would be required to validate this observation.

New skills and experience: Private jobs can be used by workers to gain experience and learn about new occupations or techniques (Chue, 2007). Individuals are willing to engage in a second job in order to obtain additional skills and experience beyond the scope of their primary job(Brekke & Lars, 2006; Garattini & Padula, 2018). This applies to a number of professionals such as physicians, teachers (lecturers in higher institutions) just to mention a few.

Entrepreneurial opportunity is a factor for an individual to hold or seek a private job in public employment, particularly, in the developing countries (Dickey et al., 2009; Panos et al, 2009; Theisen, 2006; Guarigha & Kim, 2006). In Nigeria, where public service jobs no longer offer prosperity, there is the likelihood that this is a factor for individuals in the public service to engage in private practice in public time.

Insurance device against job insecurity in the primary job. To diversify human capital as well as hedge against unemployment, employees who perceive job insecurity in their primary job may decide to engage in private practice in public time (Pouliakas et al, 2009)

If eventually, they are thrown out, they become full employees as well as employers in their secondary (now, primary) jobs. This is closely related to the entrepreneurial opportunity just imagined.

Job heterogeneity. Also known as job portfolio motive, individuals may derive different satisfaction from primary and secondary jobs that are dissimilar. Some jobs offer safety, comfort while others do not. Thus, people may want comfort in the secondary job, for instance, a good environment.

CONSEQUENCES OF PRIVATE PRACTICE IN PUBLIC TIME

We may examine the consequences of private practice in public time specifically at three levels: Individual (the practitioner), organisation (the Government as the employer) and the public service beneficiaries (the society).

The International labour Organization (ILO) (2004) identifies the consequences of private practice in public time at the individual level as follows:

Provides the practitioner(s) with supplementary incomes.

On the long run, dependence on primary job is de-emphasized. This (notwithstanding the observation of Asma & Ahmed, 2011) increases the income of the practitioner.

There is diversification of work activities. When repetitive tasks are performed in the primary job, then, engaging in private practice may widen the scope of work – this may broaden the skills of the individual.

Independence/personal fulfillment. If the private job is connected with the workers' hobby or other personal interests, then, the individual may be fulfilled – doing what he is interested in (even if the earnings are lower). The foregoing presents the positive consequences of the individual.

Personal inconveniences (if on-call duty). According to ILO, workers may be called on to work at any time and thus, may be prevented from adequately planning their domestic or other responsibilities.

High expenditure of time. There is also a probability of spending too much time (and money) to organize movement between primary and the secondary job.

AT THE ORGANIZATION LEVEL:

There is conflict of interest. The Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2003:14, in Checkaya, 2009), says that in the context of the public service, a conflict of interest involves a conflict between the public duty and the private interest of a public officer, in which the public officer's private capacity interest could improperly influence the performance of his/her duties and responsibilities. The ILO (2004) therefore contends that there is a possibility of conflicts between the demands of an individual worker's primary and secondary jobs. This implies a possible divided loyalty on the part of an individual worker towards the organisation. This will possibly limit the attainment of the organizational objectives.

Potential negative health impacts: Long hours of work, resulting from dual job holding is possible of generating negative impact on the worker, which in turn could lower productivity. This goes to affect the contribution of the worker in the primary organisation.

Absenteeism and job shirking of the practitioners in public service: This could result from workover load and other extracurricular activities. Since the affected individuals are subtly protected by their extra jobs (particularly in the case of those with pecuniary motives), the likely tendency would be for them to be lackadaisical in their first jobs.

Incentives for corruption: This may derive from the safety needs of the practitioner for their primary jobs; thus, they could be tempted to bribe whoever is their boss. Often time, reports reveal ghost workers in some public establishments in some developing countries including Nigeria.

Exploitation of public clients: The fact that dual job holders have opportunities to woo clients from public organisations that they (dual job holders) have primary employment, to their private (secondary job), such public clients are charged higher fees (rents). This phenomenon is observed to characterize most physicians (and other individuals) that engage in dual holding. This has the potential to hindering the smooth provision of social services to a nation's citizenry. This is because the poor may not afford to pay such higher fees.

Brain-drain: There is brain drain from the public sector to private sector. The resultant effect is a lack of access to quality of public services, especially in the health (and the education) sectors,

particularly in the developing countries. In recent time, there is a growing trend among some individuals in public service in Nigeria to seek higher pay in the financial and technological sectors. Such practice no doubt would deplete highly experienced personnel in the public service. Furthermore, we observe that frequent strikes (which are traced to low remunerations and other forms of incentives in public universities) among lecturers and non-lecturers are further impetus to brain-drain away from the public service. This is by way of seeking extra income-yielding jobs outside their primary engagements.

CURBING PRIVATE PRACTICE IN PUBLIC TIME

Our analysis suggests that many of the drivers of private practice in public time stem from institutional factors (whether they be hour(s) constraint, pecuniary need or a transition to self-employment). As a professional phenomenon (health perspective), writers for example, Berman and Cusion (2004) recommend a policy that should harmonize the interests of health workers in public service (their primary job) and those of health workers in the private sector. To this end, government should increase the benefits to these professionals while attempts should be made to reduce the costs that may result from this. Biglaiser and Ma (2004) recommend price fixing so that there would be no incentives for dual jobholding. However, this may not be of general application since there is no uniform pricing in all the sectors of the public service where private practice in public time thrives. As Gonzale (2004) observes, price fixing can lead to poor service delivery by the physicians and other health workers. As a general phenomenon, evidence points to a paucity of literature on curbing private practice in public time (Eggleston & Bir, 2006). However, in addition to our recommendation at the end of the discussion, we request further studies to unfold various options for tackling this phenomenon.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper focuses on private practice in public time. This phenomenon is widespread mostly in the developing countries like Nigeria compared to developed countries like United Kingdom (UK). Although, not every public service worker engages in private practice. However, the activity is common among individuals such as health personnel, the judicial workers, the academicians, professional managers, technicians and other professionals. With or without permit, it flourishes, primarily as a result of the need to earn more incomes from a secondary job, acquire knowledge and experience, hedge against possible job loss and transit to self-employment. The consequences of this phenomenon are multifaceted – negatives and positives – which cut across the individual practitioner, the organisation (public sector organisation in which the individual holds the first job) and then, the society. At the individual level, more saddled responsibilities may incur additional expenses (in terms of attending to one job or the other), although extra incomes could be obtained to ameliorate the lower regular income from the primary job. Besides, the individual has a platform to transit formally, to self-employment.

On the other hand, the organisation may suffer the shirking of responsibilities of the private practitioners; nevertheless, by the

engagement of the employees in private practice while in public employment, more knowledge is acquired which can be used in the formal organisation. The society may suffer a negative consequence from dual job holding – exploitation of the citizenry by the practitioners; however, it benefits from better services which are not available in the public service. Thus, private practice in public time has become prevalence that needs urgent attention in order to ameliorate the practice.

The paper recommends as follows:

All tiers of government, ministries, agencies and departments should maintain time keeping and management of staff in and out of offices at regular interval. The time keeping should commence right from the security post or entrance gate of government establishments and should be closely checked by the heads of departments regularly.

Salaries of public service should be increased to encourage workers to be dedicated to duty, thus discouraging them from private practice in public time

The informal sector should be developed to accommodate other individuals to reduce their dependence on the public sector employment.

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KWAMEH NKRUMAH'S VISION ON PAN- AFRICANISM: RECONCILING THE DREAM OF AFRICAN UNITY WITH 21ST CENTURY REALITIES

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ABSTRACT

Kwame Nkrumah's saw Pan-Africanism as a method to develop a collective strength that might subvert global power relations, in addition to being a way to show unity. However, there are difficulties in balancing Nkrumah's Pan-African ambition with the realities of the twenty-first century. The idea of a united, centrally administered Africa faces challenges in the modern world, which is marked by regional economic blocs, globalization, and a more varied set of political and economic priorities among African nations. New strategies are needed to address intra-African tensions, promote political unity, and integrate the economy. Furthermore, African nations are also subject to additional external pressures as a result of problems like China's ascent and the changing nature of the global economy. Pan-Africanism needs to adjust to the shifting geopolitical and socioeconomic landscape in order to bring Nkrumah's vision into line with current circumstances. This adaptation might entail upholding individual governments' sovereignty while promoting closer regional collaboration through organizations like the African Union (AU). With programs like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the focus on economic cooperation may also help to advance the unity Nkrumah envisioned in a more practical, contemporary way. Furthermore, in order to guarantee that Pan-Africanism is an inclusive and unifying ideology, it is still imperative that African diasporas be included in this vision. Ultimately, a balanced strategy that honors both the historical aspirations of African unity and the current need for adaptability, autonomy, and responsiveness to changes in the world is needed to reconcile Nkrumah's vision with the difficulties of the twenty-first century.

INTRODUCTION

Kwame Nkrumah's vision of Pan-Africanism was based on the principles of African unity, freedom, and self-determination. Nkrumah believed only through collective action and solidarity could Africa effectively combat legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and external exploitation. His vision of a united Africa with a strong central authority capable of driving development, fostering inter-African cooperation, and standing as a global force, was an ambitious and transformative one (Ajom, 2006; Nurain & Abdulyakeen, 2024).

However, Nkrumah's Pan-African goal has faced several obstacles in the twenty-first century due to regional diversity, global geopolitics, and economic interdependence. Efforts to achieve political unification and economic integration are complicated by the complex array of national interests, economic inequities, and sovereignty concerns that characterize the African political scene today. Furthermore, the framework in which African unity must be pursued has changed due to external factors such as shifting global power dynamics, China's increasing influence in Africa, and shifting global trade dynamics (Michelle, 2015; Samuel, 2018).

The main challenge, in light of these complexity, is to reconcile Nkrumah's Pan-African vision with the realities of Africa in the twenty-first century. How might Nkrumah's vision of a united, independent Africa be modified to reflect the political, economic, and cultural reality of the continent today? This study necessitates investigating how Pan-Africanism might develop to stay relevant in the modern, globalized world while tackling the urgent problems of African economic growth, political stability, regional integration, and sovereignty. The task at hand is upholding the fundamental principles of Nkrumah's vision while developing a workable, inclusive, and flexible framework for African unification in the twenty-first century.

The desire to overcome the historical legacy of colonialism, exploitation, and division has long been the driving force behind the great goal for African unification. Proponents of this vision, including Kwame Nkrumah, highlighted the necessity of an independent and united Africa, where social, political, and economic integration would open the door to wealth and freedom. The realities of globalization, technological development, and changing geopolitical dynamics, however, offer both opportunities and obstacles for achieving this ambition as the twenty-first century progresses.

Africa is a continent of many countries with distinct political structures, economic environments, and cultural identities rather than a single, monolithic entity in the modern world. The continent's potential to construct a united future is shaped by a number of factors, including economic inequality, regional conflicts, and the influence of outside powers. Notwithstanding these obstacles, the demand for African unification is still as urgent as ever, calling for a revised strategy that can balance Nkrumah's ideals with the demands of the modern, globalized world. In order to ensure that the continent advances toward greater cohesion, self-determination, and shared prosperity in the twenty-first century, this study examines how the ideal of African unification might be reinterpreted and modified to meet current issues. The specific objective are:

Comprehending Nkrumah's views on economic integration, African unity, and independence.

Examining how the political, social, and economic circumstances of Nkrumah's era influenced his Pan-African vision.

Examining how Nkrumah's ideas fit or clash with contemporary Africa's political, economic, and cultural landscape.

Outlining how Nkrumah's vision and Pan-African principles might be modified to accommodate 21st-century demands.

THE ORIGINS OF PAN-AFRICANISM

Beginning with the American declaration of independence in 1776, pan-African thought first emerged in the new world and developed over the course of the century. It was a response to the racial ideologies that characterized the abolitionism era and the mistreatment of Black people (Eseube, 1978). The Afro-American was viewed as a lower-class person in the new world, especially in the United States, because of his infirmities. Although the American Revolution was founded on the premise that "all men are created

equal," the settlers refused to apply this "self-evident truth" to the most egregious human injustice, negro-slavery. This is not to dispute that, even before the revolution, Philadelphia Quaker Anthony Benezet and other donors took advantage of every chance to highlight the wrongs of slavery. Additionally, anti-slavery groups were established, such as the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, which was founded in 1787 and is the oldest organization of its sort in the world. Benjamin Franklin served as its president. Similar to this, throughout the revolution, individuals like John Jay, the Confederation's Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and George Mason, a co-author of Virginia's constitution, actively pushed for the abolition of slavery (Eseube, 1978).

However, the term Pan-Africanism was first used at the start of the twentieth century by two African-Americans, Henry Sylvester Williams of Trinidad and William Edward Burghardt DuBois of the United States, at a number of Pan-African congresses that were primarily attended by scholars of African descent from the New World. Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement made a significant contribution to Pan-Africanism and African nationalism (Nkrumah, 1975).

