

## **Innovating Arabic Language Education for a Sustainable and Equitable Global Future: A National-Level Perspective (Nigeria)**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the transformative potentials of Arabic language education in driving sustainable and equitable development within Nigerian multilingual and multicultural landscape. As global priorities shift toward inclusive education, digital innovation, and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Arabic language education in Nigeria stands at a critical juncture where tradition must harmonize with modern pedagogical and technological demands. The study explores the ways in which innovative instructional models—such as technology-enhanced learning, competency-based curricula, multilingual integration, and community-driven pedagogies—can reshape Arabic learning outcomes and broaden the relevance of the language in national development. Drawing from policy frameworks, recent scholarly discourse, and national educational realities, the paper argues that Arabic language education in Nigeria must transcend its conventional religious and cultural boundaries to become a tool for social mobility, intercultural communication, economic empowerment, and global relevance. Emphasis is placed on addressing systemic challenges such as infrastructural deficits, teacher shortages, outdated curricula, and sociolinguistic misconceptions that hinder the equitable inclusion of Arabic within mainstream academic systems.*

*Additionally, the paper evaluates emerging opportunities presented by digital technologies, artificial intelligence, open-source learning platforms, and localized educational innovations that can expand access to high-quality Arabic instruction across rural and urban settings. The study adopts a national-level perspective to highlight policy interventions, institutional reforms, and multi-stakeholder collaborations necessary for building a sustainable and equitable Arabic education ecosystem in Nigeria. Ultimately, the paper advocates for a future in which Arabic language education is strategically positioned to contribute to national development, global engagement, and the cultivation of a knowledge-driven, culturally inclusive Nigerian society*

## **Introduction**

Arabic occupies an important cultural, religious and educational role in Nigeria. It is taught across different formal sectors (primary, secondary, tertiary) and through traditional Qur'anic/ Islamic schools, contributing to literacy, religious knowledge, and cross-regional communication (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020). However, Nigeria's Arabic language provision faces systemic challenges, which include: policy fragmentation, variable curriculum relevance, uneven teacher capacity, and limited digital and physical resources. These constraints undermine the capacity of Arabic education to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (quality and inclusive education) and to support equitable, lifelong learning opportunities (UNICEF, 2023; UNESCO, 2021).

This paper examines how Nigeria can change the course of Arabic language education at the national level to promote sustainability and equity. It synthesizes existing literature and national reports, identifies promising innovation levers (curriculum, teacher development, ICT, assessments, financing), and proposes a practical national roadmap for reform.

### **National language and Language Policy**

Nigeria's National Language Policy and Federal Ministry of Education strategic plans have recognized the role of indigenous and foreign languages—including Arabic—in national development and education (National Educational Research & Development Council, NERDC; Federal Ministry of Education, 2020). Nevertheless, implementation gaps exist: language policy statements often lack operational guidelines that bridge federal directives and state/ local practice, especially for languages taught in religious/traditional contexts (UNICEF, 2023). The UNICEF Nigeria language in education report highlights the complexity and uneven implementation of language policies across states and the implications for learners' access to meaningful instruction (UNICEF, 2023). These structural conditions set the stage for targeted innovation.

### **The Concept of Teacher Education**

Teacher Education refers to the policies, procedures and provision designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, attitudes behaviours and skills required to perform their task effectively in the classroom, school, and wider community.

### **The Case for Innovation in Arabic Studies**

Conventional Arabic instruction often emphasizes memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules, neglecting communicative competence and real-world application. Furthermore, this model may not address the diverse motivations of learners—ranging from religious studies and literary appreciation to professional and diplomatic uses.

Innovative pedagogies can:

- Enhance learner engagement and motivation.
- Promote critical thinking and cultural literacy.
- Incorporate technology to facilitate access and collaboration.

- Equip educators with tools for differentiation and personalization.

### **Challenges in Arabic Language Teaching and Learning in Nigeria**

Recent Nigerian studies identify recurring issues namely: insufficient teacher training, specifically for Arabic as a second/foreign language, limited pedagogical materials tailored to Nigerian multilingual classrooms, poor ICT infrastructure in many schools, and weak linkage between modern curricula and traditional Qur'anic instruction (Ajape, 2023; Ibrahim, 2025). Studies also point to gender and geographic inequalities in enrolment and outcomes in Arabic and Arabic-related programmes (Yusuf, 2024). These factors reduce the subject's potential to contribute to employability, cross-cultural communication, and civic inclusion.

### **Opportunities: Global Agendas and Digital Transformation**

The Sustainable Development Goals — especially SDG 4 — and UNESCO's guidance for transforming education provide momentum and normative rationale for inclusive language education reform (UNESCO, 2021). Nigeria's state-level ICT initiatives (such as Lagos' Eko Digital Initiative) show that scalable digital interventions are possible when political will and funding align (Education Profiles, 2025). Additionally, comparative research on integrating Qur'anic and modern curricula suggests context-sensitive models that preserve cultural continuity while expanding competencies (Adam, 2025).

### **Methodological approach**

This paper is a policy and evidence synthesis that combines: (a) analysis of national policy documents (Federal Ministry of Education materials, NERDC national language policy), (b) synthesis of peer-reviewed and grey literature on Arabic language teaching in Nigeria, and (c) mapping of innovation exemplars (state ICT programmes, blended learning pilots, teacher CPD interventions). The objective is not primary empirical fieldwork but to generate an actionable national roadmap grounded in documented evidence and recent initiatives.

(Key sources informing the analysis include: Federal Ministry of Education handbook (2020), UNICEF Language in Education report (2023), UNESCO SDG4 transformation guidance, studies on ICT and Arabic teaching in Nigeria (2021–2025), and comparative work on Qur’anic/modern curriculum integration (2025).) (Federal Ministry of Education)

## **Major barriers and innovation levers**

### **Policy Fragmentation and Unclear Implementation**

Although, language diversity and practical steps are recognized by national policy for harmonizing Arabic instruction across federal, state and traditional systems are limited. The lack of operational guidance constrains curriculum coherence and assessment comparability (UNICEF, 2023). (UNICEF)

**Innovation lever:** Establish a National Arabic Education Coordination Unit (NAECU) under the Federal Ministry of Education to create implementation guidelines, technical support, and data dashboards that align federal standards with state and traditional providers.

### **Teacher capacity and professional development**

Many teachers of Arabic lack systematic pre-service preparation in communicative and modern pedagogical approaches; in-service training opportunities are often ad-hoc (Abdul-Hamid, 2020; Ajape, 2023)

### **Teacher Education in Nigeria**

The advent of the formal school system introduced by christian missionaries led establishment and development of teacher’s institute (Amidu, 2022). He also stated that establishment of Christian Missionary society (CMS) Training Institution at Abeokuta in 1853 for teachers training was firstly meant for evangelism that served as the first organised formal institute for teacher training in Nigeria, other reputable development in teacher education was the passing of

important two bills in the gold coast colony (now Ghana) and the colony of Lagos in 1943/1945 respectively with aims stated below:

- i. The assistance of the growth of education
- ii. The promotion of education

Other developments in the history of education in Nigeria also include the following:

- According to Fafunwa (1975). The Higher College at Yaba introduced the Diploma of Education course was introduced in 1932 that laid the emphasis on teaching of science. Although, this came to an end in 1950.
- The introduction of a one-year course that led to a Diploma of Education between 1957-1958 after the establishment of University College, Ibadan was another development.
- The experienced Grade II teachers were admitted in 1961 to study a one-year associationship course, while the graduates of the programme were made headmasters. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka starts to produce teachers with degrees of Bachelor of Arts, science and in Education.
- In 1860, the recommendation of Ashby commission led to the establishment of Teacher Grade I College to offer Nigeria Certificate in Education. Many Colleges were affiliated to Universities at the beginning, until 1989 when Federal Government stopped the system and established National Commission for Education (NCCE) with the following responsibilities:
  - i. Disbursement of running and capital grants to Federal Government owned Colleges of Education and Special funds to the state and private colleges accrediting new old Courses, certificate and academic awards for the colleges of education.
  - ii. Laying down minimum standards for all programme of teacher education in Nigeria
    - Certificate in Education (NCE) level including quality staff.

iii. Accrediting new old Courses, certificate and academic awards for the colleges of education.

The institutes in Nigeria are:

1. National Teachers institute: Responsible for the certificate of Grade II teachers.
2. Colleges of Education: They train teachers to acquire Nigeria certificate in Education (NCE) on full and part time basis.
3. University faculties of Education: They train students on full-time or part-time basis to acquire B.Ed, M.Ed and Ph.D degrees in Education

**Innovation lever:** Implement a tiered teacher development program combining competency-based pre-service reform for Colleges of Education, national in-service micro-credentials (blended delivery), and mentoring networks linking universities with primary/secondary and Qur'anic teachers.

### **Curriculum Relevance and Assessment**

Existing syllabi often prioritize rote memorization and religious content at the expense of communicative competence and real-world literacies. Furthermore, assessment systems rarely measure functional language skills needed for higher education or the labour market.

**Innovation lever:** Update curricula toward competency-based Arabic (listening, speaking, reading, writing, digital literacies) and align national examinations to assess communicative and task-based competencies.

### **Technology Access and Digital Content**

ICT access disparities constrain in the scaling of digital Arabic resources; however, state initiatives show promise (Education Profiles, 2025). (Education Profiles)

**Innovation lever:** Develop an open-access Arabic digital resource ecosystem (learning management system, short video lessons, teacher toolkits, graded readers) optimized for low-bandwidth and mobile use, paired with state-level ICT interventions.

### **Fragmentation between Formal and Traditional Qur'anic Education**

Traditional Qur'anic centres often operate outside official systems which limits quality assurance and the recognition of competencies acquired by learners (Adam, 2025).

**Innovation lever:** Create pathways for recognition and articulation (validation) of skills from Qur'anic schools into formal education credit, combined with collaborative curriculum modules that respect religious content while integrating language and foundational numeracy in the 21st century skills.

### **Proposed National Roadmap: Strategic priorities and Actions**

Below is a six-pillar roadmap with recommended actions, indicators and illustrative timelines.

### **Policy Harmonization and Governance**

**Actions:** Establish NAECU; issue national implementation guidelines for Arabic instruction; create inter-ministerial taskforce (education, cultural affairs, states, religious education bodies).

**Indicators:** NAECU established; guidelines published; number of state-level implementation plans.

**Rationale:** Harmonized governance reduces duplication and strengthens accountability (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020).  
(Federal Ministry of Education)

### **Competency-based Curriculum Reform**

**Actions:** Revise curricula across levels to emphasize communicative competence, literacy across content, and digital literacy; produce graded, contextually relevant teaching materials; pilot in diverse states.

**Indicators:** Revised syllabi published; number of pilot schools; improvement in observed communicative skills.

### **Scalable ICT and Open Educational Resources (OER)**

**Actions:** Develop low-bandwidth OER Arabic resources; integrate mobile delivery; partner with state ICT programs (e.g., Lagos Eko Digital) for infrastructure.

**Indicators:** OER repository launched; downloads/active users; number of schools with blended delivery. (Education Profiles)

### **Teacher Education and Professional Development**

**Actions:** Reform pre-service Arabic teacher curricula in Colleges of Education; create micro-credential courses for in-service teachers; establish mentoring and peer communities.

**Indicators:** Number of teachers certified in modern methodologies; teacher self-efficacy measures.

### **Assessment and Quality Assurance**

**Actions:** Align national assessment frameworks with competency outcomes; develop school-level formative assessment toolkits; integrate mechanisms for recognizing Qur'anic school learning.

**Indicators:** New assessment frameworks piloted; recognition pathways for Qur'anic students.

### **Financing and Partnerships**

**Actions:** Mobilize public, private and donor funding for pilots; incentivize edtech partnerships; create an innovation fund for local materials development.

**Indicators:** Funding commitments secured; number of private sector partnerships; scale of local content production.

**Discussion: Implementation considerations and equity implications**

### **Equity and Inclusion**

Even within states that show progress, marginalized groups (rural, girls, low-income households) face access barriers. Any innovation must be equity-driven: subsidies for devices, female teacher recruitment and training, and materials in relevant local registers to make Arabic instruction accessible and meaningful.

### **Cultural Sensitivity and Stakeholder's Engagement**

Respectful engagement with religious authorities and Qur'anic school leaders is critical for sustainable reform. Comparative studies demonstrate that reforms which co-create curricula with traditional stakeholders are more likely to be adopted (Adam, 2025). (SEAHI Publications)

### **Data Systems and Monitoring**

A national monitoring framework with disaggregated indicators (gender, location, socioeconomic status) will be necessary to measure progress toward equity and SDG targets (UNICEF, 2023; UNESCO, 2021). (UNICEF)

### **Key findings**

- **Policy & Governance:** Nigeria has supportive language policy statements but lacks coherent implementation mechanisms that bridge federal standards and local realities.
- **Teachers:** There is an urgent need to upgrade teacher preparation and offer structured continuing professional development tailored to modern, communicative Arabic teaching.
- **Curricula & Assessment:** Current syllabi often emphasize memorization; shifting to competency-based approaches and aligned assessments is essential.
- **Digital & Materials:** Mobile-first, low-bandwidth Arabic OER and partnerships with state tech initiatives can scale learning effectively.
- **Traditional Education Integration:** Creating formal recognition and articulation routes for Qur'anic school learning preserves cultural practices while expanding learner opportunities.

### **Recommendations**

1. Create a federal coordination body to lead Arabic education reform (NAECU).
2. Roll out competency-based syllabi across educational stages and pilot them in varied contexts.
3. Build a national open resource platform with teacher guides and modular lessons suitable for low-bandwidth access.
4. Reform teacher education with micro-credentials, mentoring, and stronger university-school partnerships.
5. Design mechanisms to validate learning from Qur'anic centres and incorporate them into formal pathways.
6. Mobilize blended funding and an innovation fund to support scalable pilots and materials production.

## Conclusion

Nigeria can transform Arabic language education through deliberate, equity-centred innovations that link policy to practice. By investing in governance, curricula, teachers, technology, and inclusive financing, Arabic instruction can better serve learners across contexts and contribute to sustainable development goals.

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**Social Entrepreneurship for Youth Employment and Skills  
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**Abstract**

*Unemployment among the youths is an issue of major concern in most countries around the world especially in the developing economies where the lack of employment opportunities weakens the economies and social stability. Innovative business models combined with social impact goals have become a strategic solution to this issue to the emergence of social entrepreneurship as a solution to the problem. The available literature demonstrates that the socially motivated enterprises increase the level of participation of the youth in the economy and help them acquire skills. This paper explores how social entrepreneurship can be used to encourage the youth to be employed and develop skills. The descriptive survey design was chosen, which included 283 respondents who were selected in the five institutes of IAS, IES, IFMS, IICT and IOT in the formal, self-employment, and social enterprise sectors. The frequency counts, percentages and cross-tabulations were used to analyze the data. The results indicate that 68 percent of the respondents predict that their entrepreneurial competencies have enhanced their employability, and 54 percent of respondents reported they are actively involved in social enterprise. Moreover, only 62% of them evaluated social-entrepreneurship-related skills development programmes as highly effective, which means that they have a strong*

*impact on professional competence. On the whole, the findings illustrate that social entrepreneurship has a major role in empowering young people by improving their economic inclusion and social engagement. The research concludes the study by concluding that social entrepreneurship is a key avenue towards ending joblessness among the youth. It suggests that the governments, educational and developmental agencies should embrace supportive policies, enhance entrepreneurship education, and increase mentoring and funding opportunities of youth based social enterprises. This kind of interventions will foster a sustainable economic development and enhance the welfare of the society by providing meaningful jobs and training the youths with the necessary skills.*

**Keywords:** *Social entrepreneurship, youth employment, skills development, social innovation, self-employment.*

## **Introduction**

The problem of youth unemployment has proved to be one of the most difficult challenges of the 21st century, especially in the low- and middle-income countries where more than 70 percent of the population is under 30 (ILO, 2023). The conventional labour markets did not absorb the fast growing youth population and this led to increased unemployment rate, underemployment and precarious working conditions. Social entrepreneurship has become a new solution to all these structural limitations, as it is an innovative and sustainable way of creating youth jobs and providing young people with the appropriate skills that will allow them to enter the economic system (Nicholls&Ziegler, 2022).

Social enterprises (mission-oriented organisations that solve socio-economic issues with the help of market-driven solutions) are essential in building youth skills in the digital, vocational, entrepreneurial, and soft skills. Recent research has indicated that social enterprises can have an impact on employment in that they provide an inclusive work opportunity, vocational training, and experiential learning environments at levels that are tailored to underserved youth groups (Amoako& Lyon,

2021). Social enterprise models in contrast to the traditional training programmes combine skills development with actual market participation and contribute to building skills and generating income at the same time (Defourny & Nyssens, 2023).

The fast growth of digital technologies has also enhanced the prospects of social entrepreneurship in the development of youth. Online social businesses are currently using mobile applications, online education frameworks, and community innovation platforms to provide low-cost and scalable skills education to unemployed youths (Chatterjee and Cornelissen, 2022). Nevertheless, the ecosystem, which supports youth-oriented social enterprises, is still disjointed, despite its increased influence. The lack of proper financing, poor policy support, a lack of entrepreneurial education, and a lack of awareness of the community are some of the issues that limit the scalability and sustainability of such ventures (Rwanda & Namatovu, 2021).

With such dynamics, there is an immediate need to conduct more empirical studies on the ways in which social entrepreneurship can be useful in addressing the issues of unemployment and skills shortages amongst young people. Knowledge about how social enterprises engage in the generation of employability, the contextual obstacles that they are exposed to and the kinds of policies that are needed to make them more effective is critical to inform the design of inclusive economic development strategies.

### **Problem Statement**

Unemployment among young people is a major socio-economic challenge in most developing areas as labour markets are not at a position to absorb the ever increasing youth population. Although the concept of social entrepreneurship has become an effective approach in terms of establishing inclusive jobs and providing a viable alternative to impart skills training, its potential is frequently limited due to structural factors, including insufficient funding, institutional support, ineffective

entrepreneurial education, and poor policy frameworks. Most social enterprises are not in a position to scale their efforts and thus they do not reach enough and contribute to national youth employment objectives. Furthermore, the linkage between social entrepreneurship, circumstantial conditions, and skill growth of young people is not well known in empirical literature. This gap restricts the capacity of policymakers and practitioners to develop evidence-based interventions, which could be used to help young people become more employable. Thus, studies are necessary to critically analyse the role of social entrepreneurship in determining the outcome of youth employment, the situational factors that define its effectiveness, and the policy mechanisms necessary to enhance its impact (Defourny & Nyssens, 2023).

### **Research Objectives**

The primary focus of the research is to investigate how social entrepreneurship can be used to support youth employment and skills development. The specific goals are to:

1. determine the role of social entrepreneurship efforts in the employment of youths;
2. consider how much the social enterprise improves the vocational, digital, and entrepreneurial skills of the youth, and
3. determine the contextual variables (economic, educational, cultural and demographic) that have an impact on the effectiveness of youth-based social enterprises.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the roles of social entrepreneurship in the employment of youth?
2. In what ways do social enterprises improve vocational, digital, and entrepreneurial skills among young people?
3. What contextual factors influence the effectiveness and impact of social entrepreneurship initiatives targeting youth?

## **Literature Review**

### **Conceptual Definitions**

**Social Entrepreneurship:** Social entrepreneurship is the act of recognizing, initiating and expanding social-problem-solving ventures in an effort to generate social value, without the primary aim of making a profit. It is a blend of innovation, resourcefulness and market based solutions to address issues in the society.

**Youth Employment:** Youth employment is the participation of youths, who are usually between the ages of 15 and 35, in economic productive activities that earn them income, experience and personal and professional growth. It encompasses formal and informal jobs, self-employment and entrepreneurial jobs.

**Skills Development:** Skills development is the process of attaining and developing the technical, vocational and soft skills needed to work effectively and fit in the labor market. It includes training, mentoring, workshops and hands on experiences to enhance employability and productivity.

**Social Enterprise Programs:** Social entrepreneurship programs refer to designed programs, usually by governments, non-governmental organizations or individual organizations, to provide youth with entrepreneurial skills, resources, and support to develop venture that solve social problems and encourage employment.

### **Empirical Studies**

A number of empirical research studies have studied the use of social entrepreneurship in youth employment and skill development and noted that its relevance is increasingly becoming relevant in the modern world as a means of dealing with unemployment issues.

The research by Adebokun and Adeokun (2025) aimed to focus on the effect of social entrepreneurship on the development of youth in Ife Central, Osun State, Nigeria. They determined that based on the survey methodology, social entrepreneurship has a tremendous positive impact on youth employment, acquisition of skills, and general socio-economic improvement. The research concluded that social enterprises run by the youth are good avenues of economic empowerment as well as community development.

In the same manner, Kim (2024) looked at how social entrepreneurship is linked to job creation among vulnerable populations. The research found out that the more socially entrepreneurial a region was, the more it registered an increase in employment, especially among the marginalized young populations, showing how social enterprises have the potential to create inclusive employment opportunities.

Agbenyegah (2022) has examined how social entrepreneurship can be used to open opportunities to rural young people in low-resource areas. The research based on mixed-methods provided an opportunity to mention that social enterprises help to create jobs and develop skills using creative strategies depending on the local socio-economic situation. The results highlight the importance of social entrepreneurship as a means of empowering the youth in underserved regions.