The first pan-African congress was held in Paris in 1919. The French Prime Minister at the time, Clemenceau, was asked what he felt about the congress's holding at the peace conference. "Don't advertise it, but go ahead," he said. The concept was so bizarre that it appeared unreal, but it might have been harmful at the time. Attendees included fifty-seven representatives from the United States, West Indies, and African Colonies. The creation of a code of law for the international protection of African natives was one of the many proposals they drafted (Nkrumah, 1961). In 1921, the second Pan-African conference took place in London. One hundred and thirteen (113) delegates gathered, and the British government at the time was tolerant. "The absolute equality of races, physical, political, and social is the founding stone of the world and human advancement," according to a declaration to the world drafted during the closing session (Nkrumah, 1975).

The third conference was still convened in London in 1923. One resolution that was passed called for Africans to have a say in their own governments and to have access to land and its resources. We were starting to grasp the political dimension of social justice. However, despite DuBois's and others' efforts, growth was sluggish, and the movement lacked funding and members (Nkrumah, 1962).

After 208 delegates attended the fourth Pan-African convention in New York in 1927, the movement appeared to wane for a while. The International Africa Service Bureau, the precursor to the Pan-African Federation, was established in 1937 as a non-party organization. It sought to foster cooperation between Africans and others who shared its goals in order to advance the unity and well-being of African peoples and peoples of African origin worldwide (Nkrumah, 1975).

The fifth congress took place in Manchester, England, from October 15 to October 21, 1945. At this juncture, the congress summoned the colonies' professional and intellectual elites to remind them of their obligations. Pan-Africanism and African nationalism truly found tangible expression at this particular assembly. For the first time, it

was emphasized that a strong, well-organized movement was essential to the success of the African struggle for national independence. A clear course of action was decided upon. In essence, the demand for constitutional amendments granting universal suffrage was at the heart of the action plan. The Gandhian strategy of non-cooperation and non-violence served as the foundation for the tactics to be used. That is, economic boycotts, civil disobedience, and labor withholding. Depending on various conditions, the emphasis varied from one territory to another. However, the ultimate goal remained the same: national independence followed by African unification. Nkrumah (1975) matched the narrow goals with broader viewpoints.

After the conference concluded with a consensus on the Pan-African Nationalism platform, a working committee was established, with Nkrumah serving as secretary and DuBois as chairman. Following the relocation of the congress headquarters to London, the West African National Secretariat was also founded (Nkrumah, 1975).

Nkrumah's Contribution to Pan-African Thought

One of the main proponents of Pan-Africanism and the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, saw political unification as essential to his vision for the continent's future. Nkrumah believed that Africa could achieve its freedom, overcome the effects of colonial control, and establish itself as a powerful player in the world by achieving political unification. His views on political unity went beyond merely bringing African governments together to create alliances; they also aimed to establish a single African federation that could represent and govern the continent as a whole (Hakim, 2018; Horare, 1996).

A federation of African republics was Nkrumah's ultimate goal for the continent. According to him, the only way to bring about political unification on the continent was to create a single African government, in which African countries would combine their sovereignty in important domains like economic strategy, defense, and foreign policy while maintaining local authority over other facets of governance. The divisions caused by colonial borders—which were arbitrary and did not represent the social, cultural, or historical reality of African peoples—would be eliminated by this federation. Encourage unity and self-reliance among all Africans so that they can speak with one voice on the international scene. To ensure that Africa can overcome the economic underdevelopment and exploitation brought on by colonialism, coordinate efforts to develop the continent's resources. According to Nkrumah, the African Federation would be based on the particular requirements and difficulties of Africa, but it would be modeled after other prosperous federations such as the United States of America or Switzerland.

An important step toward achieving Nkrumah's goal of political unification was the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Despite his strong support for the OAU, Nkrumah thought that its original emphasis on promoting political independence and preserving national sovereignty was too narrow (George and Clare, 2008). He maintained that the OAU ought to eventually develop into a political union in which African nations would collaborate more closely to establish a single administration.

The main goals of the OAU were to advance political collaboration and protect African governments' independence from outside threats as well as the lingering effects of colonialism and apartheid. Nkrumah, however, thought that this would not be enough to ensure Africa's peace and advancement in the long run. In order to maintain political unity, he promoted the establishment of a Pan-African government, which would include a Pan-African parliament and a continental military command to maintain security throughout the continent.

Nkrumah's opposition to colonialism and neocolonialism served as a foundation for his desire for political unification. Due in large part to colonial control systems that were created to keep Africa dependent on the West, African nations continued to suffer political and economic difficulties after obtaining independence. To characterize the continued political and economic dominance that former colonial powers continued to exercise over African countries, Nkrumah created the term "neocolonialism." He thought that in order for African governments to achieve actual independence and escape neocolonial rule, political unity was crucial. In addition to helping African countries safeguard their resources, sovereignty, and development objectives, political unity would offer a framework for thwarting outside intervention, whether via military, economic, or diplomatic means.

The part African leaders played in furthering the cause of political unification greatly troubled Nkrumah. He believed that leadership and vision were just as important in the fight for political unity as policy. He promoted strong, forward-thinking leadership that would put African unity ahead of national interests. Nkrumah (1961) asserted that African leaders needed to put the continent's overall welfare ahead of their respective states' limited interests. He frequently attacked other African leaders for not adopting his ideas of federation and unity, claiming that their unwillingness to share sovereignty would keep Africa from attaining full independence and wealth.

In his well-known proposal, Nkrumah argued for the establishment of the United States of Africa, a continental federation in which African nations would be unified politically under a single administration with a common set of policies. His goal of Pan-African political unification would finally come to pass with this (Samuel, 2018). He maintained that Africa could only successfully confront the problems of poverty, underdevelopment, and external exploitation with such a cohesive political framework. In addition to representing Africa as a single, cohesive nation on the international scene, the United States of Africa would have a central administration that could coordinate defense, foreign policy, and economic planning initiatives.

Despite having a clear vision, Nkrumah had a difficult time convincing other African leaders to completely support political union. Fearing that their respective nations would lose authority over important decisions, many African leaders were reluctant to cede any degree of national sovereignty in favor of a federal administration. It was challenging to unify the interests of African nations due to their disparate political structures, economic circumstances, and international connections. The concept of a Pan-African government was opposed by certain leaders, particularly

those from more traditional or monarchical systems. Politics of the Cold War: African political dynamics were also shaped by the Cold War, which pitted the socialist East against the capitalist West. Nkrumah occasionally clashed with more Western-oriented African leaders due to his socialist policies. As a result, African political unification remained a pipe dream and Nkrumah's vision of a United States of Africa was never completely realized.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, Nkrumah's conception of Pan-African unification has had a significant influence on African politics. The African Union (AU), which took the place of the OAU in 2002, is a contemporary example of this concept. Although it does not yet have the centralized political structure that Nkrumah had in mind, the AU strives for greater collaboration among African states with an emphasis on political, economic, and social integration. Though attaining a completely united African political system is still a work in progress, many Pan-Africanists still adhere to the ideal of political unification today. Cooperative solutions to shared problems, including as peacekeeping, economic growth, and conflict resolution, are still sought for by the African Union and other regional organizations like ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). A key component of Kwame Nkrumah's larger Pan-Africanist program was his goal for political unification. According to him, Africa could only overcome the effects of colonialism and neocolonialism, attain economic independence, and forge a strong and unified continent by establishing a single political system. Nkrumah's call for political unity still has an impact on the African Union and Pan-African rhetoric, even though the concept of a United States of Africa or a federation of African states has not yet been fully realized. His theories offer a foundation for current initiatives to promote greater social, political, and economic integration throughout the African continent.

NKRUMAH ON ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Economic integration was strongly advocated by Kwame Nkrumah as a vital element of African unity. Because he felt that only through economic cooperation could African nations transcend the legacy of colonialism, attain self-sufficiency, and establish their strength on the international scene, his vision for economic integration was at the heart of his larger notions of African unity and freedom.

According to Abdulyakeen (2020), Nkrumah envisioned a unified African economy that would transcend national boundaries. Since the fragmented economies of recently independent African states were too weak to compete in the global market, he thought that the continent's economic unification was essential to its success. Nkrumah maintained that cooperation among African states was the only way to make the most use of the continent's natural resources, labor, and land. He believed that political unity could only be attained by economic unity.

The establishment of a Pan-African common market was one of Nkrumah's main economic theories. He advocated for the free flow of people, products, and services throughout the African continent by removing trade restrictions. African nations would be able to exchange resources, technology, and expertise as a result, promoting stability and economic prosperity. Additionally, the unified market would lessen Africa's reliance on international and former colonial

powers that have long taken advantage of its resources. Nkrumah placed a strong emphasis on centralizing economic planning for the continent as a whole. He felt that rather than being subject to the dictates of foreign interests or the whims of market forces, African economies needed to be planned and coordinated in order to attain development goals. In order to boost value-added production in Africa and lessen dependency on the export of raw materials, he promoted industrialization and the construction of infrastructure throughout the continent.

Nkrumah believed that the main force behind economic unification was the African state. He supported state-led development and thought that in order to make sure that integration was fair and advantageous to all countries, African governments had to be actively involved in the economy. In order to create a unified federation with a single currency, a common economic strategy, and a central authority to oversee economic activity, Nkrumah suggested that African nations cede some of their sovereignty. The notion of economic independence from the Western powers was central to Nkrumah's vision for economic integration. According to him, former colonial powers utilized Africa's economic fragmentation as a means of retaining control over the continent (Samuel, 2018). African nations could escape this economic exploitation by economic integration. The biggest barrier to true African independence, according to Nkrumah, is neocolonialism, which he characterized as the ongoing economic reliance of African countries on former colonial overlords. He thought that the only way for African countries to break free from neocolonial rule was through economic unification.

Nkrumah intended the OAU to serve as the foundation for more extensive economic cooperation, even though its founding in 1963 was centered on political unification and the abolition of colonialism and apartheid. He thought the OAU should eventually develop into a group that would support both economic integration and political unification throughout the continent (Michelle, 2015). Nkrumah emphasized in his book "Africa Must Unite" that without economic freedom, political independence would be pointless. In order to coordinate infrastructure, industrial development, and economic policies throughout Africa, he so campaigned for the establishment of Pan-African institutions.

Nkrumah acknowledged the necessity of regional collaboration even as he promoted continental economic unification. As stepping stones to greater African integration, he favored the establishment of regional economic blocs like the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and others. Nkrumah stressed the significance of upholding a more comprehensive Pan-African vision, though, because he was worried that these regional groups may become divided or controlled by the interests of a small number of strong nations. Nkrumah suggested creating a Pan-African Bank to help finance infrastructure development and economic initiatives throughout Africa. He thought that by reducing Africa's dependency on foreign banks and finance, such an organization would enable the region to take charge of its own growth. Another important element of Nkrumah's ambitions for economic integration was the building of infrastructure, including as roads, railroads, and telecommunications networks. He envisioned a network spanning

the entire continent that would connect African economies, improve trade, and spur economic expansion.

Many of Nkrumah's visionary plans on economic integration were not completely realized in his day. His vision was challenging to carry out because of the political and economic circumstances of the post-independence era, such as the Cold War and the division of African governments. Many African leaders opposed Nkrumah's call for a federation of African states because they were hesitant to cede sovereignty. Nkrumah's views on African economic unity are still relevant today. His vision of a single African economy is being realized through the African Union (AU), which replaced the OAU in 2002, and programs like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Although issues like political division, a lack of infrastructure, and economic injustice still exist, these initiatives concentrate on expanding commerce, lowering tariffs, and enhancing infrastructure.

NKRUMAH ON MILITARY COMMAND

Nkrumah thought that his larger vision for African unity and independence required both military unification and a unified African military command. He believed that in order to defend African states' sovereignty, fend off outside imperialist and neocolonial powers, and preserve peace and security on the continent, a single African military force had to be established. Rohio and Mutiso (1975).

Nkrumah thought that maintaining the independence and unity of the continent depended on an African military that was united. He believed that after a protracted and difficult struggle for political independence, African countries needed to protect their sovereignty from both internal and external dangers, many of which were caused by imperialist interests (Samuel, 2018). He maintained that rather than depending on former colonial powers or outside intervention, African states would be able to act collectively in the face of external threats if a united military command were established. Nkrumah envisioned an African military force that would coordinate the security and defense requirements of all African states and function under Pan-African leadership. The purpose of this force would be to prevent external powers from undermining Africa's recently achieved freedom.

Neocolonialism, which Nkrumah defined as the ongoing economic, political, and military dominance of African nations by foreign powers despite their official political independence, was a key component of his military strategy (Abdulyakeen, 2021). Nkrumah believed that maintaining military unity would shield the continent from imperialist nations, especially Western nations and erstwhile colonial overlords, who would continue to exploit and interfere. He thought that because African states had not coordinated their military response, the continent was exposed to the interests of neocolonial powers, who may use instability and violence to further their influence in Africa. According to Nkrumah, an African military command would assist stop foreign policies from being imposed on African countries and act as a check on foreign military incursions.

Nkrumah saw the Organization of African Unity (OAU), established in 1963, as a means of advancing unity and Pan-Africanism. Nkrumah advocated for the OAU to take a more active role in

Africa's defense and security, even if its primary concentration was on political and diplomatic endeavors. He supported the OAU's establishment of a collective military force capable of resolving disputes on the continent, whether they resulted from internal instability or external threats. In order to avert wars between African states, help stabilize war-torn nations, and guarantee that African nations could preserve their sovereignty without the need for external military assistance, Nkrumah envisioned a Pan-African military force.

In order to supervise a unified African military force, Nkrumah suggested the creation of an African High Command. The defense of the entire African continent would be guaranteed by this military command, which would also coordinate defense plans and create shared strategies (Mazuri, 2001). He viewed this as a component of a larger objective to establish a federation of African nations with a common military. In addition to providing defense, Nkrumah's idea of a Pan-African army aimed to foster unity among African nations. He thought that African nations could promote a stronger sense of solidarity and shared responsibility by coming together under a single military command. In order to guarantee that all countries, regardless of size, had an interest in the security and defense of the continent, the African High Command should ideally include members from every African state.

Nkrumah faced difficulties when he called for a single military. Many African leaders at the time were reluctant to hand up military control to a continental entity, even though he was a fervent supporter of Pan-African unification (Martin, 2012). There was opposition to the establishment of a Pan-African military force since many countries were hesitant to cede their sovereignty, especially when it came to defense and security issues. Nkrumah's idea of an African federation, which would necessitate the sharing of power and military resources, alarmed other African leaders. They felt that the political dynamics of the larger nations in the federation may have an impact on the collective security system and were worried about the possible loss of national control over their military forces. At first, the OAU prioritized diplomatic crisis resolution and peacekeeping over building a strong collective military defense system.

Even if it was difficult to create a single military command in his day, Nkrumah's vision of a Pan-African defense force still shapes debates about African security today. A contemporary attempt to form a Pan-African military force is the African Standby Force (ASF), which was established in 2003 under the auspices of the African Union (AU). It is intended to address crises and conflicts throughout the continent, including humanitarian efforts, peacekeeping missions, and conflict settlement. The ASF represents Nkrumah's vision of a cohesive African military reaction, albeit not being as strong or totally integrated as he had in mind. Although obstacles like political will, finance, and coordination still exist, the African Union (AU) and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) are still striving for increased collaboration in African defense and security in the twenty-first century.

Nkrumah's experiences fighting for freedom from colonialism and imperialism also influenced his idea of a single military leadership. He believed that the African liberation movements were a

component of a broader fight for freedom for all. Nkrumah believed that military collaboration was crucial to the defense of these movements and the larger cause of African freedom. He personally backed and helped liberation movements in nations like South Africa, Kenya, and Algeria. Thus, the notion of African nations standing together in their collective defense against imperialism was also associated with Nkrumah's support for military unity. He thought that in order to guarantee the success of the continent's liberation movements and protect the advantages made after independence was attained, African nations should cooperate.

A key component of Nkrumah's larger Pan-African ideology was his idea of military leadership. In his view, the preservation of African sovereignty, the avoidance of neocolonialism, and the advancement of peace and security throughout the continent depended on a single, cohesive African force under a single leadership. Although his vision of a Pan-African military force was not entirely fulfilled in his lifetime, his concepts are still relevant today in attempts to establish a more unified and cooperative approach to African security, especially through organizations like the African Union and its peacekeeping missions. Nkrumah saw political, economic, and military integration as essential to attaining true African independence, and his belief in the value of military unification supports this view.

PAN-AFRICANISM AND AFRICAN UNITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

A social and political movement known as Pan-Africanism promotes the unity and solidarity of all African countries, peoples of African heritage, and African diasporas. The fundamental tenet is the conviction that African peoples share a common history, culture, and destiny, with a focus on eradicating racism, exploitation, and colonialism. Pan-Africanism has been influenced historically by a number of turning points: Africans and people of African heritage began organizing internationally to confront racial injustice and seek equal rights in 1900 with the First Pan-African Congress, which was led by individuals like W.E.B. Du Bois. Clare and George (2008). Through the creation of the African Union in 1963, pan-African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah envisioned a united Africa that would eradicate the effects of colonialism and establish a powerful political, economic, and cultural bloc. In the twenty-first century, the idea of Pan-Africanism continues to be essential to the discussion of African integration and unification. Nonetheless, the movement has changed to reflect the opportunities and problems of the modern world.

Discussions on enhancing political unity and cooperation throughout the African continent are now part of Pan-Africanism. Greater political unity, peace, and security throughout Africa are still goals of the African Union (AU), which took the position of the OAU in 2002. Through programs like the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the African Standby Force, the AU seeks to address concerns including human rights, democracy promotion, and conflict resolution (Morika, 2011). Concerns about national sovereignty and political disintegration endure in spite of attempts. Although there are still issues like coups and civil conflicts, regional political unions like ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) have been active in maintaining peace. The 2021

implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) serves as an illustration of Pan-African economic unity. By promoting economic cooperation, lowering barriers, and boosting intra-African commerce, it might establish the largest free trade area in the world.

Pan-African philosophy has placed a strong emphasis on economic integration and shared prosperity. Africa's economy has seen significant development in the twenty-first century, with industries including technology, agriculture, and services expanding quickly (Acheoah, 2018). Africa still faces issues like poverty, unemployment, poor infrastructure, and economic reliance on outside forces despite encouraging growth. Moreover, there are glaring disparities among African nations. One important step toward achieving economic unification is the AfCFTA. By establishing a single market for products and services, it seeks to increase the competitiveness of African economies on a global scale. Initiatives like the Africa50 Infrastructure Fund and the African Development Bank are also aiming to finance and enhance industrialization and infrastructure throughout Africa.

Reclaiming African cultural identity, promoting pride, and combating the effects of colonialism have all been goals of Pan-Africanism (Martin, 2012). This element has broadened in the twenty-first century to include not just Africa's history but also its present and future. Native African cultures are frequently eclipsed by Western cultural domination in the media, education, and technology. Furthermore, unity can also be hampered by internal divisions based on cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. African culture is widely promoted by the continent's expanding entertainment sector, which includes Nollywood, Afrobeats music, and African literature. African languages, customs, and art can also be shared and revitalized through digital technologies. Pan-African solidarity is still based on the fundamental cultural principle of ubuntu, or humanity toward others.

New socioeconomic and human rights issues have emerged in the twenty-first century, including young unemployment, gender inequity, and the rights of marginalized groups, including LGBTQ+ people. Human rights violations, corruption, and authoritarianism continue to plague many African nations. Despite advancements, women's empowerment is still a major problem in many African countries. In the twenty-first century, Pan-Africanism promotes social fairness and the defense of human rights. Important tools that direct initiatives to solve social inequities throughout the continent are the Maputo Protocol (2003), which focuses on women's rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981). In Africa, there is also a burgeoning youth movement that promotes social innovation, leadership, and change.

Given that a sizable portion of individuals of African origin reside outside of the continent, mostly in the Americas and Europe, the African diaspora is crucial to Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism has expanded to encompass not only African countries but also those with African ancestry around the world. Identity concerns, discrimination, and a lack of direct participation in Africa's political and economic future are common problems for the African diaspora. Initiatives to strengthen ties between the African continent and the diaspora have been developed by the African Union. In sectors

including investment, culture, and education, initiatives like the Global African Diaspora Network and the African Renaissance and Diaspora Network (ARDN) seek to fortify relationships and provide reciprocal advantages for Africa and its international diaspora.

Africa has urgent environmental challenges in the twenty-first century, including deforestation, desertification, and climate change. In this context, Pan-Africanism places a strong emphasis on sustainable development and a coordinated approach to environmental issues. Despite having the lowest carbon emissions worldwide, Africa is most at risk from the consequences of climate change, including increased food poverty, floods, and droughts. In an effort to fight desertification and enhance livelihoods, African countries have started implementing collaborative methods for environmental sustainability, such as the Great Green Wall project in the Sahel. Utilizing Africa's renewable energy resources to combat climate change and promote sustainable development is another goal of the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI).

In the twenty-first century, Pan-Africanism is still a potent force for social, cultural, political, and economic change. Even if problems still exist, especially with regard to political division, economic disparity, and the maintenance of African identity, there are plenty of chances for advancement. A more affluent and integrated Africa is indicated by the African Union's initiatives, the AfCFTA's economic potential, the cultural revival, and the fortification of relations with the African diaspora. Pan-Africanism continues to be a key component in the global movement for Africa and its people to be united, independent, and empowered.

METHODOLOGY

The following methodology is used to provide a research approach for examining Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist vision and balancing his aspiration for African unification with the realities of the twenty-first century. This method would incorporate historical analysis, comparative studies, current assessments, and primary and secondary data. Nkrumah's writings, including "Africa Must Unite," "Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism," and other speeches and manifestos, are reviewed in primary sources. His thinking and vision will be directly revealed by these main texts. Scholarly studies, biographies, critiques, and historical assessments of Nkrumah's influence on Pan-Africanism are examples of secondary sources used in study. Works by well-known Pan-African academics, political analysts, and critics ought to be included as well. Research on contemporary Pan-Africanism, including the African Union (AU), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and other current Pan-African efforts, should be included. Examine their similarities and differences with Nkrumah's vision.

Historical Analysis (Chronological Approach) was used to comprehend how Nkrumah's perspective on Pan-Africanism was influenced by the historical background of African independence movements in the 1950s and 1960s. The success and failure of initiatives launched during Nkrumah's time, as well as how they were received by African leaders and citizens, were analyzed through a comparison and contrast of Pan-African initiatives. This was done in order to contextualize Nkrumah's vision within the

decolonization period, which saw the practical implementation of his ideas. Nkrumah's work in Ghana and his role in the establishment of organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) were examined, as well as how his vision was realized or limited in the political sphere. Thematic study also examines the themes of political unity in Nkrumah's vision, particularly his demand for an African federal government, by contrasting it with contemporary political integration mechanisms like the African Union and regional organizations. Analysis is done on Nkrumah's support for a Pan-African common market and his emphasis on economic self-sufficiency. How do his theories compare to those of the current AfCFTA and African Economic Community? Examine how this cultural unity is mirrored in modern-day Africa, especially in respect to diaspora ties, and why Nkrumah's concept of a single African identity that transcends national boundaries is important. Details of Nkrumah's criticism of imperialism and neocolonialism are provided, along with an analysis of the applicability of his theories of economic independence in the modern, globalized, neoliberal economy. By comparing and contrasting Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism with the theories of individuals like W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Julius Nyerere, comparative analysis also assesses how Nkrumah's vision differs from that of other Pan-Africanists. By contrasting Nkrumah's Pan-African beliefs with those of the African Union (AU), the African Continental Free Trade Area's (AfCFTA) economic reforms, and other contemporary Pan-African initiatives. In the context of Africa in the twenty-first century, highlight the projects' adaptation and difficulties.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Ghana's first president and a prominent proponent of Pan-Africanism, Kwame Nkrumah, had a vision of a unified Africa with a powerful continental government capable of bringing the continent together militarily, politically, and economically. He based his vision on the belief that African countries could only become really independent, prosperous, and globally relevant by presenting a united front. The United States of Africa, a federation of African states with a centralized administration that could speak with a single voice on the international scene and pool resources for the continent's collective advancement, was the focal point of Nkrumah's concept of continental government. Although there are significant variations in the organization and strategy for accomplishing those aims, the African Union (AU), which was founded in 2002 to replace the Organization of African Unity (OAU), shares many of the objectives and aspirations that Nkrumah outlined. The AU is a contemporary embodiment of Nkrumah's goal for political and economic unification, even though it is not a fully centralized continental government as he had in mind. Nkrumah's vision and the AU's current function are related in the following ways:

The AU did not fully achieve Nkrumah's vision of a United States of Africa with a powerful central authority. In the AU, independent African states maintain their independence while cooperating through continental structures, emphasizing political cooperation and a more flexible approach to unity. There is no one, overarching continental government or federal system as Nkrumah had envisioned; instead, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government and the Executive Council are the main decision-

making bodies within the AU. Nonetheless, the AU has achieved advancements in peacekeeping and political stability. Human rights, democracy, and governance concerns on the continent are addressed by programs such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the African Standby Force, a collective military force. Nkrumah's idea of African countries cooperating to maintain political stability and security is in line with these initiatives.