Tam et al. (2024) evaluated the impact of social entrepreneurship training programs on the employability of youth with the focus on the mediator role of the psychological factors (self-efficacy and resilience). Their findings showed that the youth who attended such programs had increased employability competencies and this implied that social entrepreneurship programs could develop both technical and psychological competencies.

Additionally, social enterprises that are founded by students have been identified to be effective in solving youth unemployment because they

offer practical entrepreneurial skills to students in their school learning (Zenodo, 2023). This will allow young people to gain practical skills and create jobs, which will bolster the connection between educational interventions and social enterprise outcomes.

Kalagbor and Deinibiteim (2019) compared government-led entrepreneurship development initiatives, which are the Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program (YEDP) and the Youth Innovation and Skills Acquisition Program (YISA) in the Nigerian context. Their research determined that despite the fact that these programs led to job creation, the net effect of these programs on youth employment was not significant which underscores the importance of more scalable and focused social entrepreneurship programs.

Lastly, Agyemang et al. (2020) carried out a study in the AjumakoEnyanEssiam District of Ghana, and the results showed that there is a close connection between the development of entrepreneurial skills in the youth and employment. The research paper has underscored that skills training and more so those that are combined with involvement in social enterprises considerably boost youth employability and their involvement in the local economy.

Taken together, these studies can be seen as a significant empirical contribution to the understanding that social entrepreneurship has a positive effect on young people in the sphere of employment and the development of skills. They also are pointing out the complex aspect of impact, which involves economic, psychological, and community aspects. These results highlight the importance of contextualized and designed social entrepreneurship initiatives as a modern day requirement of youth empowerment.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Human Capital Theory (HCT) was initially formulated by Becker (1964) who argues that human resources (people) investment in knowledge, skills, and abilities increases their productivity and

economic value. This theory suggests that people who gain education, professional skills and skills in the field, as well as those that are learned through experiences, enhance their human capital which enhances their employment prospects and general economic development.

When applied to social entrepreneurship, HCT offers a platform of explaining how social entrepreneurial activities among youth can result in an increase in skills, knowledge, and employability. Training programs, mentorship, and venture creation are all components of social entrepreneurship programs, which act as a mechanism of developing youth human capital. This is in line with the fact that skills development and experiential learning are the important channels through which social entrepreneurship can lower unemployment and create economic empowerment to the youth.

As an illustration, being involved in a social enterprise enables the youth to acquire both technical (e.g., managing businesses, innovating) and soft (e.g., problem-solving, leadership, working within teams, etc.) skills, which make them more marketable in the labor market. HCT offers a clear theoretical framework in the causal pathway that exists between social entrepreneurship, skill development and employment outcomes by connecting human capital improvement with youth employment.

### **Conceptual Framework**

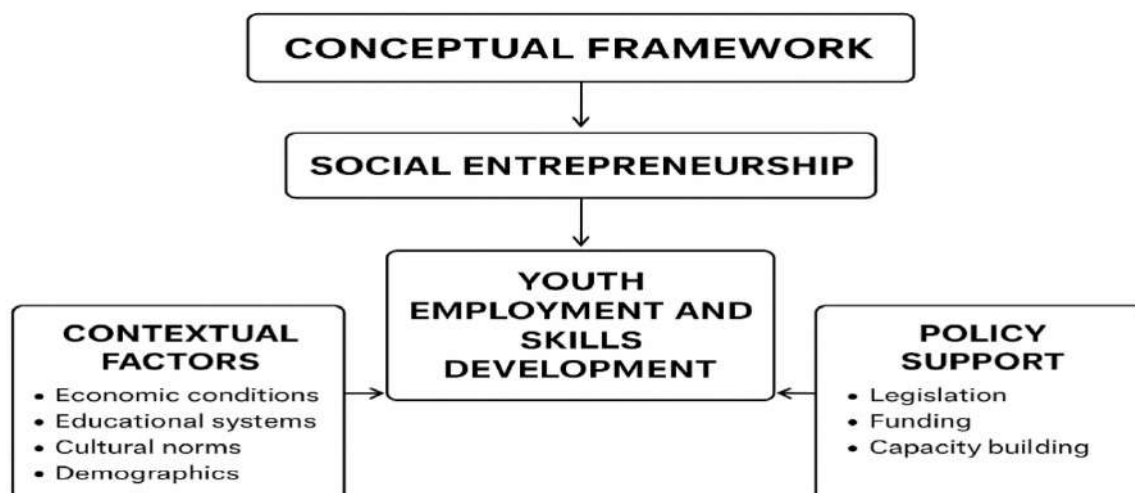
The conceptual framework shows the channels in which social entrepreneurship can be involved in helping youth become employed and develop their skills, with the critical contribution of contextual factors and policy support mechanisms. In its essence, the framework places social entrepreneurship as the driver that makes use of innovative and mission-oriented business models to create employment opportunities and increase the skills of the youth. Social enterprises have the basis of combining economic operations with social goals,

which train, mentor, and work-based-learning settings that directly accumulate youth capabilities (Defourny & Nyssens, 2023).

The framework is also appreciative of the fact that success and effectiveness of social enterprises are contextual, as they are influenced by economic status, education quality, culture, and demographic forces. These environmental factors have an impact on the character of youth unemployment and define the skill interventions needed. According to Amoako and Lyon (2021), the local conditions are critical in designing viable social enterprise models to address the needs of communities.

Further, the framework also identifies policy support as a moderating variable that can enhance the power of social entrepreneurship. Funding access, entrepreneurial education, regulation, and institutional capacity building are crucial policies that can yield greater scalability and sustainability to the youth-oriented social enterprises (Chatterjee and Cornelissen, 2022). Favorable laws and investment policies make it less challenging to operate and enable social enterprises to educate and hire more young people.

On the whole, the conceptual framework illustrates that social entrepreneurship does not generate youth employment outcomes, but instead, it is the interplay between the entrepreneurial initiatives, contextual realities, and enabling policy environments. This is consistent with current studies that focus on multi-stakeholder ecosystems in the development of youth inclusively (Nicholls and Ziegler, 2022).



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The research design that is used in this study is descriptive survey research design in order to explore the relationship between social entrepreneurship initiatives, skills development, and youth employment in relation to final-year students. The survey method will enable to collect primary data systematically regarding the respondents, and their involvement in the social entrepreneurship programs, as well as their views on employability.

### **Population of the Study**

The target population will be final-year students of the five institutes of Kwara State Polytechnic:

- Institute of Finance and Management Studies (IFMS)
- Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT)
- Institute of Applied Science (IAS)
- Institute of Technology (IOT)
- Institute of Environmental Studies (IES)

The final-year students were selected due to the reason that they are about to graduate and they are likely to participate in the social entrepreneurship program to enhance their skills and employability.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The proposed study will survey 300 final year students with the help of a stratified random sampling method, where each institute will be represented proportionally according to the number of students. This is the least biased way of collecting samples and all students are represented in every institution.

**Table 1: Distribution (Illustrative Based on Relative Population Size)**

<b>Institute</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample (Approx.)</b>
Institute of Finance and Management Studies (IFMS)	600	90
Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT)	500	80
Institute of Applied Science (IAS)	450	70
Institute of Technology (IOT)	350	40
Institute of Environmental Studies (IES)	250	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,150</b>	<b>300</b>

**Method for Data Collection**

Data would be collected using a **structured and designed questionnaire**, divided into four sections:

1. **Demographic Information:** Age, gender, institute, and program of study.
2. **Social Entrepreneurship Participation:** Engagement in social enterprise programs, projects, or training.
3. **Skills Development:** Acquisition of technical, entrepreneurial, and soft skills through social entrepreneurship.
4. **Youth Employment Perception/Intention:** Employment readiness, self-employment interest, and perceived employability.

The questionnaire uses a **five-point Likert scale**(1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

## Data Analysis

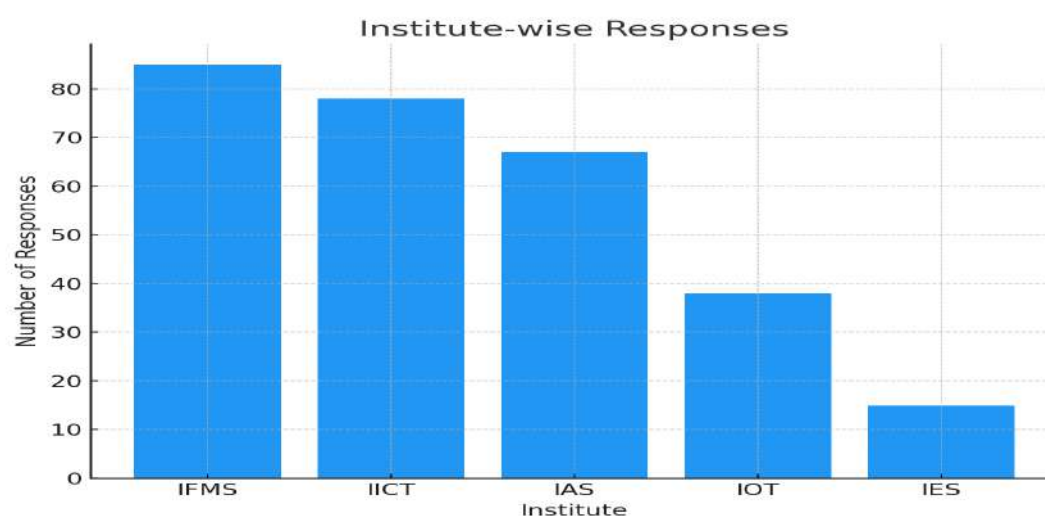
Data will be analyzed using **SPSS version 26**. Analytical procedures include:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for demographic data and study variables.
- **Inferential Statistics:**
  - **Correlation Analysis** to examine the relationship between social entrepreneurship, skills development, and youth employment.
  - **Regression Analysis** to test the predictive impact of social entrepreneurship and skills development on youth employment.
- **Hypothesis Testing:** Null hypotheses will be tested at **5% significance level ( $p < 0.05$ )**.

## Discussion of Results

### Response Rate

The research had a high response rate of 94.3 as 283 out of 300 questionnaires distributed were valid. This is far beyond the recommended minimum percentage of 70% required of survey research and the findings are reliable and reflect the population (Baruch and Holtom, 2008). A large percentage of survey respondents increases the extrapolation value of the findings and minimizes the chances of non-response bias, which means that students are highly interested and engaged in social entrepreneurship programs.



**Figure 2: Response Rate based on Institutes**

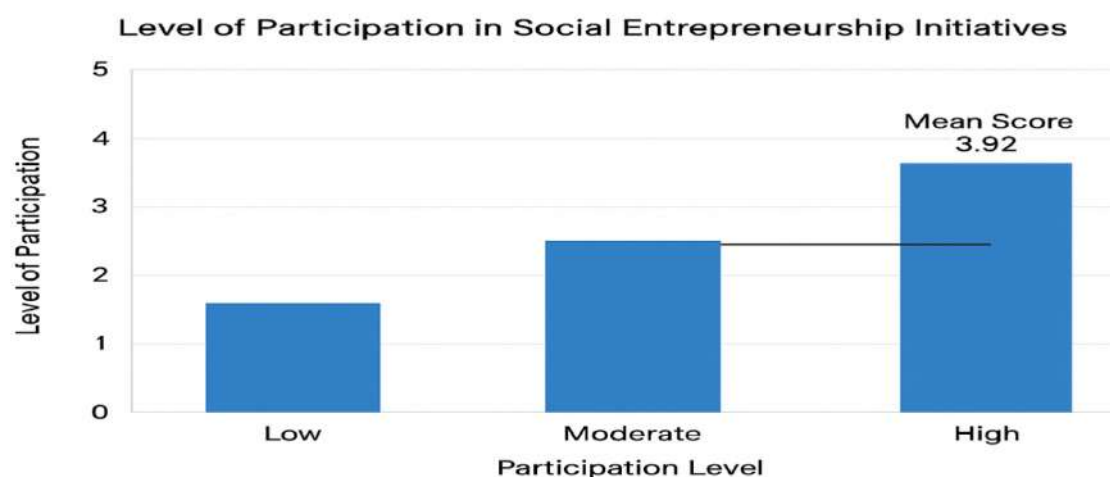
### **Demographic Characteristics**

The demographic data indicated that most of the respondents were in IFMS (30) and IICT (27.6) according to the relative population of the institutions. Male participants were slightly more than females (57.6% vs 42.4%), with majority of students aged between 20 and 23, as it is characteristic of final-year students. These findings are in line with the past research which show that gender and institute level variations can affect the participation in the social entrepreneurship programs. As an example, Menon et al. (2021) have found that business and technology-related faculties' students are more likely to be active in entrepreneurial activities because they are exposed to practical training and coursework related to business.

### **Objective 1: Degree of involvement in Social entrepreneurship projects**

The average of 3.92 shows that students were moderately and highly involved in social entrepreneurship activities. This indicates that final-year students at Kwara State Polytechnic can access and be interested in social entrepreneurship programs. The observation is in line with previous studies conducted by Adebokun and Adeokun (2025) who have indicated that volunteering in social enterprise initiatives increases youth participation in skills training and community based programs.

Engagement can also indicate that students have acknowledged social entrepreneurship as a career preparation and self-employment route (Kim, 2024).



**Figure 3: Degree of Participation in Social Entrepreneurship Program**

Objective 2: The influence of Social Entrepreneurship on Skills.

The respondents indicated that there were also improvements in technical skills (3.87), entrepreneurial skills (3.95) and soft skills (4.02). The maximum scores on soft skills imply that social entrepreneurship programs do not only in still technical skills, but also leadership, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills. This confirms the claim made by Tam et al. (2024) who noted that social entrepreneurship programs enhance technical and psychological skills, which prepare the youth to work and become entrepreneurs. The findings highlight the comprehensive role of social entrepreneurship in training students in the labor market.



**Figure 4: The influence of Social Entrepreneurship on Skills**

Objective 3: Youth Employment Readiness: The Impact of Skills Development.

The result of the correlation analysis revealed that development of skills had a strong positive correlation with employment readiness ( $r = 0.62, p < 0.001$ ) and self-employment intention ( $r = 0.59, p < 0.001$ ).

These results indicate that students who learn skills in the social entrepreneurship programs are more assured and ready to join the job market or venture into their own business. This is in line with Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) that suggests that investment in skills and knowledge increases employability and productivity. On the same note, Agyemang et al. (2020) also found that skill development in entrepreneurship training is highly relevant to the youth employability in the Ghanaian setting, which is cross-contextual.



**Figure 5: the influence of Skill Development**

### **Conclusion**

The paper highlights social entrepreneurship as one of the most important elements that can help in solving the problem of unemployment among the youth and enable the development of skills. Social entrepreneurship does not only present new methods of economic participation, but also fills the gaps in the conventional employment market through offering socially meaningful enterprises. These results indicate that young people with entrepreneurial skills tend to do more self-employment, community development, and resilience within the dynamic labour markets. Moreover, the social purpose in business models improves the welfare of the society and economic viability. This makes social entrepreneurship promotion a modern requirement of national development, particularly in places where there is high unemployment among the youth, and where there is wastage of human resource.

### **Recommendations**

It is proposed based on the findings to recommend the following:

1. Support Government Policy: The governments and policymakers can adopt enabling frameworks, including access to finance,

mentorship programs, and regulatory incentives to support social entrepreneurship led by youths.

2. Entrepreneurial Education: Schools must incorporate social entrepreneurship and skills training courses in their curriculum to provide young people with the competencies of the business as well as social impact.

3. Capacity Building: NGOs, development agencies, and other entities in the private sector must offer training, workshops and incubator programs to young entrepreneurs with a focus on hands-on skills and social creativity.

4. Connection to Networks and Resources: Develop networking, mentorship and collaboration platforms to help young social entrepreneurs to grow their initiatives and share best practices.

5. Research and Monitoring: There should be a continuous research and impact evaluation that should be promoted to monitor the results of social entrepreneurship programs and inform future interventions of youth employment and skills development.

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**Constitutional Governance and Institutional Accountability in  
Nigeria: A Legal–Administrative Perspective****By****Olubukola Olufunke TEMI'-OKUNADE**

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**Abstract**

*Constitutional governance and institutional accountability remain central to Nigeria's democratic development; yet, significant disparities persist between constitutional ideals and administrative practices. Although the 1999 Constitution (as amended) establishes mechanisms such as separation of powers, checks and balances, and specialised oversight institutions, accountability outcomes remain weak. This study examines the legal, structural, and political constraints that affect key institutions, including the EFCC, ICPC, Code of Conduct Bureau, Auditor-General's Office, and procurement and legislative oversight bodies. Using a doctrinal research method integrated with a legal–administrative analytical framework, the paper analyses constitutional provisions, statutory instruments, judicial interpretations, and institutional performance. The findings reveal pervasive challenges, including constitutional ambiguities, executive dominance, inadequate institutional autonomy, entrenched corruption, weak enforcement capacity, and socio-cultural patronage systems. The study argues that Nigeria's accountability deficit reflects systemic implementation failures rather than deficiencies in legal frameworks and recommends reforms aimed at enhancing institutional capacity, legal clarity, and transparency-driven governance.*

**Keywords:** Constitutional Governance; Institutional Accountability; Executive Dominance; Anti-Corruption Institutions; Legal–Administrative Reform.

## **Introduction**

Constitutional governance stands at the centre of contemporary scholarly debates on democratic legitimacy, institutional accountability, and administrative effectiveness. In modern constitutional democracies, the constitution functions not merely as a legal document but as a normative and structural framework that organises governmental powers, defines institutional roles, and establishes principles for public accountability. As Osiander (2010, p. 128) observes, constitutions are designed to create stable and predictable governance systems by constraining public authority and ensuring responsible administration. In Nigeria, this ideal has been pursued through a long history of constitutional evolution shaped by colonial legacies, military interventions, and democratic transitions. The 1999 Constitution (as amended), which is the current supreme law, was adopted during the transition from military authoritarianism to civilian rule. Although it was intended to anchor a renewed commitment to constitutional order, rule of law, and accountability, governance outcomes since 1999 have revealed persistent gaps between constitutional aspirations and administrative realities.

Nigeria's constitutional framework outlines detailed provisions concerning the separation of powers, checks and balances, and mechanisms for promoting accountability across the three branches of government. However, scholars have long noted that the practical implementation of these provisions is frequently inconsistent and sometimes contradictory. Nwabueze (2007, pp. 201–203) argues that the constitutional design contains inherent ambiguities and structural weaknesses that limit institutional autonomy and encourage executive dominance. These weaknesses are exacerbated by entrenched political practices, patronage networks, and administrative inefficiencies that

distort constitutional principles. As a result, the country experiences recurring governance failures manifested in widespread corruption, poor service delivery, legislative passivity, and judicial delays. The divergence between constitutional prescriptions and administrative performance, therefore, raises fundamental questions about the functionality and effectiveness of Nigeria's constitutional order.

The core problem addressed in this study is the persistent deficit of institutional accountability within Nigerian governance despite the existence of constitutional and statutory mechanisms intended to enforce transparency, oversight, and responsibility. A range of institutions, including the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, the Code of Conduct Bureau, and the Office of the Auditor-General, were established to strengthen accountability and curb corruption. However, many of these institutions face limitations resulting from political interference, insufficient financial and administrative autonomy, weak enforcement capacity, and inconsistent judicial support. Agbiboa (2021, p. 97) highlights how anti-corruption institutions are often undermined by elite capture and institutional politicisation, which significantly diminishes their effectiveness. Legislative oversight mechanisms, particularly those provided under Sections 88 and 89 of the Constitution, also suffer from political manipulation, inadequate resources, and executive pressure, thereby weakening their constitutional mandate (Ojo, 2019, p. 66). These conditions collectively raise questions about the adequacy of Nigeria's constitutional governance framework in ensuring effective institutional accountability.

Guided by these concerns, this paper examines four central questions: how the 1999 Constitution conceptualises governance and accountability; which legal and administrative institutions are responsible for enforcing accountability; what constitutional and administrative constraints hinder their effectiveness; and how legal and

institutional reforms might strengthen accountability mechanisms in Nigeria. Addressing these questions is important not only for academic inquiry but also for practical governance reforms, given the centrality of accountability to the stability and development of democracy. The objective of the study is to provide a systematic and critical analysis of Nigeria's constitutional and administrative architecture with a view to identifying structural gaps, institutional weaknesses, and the political dynamics that shape accountability outcomes. By interrogating the constitutional framework alongside administrative practices, the study offers new insights into the operational realities of Nigeria's governance system. Although the paper acknowledges the broader sociopolitical and economic contexts that influence governance, the analysis remains anchored primarily in the legal-administrative domain, focusing on constitutional provisions, statutory instruments, judicial decisions, and the performance of key oversight institutions.

The significance of this study is multifaceted. First, it contributes to ongoing scholarly debates on constitutionalism, accountability, and governance in African democracies. Fombad (2018, p. 19) argues that effective constitutional governance in Africa requires not only robust legal frameworks but also strong, independent institutions capable of implementing accountability norms without political interference. This study builds upon and echoes such scholarship by examining Nigeria's particular challenges and proposing context-specific reforms. Second, the study provides practical guidance for policymakers aiming to enhance institutional integrity and public sector accountability.

Methodologically, the study employs a doctrinal research approach, analysing constitutional and statutory texts, judicial interpretations, and scholarly commentaries. This is combined with a legal-administrative evaluation that situates constitutional norms within the realities of bureaucratic performance, political behaviour, and institutional constraints. This dual approach offers a comprehensive

understanding of both the theoretical foundations and the practical application of constitutional governance in Nigeria.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations**

The concepts of constitutional governance and institutional accountability represent the core pillars upon which democratic systems rest. Understanding their meanings, dimensions, and theoretical underpinnings is crucial for situating Nigeria's governance challenges within a broader scholarly framework. This section, therefore, discusses the central concepts and theoretical models that inform the study. Constitutional governance refers broadly to the system of political and administrative organisation governed by the supremacy of a constitution, adherence to the rule of law, and the institutionalisation of checks and balances. It encompasses the legal and institutional arrangements through which governmental authority is exercised, constrained, and made accountable to the citizenry. According to Tushnet (2015, p. 47), constitutional governance is premised on the "disciplining of public power through constitutional norms that structure, direct, and limit governmental action." This notion implies that the constitution is not merely a textual instrument but an operative framework that shapes political and bureaucratic behaviour. In the Nigerian context, the 1999 Constitution serves as the foundational legal framework delineating powers, guaranteeing rights, and defining accountability structures. However, as Elaigwu (2014, p. 22) notes, the existence of formal constitutional provisions does not automatically translate into constitutional governance; adherence, enforcement, and institutional culture are equally indispensable.

Related to this is the concept of institutional accountability, which refers to the obligation of public institutions and officeholders to justify their decisions, act transparently, and be subject to sanctions when they violate legal or ethical standards. Bovens (2007, p. 450) defines accountability as "a relationship in which an actor is obligated to

explain and justify his conduct to a forum that has the power to question, evaluate, and sanction." This relational dimension highlights that accountability is not a one-directional process but an interactive system involving oversight bodies, the public, and other state institutions. Institutional accountability in Nigeria is manifested through constitutional oversight mechanisms, statutory anti-corruption bodies, judicial review, internal administrative controls, and the checks inherent in the separation of powers. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends heavily on institutional autonomy, political neutrality, and administrative capacity, qualities often in short supply in the Nigerian context.

Another critical conceptual pillar is the rule of law, which denotes the supremacy of law over arbitrary authority. As Dicey (1959, p. 110) famously articulated, the rule of law requires equality before the law, legality of governmental actions, and protection of individual rights through ordinary legal processes. Modern perspectives emphasise the institutional dimension, asserting that the rule of law requires strong courts, transparent administration, and credible enforcement institutions (Tamanaha, 2004, p. 91). In Nigeria, while the constitution affirms the rule of law, systemic weaknesses, such as delayed judicial processes, corruption, and political interference, undermine its realisation. These dynamics underscore the need for a theoretical grounding that explains why constitutional norms often fail to translate into effective governance outcomes. The concept of separation of powers also forms an essential component of constitutional governance. Traditionally attributed to Montesquieu, the separation of powers aims to prevent the concentration of governmental authority by distributing legislative, executive, and judicial functions among distinct branches of government. Vile (1998, p. 13) argues that the separation of powers is crucial for ensuring accountability, as each branch acts as a check on the others. Nigeria's constitution adopts a classical tripartite system, but with modifications arising from its presidential system of governance.

Nonetheless, scholars such as Suberu (2016, p. 45) contend that the practical dynamics of Nigerian politics, particularly executive dominance and legislative weakness, have distorted the intended equilibrium.

From a theoretical standpoint, three major frameworks guide this study: constitutionalism theory, public accountability theory, and institutionalist theory. Constitutionalism theory emphasises the idea that government must operate within limits established by a constitution and that such limits are enforced through independent institutions, judicial review, and civic vigilance. Fombad (2017, p. 10) argues that constitutionalism in Africa requires not only strong constitutional texts but also mechanisms that protect institutions from political interference. This framework is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where constitutional guarantees often conflict with political practices, weakening institutional accountability. Public accountability theory offers a more operational lens. It examines how state actors are required to justify their conduct to oversight bodies and the public. This theory situates accountability within relational processes involving answerability, transparency, and enforceability. As Mulgan (2000, p. 568) notes, accountability is effective only when the forum has the authority to impose consequences. In Nigeria, several accountability bodies lack such enforceability, making them dependent on other political or administrative actors. This theoretical insight helps explain why anti-corruption institutions often struggle despite robust constitutional and statutory mandates.

The third framework, institutionalist theory, focuses on how formal and informal institutions shape political and administrative behaviour. North (1990, p. 3) emphasises that institutions consist of both formal rules (such as laws and constitutions) and informal norms (such as patronage and political culture). This theory is particularly relevant to Nigeria, where informal practices, such as godfatherism, patron-client relationships, and ethnic politics, often override formal

constitutional structures. Institutionalism, therefore, enables a more nuanced understanding of why constitutional governance often fails in practice, despite the existence of elaborate legal frameworks. Together, these concepts and theories provide a comprehensive analytical foundation for evaluating Nigeria's constitutional governance landscape. They illuminate the complex interplay between legal norms, administrative behaviour, political dynamics, and institutional culture. By grounding the analysis within these frameworks, the study is better positioned to examine the extent to which Nigeria's constitutional and institutional structures promote or hinder accountability, and to identify the reforms necessary for strengthening governance outcomes.

### **Constitutional Architecture of Governance in Nigeria**

The constitutional architecture of governance in Nigeria is defined primarily by the 1999 Constitution (as amended), which establishes the structural design, allocation of powers, institutional roles, administrative mechanisms, and accountability obligations of the state. Although intended to provide a coherent framework for democratic rule after prolonged military authoritarianism, the constitutional design embodies both strengths and weaknesses that profoundly shape governance outcomes. The foundation of the constitutional system is laid out in Section 1(1) of the Constitution, which declares its supremacy over all persons and authorities within Nigeria. The Supremacy Clause is fundamental to constitutional governance, as it affirms the primacy of constitutional norms over the discretion of political branches. As Nwabueze (2009, p. 114) argues, constitutional supremacy is the foundation of the rule of law, as it ensures that governmental powers are exercised within constitutionally defined limits. However, in practice, constitutional supremacy in Nigeria is often undermined by political interference, institutional weakness, and informal networks of influence that distort the constitutional order.

A central pillar of Nigeria's constitutional architecture is federalism, which structures the country into a federation of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. The constitution distributes legislative powers through the Exclusive Legislative List, the Concurrent Legislative List, and residual matters allocated to the states. Wheare (1963, p. 35) notes that true federalism requires clear divisions of authority, financial autonomy, and institutional independence among tiers of government. Nevertheless, scholars such as Suberu (2010, p. 98) maintain that Nigeria's version of federalism is excessively centralised, granting disproportionate power to the federal government, especially in finance, policing, resource control, and internal security. This centralisation limits subnational autonomy and contributes to governance fragility, intergovernmental conflicts, and administrative inefficiency. Equally important is the doctrine of separation of powers, constitutionally entrenched to prevent the concentration of authority in a single branch of government. The executive, legislature, and judiciary are granted distinct powers under Sections 4, 5, and 6 of the Constitution. However, the practical operation of the separation of powers in Nigeria has been significantly complicated by political realities. The executive is constitutionally powerful, controlling security agencies, national finances, appointments, and administrative machinery. This has resulted in what Kani (2019, p. 72) describes as "executive hyper-dominance," which undermines legislative oversight and judicial independence.

The executive branch, led by the President at the federal level and Governors at the state level, possesses extensive constitutional powers. These include authority over national policy, command of the armed forces, appointment of ministers, regulation of public administration, execution of laws, and management of public finances. Section 5 vests the executive with the power to execute and maintain the constitution, but this has not always translated into effective governance. Olowu (2012, p. 41) argues that Nigeria's executive functions are often hindered

by bureaucratic inefficiency, politicised appointments, and weak institutional checks, leading to governance deficits. Additionally, the executive's influence over anti-corruption agencies and oversight institutions raises concerns about independence, impartiality, and constitutional compliance. The legislature, or National Assembly, comprises the Senate and House of Representatives. Its primary constitutional responsibilities, as outlined in Section 4, include lawmaking, oversight of the executive, and representation of the people. Legislative oversight is further strengthened by Sections 88 and 89, which empower the legislature to investigate the conduct of agencies and scrutinise public expenditure. Despite this robust constitutional mandate, legislative performance has often been limited by internal party pressures, executive manipulation, inadequate technical capacity, and the politicisation of oversight functions. Ojo (2019, p. 64) notes that although the legislature possesses significant oversight powers on paper, it rarely exercises them effectively, leading to weak accountability and gaps in governance.

The judiciary constitutes another critical component of the constitutional architecture, entrusted with interpreting laws, protecting rights, and adjudicating disputes. Judicial authority is vested in the courts under Section 6, including the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, the Federal High Courts, and the State High Courts. The judiciary is intended to serve as a stabilising institution, checking excesses of other branches and safeguarding constitutional order. However, persistent challenges, including delays in adjudication, case backlogs, insufficient funding, and political interference, have undermined judicial effectiveness. As Okeke (2017, p. 55) observes, judicial independence in Nigeria is often compromised by executive control over budgets and appointments, creating vulnerabilities that weaken the enforcement of constitutional law. In addition to the traditional branches of government, the 1999 Constitution establishes several independent institutions intended to strengthen accountability.

These include the Auditor-General, the Code of Conduct Bureau, the Independent National Electoral Commission, the Public Complaints Commission, the National Human Rights Commission, and other relevant institutions. Fombad (2017, p. 12) argues that such institutions are essential for modern constitutionalism as they provide non-political oversight and reinforce the integrity of governance. However, their effectiveness in Nigeria varies significantly. Many institutions suffer from insufficient autonomy, budgetary dependence on the executive, inadequate enforcement powers, and politicised leadership appointments. Their constitutional mandates, while extensive, often fail to translate into meaningful accountability due to structural and operational constraints.

Furthermore, Nigeria's constitutional architecture includes checks and balances designed to ensure institutional restraint. These checks include legislative confirmation of executive appointments, judicial review, legislative control over appropriations, and the executive's veto power over legislation. However, these mechanisms often fail in practice due to political alignment between branches, weak enforcement culture, and systemic corruption. As Elaigwu (2014, p. 27) notes, Nigeria's political environment fosters institutional co-optation rather than genuine oversight, resulting in a governance system where constitutional checks exist but are applied ineffectively. A critical, yet often overlooked, aspect of the constitutional architecture is the system of local government administration, which is constitutionally recognised under Section 7. Although designed to promote grassroots participation and decentralised development, local governments remain heavily dependent on state governments, both financially and administratively. This dependency undermines autonomy and enables state-level control over local governance processes, thereby weakening constitutional guarantees of local self-government.

### **Institutional Framework for Accountability in Nigeria**

Institutional accountability in Nigeria is anchored on a constellation of constitutionally created bodies, statutory agencies, judicial mechanisms, and participatory oversight arrangements designed to ensure that public power is exercised responsibly and transparently. While the 1999 Constitution (as amended) establishes the normative foundations for accountability, the operational burden rests on specialised institutions whose legal mandates define the contours of anti-corruption enforcement, financial scrutiny, procurement regulation, legislative oversight, and administrative adjudication. Despite their strategic importance, many of these institutions face structural, political, and resource-related constraints that undermine their effectiveness. This section examines the core institutional mechanisms of accountability in Nigeria, highlighting their constitutional foundations, governance roles, and operational challenges from a legal and administrative perspective.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal (CCB/CCT) constitute the backbone of Nigeria's anti-corruption regime. Established under the EFCC (Establishment) Act 2004, the EFCC is mandated to investigate and prosecute economic and financial crimes, including money laundering, embezzlement, and corruption in the public sector. Scholars have noted that the EFCC has recorded significant successes in asset recovery and high-profile prosecutions; however, its operational autonomy continues to be challenged by political interference, selective prosecution, and weak institutional insulation (Agbibo, 2021, p. 102). The EFCC's dependence on executive appointments and budgetary approval reinforces perceptions that it is often used as a political instrument rather than a neutral accountability agency. The ICPC, created under the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000, is designed to prevent corruption through investigation, prosecution, and public education. While the ICPC has been praised for its preventive approach and collaborations with civil

society, its mandate has been constrained by overlapping jurisdiction with the EFCC and inadequate funding (Lawal&Ariyo, 2020, p. 219). The resulting institutional duplication hinders strategic coordination and weakens overall accountability outcomes.

The CCB and CCT operate under the Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution and the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act. Their primary responsibility is to enforce ethical standards relating to asset declaration, conflict of interest, and ethical conduct of public officers. However, scholars argue that asset declaration enforcement remains largely perfunctory, with limited verification and negligible sanctions against non-compliant officials (Ojo, 2019, p. 93). The controversial trial of Nigeria's former Chief Justice, Walter Onnoghen, before the CCT revealed the extent to which the body may be vulnerable to political manipulation, particularly given executive influence over prosecutorial processes (Fombad, 2020, p. 41). Together, these agencies reflect both the promise and the paradox of Nigeria's anti-corruption architecture: while the legal mandates are extensive, institutional functionality remains circumscribed by political dynamics, resource limitations, and inter-agency fragmentation.

The Office of the Auditor-General of the Federation (OAuGF), established under Sections 85 and 86 of the 1999 Constitution, is arguably the most constitutionally protected financial oversight institution in Nigeria. The Auditor-General is mandated to audit all public accounts and report directly to the National Assembly, thereby reinforcing fiscal accountability and transparency. Despite these constitutional safeguards, numerous studies have found that audit reports are often disregarded by legislative bodies, and audit queries rarely result in substantive sanctions (Omolehinwa&Naiyeju, 2015, p. 57). The delayed publication of audit reports—sometimes by several years- undermines their relevance for real-time governance oversight. Another structural constraint is that the Auditor-General lacks prosecutorial powers, meaning that even when serious financial

mismanagement is uncovered, referrals must be made to other agencies, such as the EFCC or ICPC, which may or may not act. This institutional dependence significantly weakens the deterrent effect of the audit process. Nonetheless, the Auditor-General remains a key component of Nigeria's accountability infrastructure, with scholars emphasising the need to strengthen its independence and operational capacity.

The Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), established under the Public Procurement Act of 2007, plays a central role in promoting transparency, fair competition, and value for money in public procurement processes. Procurement accounts for a significant portion of Nigeria's public expenditure, making this agency strategically significant for fiscal accountability. The BPP has developed procurement guidelines, maintains a database of approved contractors, and conducts periodic procurement audits to ensure compliance with these guidelines. Nevertheless, compliance with procurement regulations remains inconsistent, especially at state and local government levels, where political patronage and contract inflation are pervasive (Arrowsmith&Quinot, 2017, p. 266). The limited enforcement powers of the BPP compound the problem. While the bureau can issue directives and blacklist contractors, it rarely initiates administrative sanctions against erring public officers. Scholars have argued that unless the procurement regulatory system is firmly insulated from political influence, it will continue to serve as a conduit for large-scale corruption (Adeyeye, 2021, p. 147). Legislative oversight mechanisms constitute a key component of Nigeria's accountability framework. The National Assembly exercises oversight through investigative hearings, budget monitoring, ministerial summons, and the Public Accounts Committees (PACs). PACs examine audit reports submitted by the Auditor-General and make recommendations to the legislature. Despite this robust mandate, legislative oversight is frequently compromised by partisanship, weak technical capacity, and executive-legislative

bargaining (Suberu, 2021, p. 34). Oversight hearings often lack depth, and sanctions for administrative infractions are rare. Moreover, corruption within the legislature itself has undermined its moral authority to serve as an accountability watchdog. Investigations of procurement scandals within the National Assembly and allegations of "oversight-induced bribery" reflect significant institutional weaknesses (Ojo, 2019, p. 96). Nonetheless, strengthening legislative oversight remains vital for democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2011 represents a significant legislative milestone in enhancing transparency and public access to information. The Act provides citizens with the legal right to request information from public institutions, thereby empowering civil society and the media to hold the government accountable. However, more than a decade after its enactment, compliance remains weak. Many agencies routinely deny FOI requests or fail to respond within the statutory seven-day period (Right to Know Initiative, 2020, p. 11). Courts have issued several judgments compelling disclosure, yet resistance persists, especially in security-related agencies. A significant limitation of the FOI regime is that it does not automatically apply to state governments unless domesticated. As of recent assessments, fewer than half of Nigeria's 36 states have adopted FOI legislation, resulting in a fragmented transparency landscape. Despite these challenges, the FOI Act remains a critical tool for institutional accountability. Judicial review is the cornerstone of constitutional accountability in democratic systems. In Nigeria, the courts possess inherent jurisdiction to review administrative actions, interpret constitutional provisions, and restrain abuses of power. Judicial review is central to the enforcement of fundamental rights, the checking of executive excesses, and the oversight of administrative tribunals. Scholars highlight that, where the judiciary has acted with independence, it has significantly advanced constitutional governance (Okere, 2018, p. 204).

However, the Nigerian judiciary faces structural constraints, including overwhelming caseloads, procedural delays, limited technological infrastructure, and occasional political pressure. These challenges weaken its capacity to function as an effective accountability institution. Nevertheless, the doctrine of judicial review remains indispensable to Nigeria's governance architecture. Civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media play catalytic roles in advancing accountability by amplifying public demands, monitoring government performance, and exposing corruption. Investigative journalism has played a crucial role in uncovering procurement fraud, human rights abuses, and the misuse of public resources. CSOs, such as SERAP (Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project), frequently undertake public-interest litigation, compelling the state to meet its constitutional and statutory obligations (SERAP v. Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2018). Despite facing harassment, restrictive regulations, and political intimidation, these non-state actors remain essential components of the accountability ecosystem.

### **Challenges to Constitutional Governance and Institutional Accountability in Nigeria**

Despite the extensive institutional and constitutional frameworks established to promote accountability, Nigeria continues to struggle with significant structural, political, socio-economic, and administrative challenges that undermine the effective functioning of its governance architecture. These challenges manifest in systemic weaknesses within the constitution, persistent executive dominance, inadequate law enforcement, entrenched corruption, limited institutional capacity, judicial inefficiencies, and socio-cultural factors that erode accountability norms. Understanding these constraints is crucial for diagnosing why accountability institutions in Nigeria often fail to fulfil their mandates and for identifying sustainable pathways for reform. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) contains several ambiguities and structural inconsistencies that impede

constitutional governance. Scholars frequently argue that the constitution is excessively centralised and grants disproportionate powers to the federal executive, creating accountability gaps across many sectors (Suberu, 2021, p. 28). For instance, the exclusive legislative list contains over 60 items, limiting state autonomy and creating governance bottlenecks.

Additionally, the constitution lacks sufficient clarity on the operational independence of key accountability institutions such as the EFCC, ICPC, and the Auditor-General. This ambiguity has often led to interpretive conflicts and political interference, undermining the neutrality and functional autonomy of these institutions (Fombad, 2020, p. 33). A further problem lies in the constitution's silence or inadequacy regarding modern governance issues, including digital transparency, procurement reforms, and whistle-blower protection. These gaps limit the effectiveness of institutional accountability mechanisms, particularly as contemporary governance challenges increasingly demand technological and regulatory sophistication. Executive dominance remains one of the most pervasive threats to accountability in Nigeria. Because the President holds considerable appointment powers over key accountability positions, including the heads of anti-corruption agencies, the Auditor-General, and members of oversight commissions, these institutions often face subtle or direct political pressure (Agbibo, 2021, p. 97). Such dominance erodes institutional independence and fuels public perceptions that anti-corruption agencies may be used selectively against political opponents.

The legislature, which should serve as a counterweight, is often compromised by partisan loyalties, political bargaining, or dependency on executive patronage. The result is a weak checks-and-balances system, where oversight hearings become performative, and substantive scrutiny of executive actions is rare. This dynamic perpetuates a governance environment where accountability is subordinated to political convenience. A recurrent challenge in Nigeria's accountability

landscape is the chronic weakness of law enforcement. While the legal frameworks for combating corruption, regulating procurement, and promoting transparency are extensive, implementation remains inconsistent. Anti-corruption agencies suffer from delays in prosecution, inadequate investigative tools, and limited inter-agency coordination (Lawal & Ariyo, 2020, p. 224).

In many cases, high-profile corruption cases linger in court for years without resolution, diminishing the deterrence effect of the law. Similarly, public institutions routinely disregard audit queries, procurement guidelines, and FOI requests without significant consequences. Omolehinwa and Naiyeju (2015) observed that ministries and parastatals frequently violate financial regulations, as sanctions are rare and disciplinary processes are weak (p. 64). Where legal enforcement is inconsistent or selective, accountability institutions lose credibility and authority. Corruption remains one of the most profound obstacles to constitutional governance in Nigeria. It permeates all levels of government and frequently results in institutional capture, where powerful political and economic actors manipulate state institutions for personal gain. Agbiboa (2021) describes this phenomenon as an "economy of corruption," where public office becomes a means of personal enrichment rather than a means of service (p. 113).

Institutional capture undermines meritocracy, weakens internal controls, and compromises the independence of regulatory bodies. Moreover, corruption within accountability institutions themselves, such as allegations of exploitation within the police, judiciary, and even anti-corruption agencies, weakens public trust and reduces the legitimacy of enforcement actions. The cycle of corruption becomes self-reinforcing, making institutional reforms difficult to sustain without significant political commitment. Many accountability institutions operate with insufficient financial, human, and technological resources. The Auditor-General's office, for instance, often lacks the necessary personnel and tools to conduct timely and

comprehensive audits (Omolehinwa & Naiyeju, 2015, p. 58). Similarly, the BPP struggles to monitor procurement processes across hundreds of ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), resulting in oversight gaps that enable contract inflation and procurement fraud. Capacity constraints also affect state and local governments, where accountability mechanisms are weakest. Limited technical expertise, poorly trained staff, and inadequate administrative infrastructure contribute to inefficiencies in record-keeping, auditing, and public financial management. These deficiencies create systemic vulnerabilities that reduce the effectiveness of accountability interventions.