In order to lessen Africa's reliance on the West and create an economy that can support itself, Nkrumah underlined the importance of economic union. Through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the AU has made great strides in achieving Nkrumah's goal of economic unity. The AfCFTA was introduced in 2021 with the goal of establishing a single market for products and services, lowering tariffs, promoting economic cooperation throughout the continent, and facilitating intra-African trade. Nkrumah's goal of lessening division and establishing an economically cohesive Africa is in line with this. Additionally, Nkrumah's appeals for the mobilization of pooled resources for Africa's development are echoed by infrastructure-focused programs like as Africa50 and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

A continental security framework, which was part of Nkrumah's vision, was intended to cut across state borders and give Africa the tools it needed to protect itself from both internal and external dangers. Through the African Standby Force (ASF) and peacekeeping operations (such as in South Sudan, Somalia, and Darfur), the AU has worked toward this objective. The AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) is in charge of preserving peace and security, but it has come under fire for occasionally lacking the authority to take decisive action because of a lack of funding, political disputes, and the issue of national sovereignty. The AU's peacekeeping operations and regional security initiatives are a step in the right direction, even though it has not yet created the fully integrated continental military force that Nkrumah had in mind.

Nkrumah saw African unity as a cultural mission in addition to a political and economic objective. In order to foster togetherness, he promoted African identity, tradition, and values. The AU also supports Pan-African cultural and intellectual unification in the twenty-first century, emphasizing cultural interchange, education, and youth empowerment. The significance of creating a common Pan-African identity is emphasized by programs such as the African Cultural Renaissance. The AU's celebrations of African history, its attempts to combat inaccurate representations of Africa around the world, and its development of Pan-African networks all demonstrate its commitment to advancing African culture, legacy, and togetherness.

Nkrumah's plan, however, called for a federated structure with a powerful central authority. The AU, on the other hand, functions by means of collaboration amongst independent nations. Because decision-making frequently necessitates consensus and African nations maintain a high degree of political sovereignty, collective action is more difficult and takes longer. With a continental administration and armed force established shortly after independence, Nkrumah envisioned a more thorough and expedited process of integration. The AU has adopted a more measured

strategy, prioritizing diplomatic cooperation, economic integration, and peace and security. Many of the political realities of the modern world, such as national sovereignty and varied political systems, have made it challenging to carry out Nkrumah's lofty and utopian vision of African unity. More gradual growth has resulted from the AU's need to balance conflicting regional goals and national interests.

The African Union's objectives are still influenced by Kwame Nkrumah's vision of a United States of Africa with a powerful continental government. The AU is still striving for political union, economic integration, and collective security—all essential components of Pan-Africanism—even though it has not yet achieved Nkrumah's ideal of political federation and centralized administration. Nkrumah's legacy in creating a more cohesive and independent Africa in the twenty-first century is reflected in the AU's accomplishments, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and peacekeeping missions. But the AU's more measured, consensus-based strategy implies that Nkrumah's aspirational aim endures.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and African Union (AU) Reform:

Reforms within the African Union (AU) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are essential to continuous initiatives to advance political collaboration, economic integration, and Pan-African unity. However, as nations strike a balance between their dedication to regional and continental objectives and the need to preserve sovereignty and control over their own affairs, these endeavors frequently run afoul of nationalism inside African states.

One of the most ambitious initiatives to advance economic integration throughout Africa is the AfCFTA, which was introduced in 2021. AfCFTA aims to boost trade between African countries, which is currently low when compared to other regions (about 15% of Africa's total trade occurs within the continent). By facilitating the movement of capital, goods, and services, it will enable countries to access larger markets for their goods and thereby aid in industrialization in Africa. AfCFTA aims to improve the economic status of African nations internationally, decrease poverty, and generate job opportunities through the free flow of commodities and services.

By lowering tariffs, advancing free trade, and stimulating investment among African nations, it seeks to establish a single market for goods and services, expand intra-African trade, and accelerate economic progress. AfCFTA aims to improve the economic status of African nations internationally, decrease poverty, and generate job opportunities through the free flow of commodities and services.

AfCFTA has a lot of economic potential, but it also encounters opposition because of nationalist feelings and worries about losing sovereignty. This is because national governments might be hesitant to cede control of tariffs, which are a crucial tool for safeguarding homegrown industries and raising money for the government. African countries that are wealthier and more developed may worry that expanding markets may make their economies more vulnerable to competition from less developed states. Local companies and

sectors that aren't currently competitive on a continental level may suffer as a result. The desire to defend regional markets, customs, and enterprises is frequently a component of nationalism. Many African nations may be reluctant to completely embrace open borders and free trade if they think it will have a detrimental impact on their local jobs, industries, or agriculture.

In order to promote political, economic, and social integration throughout the continent, the African Union (AU) was founded in 2002 to replace the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (Samuel, 2018). To increase its efficacy and capacity to handle Africa's problems, the AU has worked to implement a number of changes over the years. The main AU reforms are: African nations are encouraged to embrace good governance, enhance human rights, and fight corruption through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). ASF, or the African Standby Force: One major focus has been the AU's attempts to create a system of collective security to deal with conflicts on the continent. The ASF is designed to be a military force that can respond quickly to crises and support peacekeeping efforts. To increase the efficiency and coordination of the union's operations, the African Union Commission (AUC) has been working to fortify the AU's central administration and decision-making mechanisms.

Nationalism within member states continues to be a major barrier to reform and integration, despite the AU's efforts to promote more integrated political and economic cooperation. African states frequently put their sovereignty ahead of the interests of the continent as a whole. Because of nationalism, governments are reluctant to accept legally binding decisions from continental or regional authorities or to give the AU too much power, particularly when it comes to political reforms or military intervention (Michelle, 2015). Some African states are reluctant to send troops outside their borders or to get involved in the internal affairs of other countries, which makes the AU's African Standby Force and peacekeeping missions difficult. Collective continental security is frequently subordinated to national concerns. Some African nations are reluctant to completely execute AU decisions, while others are ardent proponents of Pan-African objectives and AU reforms. The AU finds it challenging to proceed with significant reforms because of this inconsistency, especially in areas like peacekeeping, human rights, and democracy promotion.

In the context of Pan-Africanism and continental cooperation, nationalism in Africa has become a double-edged sword, notwithstanding its historical use as a force for freedom from colonial powers. Many African nations still have strong nationalistic traditions, which can lead to conflict between national sovereignty and continental unification (Anthony & James, 2011). Many African nations have strong attachments to their national identities, which are frequently based on historical, linguistic, and ethnic links. Opposition to regional integration or the concept of a Pan-African political union can occasionally result from this strong sense of nationalism. Nationalism frequently results in protectionist economic policies, whereby nations put their own resources and industries ahead of regional or continental collaboration. This is especially noticeable in nations with less diverse economies that use protectionist measures like tariffs to shield weaker industries. Because they are afraid of outside influence or involvement by

regional groups like the AU, many African nations would rather maintain sovereignty over their own armed forces and security programs. Nationalism manifests itself in the unwillingness to take part in collective military operations, like as those carried out under the AU's peace and security efforts. The political, cultural, and historical backgrounds of African countries are frequently varied. Nationalism associated with these particular contexts can lead to opposition to shared policies or group objectives, particularly when those policies are seen as a danger to national autonomy or legacy.

Many African politicians and institutions are attempting to find a balance between the conflicting forces of nationalism and Pan-Africanism. Among the actions are: progressive Integration Initiatives like the AU and the AfCFTA emphasize voluntary, progressive collaboration rather than imposing rapid political or economic integration. This allows nations to maintain autonomy over their domestic policies while still reaping the benefits of continental cooperation. Through multilateral diplomacy, the AU has attempted to promote communication among African nations, enabling them to voice their concerns and negotiate conditions that uphold national sovereignty while furthering shared objectives. African nations can also participate in international diplomacy that respects both their national interests and continental objectives through the Non-Aligned Movement and South-South Cooperation. In Africa, youth and civil society groups promote greater unity and progress as a group, particularly on social media and Pan-African forums. Future tensions may be reduced by this generational change in perspective, which places Pan-African solidarity above rigid nationalism (Abdulyakeen, 2021). Though nationalism still poses serious obstacles, the AfCFTA and AU reforms mark substantial advancements toward economic and political unification in Africa. Even though a large number of African nations are dedicated to the Pan-African vision, security concerns, economic protectionism, and sovereignty issues continue to be major causes of conflict. It is a delicate process that calls for political will and deliberate discussion to strike a balance between national interests and regional and continental aspirations. How well African governments are able to balance their nationalist feelings with the more general objectives of continental integration and prosperity will determine the destiny of pan-Africanism.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAN-AFRICANISM AND AFRICAN UNITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

AfCFTA and Economic Growth: An unprecedented chance for economic integration is offered by the African Continental Free Trade Area. If effective, it might boost Africa's negotiating position in international trade, help create jobs, and lessen poverty. Additionally, it might lessen the continent's reliance on foreign investment and markets.

Youth and Technology: Pan-Africanism greatly benefits from Africa's expanding youth population. Social media and growing access to technology have made it easier than ever for young people to work together internationally. Rapid dissemination of pan-African networks, movements, and ideas can enable the next generation to participate in the political, cultural, and economic future of the continent.

Regional Integration and Infrastructure Development: The foundation for further continental integration is being laid by regional initiatives such as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the East African Community (EAC). Enhancing communication and trade requires infrastructure projects like the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and pan-African rail and road networks.

Cultural Renaissance: Pan-Africanism can benefit from the current resurgence of African literature, film, fashion, and music. This worldwide cultural influence is a potent instrument for fostering a common African identity and bringing people together throughout the diaspora, as evidenced by the widespread appeal of Afrobeats, Nollywood, and African fashion.

African Diaspora Engagement: Pan-Africanism heavily relies on the African diaspora. With millions of people of African heritage residing all over the world, the diaspora's ties to Africa present chances for political, cultural, and economic cooperation. An important step toward greater unity has been taken with the AU's African Renaissance and its appeal for the African diaspora to be acknowledged as a component of the continent's destiny.

CONCLUSION

The African Union's objectives are still influenced by Kwame Nkrumah's vision of a United States of Africa with a powerful continental government. The AU is still striving for political union, economic integration, and collective security—all essential components of Pan-Africanism—even though it has not yet achieved Nkrumah's ideal of political federation and centralized administration. Nkrumah's legacy in creating a more cohesive and independent Africa in the twenty-first century is reflected in the AU's accomplishments, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and peacekeeping missions. However, it appears that Nkrumah's grandiose goal will remain a long-term ideal rather than an immediate reality due to the AU's more methodical, consensus-driven approach.

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POVERTY AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF PRESIDENT BUHARI ADMINISTRATION

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KEY WORDS

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined poverty and democratic consolidation in Nigeria: a study of president Buhari administration. In carrying out the study, the researcher posited 3 research questions and 3 research objectives. Adequate efforts were made in reviewing extant literatures. This paper adopts the theory of Structural Functionalism to guide the study. In the methodological details, the study chooses quantitative research design with the use of descriptive survey. The population of the study was drawn from 100 respondents in Edo state who are political analysts, policy experts, academics and beneficiaries of National Social Investments Programmes (NSIP) who had firsthand experience and knowledge of poverty and democratic practices in Nigeria during the Buhari regime. In the data analysis, descriptive statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 27 and the data were presented using frequency distribution, Pie chart and percentages. Based on the results, the study reveals that although some of the strategies adopted by the Buhari administration, such as the Npower program and cash transfers, have indeed achieved positive impacts on democratic participation, their impact has been limited in their contribution to democratic consolidation. Based on the findings, the study recommends among others that government should enhance mechanisms that ensure transparency and accountability in the disbursement of funds for poverty reduction. Independent auditing should be made mandatory, accompanied by public reporting, to minimize corruption and ensure equity in resource allocation.

INTRODUCTION

The complex socio-economic and political dynamics have kept poverty relevant as a high threat to Nigeria's democratic consolidations. Since 1999, with the restoring of democratic administration, successive regimes tried simultaneously to tackle some challenges related to reduction of poverty and democratic development (Odigbo & Udalla, 2022). President Muhammad Buhari started his administration in the year 2015, with a promise of far-reaching reforms which aimed in alleviating poverty burden

from the masses on the through a comprehensive social intervention programs and economic restructuring. Muhammed, (2021). The measures have however, fallen under critical scrutiny regarding effectiveness and their overall contribution toward democratic growth as poverty continues to persistently prevail.

The relation of poverty to democratic consolidation is complex, with economic privation undermining civic participation and weakening institutional frameworks, thus eroding public trust in democratic processes (Gillissen, et al, 2024). However, high levels of poverty

always results to voter disenfranchisement, or even the rise of authoritarian tendencies. While the interest of the Buhari administration in anti-corruption and economic policies is on the table, criticism has emerged regarding the efficiency of his strategies in poverty reduction and their impacts on democratic institutions.

The regime of President Buhari, introduced some poverty alleviation programs, including the National Social Investment Programmes comprising the N-Power Scheme and Conditional Cash Transfer (Ugwu & Okoli, 2021). While the intentions of the policies were good in lofty goals to give a lift to the lives of the commoners, for example, little of these plans had been effectively implemented as sustainable. From all intents and purposes, it would appear that there is some mismatch between policy formulation and actual delivery as evidenced by the high rate at which poverty seems to fly around. This may raise questions into the overall impact that these programs have on democratic consolidation.

Beyond this, democratic consolidation not only requires that elections be held regularly but also the entrenchment of democratic practices, such as accountability, transparency, and inclusivity (Paalo, et al, 2024). The persisting economic privation that the greater number of Nigerians had to endure during the Buhari administration galvanized public outrage, protests, and political apathy, which tended to further complicate the process of deepening democratic practices. The present study consequently intends to explore the relationship between poverty and democratic consolidation in Nigeria during the regime of President Buhari, in light of the fact that at least economic conditions make a difference in the best practice of democratic governance and levels of participation.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the democratic strides made by Nigeria since its return to civilian rule in 1999, poverty remains one of the most significant challenges that pose a serious obstacle to the nation's political and economic stability (Prince, et al., 2023). While the purpose of democratic consolidation is targeted towards the smooth functioning of political institutions and protection of citizens' rights, yet persistent poverty attempts to undermine the credibility and legitimacy of the democratic process (Dauda & Oyeleke, 2021). The poverty incidence in Nigeria has exceeded 40 percent of the nation's population (Prince, et al., 2023). This level of poverty has made the citizens to have some dissatisfaction with the government, weakened public trust and caused low levels of citizen engagement with democratic institutions. In this respect, persistent economic inequality presents a formidable threat to the consolidation of democracy and raises questions as to whether the Nigerian state has the capacity to make good on its promises for an economically inclusive growth and social justice.

Although President Muhammadu Buhari's administration came into office in 2015, promising among others, a fight against poverty yet little seemed to have been done with respect to some policy initiatives such as the Social Investment Programmes among other economic reforms. However, debates on such programs' ability to alleviate poverty have been highly contested. Critics further bemoan that government policies have not attempted in any meaningful way

to reduce the root causes of poverty at a time when it has gained increased acceptance among rural areas and marginal groups where poverty is most pervasive. It is also argued that the heavy reliance on short-term social welfare programs instead of long-term economic restructuring has raised many eyebrows, with a general perception in the majority that these are not enough to bring about real improvement in the lives of the average Nigerian (Prince, et al., 2023).

Besides, the inability to drastically reduce poverty has implications for democratic consolidation, as poverty breeds frustration, political disillusionment, and social unrest. These conditions create fertile ground for political instability that could undermine the country's democratic institutions and governance processes. This pervasive feeling of failure has contributed to declining confidence among the citizenry, as shown in the decreasing turnout in the recently conducted elections (Stanley, et al, 2024). As such, fostering a more stable and functional democracy becomes an uphill task. In this context, the present research tries to explain how poverty combines with democratic process in Nigeria during the regime of Buhari and also the effectiveness of Buhari's policies on poverty reduction in enhancing democratic consolidation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of this study is to examine the impact of poverty on democratic consolidation during the Buhari administration in Nigeria.

Specific Objectives:

1. To examine the nature of poverty reduction strategies implemented under Buhari's administration.
2. To identify the constraints that hindered the effectiveness of Buhari's poverty reduction policies.
3. To explore the challenges affecting democratic consolidation in Nigeria during Buhari's administration.

Research Questions:

1. What is the nature of Poverty Reduction Strategies utilized under Buhari's Administration
2. What are the constraints that hindered 'Buhari's poverty reduction policies?
3. What are the challenges facing Democratic Consolidation IN Nigeria Under Buhari's Administration

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Concept of Poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, which incorporates economic, social, and psychic elements; it is usually measured by the inability to satisfy basic needs like food, shelter, health, and education. It is very often operationalized through various income measurements such as the international poverty line set by the World Bank, which defines poverty as living on less than \$1.90 per day (Jolliffe & Lakner, 2023). However, poverty is not just a case of

financial deprivation but includes lack of access to basic services, opportunity for economic advancement, and a minimum amount of decent life. Poverty refers to the situation wherein people or communities do not obtain full participation in social, economic, and political life because of lack of resources. The 1995 World Summit on Social Development, held in Copenhagen, expanded the definition of poverty and acknowledged its cross-cultural and universal nature by stating;

“Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environment and social discrimination and exclusion. It is characterized by lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life... (see Mattes et al 2003:2)”

Besides its purely economic meaning, poverty takes deep social and psychic connotations. It is related to the social exclusion from opportunities which is capable of lifting people out of that status-availability such as quality education, health care, and social capital (Walker & Banteyba-Kyomuhendo, 2014). It socially engenders marginalization, excluding people and their groups from a voice or even less influence in public matters. It is important to understand that poverty can be manifested psychologically in feelings of helplessness, low self-esteem, and social isolation, further entrenching intergenerational transmission (Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017). This contributes to the social exclusion of the poor, placing them in a situation from which it is rather difficult to come out and, as an end result, be further entrenched in the poverty condition.

Generally, the incidence of poverty in developing countries like Nigeria is usually symptomatic and emanates from historical, political, and structural causes (Ejumudo & Ejuvwekpoko, 2013). Normally, high rates of poverty combine with political instability, poor governance, and unequal distribution of resources (Ejumudo & Ejuvwekpoko, 2013). It is in such contexts that the fight against poverty would include not only immediate alleviation but also the roots of economic injustice. Long-term solutions to poverty require comprehensive strategies that address economic growth and social development, so that all citizens are afforded equal opportunity to advance their well-being and create a more secure future for themselves and their communities.

TYPES OF POVERTY

Absolute Poverty: Absolute poverty is the complete absence of what is considered necessary for survival. Individuals experiencing absolute poverty lack basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothes, or cannot access such. It is measured by international poverty lines, with the World Bank threshold being less than US\$1.90 a day Hussain, (2019). Absolute poverty occurs and is most frequent in the most underdeveloped areas, where people do not have access to essential services.

Relative Poverty: One experiences relative poverty in the light that they do not have what is termed as the resources needed to maintain the average level of living. It is more indicative of the economic

cleavage in society, which they are part of and which fosters social exclusion or reduces their access to opportunities (Rank & Hirschl, 2015). This kind of poverty is generally associated with a lower level of participation in cultural, educational, and recreational activities and is an increasing contributor to social cleavage.

Situational Poverty: Situational poverty, on the other hand, occurs through temporary misfortunes like loss of employment and natural disasters and health-related crises, which in most instances are curable with the appropriate interventions and support mechanisms available (Dixon, 2012). When unaddressed, situational poverty may become chronic, particularly if the economy of a country is fragile.

Generational Poverty: The kind of poverty that passes from generation to generation among the same family or communities is known as generational poverty Rahman, (2019). Most often, this kind of cycle is perpetuated by a lack of quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for the people to get out of the vicious circle. This sort of poverty will actually require long-term systemic changes if it is going to be disrupted from perpetuating itself.

Urban Poverty: The rate of urban poverty is found within cities and towns and affects the disadvantaged sections of populations because of their high density of living, inferior quality of housing standards, and restricted availability of basic civic amenities (Baker, 2008). Most often, it occurs with informal occupation and squalid living. Some of the characteristic features of urban poverty include low-cost housing, criminality, and the absence or poor availability of important public utilities such as health and hygiene facilities.

Rural Poverty: Rural poverty refers to conditions related to the populations of areas with poor infrastructural development, far from markets and access to basic services. It is also very closely related to agricultural underdevelopment that causes geographic isolation (Fafchamps, 2003). The inability to have proper access to schools and health centers is also one of the factors that contributes to keeping rural poverty in this vicious circle of deprivation.

THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

Democratic consolidation is a process in which democracy becomes stable, resilient, and deeply engrained within the political culture of society. Linz and Stepan (1996) argue that consolidation requires institutional stability, rule of law, and broad-based acceptance of democratic norms among both citizens and political elites. The stability will ensure the survivability of democratic principles during political transitions and also against all external pressures.

Free, fair, and regular elections are considered one of the core elements of democratic consolidation. The elections must make real competition possible, through which the popular will concerning the winner is given free expression, uninfluenced by fraud, coercion, or manipulation (Mark, 2015). Thus, integrity of the electoral process cements public trust in democratic institutions and promotes accountability which in turn is considered indispensable for the survivability of democratic norms.

Another critical element is the assurance of civil liberty and political freedoms. Democratic consolidations cannot be said to occur without the entailment of rights connected with freedom of speech, assembling, and associations. These rights empower members to be increasingly active in the governance of the country and hold leaders answerable for malfeasances committed thereof.

Lastly, another imperative ingredient constitutes separation of the powers and further independence of judicial powers. Strong checks and well-balanced limitations prevent the propensity of power held by any powerful cluster hence enable relevant state institutions to work appropriately; a key influence to this is the development of accountability through 'checks and balances' (Kahan, 2015). The inculcation of civic education, public awareness, and active citizenship gives motivation toward sustainability of democratic norms and values. This will encourage participation through the civic organizations to support democratic practices at the grassroots level. Democratic consolidation also emanates from the socio-economic factors: a stable economy, reduction of poverty and more even development contribute to an increase in meaningful participation of the citizens in democracy. Addressing socio-economic disparities reduces social tensions that are likely to undermine democratic gains (Parvin, 2018).

POVERTY AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA

There is a strong linkage between poverty and democratic consolidation in Nigeria, with economic deprivation standing out as a serious threat to the democratic development of the country. A high incidence of poverty weakens democratic participation in which the capability of the citizens to engage in governance processes is diminished (Okey & Ikechukwu, 2024). Where the preoccupation becomes meeting the basic needs for survival, political involvement often takes a backseat. As has been observed during the presidency of Buhari, despite all his numerous social investments program aimed at reducing these figures, the rates of poverty remained relatively high, though not worse than his predecessors. Because poverty is still at an endemic level, the trend raises questions as to what pattern of intervention policies could eradicate poverty and ensures a democratic growth.

Poverty can also breed electoral malpractices, where economically poor individuals may easily give in to vote-buying and political manipulation (Muli, 2020). It casts doubt on the legitimacy of the election process and weakens confidence in democratic institutions. The state of economic deprivation forces these vulnerable groups into accepting financial inducements in lieu of votes.

Author	Title	Year	Methodology	Key Findings	Recommendations
Adeosun, A. B.	The Challenges of Consolidating Democracy in the Nigerian Fourth Republic: A Comment	2021	Historical and descriptive method, desk research using secondary data	Challenges of democratic consolidation include insecurity, poverty, banditry, leadership failure, corruption, and electoral malpractice.	Need for attitudinal among rulers and citizens and adherence to democratic tenets.
Adamu, A.	Poverty and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and the Way Forward	2020	Historical/descriptive method, secondary data from books, journals, newspapers, and internet sources	Poverty hinders democratic consolidation; extreme poverty, hunger, and poor governance contribute to challenges.	Good governance, proper resource utilization, provision of social amenities, free and fair elections, transparency, and accountability.
Olufemi, A. B.	Democratic Governance and the Challenges of Leadership in Nigeria under Buhari Administration	2024	Descriptive documentary and methods, secondary data, elite theory	Leadership challenges under Buhari include corruption, adherence to the rule of law, and banditry.	Independent anti-corruption agencies, judicial independence, strategic use of non-security apparatus.
Gilbert, L. D., & Barigbon, C. B.	The Politics of Poverty in Democratic Participation: Nigeria in Perspective	2015	Political economy approach, class analysis	Poverty and political apathy are linked; ruling class power contests exclude the poor.	The poor should rise above ethnic and sectional sentiments, demand rights, and build a democracy based on social justice.

Besides, there is social inequality and marginalization caused by poverty, which might account for political instability. Where such poor groups are shut out from democratic dividends, they result in protests or civil disobedience. The rise of the youth movement like #Endbadgovernance testifies to the role which poverty and a feeling

of disinvestment play in fermenting civil disorder (Chigozie, 2024). Poverty as a barrier to democratic consolidation needs to be tackled on many fronts: through the implementation of effective poverty reduction strategies, strengthening of democratic institutions, and promotion of citizen engagement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper adopts the theory of Structural Functionalism, as initially expounded by Emile Durkheim 1893 and further extended by Talcott Parsons around the mid-20th century. In the framework, societal institutions in one way or another interlink and constitute part of larger systems with important implications for the existence and stability of the entire society. While Durkheim focused on the social cohesion aspect—that is, the bond of people together and the need to ensure that parts within a system operate harmoniously with one another, Parsons focused on the performances of various functions or services necessary for society's stability.