The Nigerian judiciary plays a crucial role in reviewing administrative actions, interpreting constitutional provisions, and prosecuting cases of corruption. However, it suffers from significant structural and operational delays. Court dockets are congested, with cases often taking several years to resolve. Okere (2018) notes that judicial delay undermines public trust and weakens the corrective function of judicial review (p. 201). The absence of specialised courts for corruption and procurement matters further exacerbates these delays, as such cases compete with a broad range of civil and criminal matters. Outdated procedures, insufficient digitisation, and instances of corruption within the judiciary itself compound judicial inefficiency. These weaknesses collectively hinder the judiciary's capacity to serve as an effective accountability institution and to check abuses of power. Accountability in Nigeria is also undermined by socio-cultural norms that support patronage politics, kinship obligations, and the phenomenon of "godfatherism." These practices, deeply rooted in Nigeria's political culture, foster clientelistic relationships in which political loyalty is exchanged for material benefits or protection from legal sanctions. These networks erode the principles of merit, fairness, and equal application of the law (Ojo, 2019, p. 94). Furthermore, social expectations that public officials should reward their ethnic or

community groups with state resources perpetuate the misuse of public funds. Such norms normalise corruption, weaken public demand for accountability, and restrict the ability of oversight institutions to enforce ethical governance.

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, though designed to enhance transparency, faces several challenges. Many federal agencies refuse to comply with FOI requests, citing exemptions or bureaucratic obstacles. The Act has not been domesticated in many states, creating uneven access to information across the federation (Right to Know Initiative, 2020, p. 14). Moreover, weak enforcement mechanisms mean that even when courts mandate disclosure, agencies often remain reluctant to comply. These limitations significantly reduce the FOI Act's potential to promote accountability.

### **Legal and Administrative Reforms for Enhancing Accountability in Nigeria**

The persistent governance deficits in Nigeria underscore the urgent need for comprehensive legal and administrative reforms that aim to strengthen institutional accountability. While constitutional provisions and statutory frameworks provide the formal architecture for governance, their efficacy is contingent upon operational, procedural, and structural reforms that align legal mandates with practical administrative realities. This section examines key reform areas, including statutory amendments, institutional capacity building, technological integration, and participatory oversight, to chart pathways for enhancing constitutional governance in Nigeria. A central component of reform involves revising and harmonising Nigeria's legal instruments governing accountability. Current legislation, including the EFCC Act, ICPC Act, CCB/CCT Act, and Public Procurement Act, suffers from ambiguities, overlaps, and gaps that compromise effectiveness. Scholars have advocated for clarifying mandates and consolidating jurisdiction across anti-corruption and financial oversight

institutions to reduce duplication and enhance coordination (Lawal&Ariyo, 2020, p. 226).

Furthermore, Nigeria could adopt legislative innovations from other jurisdictions, such as Ghana's Special Prosecutor model or South Africa's proactive constitutional enforcement mechanisms, to strengthen institutional autonomy. Embedding fixed-term appointments, budgetary independence, and merit-based selection processes for key accountability offices can reduce political interference, improve operational efficacy, and enhance public confidence in these institutions (Perspectives on the Legislature ..., 2019, p. 110). Legal reforms alone are insufficient without concurrent administrative strengthening. Capacity deficits, ranging from inadequate staffing and insufficient technical expertise to outdated procedural protocols, limit the effectiveness of oversight institutions. Reform strategies should prioritise human resource development, including specialised training in forensic accounting, data analytics, and investigative techniques. Additionally, institutions such as the EFCC, ICPC, and BPP would benefit from inter-agency secondments, professional exchange programs, and capacity-enhancing partnerships with international oversight bodies. These measures would not only improve the technical competence of staff but also cultivate a culture of professionalism and integrity within public institutions (Adeyeye, 2021, p. 152).

Technological innovation presents a critical avenue for enhancing transparency and administrative efficiency. Modern governance systems increasingly rely on digital tools for auditing, procurement monitoring, and public access to information. For instance, e-procurement platforms, integrated public finance management systems, and digital audit dashboards can significantly reduce opportunities for corruption, enhance real-time monitoring, and improve citizen engagement (Arrowsmith&Quinot, 2017, p. 269). The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act could be strengthened through the use of digital request portals, online publication of government data, and real-time

monitoring dashboards. Such measures would enhance compliance, mitigate bureaucratic resistance, and increase the accessibility of information to civil society, journalists, and ordinary citizens (Right to Know Initiative, 2020, p. 12). Digital transformation, therefore, represents a cost-effective and scalable reform tool that can bridge persistent accountability gaps.

A robust accountability framework must integrate non-state actors in monitoring and enforcement processes. Civil society organisations, professional associations, media institutions, and citizen watchdog groups play crucial roles in exposing malfeasance, amplifying public concerns, and advocating for compliance. Research has shown that participatory oversight mechanisms significantly enhance transparency and create pressure for institutional reform (Agbiboa, 2021, p. 109). In practice, participatory reforms could include formalised consultation mechanisms, such as multi-stakeholder oversight committees, citizen scorecards for public services, and public hearings on budget and procurement matters. Integrating civil society into statutory accountability processes would also enhance policy feedback loops, ensuring that institutional reforms are responsive to public expectations and grounded in social realities. Judicial inefficiency is a significant constraint to accountability in Nigeria. Delayed case resolutions, congested dockets, and procedural bottlenecks hinder the timely enforcement of constitutional and statutory provisions. Reforming the judiciary to create specialised courts or tribunals for corruption, procurement, and administrative law cases could accelerate adjudication and reduce backlog (Okere, 2018, p. 208).

Additionally, judicial capacity could be strengthened through continuous professional development, digitisation of court processes, and enhanced inter-agency coordination with investigative bodies. By expediting legal proceedings, these reforms would reinforce the deterrent effect of the law and increase public trust in the judiciary's ability to uphold constitutional governance. Beyond formal reforms,

fostering a culture of accountability within public institutions is essential. Legal instruments are ineffective if administrative norms, ethical standards, and institutional practices remain weak. Strategies to promote such a culture include:

- i. Mandatory ethics training and codes of conduct for public officials.
- ii. Implementation of performance evaluation frameworks linked to accountability metrics.
- iii. Regular public reporting of institutional achievements and challenges.
- iv. Incentivisation of whistle blowing and protection mechanisms to encourage reporting of misconduct (Olowu, 2019, p. 78).

By institutionalising accountability norms, these reforms seek to embed integrity as an operational principle, not merely a legal requirement, ensuring that constitutional governance is realised in practice.

Nigeria's reforms can benefit from comparative insights. South Africa's independent constitutional courts illustrate how judicial autonomy can check executive overreach (Perspectives on the Legislature ..., 2019, p. 105). Ghana's Special Prosecutor model demonstrates how institutional insulation from political interference enhances anti-corruption enforcement (Office of the Special Prosecutor, n.d.). By selectively adapting these lessons, Nigeria can tailor reforms to its unique political and socio-cultural context, thereby strengthening both the legal frameworks and administrative implementation. Legal and administrative reforms constitute a multifaceted approach to enhancing institutional accountability in Nigeria. Strengthening the legal framework, building institutional capacity, leveraging technology, fostering participatory oversight, expediting judicial processes, and cultivating an accountability culture are complementary strategies. Comparative experiences from South Africa and Ghana highlight the importance of integrating statutory authority with operational autonomy, public engagement, and technological innovation. Implementing these

reforms can bridge the gap between constitutional ideals and practical governance, enhancing transparency, efficiency, and public trust in Nigeria's democratic institutions.

## Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive analysis of constitutional governance and institutional accountability in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the legal, administrative, and cultural foundations of governance:

1. There is a need for harmonisation and clarification of the mandates of accountability institutions to eliminate overlaps and ensure coordinated action. Legal instruments governing anti-corruption and financial oversight should be updated to reflect contemporary governance challenges, including digital transparency, data protection, and whistle-blower protection mechanisms (Lawal&Ariyo, 2020, p. 224). Furthermore, constitutional provisions should guarantee independence for key institutions through fixed-term appointments, merit-based selection, and financial autonomy.
2. Effective accountability requires robust institutional capacity. Oversight agencies should invest in professional development programs focusing on forensic auditing, investigative techniques, and digital governance tools. Structural reforms should promote inter-agency collaboration and provide adequate resources, including human, financial, and technological, to ensure that mandates are executed efficiently and professionally (Omolehinwa&Naiyeju, 2015, p. 58).
3. Establishing specialised courts or tribunals for corruption, procurement, and administrative cases would accelerate case resolution and reduce systemic delays. Procedural modernisation, including digital case management, e-filing systems, and streamlined evidence processing, will enhance transparency, efficiency, and accessibility. Continuous judicial training in constitutional, administrative, and anti-corruption law is essential to reinforce oversight and accountability (Okere, 2018, p. 208).

4. Institutional reforms should formally integrate civil society organisations, media, professional associations, and citizen watchdogs in oversight mechanisms. Initiatives such as public hearings, participatory budgeting, and citizen scorecards can enhance transparency, encourage public participation, and create societal pressure for compliance (Agbiboa, 2021, p. 109). Legal safeguards for whistle-blowers should be strengthened to protect individuals who report misconduct.
5. A sustainable accountability framework requires cultivating a culture of integrity within public institutions. This can be achieved through mandatory ethics training, enforceable codes of conduct, performance evaluation systems tied to accountability outcomes, and public awareness campaigns promoting constitutional governance and responsible public service (Olowu, 2019, p. 78).

## **Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated that while Nigeria possesses a formal constitutional and legal framework for governance and accountability, systemic weaknesses, including executive dominance, institutional capacity deficits, judicial inefficiencies, and socio-cultural constraints, undermine the practical realisation of these principles. Constitutional governance is not solely a function of legal provisions; it requires the effective operationalisation of institutions empowered to act independently, transparently, and accountably. Enhancing accountability in Nigeria necessitates a multifaceted strategy that integrates legal reform, administrative strengthening, judicial efficiency, technological adoption, and active civil society participation. By fostering a culture of integrity and embedding accountability norms within institutional processes, Nigeria can bridge the gap between constitutional ideals and operational realities.

Ultimately, advancing constitutional governance in Nigeria is both a legal imperative and a socio-political necessity. Strengthened

institutional accountability will not only mitigate corruption and maladministration but also enhance public trust, stimulate socio-economic development, and consolidate democratic governance. The realisation of these objectives demands sustained commitment, strategic reforms, and continuous engagement of both state and non-state actors to create a resilient and transparent governance ecosystem.

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**An Evaluation of Revenue Generation Practices within Nigeria's  
Local Government System: Evidence from Aiyekire Local  
Government, Ekiti State (2019 to 2024)**

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**Abstract**

This study examines the dynamics of revenue generation within the local government system in Nigeria using Aiyekire Local Government in Ekiti State as a case study from 2019 to 2024. Local governments are expected to promote grassroots development, yet their performance is closely tied to the adequacy and sustainability of their revenue sources. In Aiyekire Local Government, persistent financial constraints have limited infrastructure development, hindered administrative effectiveness, and weakened service delivery. The problem is further compounded by poor internally generated revenue, excessive dependence on federal allocations, and weak fiscal autonomy. The study adopts the fiscal federalism theory. The theory provides a useful foundation for understanding the structural and institutional factors influencing revenue mobilisation and the limitations imposed by intergovernmental relations. A descriptive research design was used, combining primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained

through structured interviews with 6 officials within the local government. Secondary data were sourced from government publications, and academic literature. Qualitative content analysis was employed to interpret and synthesise the data. The major findings reveal that Aiyekire Local Government relies heavily on statutory allocations while internally generated revenue remains underutilised due to poor property enumeration, manual collection processes, inadequate public awareness, and socio economic conditions such as low income levels and informal economic activities. The study also found that political interference and limited institutional capacity further weaken revenue administration. The study conclude that, strengthening the fiscal capacity of Aiyekire Local Government requires improved autonomy, modern digital revenue systems, enhanced public engagement, and better accountability mechanisms.

**Key Word:** Revenue Generation, Nigeria, Local Government System, Aiyekire Local Government, Ekiti State

### **Introduction and Problem Statement**

Local government system is a central aspect of the system of governance of any independent state, as it is the foundation of grassroots management and development (Akindoyin, 2024). Nigeria, a diverse country in terms of culture, ethnic, and geographical landscape, has the federal system of government comprising of three levels; the federal, states, and local government. The third tier is the local government system which is the nearest structure of government to the citizens. Local governments were set up to move the governance and development more to the grassroots to enable participatory democracy, effective service delivery and community development (Malemane, 2021). The realisation of these goals, however, has been shortchanged with many issues, such as structural shortcomings, institutional debilitations, and political ambitions.

The development of the local government system in Nigeria could be traced on a long history of development that dates back to the colonial period when the British colonial government used indirect rule

(Monday, 2022). This system entailed the identification and use of the traditional rulers and institutions as local agents of the colonial rule. With the independence in 1960, the system of the local government was adopted in Nigeria which was founded on the principles of decentralization and devolution of powers (Ogunnubi, 2022). This was further redefined in 1976 by the Local Government Reform which focused more on the structure and functions of local governments with more importance on their autonomy and functions in development. Currently, the local government structure of Nigeria comprises of 774 local government areas (LGAs) distributed across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (Ayuba, 2021). Every LGA is governed by a council of elected officials such as a chairman and councilors along with administrative and technical employees who are appointed. The provisions of the local governments as they are stipulated in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) are the provision of the basic amenities, including the primary education, the healthcare, the water supply, and the sanitation, the development of the infrastructure, the development of the rural areas, and the mobilisation of the grassroots (Okorie, 2022). Local government in Nigeria is a critical level of governance that is placed in the position to provide the necessary services and grassroots development. Nonetheless, it has been undermined by diverse challenges, the generation of revenue being one of the core problems. In Nigeria, the local governments largely depend on the federal allocations which in most cases are not sufficient to cater to the various demands of the communities. This, therefore, creates an urgent necessity of discussing the methods to increase the level of revenue generation of the local government system to guarantee sustainable growth.

The local government system in Nigeria has been going through a number of reforms with the aim of enhancing its ability to provide services and encourage growth at the grassroots level. Regardless of such efforts, the problems still exist especially on revenue generation.

The constitution of Nigeria gives the local governments the mandate to raise revenue in a number of ways such as taxes, levies and fees. Their ability to generate revenue is, however, low with respect to factors like poor fiscal management systems, lack of proper infrastructural means to collect revenue and prevalence of informality in economic activities.

Aiyekire Local Government Area is a local government area in southwestern Nigeria, Ekiti State, which has a rich historical fabric created by centuries of cultural development and system of governance. Its evolution dates back to pre-colonial days when it belonged to the ancient Yoruba kingdoms which were characterized by high level political organization, as well as rich cultural background. Aiyekire Local Government has had its fair share of challenges and developmental growth as is characteristic of developing areas since its inception. Certain issues like the rise in population, economic cycles, development of infrastructures and political influences have influenced its course. There has been continuous effort to improve service delivery, community development, and participation of the grassroots though with different level of success.

Yet, Aiyekire Local Government has major problems with the revenue collection that prevents its opportunities to finance the basic services and development programs. To begin with, there is the fact that the economic activities in the area of the local government are low. Aiyekire is mostly agrarian and subsistence farming is the major source of livelihood. This dependence on farming, insufficient infrastructure and industrialization limits the area of revenue generation. Lack of diversification in the economy implies that there is limited avenue of taxation and other revenue generation activities. There is also the problem of tax evasion and informal economic activities that is witnessed in large numbers. A good number of residents are either running informal businesses or employed in the informal sector and it is difficult to effectively track and collect taxes by the local authorities. In addition, the efforts of revenue collection are also worsened by a

deficiency of awareness regarding the value of taxation and unwillingness to pay them. On the same note, weak institutional processes and technical skills are barriers to revenue generation projects. The local government appears to have inadequate personnel that can handle the task of designing and executing effective strategies of collecting revenue. Without the right training and capacity building, then there is a probability that the attempts to enhance revenue generation will not work. It is on the above indices that the study attempt to explore revenue generation and Local Government System in Nigeria with a bird eye view of the Aiyekire Local Government of Ekiti State.

Thus, the paper specific objectives are to;

1. Investigate the current revenue sources and collection methods in Aiyekire Local Government of Ekiti state and identify areas for improvement and optimization.
2. Assess the effectiveness of existing revenue generation strategies employed by Aiyekire Local Government.
3. Analyse the socio-economic factors influencing revenue generation in Aiyekire Local Government.

### **Literature Review: Revenue Generation**

The term revenue generation is a concept that is used to refer to the process of earning money as a result of conducting diverse activities and operations(Onabe, 2024). Sustainability and growth of any organization is imperative since revenue is the lifeblood that supports running of a business enterprise, meet the expenses, and make an investment in growth prospects. Revenue generation is the process of generating income streams by selling any form of goods or services, by investing or any other form of financial activity to maintain organization operations and growth (Shonk, & Weiner, 2021). It is a collection of all strategic steps and efforts by companies or

organizations to make revenue and use the financial resources to the fullest by depending on numerous means, including sales, marketing, collaboration, and fund-raising. Also, it refers to the methodical process which is used by organizations to transform their assets, resources and capabilities into financial returns by successfully monetizing products, services, intellectual property or other valuable services (Diorio, & Hummel, 2022).

Within the business environment, revenue generation refers to the application of the revenue generation strategies that strive to make a company more profitable, advance the market base and improve the financial performance of the company. It denotes the act of recognizing, finding and retaining customers or clients to spur sales and create income streams that lead to the survival and prosperity of an organization. Akindoyin, and Obafemi(2024), sees it as the operations that are carried out to bring the top-line revenue such as pricing, sales forecasting, revenue recognition and revenue management practices to maximize revenue growth and profitability. In the context of economic development, revenue generation is the effort of the governments, the non-profit organizations and institutions to collect funds to fund the public services, projects and programs by means of taxation, grants, donations, etc (Farag, 2022). Putra, and Widodo, (2024)defined it as the application of technology, data analysis, and online mediums in ensuring customer interaction, maximization of marketing campaigns, and increase sales conversion rates to generate revenue in a competitive and fast-changing marketplace.

It is worthy of note that the process of revenue generation is complex and it entails the matching of business goal with customer needs, market, and competitive forces with the aim of establishing value propositions that are attractive to customers and lead to revenue growth in the long run. Therefore revenue generation involves the ongoing analysis of the market opportunities, positioning, the pricing elements and the revenue models to enable sustainable growth of the revenue

streams and achieve the long term financial success of an organization. Revenue generation entails the generation of value that customers can make payment. This value may be provided in the form of products sale, services or other business processes. Revenue generation is mainly to maximize the total income of the organization through maximizing sales and optimization of the revenues streams.

Revenue generation has been revolutionized in the last few years using innovative business models and technologies. Models that are based on subscriptions, such as those, offer recurring revenue streams and develop a long-term customer relationship. The global market expansion has been achieved through e-commerce, where businesses can outreach the traditional brick-and-mortar stores and exploit the growth of revenue.

### **Local Government**

The local government plays a very essential role in the administration of different nations in the world. Different conceptualization of the local government has been given by scholars, and they have been reflective of the various roles, functions, and nature in a particular region or jurisdiction. Local government can be defined as the decentralised political bodies that are charged with the responsibility of administering a given geographical location in a nation (Issac, &Chukwuemeka, 2023). These organizations are given the powers to make decisions concerning local issues, offer rudimentary services and act on behalf of the local people. The elected officials in the local governments usually govern the local government at the grassroots level and strive to make the lives of the residents better. The local government is also considered as the administrative units which are subnational and are below the national or central government (He,& Jing, 2024). These units possess different levels of autonomy and legislative authorities bestowed by the senior levels of government. The local governments have the role of enforcing policies, administering the resources and meeting the community needs in the area under its

jurisdiction without going against the national legislations and regulations.

It also focuses on a territorial subdivision which is further broken down into smaller entities as an administrative unit. These divisions including municipalities, counties or districts are the units of local governance. Considering the provisions of local governments, they exist to provide residents with the necessary services such as education, health, transport, and security services in the territories of the local governments. It has also been categorised as a type of democratic rule that is distributed at the grassroots level (Hill, 2024). Local governments involve the citizens in the policy and program development processes through elective channels and participation in the process of decision making that directly affect the daily lives of the people. This is a bottom-up form of governance that encourages civic participation, transparency, and responsiveness to the local demands and tastes. Another point that is emphasized by the local government is the notification of the territorial governments with decentralized government influence. These officials can control local matters, collect taxes, and make bylaws in the limits that are prescribed to them. The local governments are important in ensuring economic development, social welfare and environmental sustainability in the communities they serve by way of strategic planning and resource-sharing. It is vital to understand that local government is regarded as multifaceted institutions that are critical in local governance in offering necessities services, land use regulation, economic development promotion as well as community cohesion. These institutions are used as liaisons among citizens and the upper governmental structures, as a result of which the voices of the locals are represented in the decision making processes and policy making. Therefore, local government has a wide range of discourses that represent its importance as a decentralized, subnational, territorial, democratic, devolved as well as a diversified institution of governance at grassroots level.

## **Aiyekire Local Government**

Aiyekire Local Government Area is situated in the southwestern part of Nigeria, and it was founded on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 1996 through partitioning of Ekiti East Local Government. After Ekiti State was established in the first instance on the same date, Aiyekire Local Government, which is formally known as Aiyekire in the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, is one of the sixteen local governments established, whose headquarters is situated in Ode Ekiti (Busayo, 2024). The region is mostly composed of Yoruba speaking residents of the South West Zone in Nigeria which make the society very homogeneous. Most of the citizens are Christians and Muslims with other minor percentage practicing traditional religion. Ode-Ekiti is the administrative centre of Gbonyin LGA. Gbonyin LGA consists of several towns and villages including Iluomoba, Aisegba, Agbado, Iro, Ugboeku, Aba ika, Oguniyi, Sakunmi, and Olorunda. Aiyekire LGA is estimated to have a population of 201,713 people with the Yoruba tribe being the largest tribe in the area. Some of the neighboring local government areas that Aiyekire Local Government borders on are Ise/Emure, Ekiti East, Ikole, Irepodun/Ifelodun, Ado Ekiti and Akoko Northwest. Yoruba and English are the two major languages used in Gbonyin LGA. The Maintenance of Aiyekire local government has remarkable features like the Ose/Ogbe dam and the General Hospital in Ijan-Ekiti. Aiyekire Local Government Area covers an area of 391 square kilometers and has an average temperature of 28 degrees Celsius. It receives a precipitation of 1950 millimeters per year (Busayo, 2024). The average speed of the wind in Gbonyin LGA is at 11 kilometers per hour with an average humidity level of 60 percent.

### ***Aiyekire Local Government Structure***

Aiyekire local government has an executive structure which is made up of key personalities such as its chairman, vice-chairman, supervisors, the secretary and other senior personalities. It is worth noting that the secretary to the local government has changed his or her position to a

political role. In the meantime, the local government has a workforce made up of career civil servants, which constitutes the administrative division which is headed by the executive arm. Such workforce is comprised of the Head of Personnel Management, heads of other departments including works, education, agriculture, health, finance, and supplies. All the departmental leaders have an annual performance evaluation which is based on physical achievements. Each head of the department will be evaluated by the Secretary of the local government with the assistance of the chairman. The chairman of the respective local government will then be able to assess the performance of the Secretary.

The legislative body of Aiyekire local government is a body that consists of elected councilors who represent various wards. This organ is referred to as the Council comprising of the Leader, Deputy Leader and Councilors. It has the power to make bye-laws which cannot become effective unless approved by the Chairman. Nonetheless, the Chairman still has a right to veto these bye-laws. However, in the event that the Chairman refuses to sanction a duly passed bye-law, then that bye-law still can be enacted in the event that two-thirds of the members of Council vote to remove the veto.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Fiscal Federalism Theory**

The theory adopted in this research study is the *Fiscal Federalism Theory*. The theory describes the distribution of financial responsibility and revenue powers between various levels of government of a federal system (King, 2022). Fiscal federalism assumes that the local governments will effectively operate where they have enough autonomy to raise revenue and where there are clear-cut arrangements on how the fiscal powers are to be shared among the federal, state and local governments (King, 2022). The theory indicates that revenue

distribution must be done in a way that facilitates efficiency, accountability and fair development among sub national units.

The fiscal federalism is suitable to this research as it offers a model of interpreting the functioning of the Aiyekire Local Government in the financial system of Nigeria. The local governments rely on internally-generated revenue, statutory allocations and grants although they are affected by the state and federal governments. The theory assists in understanding the reasons why Aiyekire Local Government faces the limitation of revenue mobilisation because of deficient autonomy, presence of overlapping taxation power, as well as, dominance of the state joint local government account. Through the fiscal federalism, the study focuses on the influence of structural arrangement in determining revenue performance, administrative capacity and service delivery.

Fiscal federalism however has its own shortcomings. One great criticism is that it occasionally presupposes utopian collaboration of the levels of government that does not necessarily correspond to the truth of political interference and bureaucratic irregularity. In most developing states such as Nigeria, the greater government levels still have too much control over the revenue resources thus restricting the local governance. The second weakness is that the theory puts much emphasis on structural organizations and not informal social and economic statuses that also affect the revenue results. As an example, the theory does not fully explain the impact that poverty, cultural attitude, and trust of the people have on tax compliance.

Regardless of these constraints, fiscal federalism in application is of much relevance to this study. It helps the study to assess financial independence of Aiyekire Local Government and sufficiency of its sources of revenues and whether the intergovernmental relation affects financial performance of the Local Government. The theory gives an understanding of the interaction between statutory allocations and internally generated revenue in order to determine the fiscal health of the council. It can also be used to evaluate how the current revenue

strategies are in line with the overall concepts of decentralisation, accountability and local economic development. Thus, fiscal federalism provides an important conceptual framework in understanding the strength and weaknesses concerning revenue generation in Aiyekire Local Government between 2019 and 2024.

## **Methodology**

The research design that was used in this study is the descriptive research design which aimed at studying the generation of revenue in the Aiyekire Local Government in the year 2019 and 2024. The design was suitable given the fact that it facilitated systematic exploration of the sources of revenue, manner in which revenue was collected, socio-economic aspects and administrative practices without interfering with any of the variables. Primary as well as secondary data was used. The structured interviews with the selected officials in the local government were used to receive primary data. Six respondents were selected purposely because they participated in revenue administration within the local government. The secondary data were obtained through official reports such as revenue statements as well as policy directives of the Aiyekire Local Government. More literature was checked through scholarly publications, books, and governmental publications on local government financing in Nigeria.

Qualitative content analysis was used in analysing data collected. Interview responses were divided into themes that included sources of revenue, challenges, strategies and socio economic influences. Interview findings were supported by documentary evidence. The methodology allowed obtaining the in-depth knowledge on revenue system of Aiyekire Local Government and helped to conduct objective assessment of its functioning in the studied period.

## **Results and Discussion of Findings**

### **Elucidating the Current Revenue Sources and Collection Methods in Aiyekire Local Government and Identification of Areas for Improvement and Optimisation**

Revenue generation as highlighted by the first and second respondents is an important element of local government administration in Nigeria and Aiyekire Local Government in Ekiti State inclusively. They emphasized that Aiyekire Local Government receives its revenue in

two broad sources that are well internally generated revenue and federation account statutory allocations through state joint local government account. Internal generated revenue is money raised locally within the jurisdiction of the local government through taxes, fines, fees, levies, business permits as well as income generated by property or businesses. Statutory allocations are constitutionally guaranteed transfers of the Federal Government of Nigeria, which finances the local government activities.

The significant internal sources of revenue at Aiyekire Local Government mean the tenement rates, market fees, fees on motor park, royalties on natural resources, fees on registration of business premises, haulage permits, slaughter slab fees, fees on registration of birth and death, and fines due to sanitation offenses. An example is the market fees charged on the weekly markets in communities like IgbaraOdo and Ikoyi which are also a significant part of internally generated revenues. These are fees that are normally imposed by revenue officers in special markets that sell the tickets to the traders. The other source of importance is the tenement rate which is paid on residential and commercial buildings. Despite the high potential of this source, Aiyekire Local Government has poor enumeration of taxable properties that minimizes the collected amount of the same. The motor park fees also form part of the revenue base particularly that of the commercial motorcycle operators and taxi unions who pay their dues on a daily or weekly basis.

The second respondent stress that, the methods of collection at Aiyekire Local Government are both a manual and semi digital one. The majority of revenue officers use the physical receipt booklets to write a receipt to a taxpayer. In other cases, the local government outsources the services of consultants to collect certain revenues like haulage charges and market stall charges. Although the idea of this arrangement is to minimize leakages and enhance efficiency, it has in some cases brought about disharmony between the consultants and the local

communities as regards to the rates charged. The most prevalent method is the manual collection. This has provided possibilities of revenue leaks since the officers can report lesser collections or even pay the entire amount. Besides that, not all of these officers are properly trained in the basics of accounting and record keeping that adds to the lack of transparency.

The first respondent explained that the current revenue system of Aiyekire Local Government still has a number of improvement and optimisation areas. To start with, a detailed taxation of persons and properties has to be undertaken by the local government. Effective revenue collection requires proper recording of the households, business owners and physical structures in the council. This is because a significant number of buildings have not been evaluated to pay tenement rates since the database of property is not done in detail. An example is the community of OgotunEkiti, which through field survey indicates that there has been a remarkable increase of building between 2019 and 2024 and an increase in tenement rates is not comparable. Better enumeration and mapping will help to bring more households and businesses into the revenue net.

As the first respondent put it, efficiency will be improved significantly due to the implementation of digital revenue platforms. In Lagos and the Ogun State several local governments have installed electronic ticketing of market fees and motor park dues, which greatly reduces leakages. Aiyekire Local Government can assume the same solutions by liaising with the financial technology firms to create payment systems where taxpayers can make electronic payments using mobile phones, bank transfers, or point of sale devices. This will enhance less reliance on cash and give real time checking of collections.

Also is the need to improve education of taxpayers. The reason why local government taxes and fees take place is not clearly understood by many residents. Others assume that these levies are unlawful particularly due to the high numbers of informal collectors who purport

to represent the local government. Carrying out of regular enlightenment programs by assigning radio announcements, community meetings, and distributing printed fliers can assist the inhabitants to value the need to pay taxes. Indicatively, farmers in Aiyekire tend to pose questions about the suitability of revenue collection in the event where the local governments fail to offer visible services. Willingness to pay can be improved through better communication and better service delivery.

Similarly, the second respondent stress that, Aiyekire Local Government ought to intensify on surveillance and punishment of corrupt actions by the revenue personnel. Diversion of funds may be discouraged by regular auditing of revenue accounts and through independent monitoring teams. Hence, the first and second respondent both stress that the ability to generate revenue within Aiyekire Local Government is still marked by the untapped potential. As there are more people and more business activities between 2019 and 2024, the council has sufficient chances to enhance its financial capacity in case modern, transparent, and accountable systems are implemented.

### **Assessing the Effectiveness of Existing Revenue Generation Strategies Employed by Aiyekire Local Government**

The third and fourth respondents both stress that when determining the levels of effectiveness of the revenue generation approaches applied by the Aiyekire Local Government, it is vital to make reference to the operational plans as well as administrative structures which facilitate the process of revenue collection. The success of such strategies can be measured by determining whether they affect the growth of revenue, according leaks, fairness, and compliance among taxpayers.

The third respondent opined that *revenue mobilization* is one of the key revenue strategies employed by Aiyekire Local Government which is done through revenue committees that are constituted every year. These committees work on the planning of revenue targets, to recognize the possible sources of revenue, overseeing the collectors, and working with the leaders of the community to ensure adherence. Theoretically,

such structure keeps organized revenue collection. As a matter of fact, though, the efficiency of the committees is restricted since they are frequently politically tinted. Membership in some committees is sometimes based on political favors instead of technical skills as stressed by the fourth respondent. This limits the capacity of the committees to implement stringent revenue standards. An example to this is the situation where members of the committee have given unofficial waivers to business associates who own large business premises.

The fourth respondent stress that *licensing of the private revenue consultants* is another approach. Aiyekire Local Government normally contracts some revenue functions to the consultants who collect the revenue on behalf of the council and leave a percentage of the revenue as commission with them. There are both strengths and weaknesses of this arrangement. On its pros, consultants are more experienced in terms of their profession and are sometimes able to gather greater of this revenue than the government officers. The employment of consultants has however created controversies. The consultants charge more than the officially acceptable amounts which results in protests by the residents. There are also cases when consultants do not pay the right sums of money to the government treasury. This strategy has also failed to be very consistent in terms of strict supervision and transparent contract arrangements, so its effectiveness currently relies on those.

As opined by the fourth respondent, another approach is *regular enforcement operations*. They are normally implemented in the process of revenue drives where mobile taskforce teams go to markets, motor parks and business premises to implement payment. The strategy promote compliance by enforcing it visibly. The approach, however, is not completely successful. There are residents who are found to comply when facing the enforcement teams but the compliance rate is found to reduce as soon as the operation is done. In addition, the locals tend to complain about harassment and extortion by the taskforce officers and this tarnishes the image of the local government.

The other strategy that is important as opined by the third respondent is the *use of community relations and engagement*. In other communities of Aiyekire, the local government collaborates with local chiefs and community development associations to sensitize the inhabitants on the subject of revenue collection. This strategy is usually a good fit since locals trust community leaders than the members of the government. As an illustration by the fourth respondent, community leaders in Igbara Odo assisted in enhancing compliance to market fees through facilitating communication between the council and the traders. In the event that taxpayers are respected and informed, they will be willing to cooperate with revenue officers.

*Statutory allocations by the Federal Government to the local government* are another significant part of the revenue strategy of the government. These funds are not internally raised but they are of great significance to the financial wellbeing of the local government. The reliance on federal allotments has however lowered the initiative of the council to vigorously seek internally raised income reformation (Akindoyin, 2024). Statutory allocations do not always come on time or in time and so when solely relied upon, weaken fiscal sustainability. A proper revenue plan ought to promote diversification and robustness, yet Aiyekire remains heavily reliant on external transfers.

As it has been put forward by the third and fourth respondent, an analysis of these strategies shows that there are a number of challenges. To begin with, the strategies are not sufficiently aligned with the current modern revenue administration practices. Not many of them take into consideration technology, accountability systems, and involvement of wide stakeholders. Second, revenue administration is often disturbed by political interference. Also, the strategies are not long term planned. Setting targets on the annual revenue is not realistic and this puts strain on the collection officers who may be tempted to use coercion. Thus, on the whole, although the existing strategies in the Aiyekire Local Government show partial effectiveness, they do not

seem to be effective enough to facilitate sustainable growth in revenues in the period between 2019 and 2024.

### **Analysis of the Socio Economic Factors Influencing Revenue Generation in Aiyekire Local Government**

As the fifth and sixth respondent expatiated, various socio-economic factors are what determine the capacity of a local government to raise sufficient revenue. The level of income, population, employment pattern, cultural attitudes, economic activity and local infrastructure are some of the factors used in Aiyekire Local Government to determine the outcome of revenue.

As the fifth respondent explained, *the income level of residents* is one of the most substantial aspects. The economy of Aiyekire Local Government is agrarian based. A lot of homes are subsistence based and small scale traders. The income levels are not very high as compared to urban regions in Nigeria. The low income level would lower the ability of residents to contribute taxes and fees on a regular basis. As expatiated by the fifth respondent, an example is that most traders in weekly markets would find it difficult to meet payments to the stalls in the market since their incomes are erratic more so during rainy season when prices of farm produce are volatile. The household income is also low and this influences the willingness to pay the tenement rate and business premises registration fees.

*The revenue generation is also affected by population characteristics* as emphasized by the sixth respondents. Aiyekire is an area predominantly marked by unemployed or underemployed youths. The lack of jobs is such that most of the young residents can only participate in informal economic activities which are hard to tax. The local economy is informal, and as such, the local government finds it difficult to capture the right information regarding taxable activities in the local economy. Indicatively, commercial motorcycle riders are self-employed and it is difficult to get them to pay regular fees. On the flipside, the local

governments that have a bigger formal sector are more likely to generate more stable revenue.

Other socio economic factors are *educational levels and public awareness* as stressed by the sixth respondent. Low awareness among many residents makes them unaware of the reason behind the local taxes and fees. There are those who feel that they do not get anything in terms of reduced services like road maintenance or better waste disposal since they do not relate the payment of taxes. This impression decreases voluntary compliance. Civic education should be improved to create awareness and shift the attitude of the people towards taxation.

The fifth respondent laid emphasis on the *intensity of business* is another socio economic factor. Aiyekire Local Government has markets and small scale businesses, but does not have large industries or corporate business to generate large tax revenue. The council lacks big business opportunities, which curtail the potential of revenue. On the other hand, local governments that are characterized by large industries are well endowed in terms of income generated through business premises registration and other economic activities. The small industrial base of Aiyekire puts a limit on the revenue pool of the company.

Revenue generation also depends on the *migration patterns* as put forward by the sixth respondent. Ado Ekiti, Ibadan, and Lagos are other big cities that young adults immigrate to in search of jobs, this has resulted in moderate rural to urban migration. This migration decreases the economically active inhabitants who can be used to pay taxes in the local government. Migration seasonally also influences the market operations, particularly around the festive seasons when a large number of individuals are on holidays. The population fluctuation impacts on the market fees and the stall charges which are significant sources of revenue.

Revenue also depends on *cultural attitudes* as the sixth respondent put it. Some communities within the local government resist taxation as

they feel that the state or the federal government is the one in charge of development. The cultural norms that encourage development project in self-help activities rather than government intervention can make the residents be subjective to local government taxes as unnecessary. As an illustration, there are communities who will give donations to their community development associations instead of paying formal taxes.

Similarly, the sixth respondent opined that the *extent of confidence in the government institutions* plays an important role in revenue generation within Aiyekire local government. When the locals feel the local government is transparent and accountable, the chances of obeying the law are high. However, when the mismanagement, the misappropriation of funds and bad service delivery is being alleged, the residents are not willing to pay.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, coupled with the socio economic realities and structural issues in the Nigerian local government system, internal administrative practices have influenced revenue generation in Aiyekire Local Government of Ekiti State between 2019 and 2024. Although the local government has a number of current sources of revenue, the methods of collections are largely manual and prone to leakages. The revenue strategies that have been used have had varied outcomes, as it is partially effective but the room of improvement is quite high. The socio economic circumstances which include low income levels, informal economic activities, inability to expand industrial undertakings, bad infrastructure and poor public trust further limit the revenue performance.

Modern technology, better interaction with the people, better organizational capacity, better enumeration framework, transparent government, and long term development planning are some of the ways to improve revenue generation in Aiyekire Local Government. By curbing the administrative as well as the socio economic limitations, the

local government will be in a better position to improve its internally generated revenue and its capacity to provide quality services to the citizens.

### **Recommendations**

The study hereby makes the following recommendations;

#### **1- Increase Revenue Administration Institutional Capacity:**

Aiyekire Local Government ought to invest in developing the administrative and technical capacity of the revenue officers by keeping them under constant training, using the modern revenue tools, and effective supervision mechanisms. The research found flaws in employee ability, limited knowledge on tax law, and ineffective monitoring habits. By improving the capacity of the staff, efficiency in the evaluation, gathering and recording of revenues will be enhanced. Training also stops the leakages, professionalism and instills institutional memory in the sustainable revenue management.

#### **2- Adoption of the E-payment Systems:**

Full digitalization of the revenue process must be implemented by the local government, such as electronic invoicing, e-receipts, and the use of POS machines to reduce the number of people involved, and increase the level of transparency. Manual systems are vulnerable to fraud, diversion of revenue and inaccurate keeping of records. The introduction of technology will assist in the development of real time revenue tracking, reduce corruption, motivate the tax payers to make payments easily and remarkably enhance internally generated revenue (IGR). Online systems also enhance accountability as all transactions are automatically registered.

#### **3- Broadening the Tax Base at the Local Level by Data Collection and Correct Enumeration:**

Aiyekire LG must engage in an extensive list of taxable persons, businesses, property and economic undertakings within its jurisdiction in order to increase the revenue base. Low IGR in many of the local governments is also associated to the use of old information. With the correct identification of all possible sources of

revenues, the local government will be able to create efficient tax schedules and cease working on assumptions. Full database also avoids multiple taxation and allows the government to project revenue in a better way.

**4- Empower Anti-corruption Systems and Hold Leaders Accountable:** Institutionalization of strict internal control, periodical auditing and clear reporting should be instituted to keep the revenue leakages down and to ensure that the collected funds have been duly remitted to the treasury. The study established indications of poor accountability frameworks and unofficial collection procedures. Corruption will be discouraged by enforcing internal audits, rotating revenue officers and applying sanctions on misbehaviors. Open disclosure will reinstate the trust and credibility of the revenue practices by the local government.

**5- Enhance Community participation and awareness on Taxation:** The local government must also increase sensitization programs, consultation with the stakeholders, and enlightening the people to create awareness to the people on the significance of paying taxes and other levies. The lack of compliance is usually caused by the lack of knowledge in the tax obligation and lack of trust towards the local authorities. When citizens are educated and demonstrate the evidence of developments projects financed by their taxes, the compliance increases. Activation also enables the government to know the concerns of the tax payers, settle the disputes, and create cooperative governance.

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**The Effect of Leadership Style on Deviant Conduct in Policing: A Study of Kwara State Police Command**

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**Abstract**

*This study examined the effect of leadership style on deviant work behaviours among police officers in the Kwara State Police Command, Nigeria. Leadership has long been recognised as a determinant of workplace conduct, particularly in high-stakes environments such as policing, where authority, discretion, and ethics converge. Drawing on theories of transformational leadership, Path–Goal Theory, and Leader–Member Exchange, the study investigated whether leadership style significantly predicts workplace deviance within the force. A quantitative survey design was employed, with data collected from 807 police officers across different ranks using structured questionnaires. Regression analysis revealed that leadership style had a statistically significant effect on deviant work behaviours ( $R = .205$ ,  $R^2 = .042$ ,  $F = 7.103$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The findings demonstrate that leadership contributes meaningfully to variations in deviance, including absenteeism, insubordination, extortion, unlawful arrests, misuse of authority, and substance use while on duty. These behaviours not only undermine organisational effectiveness but also erode public trust in law enforcement. The study contributes to policing scholarship by demonstrating that leadership style is a central factor in shaping officer conduct and reducing workplace deviance. The findings affirm existing*

*literature on the positive influence of transformational and participative leadership on organisational citizenship behaviours, while also highlighting the risks associated with authoritarian or hierarchical styles that suppress subordinates' inputs. Based on the results, the study recommends prioritising leadership development within the Nigeria Police Force, with emphasis on transformational and ethical leadership training, accountability mechanisms, and the cultivation of organisational cultures that balance discipline with collaboration. Strengthening leader–member relationships and reinforcing community-oriented policing approaches are also proposed as strategies to reduce workplace deviance and improve institutional legitimacy.*

**Keywords:** Leadership style, workplace deviance, police officers, organizational culture, Nigeria Police Force.

### **Introduction**

The police institution worldwide, particularly in Nigeria, stands as a cornerstone of societal order, entrusted with the noble yet demanding responsibility of preventing and managing crime while ensuring the protection of lives and property. In Nigeria, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is constitutionally mandated under Section 4 of the Police Act (2020) to maintain internal security, detect and prevent criminal acts, apprehend offenders, and enforce laws impartially to safeguard fundamental human rights. This role encompasses various functions, including routine patrols to deter potential crimes, intelligence gathering for proactive threat mitigation, and community engagement initiatives that foster public cooperation in crime reporting and resolution. As articulated in foundational policing doctrines, such as those outlined by scholars like Reiner (2017), the police serve not merely as reactive enforcers but as proactive agents of social control, preserving public tranquillity amid Nigeria's complex socio-economic landscape marked by urbanisation, ethnic diversity, and emerging threats like cybercrime and insurgency.