Structural functionalism, on the other hand, is a perspective that views each element in society as contributing to the overall functioning of the society and that the institutional framework, such as government, education, and economy, is very vital in maintaining proper balance in society. In the case of Nigeria, one can explain from this perspective that poverty and democratic consolidation are interlinked, wherein poverty affects the proper functioning of democratic institutions and democratic consolidation needs a stable socio-economic environment.

The framework is useful in the understanding of the level of poverty, as it connects mainly to democratic consolidation in Nigeria, especially during the regime of President Buhari. High levels of poverty disrupt the effective participation of citizens in democratic processes, weakening social cohesion and the legitimacy of governance structures. Functional institutions are at the heart of democratic stability, but these are often weakened by poverty, which reduces citizen engagement and accountability.

This paper, through the application of Structural Functionalism, intends to explain how poverty destabilizes the democratic structure of Nigeria and how systemic institutional reforms could facilitate poverty reduction and stronger democratic consolidation. The theory provides a framework for the interdependence of economic welfare and political stability and underlines the need for comprehensive reforms toward sustainable democratic development.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for the study is a descriptive survey. The descriptive approach is appropriate in conducting a study on the relationship between poverty and democratic consolidation in Nigeria during the regime of President Muhammadu Buhari. The design allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data to understand patterns and correlations between the variables under study. Population of the Study

The populations of the study are residents of Edo state who are political analysts, policy experts, academics and beneficiaries of National Social Investments Programmes (NSIP) who had firsthand

experience and knowledge of poverty and democratic practices in Nigeria during the Buhari regime; these are those who would have observed changes within this regime in sociopolitical and economic terms.

DATA PRESENTATION AND RESULTS

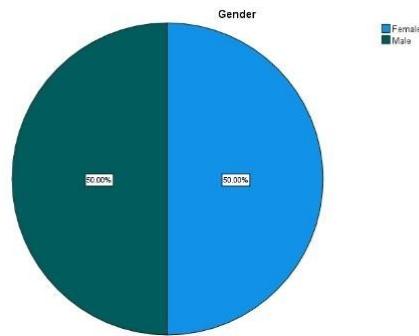
This section presents the analysis of data collected from respondents on demographic information and their perception of the poverty reduction programs in Nigeria. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize gender, age, occupation, and education. The key findings concern how effective the program is, the challenges facing the programs like corruption and poor targeting, and its impact on democratic consolidation. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha showed very strong internal consistency. Results are presented in frequency tables and percentages for clarity.

BIO-DATA OF RESPONDENT

Gender

	N	%
Female	50	50.0%
Male	50	50.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

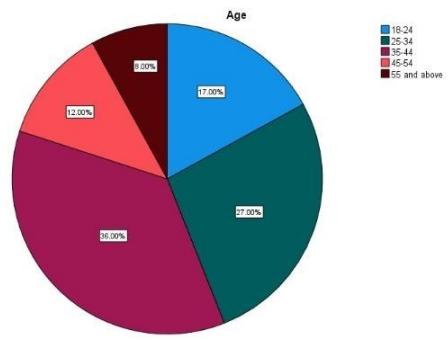


The gender distribution is perfectly balanced, with 50% of respondents identifying as female and 50% as male. This equal representation ensures a gender-neutral perspective in the dataset, minimizing bias from gender differences in the analysis.

Age

	N	%
18-24	17	17.0%
25-34	27	27.0%
35-44	36	36.0%
45-54	12	12.0%
55 and above	8	8.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

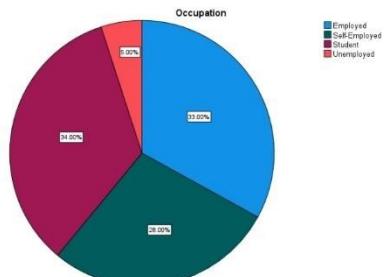


The largest age group among respondents falls between 35-44 years (36%), followed by 25-34 years (27%). Younger individuals aged 18-24 constitute 17%, while older groups (45-54 years and 55+) represent smaller portions (12% and 8%, respectively). This indicates a broad representation across age categories but with a concentration in the middle-aged demographic.

Occupation

	N	%
Employed	33	33.0%
Self-Employed	28	28.0%
Student	34	34.0%
Unemployed	5	5.0%

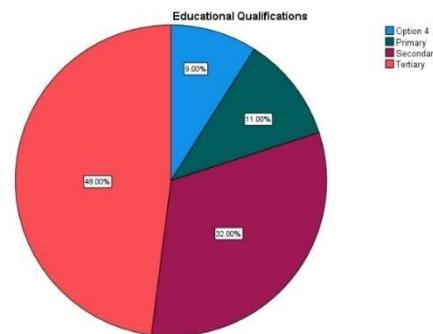
Source: Online Survey, 2024



The dataset reflects a diverse occupational background, with students making up the highest share (34%), followed by employed individuals (33%) and self-employed participants (28%). Only 5% reported being unemployed, suggesting most respondents are engaged in work or education activities.

Educational Qualifications

	N	%
Others	9	9.0%
Primary	11	11.0%
Secondary	32	32.0%
Tertiary	48	48.0%



The majority of respondents have tertiary education (48%), followed by secondary education (32%). Primary education and "Option 4" represent smaller portions, at 11% and 9% respectively. The high percentage of tertiary-educated respondents suggests a relatively well-educated sample population.

	N	%
Agree	47	47.0%
Disagree	14	14.0%
Strongly agree	14	14.0%
Strongly disagree	25	25.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

A significant portion (47%) agrees that the Npower programme has improved citizens' trust in democratic institutions, while 25% strongly disagree. The responses reflect a divided perception, with a noticeable level of skepticism.

Cash transfers have led to increased political participation by citizens in the democratic process.

	N	%
Agree	51	51.0%
Disagree	16	16.0%
Strongly agree	17	17.0%
Strongly disagree	16	16.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

A majority (51%) agree that cash transfers have boosted political participation, while 16% each disagree or strongly disagree. This suggests moderate support for the effectiveness of cash transfers in enhancing democratic involvement.

Trades and Market Monies programs have empowered citizens, thereby improving democratic consolidation

	N	%
Agree	55	55.0%
Disagree	19	19.0%
Strongly agree	16	16.0%
Strongly disagree	10	10.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

A strong 55% agree that these programs have empowered citizens and improved democratic consolidation, while 19% disagree and 16% strongly agree. This indicates generally positive feedback on the impact of these initiatives.

The COVID-19 loan scheme and the N50 Billion Targeted Credit Facility have helped improve governance and democracy.

	N	%
Agree	52	52.0%
Disagree	14	14.0%
Strongly agree	25	25.0%
Strongly disagree	9	9.0%

The COVID-19 loan scheme and N50 Billion Targeted Credit Facility received positive feedback, with 52% agreeing and 25% strongly agreeing they improved governance and democracy. Only 9% strongly disagree, showing overall positive sentiment.

The poverty reduction policies under Buhari (e.g., Npower, cash transfers) have had a minimal effect on democratic consolidation.

	N	%
Agree	46	46.0%
Disagree	20	20.0%
Strongly agree	17	17.0%
Strongly disagree	17	17.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

Perceptions on the minimal effect of Buhari's poverty reduction policies are mixed, with 46% agreeing and 17% strongly agreeing, while 20% disagree. This indicates a general belief that these policies had limited impact on democratic consolidation.

Buhari's poverty reduction initiatives have encouraged more citizens to participate in democratic processes, such as voting.

	N	%
Agree	55	55.0%
Disagree	22	22.0%
Strongly agree	14	14.0%
Strongly disagree	9	9.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

A majority (55%) agree that Buhari's poverty reduction initiatives encouraged democratic participation, while 22% disagree. This suggests moderate approval of the policies' influence on civic engagement.

Analysis of Research Question 2: What are the constraints that hindered Buhari's poverty reduction policies?

Inadequate funding has hindered the success of Buhari's poverty reduction policies

	N	%
Agree	48	48.0%
Disagree	16	16.0%
Strongly agree	21	21.0%
Strongly disagree	15	15.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

48% of respondents agree that inadequate funding has hindered the success of Buhari's policies, while 21% strongly agree. This indicates a widespread belief in financial constraints affecting policy outcomes.

Corruption within the implementation of poverty reduction programs has limited their effectiveness

	N	%
Agree	41	41.0%
Disagree	16	16.0%
Strongly agree	35	35.0%
Strongly disagree	8	8.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

A substantial 41% agree and 35% strongly agree that corruption within poverty reduction programs has limited their effectiveness. Only 8% strongly disagree, indicating a prevailing negative perception regarding corruption issues.

Lack of proper targeting of beneficiaries has reduced the impact of poverty reduction initiatives.

	N	%
Agree	54	54.0%
Disagree	17	17.0%
Strongly agree	12	12.0%
Strongly disagree	17	17.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

Most respondents (54%) agree that poor targeting reduced the impact of poverty initiatives, while 17% both disagree and strongly disagree, indicating moderate agreement with targeting concerns.

Inadequate infrastructure in rural areas has prevented effective delivery of poverty reduction programs

	N	%
Agree	45	45.0%
Disagree	23	23.0%
Strongly agree	22	22.0%
Strongly disagree	10	10.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

Inadequate infrastructure in rural areas is seen as a barrier, with 45% agreeing and 22% strongly agreeing, while 23% disagree. This highlights significant infrastructure concerns in program delivery.

Mismanagement and lack of transparency in the distribution of poverty alleviation funds have caused program failures

	N	%
Agree	43	43.0%
Disagree	20	20.0%
Strongly agree	24	24.0%
Strongly disagree	13	13.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

43% agree and 24% strongly agree that mismanagement and lack of transparency have caused program failures, while 13% strongly disagree, reflecting substantial concern about governance issues.

Analysis of Research Question: What are the challenges facing Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria Under Buhari's Administration

Political instability, including election rigging, has hindered democratic consolidation in Nigeria under Buhari

	N	%
Agree	47	47.0%
Disagree	18	18.0%
Strongly agree	23	23.0%
Strongly disagree	12	12.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

A majority (47%) agrees and 23% strongly agree that political instability, including election rigging, has hindered democratic consolidation, while only 12% strongly disagree. This reflects a significant concern about political challenges.

Corruption within government institutions has significantly undermined efforts at democratic consolidation.

	N	%
Agree	34	34.0%
Disagree	35	35.0%
Strongly Agree	10	10.0%
strongly disagree	21	21.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

Opinions are more divided regarding corruption in government institutions, with 34% agreeing and 35% disagreeing, while 21% strongly disagree. This indicates a nearly even split in perceptions of institutional corruption.

Economic hardship caused by poor policies has led to public dissatisfaction, affecting democratic processes

	N	%
Agree	49	49.0%
Disagree	26	26.0%
Strongly Agree	15	15.0%
strongly disagree	10	10.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

49% agree and 15% strongly agree that economic hardship from poor policies has led to public dissatisfaction, while 26% disagree. This shows moderate agreement on the impact of economic struggles on democratic participation.

Lack of trust in the electoral process has weakened democratic consolidation in Nigeria under Buhari's leadership.

	N	%
Agree	44	44.0%
Disagree	24	24.0%
Strongly Agree	23	23.0%
strongly disagree	9	9.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

A significant portion (44%) agrees and 23% strongly agrees that lack of trust in the electoral process has weakened democratic consolidation, while 9% strongly disagree. Trust issues appear to be a widespread concern.

Ethnic and religious divisions have prevented national unity, thereby hindering democratic progress.

	N	%
Agree	45	45.0%
Disagree	27	27.0%
Strongly Agree	18	18.0%
strongly disagree	10	10.0%

Source: Online Survey, 2024

Ethnic and religious divisions are seen as a barrier to national unity by 45% of respondents, with 18% strongly agreeing, while 27% disagree. This highlights concerns over unity challenges.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings reveal a mixed perception of poverty reduction strategies under Buhari's administration, with some policies perceived positively while others face criticism. For instance, the Npower program received moderate support, with 47% agreeing that it enhanced trust in democratic institutions, while a significant 25% strongly disagreed. Similarly, cash transfers were seen as encouraging political participation, with 51% agreement, indicating moderate success in promoting civic engagement. However, the belief that poverty reduction policies had minimal effect on democratic consolidation remained prevalent, as 46% agreed with this statement. These findings suggest that while certain initiatives positively influenced political engagement, their broader impact on democratic consolidation was limited.