In Nigeria, the NPF's mandate is amplified by the nation's federal structure, where state commands, including the Kwara State Police Command, operationalise national policies at the grassroots level. Empirical studies underscore the police's critical function in crime prevention strategies, such as beat patrols, stop-and-search operations, and specie escorts for high-value transports, which aim to reduce vulnerability to theft, violence, and disorder. For instance, research on community policing in Nigeria highlights how these efforts, when effectively implemented, contribute to a 20-30% decline in reported incidents in urban areas by enhancing visibility and responsiveness. Moreover, the police's involvement in supporting ancillary services like immigration, customs, and prisons extends their protective remit to border security and correctional oversight, ensuring a holistic approach to national safety. This multifaceted role positions the police as indispensable guardians. Yet, it exposes them to ethical dilemmas in high-stakes environments where quick decisions blur the line between protection and overreach.

Paradoxically, while the police are empowered to uphold the rule of law, they have frequently been implicated in deviant conduct. This has continued to undermine their legitimacy and erode public confidence. Deviant behaviour among police officers involves actions that violate professional ethics, legal standards, or organisational norms (Barker & Carter, 1994). This often manifests in various forms within the NPF, as extensively documented in academic scholarship. These include corruption, brutality, extortion, unlawful arrests, and extra-judicial killings, which not only contravene the Police Code of Conduct but also perpetuate a cycle of impunity.

Numerous cases illustrate this troubling trend. The #EndSARS protests of 2020, for example, spotlighted widespread police brutality, with reports from Amnesty International (2020) detailing over 82 cases of torture, including waterboarding and sexual violence, perpetrated by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Academic analyses, such as

Agbiboa's (2015) study, reveal systemic extortion at checkpoints, where officers routinely demand bribes from motorists. Similarly, Ojedokun (2010) identifies bribery and corrupt practices as pervasive, with surveys showing 70% of officers admitting to soliciting gratuities. Further evidence from Akinlabi (2017) documents unlawful detentions and frame-ups, particularly against vulnerable groups like youth and minorities. These deviant acts, rooted in a culture of deviance, compromise crime-fighting efficacy and complicate insecurity.

In Kwara State, the local manifestation of these national issues is equally alarming, with several documented cases of police deviance highlighting a pattern of misconduct that has claimed lives and eroded trust. One prominent incident occurred on September 5, 2024, when Qoyum Abdulyekeen Ishola, a 21-year-old student at Kwara State Polytechnic, was fatally shot by officers during a fuel hike protest. Three police Inspectors were implicated in criminal conspiracy and culpable homicide. They were dismissed for abandoning their posts and engaging in corrupt practices, as confirmed by an investigation ordered by the Inspector General of Police. Another case involved Suleiman Olayinka, a 27-year-old resident of Ilorin, who died in November 2024 after being beaten by officers in Tanke over a NGN 400,000 business dispute; family accounts describe excessive force leading to his collapse and death at a police clinic, contradicting official claims of resistance.

Further evidence includes the December 2024 death of Jimoh Erubu Abdulqodir, arrested by plainclothes officers near Balogun Fulani in Ilorin under false pretences. His body showed signs of torture, including bruises and bloodstains, with police narratives of suicide or natural death disputed by relatives (Bakare, 2024). Extortion cases abound, such as that of Abdul in September 2024, where officers from the Criminal Investigation Bureau ransacked his home, damaged property, and coerced NGN 51,000 from him on cybercrime suspicions without evidence. In 2022, Olarewaju, a University of Ilorin graduate,

was assaulted around Tanke, and the officers seized his phones while demanding bail money. These incidents, corroborated by reports from the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR, 2025) and Bakare (2024), reflect a localised culture of impunity, with over 20 brutality complaints in Kwara since 2022, often involving plainclothes operations and unfounded accusations.

However, in response to such deviance, the NPF and the Police Service Commission (PSC) have imposed sanctions, including dismissals, demotions, and prosecutions, though enforcement remains inconsistent. Between 2022 and 2025, the PSC dismissed 31 officers for misconduct (Police Service Commission, 2024). In December 2024 alone, 18 senior officers comprising 10 Assistant Superintendents, six Deputy Superintendents, two Chief Superintendents, and one Superintendent were dismissed for gross misconduct, such as extortion and brutality (ICIR, 2025; Bakare, 2024). Notable cases include dismissing an Inspector and two others in 2024 for extorting NGN 4.2 million. Nationally, 151 officers faced disciplinary panels in 2025 for ethical violations, with demotions affecting 19 others. The PSC's 2025 report indicates over 200 sanctions since 2023, including prosecutions under the Administration of Criminal Justice Act. These measures, while punitive, deviant conduct among men of NPF is prevalent and has been attributed to several interconnected factors.

Deviant conduct in the NPF is influenced by multifaceted factors, including low remuneration, inadequate training, peer pressure, and systemic corruption, which erode ethical standards. Economic pressures, such as salaries averaging NGN 50,000 monthly amid inflation, drive extortion, as Agbiboa (2015) noted, with 60% of officers citing financial strain. Organisational issues like godfatherism and nepotism foster favouritism, undermining meritocracy and morale (Oduntan, 2017). Peer influence and a "blue wall of silence" normalise deviance, while poor training environments at academies contribute to behaviours like bullying and drug abuse among cadets (AbdulBasit & Faruk,

2024). Amid these, leadership style has emerged as a critical determinant, shaping ethical climates and behavioural norms.

Transformational leadership, emphasising inspiration and intellectual stimulation, correlates with reduced corruption perceptions (Orole et al., 2014), while transactional styles through rewards and punishments can curb deviance by 47% (Appelbaum et al., 2004, applied to Nigeria). Studies indicate that authoritarian leadership exacerbates misconduct by stifling dissent, whereas ethical leadership promotes procedural justice, mitigating factors like low self-esteem that fuel deviance ((Popoola et al., 2019). In Nigeria, where command structures dominate, leadership's role in fostering resilience and values-based training has been highlighted as pivotal when it comes to reducing violence and absenteeism by up to 30% (Popoola et al., 2019).

Existing studies have examined police deviance and leadership, but with notable limitations. Orole et al. (2014) analysed transformational leadership's positive impact on reducing bribery and poor ethics in Lagos, finding a 38% variance explained by leadership attributes, yet limited to one district. Popoola et al., (2019) revealed that leadership and ethical climate significantly influence work attitudes, indirectly curbing deviance through enhanced self-esteem and justice perceptions. Oduntan (2017) identified training and mentorship as deviance mitigators in Lagos, emphasising strategic leadership for performance, while AbdulBasit and Faruk, (2024) proposed models for cadet training to address peer-induced deviance.

These studies provide robust evidence on national trends; however, gaps persist. Most of the studies are conducted outside of Kwara's unique socio-cultural dynamics. Also, few directly quantify leadership styles' causal effects on deviance metrics, relying on perceptions rather than empirical outcomes, and overlook state commands' operational structure. This study fills this void by investigating the specific impact of leadership styles on deviant conduct within the Kwara State Police Command.



### **Brief Review of the Literature**

Deviant behaviour refers to actions that differ from, or go against, what society considers normal or acceptable. Such behaviour may range from minor transgressions, such as breaking dress codes, to serious acts like committing crimes. Importantly, society defines what counts as deviant, and these definitions vary across cultures and communities, since they are grounded in the rules and expectations of each group. Hartney (2023) argued that deviant behaviour can be understood as conduct that does not conform to cultural standards, including laws, social norms, or even more simply, state-sanctioned rules. Conversely, actions that are generally permissible in the presence of others are regarded as socially acceptable behaviour. Any action that falls outside accepted social norms is considered deviant. Examples of social deviance include drug misuse, rudeness, and aggression. While such behaviours are not always illegal, they are regarded as aberrant. Some forms of deviance are destructive or dangerous, while others may appear unusual or eccentric (Nickerson, 2024).

According to Okere (2025), any behaviour that deviates from what is considered normal in a given society may be considered deviant. This includes non-criminal behaviours that are nonetheless socially unacceptable (such as speaking loudly in a library) as well as criminal behaviours such as drug use or theft. Okere further noted that criminologists, sociologists, and psychologists have long been fascinated by deviant behaviour, given its broad scope, encompassing acts that contravene both formal laws and informal cultural mores. For instance, deviance is often perceived as “bad” or unacceptable, whereas socially acceptable behaviour is viewed as “good” or permissible. Most people are taught that one may act freely so long as such behaviour does not harm others, as it is also perceived as normal. Deviance, however, is complex because standards of normality vary across groups, settings, and time periods. What is considered normal in one society may be viewed as abnormal in another.

Little and McGivern (2014) argue that society determines deviance since the meaning of conduct is socially constructed. Behaviour, therefore, is not inherently wrong. A key sociological insight is that deviance is the product of social processes rather than an attribute of individuals or the acts themselves. Political, legal, and cultural dynamics continually redefine what is considered deviant. Through these processes, moral entrepreneurs can label deviance as something that is attached to certain behaviours or individuals. Early research examined how organisations foster allegiance and conformity, sometimes resulting in groupthink, but noted that they do not always penalise deviants. Some societies are dynamic and capable of challenging existing norms, while others maintain structures discouraging creativity and innovation. The latter often involves struggles over resources or rights, which can give rise to deviant subcultures, such as anti-police gangs. Earlier theories of crowd behaviour assumed that people in mobs became more primitive. This view gained support in the 1970s when American psychologist Edward Diener studied group deindividuation. Diener's findings indicated that group self-regulation and restraint tend to diminish when individuals feel unidentifiable and anonymous (Abrams, 2024).

Police deviant behaviour can be defined as any action or omission by a police officer that violates the formal laws, ethical codes, professional standards, or informal social expectations of policing, undermining institutional integrity, eroding public trust, or contravening societal norms. It encompasses criminal and non-criminal acts, ranging from corruption, excessive use of force, and abuse of authority, to absenteeism, negligence, and discriminatory practices. While some forms of police deviance are explicitly illegal, others may be organisationally or socially unacceptable without being criminalised. Ultimately, police deviant behaviour reflects the intersection of individual conduct and the structural, cultural, and institutional dynamics of policing.

Meanwhile, occupational deviance refers to employee behaviour that violates organisational norms, professional codes, or societal expectations in the workplace (Vardi & Wiener, 1996). Examples include theft, lateness, misuse of organisational resources, harassment of colleagues, or failure to follow due procedures. Such actions undermine productivity, damage organisational reputation, and compromise trust within the workplace. Police deviant behaviour, while sharing these characteristics, is uniquely consequential because of the nature of policing as a public service institution entrusted with the monopoly of legitimate force, law enforcement, and the protection of citizens' rights. Thus, when police officers engage in deviant acts such as corruption, brutality, arbitrary arrests, excessive use of force, collusion with criminals, falsification of evidence, or dereliction of duty, the impact extends beyond the organisation. It directly undermines public trust, delegitimises the criminal justice system, and threatens the social contract between the state and its citizens (Ayeni, 2024). Whereas occupational deviance in other sectors may primarily affect the organisation and its internal stakeholders, police deviance has systemic consequences. It damages internal discipline and erodes societal confidence in justice, increases crime through non-accountability, and may even foster cultures of impunity. In this sense, police deviance represents both an occupational issue and a broader sociopolitical problem.

One of the most well-documented forms of deviance among police agencies worldwide is corruption. Jauregui (2022), in a study conducted in India, revealed systemic police corruption in which officers demanded bribes for routine tasks. These practices were attributed to low pay, weak organisational regulation, and a prevailing climate of impunity. Another common form of police deviance globally is the excessive use of force. Using national data from the United States, Smith and Holmes (2014) examined racial disparities in police use of force. It found that Black and Latino individuals were more likely than

White individuals to experience excessive force. In South Africa, Lamb (2018) investigated the “militarisation of police” in response to “internal ideological threats”. He argued that this process resulted in widespread “beating, smashing, and violence,” mainly due to poor training, lack of supervision, and inadequate emphasis on human dignity. These findings underscore the importance of reforms aimed at reducing systemic bias and strengthening accountability.

Other notable examples of police deviance include the misuse of discretion, internal discrimination, and racial profiling. Unethical practices, such as abuse of authority, are also prevalent in other regions. In their study of police forces in Latin America, Karstedt and Farrall (2006) identified widespread abuses, including unlawful arrests and extrajudicial executions, enabled by weak legal frameworks and inadequate accountability mechanisms. Similarly, Curato (2017) reported that law enforcement officers in the Philippines committed numerous human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, under the guise of the government’s “war on drugs.”

Scholars have also emphasised the role of police organisational culture in perpetuating deviance. Punch (2009), in his comparative study of policing across several countries, contended that a “blue code of silence” often protects deviant officers within police organisations. This “curtain of silence,” coupled with weak external accountability, perpetuates abusive practices. Bayley and Perito (2011) similarly observed that the hierarchical and opaque structures of many police organisations facilitate the normalisation of deviant conduct. At the individual level, psychological and occupational stress have also been linked to deviance. Violanti et al. (2017), for instance, examined the relationship between occupational stress and misconduct and found that highly stressed officers were more likely to engage in aggressive and unethical behaviour, underscoring the importance of mental health support in police agencies.

It is therefore evident that police deviance is a global phenomenon, encompassing corruption, brutality, exploitation, discrimination, and abuse of authority. Such practices erode public trust, diminish institutional credibility, and foster hostility between the police and the communities they serve. This body of research demonstrates the extent, causes, and consequences of police malpractice internationally.

Ethical challenges within the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) have historically undermined the institution, eroding public confidence in its credibility and effectiveness in crime prevention. Empirical studies and reports identify corruption, abuse of power, brutality, and dereliction of duty as some of the most pervasive unethical practices in Nigerian policing. While many officers remain committed and professional, the persistence of these deviant behaviours has deeply tarnished the reputation of the police, complicating efforts to maintain public order and legitimacy.

Corruption, in particular, remains one of the most entrenched unethical practices within the NPF. Transparency International (2019) ranked the Nigerian police among the most corrupt institutions in the country, with bribery reported as a routine practice. Citizens often pay bribes for basic services, including obtaining police clearance, bail, or avoiding wrongful arrests. Such systemic corruption fosters impunity, undermines professionalism, and cripples the wider criminal justice system. Yusuf (2025) documents the routine extortion of motorists at traffic stops and roadblocks, popularly known as “roadblock extortion.” These practices widen social inequalities and weaken the state’s capacity to combat crime effectively.

Police brutality and extrajudicial killings further illustrate deviant conduct. Numerous incidents of citizens being shot or killed by law enforcement officers have been documented, culminating in the EndSARS protests of 2020, which highlighted widespread impunity by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Reports of extrajudicial executions, torture, and arbitrary arrests exposed the absence of

accountability mechanisms. Max (2024) attributes officers' excessive use of force to inadequate training, lack of accountability, and entrenched impunity. These patterns of violence, especially against the poor and vulnerable, have significantly eroded public trust in the police.

Ethnic discrimination is another dimension of police deviance in Nigeria. Studies, such as Akinyemi (2021), reveal that officers often target individuals based on ethnicity, religion, or region of origin, particularly in the north and south-east. Harassment, extortion, and disproportionate use of force against minority groups exacerbate ethnic and political tensions. Such discriminatory practices undermine efforts at fostering impartial and community-based policing.

Sexual misconduct is also documented. Reports from the Nigerian Human Rights Commission (NHRC, 2018) and the United Nations Development Programme (2019) indicate that female detainees, including victims of domestic violence and vulnerable women, are subjected to sexual exploitation by police officers. Demands for sexual favours in exchange for bail, leniency, or protection constitute grave abuses of power that deepen mistrust between the police and the public, particularly among women.

Fabrication of evidence and false testimony are further examples of misconduct. Abubakar (2023) report that police officers have been involved in falsifying crime scene reports and fabricating evidence to secure wrongful convictions or conceal misconduct. Coerced confessions and trumped-up charges, often targeting political opponents or marginalised groups, have weakened the credibility of the justice system and contributed to widespread distrust.

Moreover, some officers abuse their positions for personal gain by engaging in extortion rackets, smuggling, human trafficking, and illegal mining, often under the guise of official duties (Onyepuemu et al., 2022). Such practices blur the boundaries between law enforcement and criminality, creating a vicious cycle of corruption and violence that

undermines the police's core mandate of protecting citizens and upholding the rule of law.

Police neglect of duty is another primary concern. Reports indicate that officers frequently ignore distress calls or withdraw from cases unless bribes are paid (NHRC, 2019). This abdication of responsibility, particularly in rural areas, has contributed to rising insecurity and the proliferation of vigilante groups. Communities, perceiving the police as ineffective or complicit, often resort to self-help measures, further destabilising public order.

Weak accountability mechanisms enable the persistence of these problems. According to the Police Service Commission (PSC, 2020), the absence of independent oversight and political interference has entrenched a culture of impunity. Officers often operate without scrutiny, secure in believing that misconduct will go unpunished. Akinyemi (2016) notes that inadequate oversight frameworks have allowed corruption to flourish unchecked.

### **Leadership Style and Workplace Deviant Conduct**

Leadership has long been recognised as a critical determinant of employee behaviour, including workplace deviant behaviour (WDB). Leaders shape the values, norms, and culture of organisations, and their leadership style often determines whether employees engage in ethical or unethical conduct (Oubrich et al., 2021). Authoritarian, transactional, transformational, laissez-faire, and ethical leadership styles each exert distinctive influences on organisational behaviour, with profound implications for deviance in the workplace.

Authoritarian leadership, characterised by concentrated power, rigid command, and the expectation of unquestioned obedience (Khan et al., 2020), has consistently been associated with negative employee outcomes. Such leaders often suppress autonomy and participation, creating climates of fear, resentment, and disengagement. Research links authoritarian leadership to job dissatisfaction (Shaw, 1955),

negative attitudes toward supervisors (Ichsan et al., 2021), and deviant behaviours (Chen et al., 2014). In the paramilitary culture of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), authoritarian leadership manifests as command-and-control structures. While this style may instil discipline, it simultaneously fosters low morale and opportunistic deviance, with officers engaging in misconduct when unsupervised.

By contrast, transactional leadership which relies on structured rewards and punishments has been found to reduce deviant conduct when properly implemented. Leaders who set clear goals and enforce compliance through contingent rewards and sanctions can discourage unethical behaviour (Bass, 1990). Empirical studies in Nigeria demonstrate that transactional leadership significantly reduces workplace deviance by rewarding compliance and punishing misconduct (Obiwuru et al., 2011; Fasola et al., 2013). However, in the NPF, transactional leadership risks reinforcing corruption when leaders overemphasise outputs, such as arrest quotas or revenue generation, while neglecting ethical processes (Okechukwu, 2020). This may encourage officers to fabricate charges or extort bribes to meet targets.

Transformational leadership exerts a more profound and positive influence by motivating followers through vision, inspiration, and moral example (Gemeda & Lee, 2020). Transformational leaders foster a collective identity and promote ethical attachment to organisational goals. In the Nigerian setting, transformational practices such as mentoring, delegation, and modelling integrity have been associated with lower incidences of bribery, extortion, and corruption among officers (Adebanjo & Oladipo, 2021). By cultivating intrinsic motivation and aligning officers with the values of justice and service, transformational leadership addresses not only behaviour but also the underlying moral framework guiding decision-making. Laissez-faire leadership, on the other hand, is characterised by withdrawal, passivity, and lack of accountability. Leaders who abdicate responsibility leave an ethical vacuum, creating opportunities for subordinates to define

acceptable behaviour for themselves. Studies show that laissez-faire leadership correlates with embezzlement, extortion, and misuse of authority (Agbaenyi, & Owuamanam, 2021). Within the NPF, this form of leadership undermines oversight, emboldens deviant practices, and signals to officers that misconduct will go unpunished.

Lastly, ethical leadership grounded in honesty, fairness, integrity, and accountability has been proposed as a powerful antidote to deviance. Ethical leaders serve as role models, build climates of trust, and ensure that misconduct is sanctioned while ethical behaviour is rewarded (Adegoke, 2022). In the NPF, moral governance through ethical leadership could counter entrenched corruption, enhance transparency, and restore public trust.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

Leadership style and organizational culture in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) have long been cited as key factors shaping officer behavior and public trust. Empirical studies note that the NPF has historically operated under a rigid, hierarchical command structure inherited from colonial-era bureaucracy (Hicken, 2024). This top-down, often autocratic style means senior commanders give strict instructions with heavy disciplinary consequences, while information and support seldom flow down to junior officers. As a result, NPF personnel report low morale and motivation: for example, lower-ranked officers receive limited guidance, face unchallenging work, and feel demotivated by harsh supervision. In contrast, police forces with transformational leadership (e.g. Dubai Police) show high employee engagement and innovation, highlighting the NPF's authoritarian culture and lack of support (Aborisade & Fayemi, 2015). In practical terms, this means that many Nigerian officers work under stressful, under-resourced conditions with little autonomy. Such an environment not only undermines performance but also creates fertile ground for deviant practices (bribery, extortion, brutality, etc.) to emerge and be tolerated within the force.

At the individual level, workplace deviance in the NPF often manifests as police misconduct such as bribery, corruption, and abuse of force, nepotism, and other violations of formal rules and citizens' rights. Systematic reviews of Nigerian public institutions report that a large fraction of workers admit to unethical behaviours (e.g. absenteeism, favouritism, fraud) (Olabimitan, 2025), and the police are widely perceived as rife with corruption and abuse. For example, analysts describe NPF corruption as a "product of political processes" and note that its officers commonly engage in bribery and extortion as a norm (Olabimitan, 2025; Aborisade & Fayemi, 2015). In fact, one senior analyst reports that within the NPF "the corrupt subculture is so grounded" that junior constables consider bribery a "fundamental right" (Aborisade & Fayemi, 2015). These observations suggest that deviance in the Nigeria Police is not merely individual wrongdoing but is influenced by deeper organizational and social processes tied to leadership and culture.

### **Social Learning and Organisational Subculture**

Social Learning Theory (SLT) offers a powerful lens for understanding how leadership style and culture foster deviance in police. SLT (Bandura, Akers) posits that individuals learn conforming or deviant behaviours by observing and imitating others in their immediate social environment (Olabimitan, 2025; Aborisade & Fayemi, 2015). In police organisations, peers and superiors constitute the primary reference group ("police subculture") that teaches norms and definitions of acceptable conduct. Under autocratic leadership, officers often rely on informal peer networks for guidance. When those peer groups condone or engage in corruption, new recruits quickly adopt these attitudes. As one reviewer notes, attitudes toward misconduct are bound by context and learned by observing others (Oluwasanmi et al., 2025). When senior officers tacitly allow or model extortion and brutality, they normalise deviance.

Applied to the NPF, SLT implies that an authoritarian leadership style, which deprives officers of transparency and support, effectively shifts norm-setting to the ranks. In practice, this has created a deviant subculture: veteran officers transmit pro-corruption beliefs and practices (“definitions” in SLT terms) to newcomers. As a result, even formally ethical training is undermined by peer reinforcement of wrongdoing. In effect, poor leadership fails to discipline deviance and instead lets it be modelled as a coping strategy. Researchers observe that in such environments, the balance of learning influences (differential association, reinforcement, modelling) tilts toward deviance. Officers report intense peer pressure to join the corrupt practices already prevalent among colleagues. Thus, SLT predicts that without strong, ethical leadership modelling positive norms, a spill over of deviance through observational learning will occur a pattern well documented in Nigerian policing.

### **Strain, Frustration, and Deviance**

General Strain Theory (GST) (Agnew) also explains police deviance by linking negative experiences to misconduct. GST posits that individuals under strain – such as the inability to achieve valued goals or the presence of negative stimuli – experience anger and frustration, which can be channelled into crime or deviance if no legitimate coping resources exist (Anaekwe & Oli, 2024). For Nigeria’s police, chronic strains abound. Officers face low pay and poor working conditions, making it difficult to meet material needs. The theoretical literature notes explicitly that Nigerian police are “underpaid” and live in “harsh and unfavourable conditions,” creating significant strain. Agnew’s GST suggests such unjust strain fosters resentment and risk-taking. Under pressure, officers may resort to violence or corruption as a form of negative coping (Anaekwe & Oli, 2024).

Crucially, leadership style influences the intensity of strain. An authoritarian command that withholds support and sets unrealistic demands (e.g. quotas) exacerbates frustration. In the NPF case, leaders

often increase strain by imposing rigid orders without accommodating resource shortages. The result is a sense of inequity and entrapment: officers are expected to achieve policing goals with inadequate tools and scant support. GST predicts that when officers perceive this pressure as illegitimate (for example, unsafe posts, denial of promotions), they develop negative emotions that may be expressed through deviance. Empirical accounts from Nigeria confirm this. The police experience of strain is linked to brutality and corruption, seen as ways to gain resources or release anger (Anaekwe & Oli, 2024). In short, authoritarian leadership can amplify police strain, and without positive outlets or leadership relief, deviant acts (e.g. illicit fees, excessive force) can become an outlet for accumulated frustration.

### **Path–Goal Theory and Leader Support**

Leadership theories such as Path–Goal Theory (House) describe how different leadership behaviors can either alleviate or create follower strain and uncertainty. Path–Goal Theory argues that effective leaders clarify the path to subordinates’ goals by providing necessary guidance, support, and resources, or by removing obstacles that impede goal attainment (Martin, 2009). In this framework, a supportive/participative leader pays attention to subordinates’ needs and involves them in problem-solving, which boosts morale and reduces ambiguity. Conversely, a purely directive (or autocratic) leader only issues commands and expects compliance without explanation. Nevertheless, such a style can leave followers feeling unsupported and confused about how to succeed.

In the Nigeria Police situation, a strong lack of Path–Goal supportive behaviours is evident. Officers routinely report “occupational stress” and a lack of leadership support, noting that their bosses are often “self-serving” and neglect the welfare of the rank-and-file (Aborisade & Fayemi, 2015). This mirrors the Path–Goal warning. When leaders fail to help subordinates overcome obstacles, frustration and disengagement rise. For example, NPF senior commanders rarely solicit input or

clarify how junior officers can meet tough performance goals under resource constraints. The remaining option for stressed officers is to seek rewards via informal (often deviant) routes. In contrast, police forces with participative leadership (in which leaders' coach and support personnel) report higher commitment and ethical standards. House's theory thus implies that the NPF's autocratic, non-supportive leadership style inadvertently pushes officers into maladaptive coping; they lack clear legitimate "paths" to meet demands, so some take illicit shortcuts.

### **Integrating the Framework**

Bringing these theories together, the researcher has constructed a narrative where leadership style shapes police deviance through cultural and emotional mechanisms. Transformational or participative leadership (supportive, empowering) tends to foster a positive organisational climate. It clarifies goals, offers resources, and exemplifies ethical norms. Under such leadership, officers have less reason to feel strain or to imitate deviant peers, which generally reduces misconduct. Indeed, research suggests that transformational leaders characterised by charisma and individualised consideration can reduce corrupt practices, even though in Nigeria's case, this effect has been muted by deeper problems (Orole et al., 2014). On the other hand, authoritarian, or purely transactional leadership (strict commands with punishment, little support) exacerbates deviance. This style stifles communication and innovation, intensifies officers' strain by failing to remove obstacles, and leaves informal peer norms unchecked. In such an environment, Social Learning Theory predicts that corruption and violence are learned as acceptable shortcuts, and Strain Theory predicts that underpaid, disrespected officers' lash out or pocket illegal gains.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a survey research design appropriate for assessing respondents' attitudes, opinions, and behaviours on specific issues.

Surveys allow for systematic measurement of the prevalence, type, and frequency of deviant workplace behaviours and the relationship between leadership styles and organisational misconduct. The study was conducted in the Kwara State Police Command, established in 1967 following Nigeria's state creation exercise. Kwara State, popularly called the *State of Harmony*, covers 32,500 square kilometres and is strategically located between the forest and Guinea Savannah belts. The Command, currently headed by Commissioner of Police Victor Olaiya (appointed in 2023), has approximately 3,429 personnel across five Area Commands and 50 Divisional Police Headquarters (Kwara State Police Command, 2019).

Therefore, the population comprised all police personnel serving under the Kwara State Police Command. At the time of the study, the Command had an estimated 3,429 officers. Officers temporarily posted from other commands on special duties were excluded to ensure the sample reflected only Kwara-based personnel. Using a sample size calculator (95% confidence level, 3% margin of error, 50% population proportion), the required sample was 815 officers. A multistage sampling procedure was adopted:

- Stratification by Senatorial Districts: Central, South, and North. Divisions with higher personnel strength were purposively selected within each district.
- Stratification by Local Government Areas (LGAs): Within districts, officers were further stratified by LGAs.
- Third Stage Quota and Convenience Sampling: Quota sampling determined the number of officers to be selected per LGA. For instance, in Kwara Central, 66 officers were drawn from Asa, 71 from Ilorin East, 81 from Ilorin South, and 89 from Ilorin West. Similar quotas were applied in Kwara North and South. Within each quota, officers were selected using convenience sampling, where only those available at divisions during visits were included.

A structured questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. It consisted of closed-ended items assessing leadership style and workplace deviance. A Likert scale was used to measure officers' perceptions and attitudes. This facilitated statistical analysis of correlations between leadership style and deviant workplace behaviours. Validity was established through expert review, ensuring content relevance and theoretical alignment. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, and coefficients above 0.7 were considered acceptable.

**Table 1. Reliability Tests (Cronbach's Alpha)**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Leadership Style	.757	10
Work Behaviours	.909	18

(Source: SPSS Output, 2025).

These results confirm that the instrument was valid and reliable for the study.

**Presentation of Result**

**Socio-demographic Characteristics**

In this section, descriptive analysis of socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents is done as shown in Table 2:

**Table 2: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (n=807)**

Socio-demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage %
Sex:		
Male	713	88.35
Female	94	11.65
Total	807	100
Age in Years:		

21-27 years	198	25.54
28-37 years	253	31.35
38-47 years	191	23.67
48 years and above	165	20.45
Total	807	100
Marital status:		
Single	208	25.78
Married	551	68.28
Separated	35	4.34
Divorced	13	1.61
Total	807	100
Religion:		
Islam	517	64.06
Christianity	290	35.94
Others	00	00
Total	807	100
Ethnic nationality:		
Yoruba	266	32.96
Igbo	132	16.36
Hausa	243	30.11
Others	166	20.57
Total	807	100
Educational Attainment:		
Secondary education	297	36.80
Tertiary education	510	63.20
Total	807	100
Work experience:		

Between 1 and 5 years	176	21.81
Between 6 and 10 years	249	30.86
Between 11 and 15 years	312	38.66
Above 16 years	70	8.67
Total	807	100
Monthly income:		
N75,000 – N149,999	346	42.88
More than N150,000	461	57.13
Total	807	100
Rank		
Constable-Inspector of Police(IP)	529	65.55
Assistant Superintendent (ASP)-Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP)	271	33.58
Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP)-Commissioner of Police (CP)	7	0.87
Total	807	100

Source: Researcher’s fieldwork (2025)

As evident in table 2, out of the total respondents, 713 were male and 94 were female, indicating a male-dominated sample. In terms of age distribution, 198 (25.54%) were aged 21–27 years, 253 (31.35%) were 28–37 years, 191 (23.67%) were 38–47 years, and 165 (20.45%) were above 48 years. The largest proportion fell within the 28–37 age group, while approximately 80% were between 21 and 47 years. This suggests that the Nigerian Police Force is predominantly youthful in composition. With respect to marital status, 208 (25.78%) were single, 551 (68.28%) married, 35 (4.34%) separated, and 13 (1.61%) divorced. Regarding religion, 517 (64.06%) were Muslims and 290 (35.94%) Christians, reflecting the general religious distribution of the Nigerian population. Ethnic composition showed that 266 (32.96%) were Yoruba, 132 (16.36%) Igbo, 243 (30.11%) Hausa, and 166 (20.57%) from other ethnic groups. In terms of education, 297 (36.80%) had secondary-level qualifications, while 510 (63.20%) held tertiary-level qualifications,

indicating a majority of officers were highly educated. Work experience varied, with 176 (21.81%) having 1–5 years, 249 (30.86%) having 6–10 years, 312 (38.66%) having 11–15 years, and 70 (8.67%) having 16 years or more. Income distribution showed that 346 (42.88%) earned between ₦75,000 and ₦149,999, while 461 (57.13%) earned above ₦150,000. Regarding ranks, 529 (65.55%) were Constable–Inspector of Police, 271 (33.58%) were Assistant Superintendent–Chief Superintendent of Police, and 7 (0.87%) were Assistant Commissioner–Commissioner of Police.

### **Descriptive Results on Leadership Style**

Leadership refers to the leader's methods, characteristics, and behaviours when directing, motivating, and managing his/her teams. In this section, descriptive results on leadership style were presented and analyzed.

Please note the following; SA: Strongly Agree. A: Agree. IDK: I Don't Know. D: Disagree. SD: Strongly Disagree.

**Table 3: Descriptive Results on Leadership Style (n=807)**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	IDK	D	SD
1	Our superiors always dominate the entire discussion.	343 (42.50%)	404 (50.06%)	8 (0.99%)	30 (3.72%)	22 (2.73%)
2	Our superiors are determined to push projects forward and get results no matter what happen.	299 (37.05%)	371 (45.98%)	14 (1.74%)	84 (10.41%)	39 (4.83%)
3	Our superiors always determine how we should be organized and carry out our duties.	341 (42.26%)	411 (50.93%)	3 (0.37%)	37 (4.59%)	15 (1.86%)
4	Our superiors set high standards and expect others to do the same for themselves.	249 (30.86%)	378 (46.84%)	24 (2.97%)	111 (13.75%)	45 (5.58%)
5	Our superiors do not ask for our opinions	242 (29.99%)	457 (56.63%)	61 (7.56%)	32 (3.97%)	15 (1.86%)
6	Our superiors' orders are the final, there is no room for	267 (33.09%)	398 (49.32%)	23 (2.85%)	89 (11.03%)	30 (3.72%)

	complaints					
7	Our superiors do not go by our knowledge and experience	287 (35.56%)	412 (51.05%)	11 (1.36%)	68 (8.43%)	29 (3.60%)
8	We are scared to make mistakes	209 (25.90%)	384 (47.60%)	6 (0.74%)	166 (20.57%)	42 (5.21%)
9	Our performances are closely monitored	302 (37.42%)	456 (56.51%)	14 (1.74%)	21 (2.60%)	14 (1.74%)
10	Our day-to-day activities solely depends on our superiors	211 (26.15%)	397 (49.19%)	58 (7.19%)	101 (12.52%)	40 (4.96%)

**Source: Researcher’s fieldwork (2025).**

The results reveal a dominant hierarchical leadership style within the Nigeria Police Force. A significant proportion of respondents (26.22% strongly agreed; 14.51% disagreed; 3.10% strongly disagreed) reported that their superiors dominate discussions, indicating limited room for subordinate input. Similarly, 37.05% strongly agreed and 45.98% agreed that their superiors are committed to pushing projects forward and securing results, regardless of circumstances. While this reflects task-oriented leadership, it also suggests a tendency toward rigid goal pursuit, potentially at the expense of inclusiveness.

In terms of decision-making, 42.26% strongly agreed and 50.93% agreed that their superiors determine how duties should be organized and executed, confirming a top-down command structure. Moreover, 30.86% strongly agreed and 46.84% agreed that supervisors set high standards and expect the same of subordinates, pointing toward a culture of performance expectations but also potential pressure on officers.

Notably, 29.99% strongly agreed and 56.63% agreed that higher-ups do not seek their opinions, while 33.09% strongly agreed and 49.32%

agreed that superiors' orders are final and unquestionable. This indicates an authoritarian leadership climate where dissent is discouraged. Similarly, 35.56% strongly agreed and 51.05% agreed that supervisors disregard their knowledge and work experience, suggesting limited recognition of subordinate expertise.

Fear and surveillance also emerged as dominant themes: 25.90% strongly agreed and 47.60% agreed that they are scared of making mistakes, while 37.42% strongly agreed and 56.51% agreed that their performance is closely monitored. Finally, 26.15% strongly agreed and 49.19% agreed that their day-to-day activities depend solely on directives from superiors.

These findings revealed the prevalence of authoritarian and transactional leadership styles in the Nigeria Police Force, characterized by strict control, limited subordinate participation, and performance monitoring. While such styles may ensure discipline and efficiency, they risk fostering workplace deviance, fear, low morale, and resistance among officers. The lack of participatory leadership and disregard for officers' expertise may undermine innovation, weaken trust, and strain superior-subordinate relationships. In policing, this rigid leadership approach may also exacerbate deviant behaviours, hinder community-police relations, and impede reforms aimed at accountability and professional conduct.

**Table 4: Work Behaviours**

<b>S/ N</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>IDK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>1</b>	Absenteeism is increasing among police officers.	44 (5.45%)	61 (7.56%)	108 (13.38%)	421 (52.17%)	173 (21.44%)
<b>2</b>	Lateness is increasing among police officers.	51 (6.32%)	68 (8.43%)	164 (20.32%)	342 (42.38%)	182 (22.55%)
<b>3</b>	Withholding efforts is increasing among police officers.	267 (33.09%)	411 (50.93%)	5 (0.62%)	78 (9.67%)	46 (5.70%)
<b>4</b>	Extorting money from suspects is increasing among police officers.	351 (43.49%)	377 (46.72%)	8 (0.99%)	43 (5.33%)	28 (3.47%)
<b>5</b>	Unlawful arrests of suspects are increasing among police officers.	203 (25.15%)	433 (53.66%)	19 (2.35%)	114 (14.13%)	38 (4.71%)
<b>6</b>	Stealing arms and ammunition and other equipment belonging to the Nigeria Police Force.	78 (9.67%)	116 (14.38%)	56 (6.94%)	313 (38.79%)	244 (30.24%)
<b>7</b>	Verbal abuse	289	478	11	18	11

	targeted at suspects is increasing among police officers.	(35.81%)	(59.23%)	(1.36%)	(2.23%)	(1.36%)
<b>8</b>	Disobedience to lawful orders from superiors	123 (15.24%)	136 (16.85%)	81 (10.04%)	312 (38.66%)	155 (19.21%)
<b>9</b>	Soliciting and taking alcohol while on duty.	149 (18.46%)	186 (23.05%)	43 (5.33%)	299 (37.05%)	130 (16.11%)
<b>10</b>	Soliciting and taking illegal substance while on duty	112 (13.88%)	174 (21.56%)	49 (6.07%)	317 (39.28%)	155 (19.21%)
<b>11</b>	Seeking to obtain promotion illegally	186 (23.05%)	342 (42.38%)	15 (1.86%)	187 (23.17%)	77 (9.54%)
<b>12</b>	Offering illegal supports to a third party to obtain a license from the Nigeria Police Force	64 (7.93%)	118 (14.62%)	98 (12.14%)	388 (48.08%)	139 (17.22%)
<b>13</b>	Discriminating suspects based on place of origins and other criteria.	297 (36.80%)	374 (46.34%)	54 (6.69%)	56 (6.94%)	26 (3.22%)
<b>14</b>	Intimidating suspects with fire arms and other	302 (37.42%)	387 (47.96%)	12 (1.49%)	74 (9.17%)	32 (3.97%)

	weapons					
<b>15</b>	Operating a liquor shop	14 (1.73%)	73 (9.05%)	186 (23.05%)	311 (38.54%)	223 (27.63%)
<b>16</b>	Seeking sexual pleasure from suspects.	166 (20.57%)	213 (26.39%)	87 (10.78%)	208 (25.77%)	133 (16.48%)
<b>17</b>	Using the Nigeria Police Force identity card to gain undue advantages	317 (39.28%)	416 (51.55%)	9 (1.12%)	29 (3.59%)	36 (4.46%)
<b>18</b>	Deliberately using false evidence or making false testimony against suspects.	241 (29.86%)	412 (51.05%)	18 (2.23%)	91 (11.28%)	45 (5.58%)

Source: Researcher’s fieldwork (2025)

The results reveal significant patterns of deviant work behaviours among officers in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Absenteeism and lateness were largely dismissed by respondents, with 74.15% and 64.93% respectively disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that such behaviours were on the rise. This suggests that basic attendance-related misconduct is less of a problem compared to more serious forms of deviance.

However, substantial proportions of respondents acknowledged more critical behavioural concerns. A combined 84.02% agreed that officers increasingly withhold effort, signalling reduced motivation and disengagement. Similarly, extortion emerged as a major issue, with 90.21% reporting that officers engage in extorting money from suspects. Likewise, 78.81% agreed that unlawful arrests are on the rise, pointing to abuse of authority.

Other forms of misconduct were also evident. While stealing arms and ammunition received less support (38.79% disagreed; 30.24% strongly disagreed), a majority acknowledged verbal abuse of suspects (82.3%) and intimidation with firearms (85.38%). This indicates a pattern of coercive practices and misuse of force.

Disobedience to lawful orders appeared less prevalent, with 57.87% rejecting its occurrence. Yet, issues of indiscipline such as alcohol (41.51%) and illegal substance use (34.44%) while on duty were acknowledged by respondents. Importantly, nearly two-thirds (65.43%) agreed that officers attempt to buy promotions, reflecting deep institutional corruption. Although fewer officers supported the claim of providing illegal support to third parties for licensing (65.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed), discrimination based on place of origin (83.14%) and sexual exploitation of suspects (46.96% agreed) highlight ethical breaches with direct social consequences. Abuse of institutional identity also surfaced strongly. A combined 80.83% agreed that officers misuse their police ID cards for undue advantage, while 80.91% agreed that false evidence and testimonies are used against suspects.