Among the constraints that had faced the success of Buhari's poverty reduction policies were funding limitations, corruption, and poor targeting. 48% of the respondents reported inadequate funding to be a key constraint facing the implementation of these policies, where 21% strongly agreed. Corruption in implementing programs is also an issue, where a total of 76% either agreed or strongly agreed that this was limiting effectiveness. Besides this, there is also a case of poor beneficiary targeting, as 54% agreed that this would reduce the impact of the policy in question. Such barriers suggest that there is some sort of systemic problem hampering efforts toward poverty reduction, as the literature indicates that for policies to succeed, there must be transparency and accountability (Carter, 2014).

Equally, challenges to democratic consolidation under Buhari's regime are evident from aspects like political instability, economic hardship, and corruption at an institutional level. The political instability, including rigging of elections, was one of the major issues that have been witnessed to affect democratic development, with 47% agreeing and 23% strongly agreeing that it breeds obstacles in democratic progress. Equally, poor policies leading to economic hardship have compounded dissatisfaction with 49% agreeing that such factor has impacted the democratic process.

Corruption within government institutions also presented a challenge, with 34% agreeing and 35% disagreeing on its impact, reflecting divided opinions on institutional integrity under Buhari. These findings underscore the complex relationship between governance challenges and democratic development, as previously noted by Odo, (2015).

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that although some of the strategies adopted by the Buhari administration, such as the Npower program and cash transfers, have indeed achieved positive impacts on democratic participation, their impact has been limited in their contribution to

democratic consolidation. These programs, while recording fairly impressive performances in promoting civic engagement, have been hindered by challenges related to corruption, underfunding, inappropriate targeting, and systemic governance issues. The democratic advancement was also deterred by the political instability, economic hardships, and institutional mistrust, for which comprehensive reform needed to tackle the structural stumbling blocks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improved transparency and accountability: The government should enhance mechanisms that ensure transparency and accountability in the disbursement of funds for poverty reduction. Independent auditing should be made mandatory, accompanied by public reporting, to minimize corruption and ensure equity in resource allocation.

Targeted Beneficiary Identification: Implementing a more robust data-driven system for identifying beneficiaries can address the issue of poor targeting. This can be achieved through digital registries and collaboration with local authorities to ensure those most in need receive support.

Increased Funding and Resource Allocation: Sufficient financial allocation should always be made so that poverty prevalence programs are pursued. Increasing any budget, according to the need apparent in the programs like Npower and resultant cash transfers given to people where the reach into the population also increases, will enhance the result of the exercise. Regular evaluation systems will ensure their proper utilization.

Capacity Building and Civic Education: It could also be argued that civic education, when combined with poverty alleviation, may lead to stronger democratic consolidation by giving citizens the capacity for active participation in governance processes. Besides, training programs on rights, voting, and public engagement could instill a greater democratic consciousness.

Structural Political Challenges: Reforms in electoral processes and reduction of political instability are required, such as more effective election monitoring and anti-rigging measures. Democratic consolidation can be further facilitated by strengthening democratic institutions and making governance inclusive.

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PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP AND THE PROVISION OF ELECTRICITY IN EDO STATE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BENIN ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY AND CCETC-OSSIOMO POWER PLANT

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ABSTRACT

The study presented a comparative study on the role of public-private partnership in the provision of electricity in Edo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the impact of the partnership agreement between the Edo State government and CCETC-Ossiomo power plant company on the provision of electricity to government parastatals and businesses in the Benin City metropolis, to the service provided by Benin Electricity Distribution Company. The study aimed to examine the extent to which the PPP arrangement between the Edo State government and Ossiomo power plant company has been useful in the provision of electricity in Edo State, identify challenges that may hinder the effective provision of electricity under the PPP arrangement, and proffer solutions to the challenges identified. The study relied on the mixed-scanning approach by combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Primary data were generated through responses to questions from BEDC and CCETC-Ossiomo power plant company officials, while secondary data were gathered from reputable sources such as reports, journals, textbooks, and newspapers, amongst others. The study concluded that the Ossiomo power plant company has demonstrated the potential of PPP models in improving electricity access in Edo state. Recommendations were made to the government to provide the enabling environment for the Ossiomo power company to be able to generate and distribute its targeted 55 megawatts of electricity; partner with more private electricity companies to guarantee sufficient distribution of electricity to the consumers; encourage increased investments in renewable energy sources to diversify the energy mix and promote sustainability; amongst others.

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, access to stable and reliable electricity infrastructure remains essential for sustainable economic growth and development. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have emerged

over the last two decades as a popular strategy for infrastructural development by governments worldwide; primarily to meet the ever-growing aspirations of its citizens (Garvin, 2009). Before now, the delivery of services to the public as well as the provision of infrastructure has been handled solely by the government. However,

with population growth and dwindling resources available to the government, as well as the need to ensure that other areas are equally developed, the government seemed not to have been living up to expectation in the provision of the infrastructural needs of its citizens. Globally, governments now partner with the private sector to provide and manage infrastructural facilities in their countries. This contractual arrangement is referred to as a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) (Fadeyi *et al*, 2016).

Rendering of services and the provision of infrastructural facilities are two key functions of government that can bring development to any nation. The involvement of the private sector in the development and financing of public facilities and services has increased over the past years in the developed and developing countries (Akpogome & Nwano, 2019). The government alone cannot provide all needed infrastructure if the cost of providing infrastructure is put into consideration alongside other responsibilities that the government is expected to undertake. This was why the Nigerian government, like other governments across the globe, decided to adopt the public-private partnership model in the area of infrastructure. Public-private partnership can be conceptualised as the government's involvement of the private sector in service delivery to the citizens. It is a form of contract between the public sector (government) and the private sector (society) in the delivery of services. It can also be seen as government provision of services through the private sector (Eugbog & Omitogun, 2018).

Nigeria is not an exception in PPP collaborations. Over the last two decades, both the federal and state governments in Nigeria have had reasons to collaborate with private companies and institutions in the provision of some capital-intensive infrastructures which are required for service delivery to the citizens. Some of these infrastructures include electricity, roads, buildings, industries, bridges, health, education, hospitals, amongst others (Oyedele, n.d.). Different types of PPP arrangements, varying in terms of the degree of the involvement of the private sector have been used to procure projects depending on the objectives as well as the requirements of the project. The arrangements can also differ in purpose, service scope, legal structure, risk sharing, finance sources and ownership of properties (Kwak *et al*, 2009).

In line with the desire by the federal government to provide capital-intensive infrastructures for efficient service delivery, Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC) is one of the successor distribution companies (DisCos) that were created following the unbundling and privatization of the state-owned Power Utility, Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) PLC in 2013 in a bid to restructure the power sector for efficiency in service delivery (Premium Times, 2013). It has the responsibility of distributing electricity to four Nigerian states: Edo, Delta, Ondo, and Ekiti, with a geographical coverage of 57,353 square kilometres (BEDC, 2023).

To change the narrative of poor power supply as one of the ways to create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive, the Edo State Government under the leadership of Governor Godwin Obaseki entered a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) of 55MW with Ossiomo Power and CCETC Clean Energy (CCETC-Ossiomo Power), to boost electricity market in the state (BusinessDay, 2020).

The CCETC-Ossiomo Power Plant Company was inaugurated in 2018 in Ologbo, Edo State. The Ossiomo Power Plant operates as an Independent Power Producer (IPP) and plays a vital role in meeting the electricity needs of households, businesses, and government offices and parastatals in its area of jurisdiction. Over the years, the provision of electricity to consumers in Edo state by the BEDC has been abysmally poor. Most residential buildings as well as government offices in the state could barely get three hours of electricity supply in a whole day and this was slowing down business and other economic activities in the state. This was why in the year 2020, the Obaseki-led government in Edo state entered into a power purchase agreement with the CCETC-Ossiomo Power Plant Company to make power more available to government offices and business places to boost economic and business activities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Globally, electricity is considered a major determinant of the economic and social growth and development of any nation or society. Power is needed for small, medium or large business enterprises to thrive. Before the 2013 unbundling of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) into Generation Companies of Nigeria (GenCos), Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) and Distribution Companies of Nigeria (DISCOs), the responsibility of generating, transmitting and distributing electricity rested on the federal government as prescribed by the Nigerian Constitution (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended). Until recently, the federating states and private companies were not given the power to generate, transmit or distribute electricity even when they could do so. However, the public sector's traditional role in electricity provision has proven inadequate in meeting the increasing demands of the population. The immediate past President of Nigeria, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari signed sixteen constitutional amendments into law in 2022, one of which pertained to the devolution of powers, giving constitutional authorities to states to also generate, transmit and distribute electricity within their boundaries, including territories formerly covered by only the national grid, and the incumbent President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Grand Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic(GCFR), assented to the bill in 2023 (Daily Post, 2023). In response, the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) has gained attraction as an alternative approach to improve and expand electricity service delivery. Some states of the federation have been leveraging the opportunity to make electricity more available in their states for rapid economic growth and development. In 2020, Edo state government under the leadership of Governor Godwin Nogheghase Obaseki, entered a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) of 55MW with Ossiomo Power and CCETC Clean Energy (CCETC-Ossiomo Power), to boost the electricity market in the state (BusinessDay, 2020). This public-private partnership agreement was initially meant to make electricity more available to businesses, government offices and parastatals especially within the Benin City metropolis. The agreement was later modified to include residential buildings that meet the requirements to be connected to the power source. Since its operational takeoff, how effective has the CCETC-Ossiomo Power Plant helped to improve the supply of electricity in Edo state?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions for this study are:

To what extent has PPP been useful in the provision of electricity in Edo State?

What are the factors that may hinder the effective provision of electricity under the PPP arrangement?

How can PPP be best be utilized for efficiency in the provision of electricity?

What are the possible solutions to the challenges of ineffective provision of electricity under the PPP arrangement?

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the efficacy of public-private partnership in the provision of electricity in Edo state while the specific objectives are to:

Examine the extent to which PPP has been useful in the provision of electricity in Edo State.

Identify the factors that may hinder the effective provision of electricity under the PPP arrangement.

Give policy recommendations on how PPP can best be utilized for efficiency in the provision of electricity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualisation of Public-Private Partnership

Public-Private Partnership has several definitions. The variations in the definitions can be attributed to the consequences (political and economic) of PPPs which make their meaning and desirability open to different interpretations. Some definitions of PPP are as follows: Public-Private Partnership is defined as “a cooperative venture between the public and private sectors built on the expertise of each partner that best meets clearly defined public needs through the appropriate allocation of resources, risks and rewards” (The Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships in Jatto, 2011). Public-Private Partnership is a long-term agreement between the government and a private partner whereby the private partner delivers and funds public services using a capital asset and sharing the associated risks (OECD, 2019). Ughulu and Erah (2020), defined PPP as “a long-term relationship between the public sector and private sector under which the responsibility for designing, financing, construction, management and/or operation of public infrastructure and services that were traditionally undertaken by the public sector are contractually shared and jointly undertaken by both the public and private sectors, usually in proportion to the type and quantity of risks each party can best carry”. From the discussions above, PPPs can be seen as long-term contractual relationships between public and private sectors in which both parties collaborate to provide and/or manage public infrastructures or services that were hitherto undertaken by the public sector only.

Public-Private Partnerships involves the public and private working in co-operation and partnership with each other (Harris, 2003 in Babatunde, Opawole & Akinsiku, 2012), it is essentially a partnership between public sector organizations and private sector investors and businesses to design, plan, finance, construct, providing and/or operating infrastructure, facilities or related services. Successful public-private partnerships build on the experience of each partner to meet clearly defined needs and provide a net benefit (or value for money) to the general public through the appropriate allocation of resources, risks and rewards (Leiringer, 2003). It involves unbundling the costs and the risks inherent in delivering the project and allocating them to the partner best able to absorb and mitigate them (Pryke and Ouwerkerk, 2013). The allocation of every risk is determined by how well partners in both sectors can reduce risk efficiently and effectively. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) represent an alternative form of outsourcing that involves collaborating with the private sector to deliver services, especially those necessitating the creation of new physical assets. PPPs involve forging enduring partnership between the two sectors to provide services which is a new method of boosting private sector involvement in providing public infrastructure and services. With PPP, the public sector will focus on acquiring services on the most cost-effective basis, rather than directly owning and operating assets (Oladapo, 2007). Under PPP, the private sector can look forward to providing a wider range of services over a longer contract period, usually between 15 to 30 years (Harris, 2003 in Babatunde, Opawole & Akinsiku, 2012). Public services can be rendered more efficiently and effectively to meet public needs through cordial partnership with the private sector. There are varying reasons for establishing public-private partnerships but the partnerships generally involve the financing, design, construction, operation and maintenance of public infrastructure, facilities as well as services. This means that public-private partnerships are not only concerned about the private sector financing capital projects in return for an income stream, it is also the use of private sector skills and management expertise to deliver and operate public projects in a cost-effective way over their lifetime. The underlying logic for establishing partnerships is that both the public and the private sector have unique characteristics that provide them with advantages in specific aspects of service or project delivery (Leiringer, 2003). The most successful public-private partnership arrangements lie in the strength of both sectors establishing mutual relationships. Whereas the roles and responsibilities of the public and private partners may differ on individual servicing initiatives, the public sector's overall role and responsibilities would not change. Although PPP is one way of providing public infrastructure and services, it is however not a substitute for strong and effective governance and decision-making by the government.

Types of Public-Private Partnership Arrangements

There are various forms of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) which are mostly represented by different acronyms. A number of these PPP arrangements are only slightly different from one another. Some of the popular examples are represented in the table below:

Types of Public-Private Partnership	Meaning
BOT – Build-Operate-Transfer	A private investor builds a facility, sells the output to the public, and transfers it at the end of the contract.
BRT - Build-Rent-Transfer	The private investor builds the facility, rents it out, and transfers at the end of the contract.
BTO – Build-Transfer-Operate	Private vendor builds facilities and transfers them to the government, and the government either operates directly or contract out. The private vendor either gets full payment at the end of the contract or shares in the earnings from the operation thereafter.
CONCESSION	A private vendor (concessionaire) may or may not build the facility, but is allowed to manage the facility and charge users a fee for use of the facility.
DBB – Design-Bid-Build	The government agency provides the design, puts out tenders, and the winner builds the facility.
Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Contract	The contract whereby the contractor provides a complete installation (e.g., a power plant) to specification, at a fixed price and to a fixed schedule.

Source: Afolabi (2011) and Centre for Sustainability in Mining and Industry (CSMI) (2010) cited in Fadeyi *et al* (2018).

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BENIN ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY

Benin Electricity Distribution Company is one of the distribution companies (DisCos) created after the unbundling as well as privatization of Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) Plc which was the state-owned electricity company. Other distribution companies that were created include Eko Electricity Distribution Company, Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company, Enugu Electricity Distribution Company, and Kaduna Electricity Distribution Company, amongst others (BuyPower.ng., 2020). BEDC is in charge of retail distribution of electricity in Edo, Delta, Ondo and Ekiti States. BEDC is the 5th largest DisCo in distribution capacity and the 3rd largest in the number of households among the Distribution Companies (DisCos) that were privatized (BEDC, 2023). BEDC is strategically located and uniquely positioned to maximize the opportunities that may arise as Nigeria's power trading market becomes more competitive and liberalized, as there are several major power generations and transmission hubs located within the area (BEDC, 2023). The company was established in

2013 as part of the privatization efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of electricity distribution (Premium Times, 2013).

It was assigned the responsibility of distributing electricity to four Nigerian states: Edo, Delta, Ondo, and Ekiti, with a geographical coverage of 57,353 square kilometres. The company operates from twenty-seven (27) business districts with approximately 350 offices located across four (4) states with about 18 million people, about 4 million households, and an effective customer population of 1,291,181 as of September 2023 (BEDC, 2023). Since its inception, BEDC has faced several challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, ageing distribution networks, inadequate training of personnel, power theft, revenue collection issues, and customer service complaints. These challenges have impacted the reliability and quality of electricity supply in its operational area (Uhumwangho & Okedu, 2014; Esan, Nwulu, David & Adepoju, 2024). To address these issues, BEDC has been working on various initiatives. It has invested in upgrading infrastructure and expanding the distribution network to improve service delivery. BEDC has also implemented measures to prevent theft, reduce technical losses, and enhance revenue collection through training and retraining of personnel. Additionally, the company has focused on customer engagement and satisfaction, aiming to provide reliable and efficient electricity services (Esan *et al.*, 2024).

Over the years, BEDC has collaborated with stakeholders, including government agencies, regulatory bodies, and communities, to address the complex issues plaguing the power sector. It has participated in public-private partnerships and engaged in dialogue with consumers to understand their needs and concerns better (BEDC, 2023). Despite these efforts however, there seems not to be much progress made by BEDC in improving power supply in its operational areas as consumers continue to grapple with epileptic power supply, thereby implying that there is still much work to be done to achieve reliable and consistent electricity access for all consumers.

AN OVERVIEW OF OSSIMO POWER PLANT

The Ossiomo Power Plant, located in Ologbo, Edo State, is a major power generation facility that plays a significant role in addressing the country's electricity needs. Access to reliable and affordable electricity is crucial for economic growth and development. The Ossiomo Power Plant, inaugurated in 2018, represents a significant milestone in Nigeria's pursuit of energy self-sufficiency. Situated in Ologbo, Edo State, the plant is a key power generation asset that has positively impacted the region and the country as a whole. The Ossiomo Power Plant currently has an installed capacity of 55 megawatts (MW). It utilizes modern gas-fired combined cycle technology, which involves the integration of gas turbines and steam turbines to maximize efficiency. The transmission and distribution infrastructure of the Ossiomo Power plant includes a 33KM 33KV line; 8KM 11KV mini-grid around Ologbo; 2 X 15MVA Injection Substation located at the Edo State Government Secretariat on Sapele Road and a 10KM 11KV mini-grid around GRA/Ring Road, Benin City (Vanguard, 2020). The Ossiomo Power Plant stands as a significant power generation facility in Nigeria, contributing to the country's energy security and economic development. Through its efficient operations, commitment to environmental sustainability,

and socio-economic impact, the plant exemplifies the potential of the power sector to drive progress. Continued investments in the plant's infrastructure and technology will be crucial to meet evolving energy demands and ensure a sustainable energy future for Nigeria (Punch, 2022).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

State-in-Society Theory

This work adopts the state-in-society theory which emerged as a result of the understanding that the developmental state was no longer the solution to virtually all societal problems as the state (government or public sector) alone cannot bring about sustainable development unless it partners with the society (private sector) (Imuetinyan & Mustapha, 2018). The basic characteristics of weak states theory as propounded by Migdal (1988) are a diminishing provision of social goods and services by state institutions, high capabilities in terms of penetration and extraction (collection of taxes) but weak capabilities in terms of appropriation as seen in recurrent expenditure always outweighing capital expenditure, possession of numerous social and economic organizations headed by "strongmen" and "social authorities" with authority and accountability imbued into the people's strategy for survival.

For there to be any meaningful development in any state, especially weak states, the state-in-society theory looks beyond the developmental state (Lambach, 2004 in Mustapha & Omored, 2017). Whereas the state lays claim to having the authority to superintend over, and regulate all social activities that fall within its borders, a claim which is justified by the Constitution (CFRN, 1999 as amended), in reality, the state (the public sector) and social organizations (the private sector) are always in constant competition for social control. The state and the society influence each other. The state can transform society through the work of its agencies and state policies (Migdal, 1988). However, when the state is weak and unable to effectively transform the society positively, the society steps in to fill the gap created by the failure of the state to insert itself into the strategies for the survival of its citizens. The Society fills the gap through a partnership with the state or by taking over certain developmental activities while the state performs regulatory functions (Odusola, 2006 in Mustapha & Omored, 2017). What this indicates is that collaborative efforts of the state (public sector) and the society (private sector) are needed to bring about development (Mustapha and Omored, 2017).

This theory fits into this research study as its theoretical framework because the theory helps to underscore the importance of public-private partnership in the development of any state or nation, which is what the study aims to examine.

METHODOLOGY

This study relied on the mixed-scanning approach by combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Primary data will be generated through responses to questions from BEDC and CCETC-Ossiomo power plant company while secondary data will be gathered from reputable sources such as reports, journals, textbooks, newspapers, official publications and the internet. Data obtained from the BEDC and CCETC-Ossiomo power plant

company will be compared and findings will thereafter be made known.

FINDINGS

The findings arising from the responses received from BEDC and Ossiomo power plant company revealed the following:

Whereas BEDC distributes electricity to about one million, two hundred and ninety-one thousand, one hundred and eighty-one (1, 291, 181) customers (inclusive of private and commercial customers), Ossiomo power plant company distributes electricity to about three thousand (3, 000) customers of the same categories. This implies that BEDC distributes electricity to 1, 288, 181 (99.7%) customers more than Ossiomo power plant company. It therefore means that BEDC has a customer base that far outweighs the customer base of Ossiomo power plant company by 99.77%.

BEDC distributes 350 megawatts of electricity to its customers in its catchment areas while Ossiomo power plant company distributes 10 megawatts of electricity to its customers. This means that BEDC exceeds Ossiomo power plant company in electricity distribution by 97.14%.

BEDC charges N55 for a kilowatt unit of electricity to its private electricity consumers while Ossiomo power plant company charges the same N97 for a kilowatt unit of electricity to its private electricity consumers. This means Ossiomo Power Plant Company charges 43.30% more than BEDC for a unit of electricity consumed by its private customers.

BEDC charges N71 for a kilowatt unit of electricity to its commercial electricity consumers while Ossiomo Power Plant Company charges same N97 for a kilowatt unit of electricity to its commercial electricity consumers. This means Ossiomo power plant company charges 26.80% more than BEDC for a unit of electricity consumed by its commercial electricity consumers.

BEDC distributes electricity to its customers for an average of 6 hours daily (which is equivalent to 25%) while Ossiomo power plant company distributes electricity to its customers for an average of 23 hours daily (which is equivalent to 95.83%). This means that Ossiomo power plant company distributes 73.91% of electricity to its customers more than BEDC daily. The reason for this significant difference can be attributed to the volume of customers of Ossiomo power plant company which is low (3000 customers) as compared to the volume of customers of BEDC which is much higher (1, 291, 181 customers). The implication of this therefore is that Ossiomo power plant company will be able to effectively and conveniently distribute the 10megawatts of electricity available to it to its 3, 000 customers on a 24-hour basis whereas BEDC is left with no other choice than to ration its 350 megawatts of electricity among its 1, 291, 181 customers.

The summary of the findings is presented in the table below.

Parameters for Comparison/Electricity Company	BEDC	OSSIOMO Power Company	Percentage Difference
Number of Customers Captured	1, 291, 181	3, 000	99.77% (BEDC)
Unit of Electricity Distributed (MW)	350	10	97.14% (BEDC)
Unit Cost of a KWH Electricity to Private Consumers (N)	55	97	43.30% (Ossiomo)
Unit Cost of a KWH Electricity to Commercial Consumers (N)	71	97	23.80% (Ossiomo)
Average Period Electricity is Available to Consumers (Hours)	6	23	73.91% (Ossiomo)

Sources: BEDC Headquarters, Benin City and Ossiomo Power Plant Company, Ossiomo, Edo State (2023).

CONCLUSION

The study underscores the importance of public-private partnership in addressing the electricity deficit in Edo State, with a focus on the power purchase agreement between the government of Edo State and CCETC-Ossiomo Power Plant Company located in Ologbo, Edo State. Although the Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC) operates as the major electricity distribution company) in Edo State, despite its efforts to improve service delivery, it faces challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, poor customer service, and high levels of electricity theft. These factors have contributed to frequent power outages and low customer satisfaction.

CCETC-Ossiomo Power Plant Company, a 55 MW gas-fired power plant, is a clear example of a Public-Private Partnership in electricity provision in Edo State. This public-private partnership in the form of the power purchase agreement between the state government and a private entity has led to increased electricity distribution and improved service quality in the Benin City metropolis, especially for government ministries, agencies and departments as well as some private firms and household who now enjoy an average of 23 hours electricity supply daily. However, the report that was obtained from the company revealed that the pricing of gas which is done in dollars instead of naira hurts the electricity tariff. Another challenge is power theft through the bypassing of meters and illegal connections. Again, the inability of the neighbouring communities to be connected to the CCETC-Ossiomo power supply due to their inability to afford the cost of getting connected could have security implications for the company if not urgently addressed.

While the BEDC faces persistent challenges of having more customers than the electricity that is available for distribution,

inadequate infrastructure, ageing distribution networks, power theft, revenue collection issues, and customer service complaints, the Ossiomo Power Plant demonstrates the potential of PPP models in improving electricity access (Esan *et al.*, 2024). By addressing the identified opportunities and challenges, policymakers, regulators, and stakeholders can foster a conducive environment for successful and sustainable PPP initiatives in electricity provision across the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- (i) The government should strengthen regulatory frameworks to ensure effective governance and accountability in PPP agreements.
- (ii) the government should provide the enabling environment for Ossiomo Power Company to be able to generate and distribute its targeted 55 megawatts of electricity as this will further guarantee access to stable electricity for more electricity consumers.
- (iii) the government should partner with more private electricity companies to guarantee sufficient distribution of electricity to the consumers and reduction in the unit price of electricity consumed as a result of competition.
- (iv) The government should encourage increased investments in renewable energy sources to diversify the energy mix and promote sustainability.
- (v) Collaborations among government agencies, private sector entities, and local communities should be enhanced to address community-specific electricity needs in a participatory manner. Mechanisms for regular consultation and feedback from electricity consumers to electricity providers should be enhanced to improve service quality and enhance customer satisfaction.

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