These findings highlight a shift from minor workplace misconduct to systemic and ethically corrosive deviant practices within the NPF. Extortion, unlawful arrest, intimidation, and misuse of institutional identity point to entrenched corruption and abuse of power. Such behaviours undermine public trust, erode legitimacy, and weaken the police's mandate to uphold justice. The prevalence of effort-withholding and coercive practices further indicates morale problems linked to authoritarian leadership and institutional culture.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**Leadership Style and Deviant Work Behaviours (Hypothesis 1)**

**$H_0$  Leadership style has no significant effect on deviant work behaviours among police officers in Kwara State Police Command.**

In this section, the effect of leadership style on deviant work behaviours was determined using simple linear regression (Table 4.8). The hypothesis states that leadership style has no significant effect on deviant work behaviours among police officers in Kwara State Police Command.

**Table 5:** Model summary, ANOVA and Coefficient

Model summary							
Model	1						
R	.205						
R Square	.042						
Adjusted R Square	.036						
Std. error of the estimate	.48649						
R Square Change	0.42						
F Change	7.103						
Df 1	1						
Df 2	162						
Sig. F Change	.008						
Durbin Watson	2.001						
ANOVA							
Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.		
Regression	1.681	1	1.681	7.10	3	.008 <sup>b</sup>	
Residual	38.341	162	.237				
Total	40.022	163					
Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficient			95% Confidence interval	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower bound	Upper bound
(Constant)	2.268	.217		10.464	.000	1.840	2.696

Leadership style	.228	.086	.205	2.665	.008	.098	1.059
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Source: SPSS output (2025)

The hypothesis tested whether leadership style has no significant effect on deviant work behaviours among police officers in Kwara State Police Command. From the table, the result indicates a correlation coefficient (R) of .205, suggesting a weak but positive relationship between leadership style and deviant work behaviours. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is .042, meaning that leadership style accounts for 4.2% of the variance in deviant work behaviours among the officers. While this proportion is relatively small, it shows that leadership style is nonetheless a measurable predictor of deviant behaviour. The adjusted  $R^2$  (.036) further confirms that the explanatory power of the model remains modest when adjusted for the sample size.

Furthermore, the result shows that the regression model is statistically significant, with  $F(1, 162) = 7.103$ ,  $p = .008$ . This indicates that leadership style significantly predicts deviant work behaviours, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis of no effect. In other words, the probability that this effect occurred by chance is less than 1%. The coefficient (B) for leadership style is .228 (SE = .086), indicating that for every one-unit increase in leadership style (as measured in this study), there is an associated increase of .228 units in deviant work behaviours, holding other factors constant. The standardised coefficient (Beta = .205) reinforces that leadership style has a modest positive effect on deviant behaviours. The t-value (2.665,  $p = .008$ ) confirms that the effect is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The 95% confidence interval (.098 to 1.059) does not include zero, strengthening the reliability of the effect estimate.

These results suggest that leadership style plays a statistically significant role in shaping deviant work behaviours among officers in Kwara State. Specifically, certain leadership approaches likely authoritarian, laissez-faire, or poorly structured styles may inadvertently encourage or fail to deter deviant behaviours such as extortion, intimidation, or absenteeism. Although leadership style explains only a small proportion of the variance (4.2%), the significance of the effect underscores its importance as part of the broader institutional and organisational dynamics influencing police deviance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that leadership style significantly affects deviant work behaviours among police officers in Kwara State Police Command.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of leadership style on deviant work behaviours among police officers in the Kwara State Police Command. The regression analysis revealed that leadership style has a statistically significant effect on deviant work behaviours among police officers in Kwara State Police Command, albeit with a modest explanatory power ( $R^2 = 4.2\%$ ). The findings demonstrated that leadership style significantly influences officers' behavioural outcomes, underscoring the critical role of leadership in shaping workplace conduct within law enforcement. Although the explanatory power was modest, the result confirms the long-standing assertion that leadership is not behaviourally neutral; rather, it can either reinforce professional standards or foster deviance.

This outcome resonates with existing scholarship which has consistently linked transformational leadership to positive work behaviours such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and ethical conduct (Bass & Riggio, 2006). For instance, transformational leaders inspire subordinates by articulating a compelling vision, modelling ethical standards, and fostering ownership, which in turn discourages deviant practices. Within policing, Densten (2003) observed that supportive and visionary leadership enhances officers' commitment to community engagement and ethical decision-making. The current study's findings similarly suggest that when leaders embody these traits, deviant work behaviours are less likely to thrive.

The findings also align with the Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971), which posits that leaders influence subordinates' performance by clarifying goals, removing barriers, and offering appropriate support. In the policing context, directive leadership may enforce discipline, but overemphasis on rigid command structures without supportive or participative elements risks breeding resentment and disengagement, thereby encouraging deviance. Conversely, adaptive leaders who combine directive clarity with participatory and supportive approaches are more likely to sustain positive behavioural outcomes among officers.

Furthermore, the study echoes insights from Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) Theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), which emphasizes that high-quality relationships between leaders and subordinates are associated with greater trust, cooperation, and citizenship behaviours. Within the police, such relationships are pivotal: when officers perceive fairness, respect, and reciprocal trust from their superiors, they are less inclined toward deviant behaviours such as insubordination, corruption, or abuse of authority.

Beyond individual leadership behaviours, the findings point to the broader influence of organizational culture in reinforcing or mitigating deviance. Chatman and O'Reilly (2016) argue that cultural alignment between organizational values and employee behaviour fosters cooperation, innovation, and commitment. In contrast, misalignment creates frustration, dissatisfaction, and, in policing, potential misconduct. Denison and Mishra (1995) similarly found that cultures built on adaptability, mission clarity, involvement, and consistency cultivate proactivity and collaboration, the attributes essential in high-stakes policing environments. Within this study, the interplay of hierarchical discipline with participative cultural elements appears especially important, reflecting Cameron and Quinn's (1999) Competing Values Framework (CVF). A balance between hierarchical authority (to maintain order) and clan-like collaboration (to build trust and community ties) may be particularly effective in policing settings.

From the perspective of transactional and authoritarian leadership theories, the finding suggests that when leadership is overly rigid, hierarchical, or primarily focused on command and control, officers may become disengaged, resistant, or inclined to engage in deviant behaviours such as insubordination, corruption, or abuse of authority. Conversely, the absence of participatory or transformational elements in leadership deprives officers of motivation, accountability, and ethical guidance, which could reinforce deviance. The result, therefore, confirms the assertion that leadership style is not neutral; it either enables or constrains organisational deviance depending on the quality of leadership practices.

The findings also align with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasises that behaviour is learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within social environments. In police organisations, officers frequently model their behaviour on their superiors. When

leaders demonstrate integrity, fairness, and accountability, these behaviours are likely to cascade downward, reducing deviant practices. However, where leaders neglect professional standards, tolerate unethical practices, or impose arbitrary commands, officers may internalise and replicate these patterns, thereby normalising deviant behaviours within the command. The significant effect found in this study thus highlights the role of leadership as a socialising agent in the organisational culture of the police.

Collectively, the findings illustrate that deviant behaviours among police officers are not simply a matter of individual misconduct but are deeply embedded in leadership practices and organizational culture. In line with Schneider, Ehrhart, and Macey (2013), leadership style shapes the organizational climate, which in turn amplifies or constrains cultural values. A climate marked by fairness, accountability, and supportive supervision reinforces professional conduct, while authoritarian or neglectful leadership creates fertile ground for deviance.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the effect of leadership style on deviant work behaviours among police officers in the Kwara State Police Command. The findings established that leadership style significantly influences workplace conduct, with results indicating that leadership explains variations in behaviours such as absenteeism, insubordination, extortion, and misuse of authority. While the explanatory power was modest, the significance of leadership underscores its central role in shaping ethical standards, discipline, and performance within the police. Theoretically, the findings affirm the relevance of transformational leadership, Path-Goal Theory, and Leader–Member Exchange Theory in understanding workplace deviance in policing contexts. Practically, the study demonstrates that leadership is a crucial lever for promoting professionalism and reducing deviance, especially in environments where authority, discretion, and community trust are closely intertwined.

**Recommendations**

1. **Promote Transformational and Participatory Leadership:** Training programs for police leaders should prioritise transformational leadership skills, including communication of vision, ethical modelling, and supportive supervision. This will foster trust and accountability while discouraging deviance.
2. **Embed Ethical Leadership in Police Training Curricula:** The Nigeria Police Force should institutionalise ethical and participatory leadership modules in its academies and continuous professional development programs, ensuring leaders are equipped to balance authority with fairness.
3. **Strengthen Organizational Culture and Climate:** Efforts should be made to cultivate a culture that combines discipline (hierarchical order) with collaboration (clan values). This balance will sustain professionalism, teamwork, and responsiveness to community needs.
4. **Accountability and Oversight Mechanisms:** Internal monitoring and external oversight should be reinforced to ensure that leadership practices align with organizational values and to curb abuses of authority. Clear consequences for deviance must be consistently applied.
5. **Foster High-Quality Leader–Member Relations:** Supervisors should intentionally build trust-based relationships with subordinates by demonstrating fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. Such relationships reduce the likelihood of misconduct and enhance officers' commitment.
6. **Community-Oriented Leadership:** Leaders should be encouraged to adopt community-engagement strategies that foster collaboration between police and citizens. This not only strengthens legitimacy but also holds officers accountable to the public they serve.

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**Assessing the Effects of Partisan Defection on Nigeria's Democratic System (2019–2025)**

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**Abstract**

This paper examines the nature, scale, and democratic consequences of partisan defection in Nigeria between 2019 and 2025. Using a qualitative documentary research design, the study draws on legislative records, INEC documents, party communiqués, judicial decisions, and verified media and think-tank publications. Findings reveal that defections within this period were unprecedented in magnitude, often strategically coordinated, and primarily driven by career preservation, internal party conflicts, patronage incentives, zoning disputes, godfatherism, and the exploitation of constitutional loopholes. The study also identifies a troubling pattern in which some high-profile politicians under investigation for corruption defected to the ruling party, followed by a notable weakening or disappearance of their legal challenges. This dynamic has produced significant shifts in legislative composition, weakened the opposition, eroded accountability, and increased the drift toward dominant-party politics. The study argues that partisan defection has become a systemic force reshaping Nigeria's democratic system, destabilizing institutional balance, undermining public trust, and contributing to democratic backsliding. It concludes by recommending

urgent constitutional, institutional, and party-level reforms to strengthen internal party democracy, tighten anti-defection laws, and restore competitive pluralism.

**Keywords:** Partisan Defection, Democratic System, Cross-Carpeting, Dominant-Party Politics, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

A stable democratic system depends on political parties that can articulate societal interests, cultivate ideological coherence, and maintain internal discipline. Strong party systems provide the foundation for accountability, orderly competition, and effective governance (Arowolo, 2022; Adegami & Uche, 2023). In Nigeria, however, the proliferation of partisan defections since the return to civil rule in 1999 and particularly after 2019 has raised profound concerns about the resilience of the country's democratic order. Instead of functioning as platforms for ideological representation, Nigerian political parties frequently serve as vehicles for electoral survival, patronage access, and strategic repositioning (Ulu&Okogbuo, 2024; Uwakina, 2025).

Although defection is constitutionally permitted under Section 68(1)(g) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), its widespread abuse has transformed cross-carpeting into a structural feature of Nigerian politics. Between 2019 and 2025, the country experienced an extraordinary wave of defections across federal, state, and local levels, with the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) benefiting overwhelmingly from these political realignments (Athena Centre, 2025; PLAC, 2025). While partisan switching has always been part of Nigeria's political culture, post-2019 defections intensified in scale and became deeply intertwined with electoral ambitions, internal party crises, factional engineering, and the dynamics of executive dominance.

More troubling is the emergent pattern in which political actors facing investigations by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission

(EFCC) or other agencies defected to the ruling party, followed by a notable weakening or disappearance of their corruption cases. High-profile examples include Ifeanyi Okowa, Senator Peter Nwaoboshi, David Umahi, Stella Oduah, and others cases widely cited in public discourse as evidence that partisan defection has become a form of political sanctuary (Sahara Reporters, 2025; FIJ, 2024). When defections produce material changes in legislative majorities, distort accountability, reverse political mandates, or offer perceived immunity, they undermine the democratic system and erode citizens' confidence.

From a structural perspective, the surge in partisan defections between 2019 and 2025 significantly reshaped Nigeria's political landscape. The APC's representation in the National Assembly rose from 235 seats in 2023 to 260 seats by mid-2025, while the PDP's representation fell sharply from 154 to 92 (Kosisochukwu & Chinaza, 2025). Similar realignments occurred across state assemblies, most notably in Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Edo, Zamfara, and Cross River states, often triggering constitutional disputes and judicial interventions. These shifts weakened the opposition, reduced legislative diversity, and consolidated incumbency advantage.

Given these developments, the central concern of this study is not merely to understand why defections occur, but to critically examine how they affect Nigeria's democratic system. The phenomenon of partisan defection has evolved beyond the personal choices of political elites and has become a systemic force with profound implications for governance, representation, and institutional integrity. This paper therefore provides a systematic assessment of the effects of partisan defections on Nigeria's democratic system from 2019 to 2025, drawing on empirical evidence, legal analysis, and relevant theoretical frameworks. It argues that the pattern of defections in this period has moved beyond isolated political decisions and has become a structural threat to democratic resilience in Nigeria.

### **Problem Statement**

The period between 2019 and 2025 marked an unprecedented phase of political instability in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, characterised by frequent and large-scale partisan defections that reshaped legislative composition, weakened opposition parties, and threatened democratic consolidation. Over 300 defections occurred across federal and state legislatures, with the ruling APC emerging as the primary beneficiary (TheCable, 2025; PLAC, 2025). Notable instances include the mass defection of six Delta State lawmakers on 9 May 2025 and similar shifts in Rivers, AkwaIbom, Delta, and Zamfara State assemblies (PLAC, 2025; Athena Centre, 2025). Defections were often linked to strategic political calculations, including securing electoral advantage, aligning with dominant patronage networks, or evading legal scrutiny, with high-profile cases such as IfeanyiOkowa, David Umahi, Stella Oduah, Peter Nwaoboshi, Orji UzorKalu, and MusiliuObanikoro demonstrating a correlation between defections and the slowdown or disappearance of EFCC investigations (Sahara Reporters, 2025; FIJ, 2024).

Legally, the constitutional provision governing defections—Section 68(1)(g)—proved inadequate, as ambiguous language and inconsistent judicial rulings allowed opportunistic defections to flourish. In some cases, courts removed defectors from office (Cross River, 2022; Dogara, 2022), while in others, protracted legal disputes enabled defectors to retain positions (Rivers, 2023–2024). These inconsistencies, combined with weak internal party democracy, eroded accountability, hollowed out opposition strength, and fostered a drift toward dominant-party politics. The cumulative effect undermined legislative oversight, concentrated power in the executive, distorted electoral mandates, and diminished public trust in democratic institutions. These developments raise critical questions about the scale, motives, and consequences of defections, highlighting the need to understand their implications for Nigeria's democratic stability, institutional integrity, and political pluralism.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

A clear conceptual foundation is essential for understanding how partisan defections influence Nigeria's democratic system. This section clarifies key concepts central to the study: party defection, partisan loyalty, democratic stability, and dominant-party dynamics. Each concept is contextualised within Nigeria's political environment between 2019 and 2025.

### **Party Defection (Cross-Carpeting)**

Party defection refers to the act of an elected official or political actor abandoning the party under which they were elected and joining another political party, often without relinquishing the mandate obtained from voters (Badejo, Agunyai & Buraimo, 2016). In advanced democracies, defection is typically rare and ideologically motivated. In Nigeria, however, defections are largely opportunistic, transactional, and driven by strategic political calculations (Arowolo, 2022; Uwakina, 2025). Under Section 68 (1) (g) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), defections are only lawful when there is a division in the party that sponsored the elected member. In practice, this clause has been routinely manipulated. Politicians frequently cite vague internal disputes or manufactured factional crises as justifications for cross-carpeting. Judicial interpretations have also been inconsistent, enabling defectors to exploit legal ambiguities.

Between 2019 and 2025, Nigeria witnessed unprecedented defections at federal and state levels. A defining example is the mass defection of 27 Rivers State House of Assembly members in December 2023, followed by judicial controversies and prolonged legal battles over the legitimacy of their move. Similarly, 24 of AkwaIbom's 26 lawmakers defected to the APC in 2025, reshaping the state's political structure overnight. In this period, defection also became linked with corruption allegations. Numerous high-profile politicians under EFCC investigation, such as Ifeanyi Okowa, Peter Nwaoboshi, Stella Oduah, Orji UzorKalua, and David Umahi defected to the ruling party shortly before their cases

went quiet (Sahara Reporters, 2025; FIJ, 2024). This has reinforced public perceptions of defection as a political sanctuary rather than a democratic choice. Thus, within the Nigerian context, party defection has evolved into a major structural force shaping institutional balance and democratic outcomes.

### **Democratic Stability**

Democratic stability, defined as the capacity of a political system to maintain predictability, institutional balance, accountable governance, and citizen trust over time (Muse, 2023), relies on strong party systems, predictable political competition, independent oversight institutions, electoral integrity, and an effective opposition. Partisan defections, however, undermine these foundations by abruptly altering legislative majorities, destabilising checks and balances, and creating policy uncertainty as shifting alliances disrupt governance. They weaken opposition parties, reducing democratic accountability, while judicial and procedural inconsistencies—manifested in contradictory court rulings and INEC decisions—further erode institutional reliability. Defections also contribute to voter disillusionment, as elected officials abandon the platforms on which the electorate cast their votes. Between 2019 and 2025, repeated cycles of partisan defection in Nigeria produced unstable legislative arrangements, hollowed out political pluralism, and intensified the centralisation of political power, collectively weakening the country's democratic stability.

### **Dominant-Party Politics**

Dominant party politics refers to a political environment where one party consistently secures disproportionate power across electoral cycles, not necessarily through fair competition, but through structural advantages, elite realignment, and institutional capture (Agboga, 2023; PLAC, 2025). In Nigeria, partisan defections significantly accelerated the drift toward dominant-party politics between 2019 and 2025. Through coordinated defections, the APC increased its National Assembly majority from 235 seats in 2023 to 260 seats by mid-2025,

while the PDP fell from 154 seats to 92 (Kosisochukwu & Chinaza, 2025). Similar realignments occurred in state assemblies, with entire legislatures switching allegiances in Akwa Ibom, Delta, Edo, and Rivers States. Dominant-party systems tend to weaken democratic competition by undermining electoral checks, reducing policy diversity, marginalizing opposition voices/ enabling executive overreach, and weakening institutional resistance to corruption. Defections therefore functioned as strategic tools for consolidating ruling-party dominance rather than expressions of democratic choice.

### **Party Systems and Democratic Stability**

Democratic systems rely heavily on strong, predictable, and institutionalised party structures (Ake, 1995; Huntington, 1968). The more coherent and stable the party system, the more durable a democracy becomes, as institutionalised parties help structure political competition, sustain ideological representation, reduce elite fragmentation, foster accountability, and promote policy continuity. Conversely, weak party systems contribute to unstable governance, personality-driven politics, and ideological incoherence (Diamond, 2019). Nigeria's party system is widely classified as weakly institutionalised, characterised by fluid partisan identities, personalist politics, weak internal democracy, and rampant defections (Gyimah-Boadi, 2020; Omotola, 2021). Scholars such as Ulu and Okogbuo (2024) argue that Nigeria's contemporary parties function more as election platforms than ideological institutions, enabling elites to switch parties with minimal consequences and often for strategic advantage rather than principled reasons. Between 2019 and 2025, this fluidity intensified dramatically, and defection became not just a behavioural trend but a structural phenomenon that significantly shaped governance outcomes.

### **Defection as a Democratic Distortion**

Scholarly perspectives generally agree that uncontrolled party defection distorts democratic processes in multiple ways. One major concern is mandate distortion, as elected officials who defect without consulting the electorate violate the principle of mandate fidelity (Okechukwu, 2021); voters make choices based on party platforms and ideological orientations, yet defection transfers votes meant for one party into parliamentary strength for another, thereby undermining democratic representation. Another distortion arises from the collapse of legislative balance, as noted by Badejo et al. (2016) and Adegbami and Uche (2023), who show that defections can abruptly shift majorities and weaken checks on the executive, especially in systems where ruling parties depend heavily on legislative loyalty. Defections also significantly weaken opposition parties, which are essential for democratic health; as Ojo and Olaiya (2019) explain, the loss of high-value legislators, governors, and party structures hollow out opposition capacity, a trend clearly illustrated by the PDP's declining influence between 2019 and 2025. Judicial ambiguity further compounds these problems, as Nigeria's vague constitutional provisions have led to inconsistent court rulings that, according to Jonathan (2020), create political uncertainty and embolden opportunistic defectors. Additionally, defections incentivise political survival over ideology, with studies such as Uwakina (2025) showing that politicians often cross party lines for personal ambition, protection from prosecution, or enhanced relevance rather than for principled or ideological reasons. Collectively, these scholarly positions align with Nigeria's empirical reality between 2019 and 2025, where defection increasingly served as a strategy for personal advancement rather than a genuine democratic choice.

### **Defection and Anti-Corruption Politics**

A growing body of literature links partisan defection to corruption dynamics in emerging democracies (Hellman, 2011; Fjelde & De Soysa, 2018), arguing that ruling parties often wield influence over prosecution,

elites defect to gain protection, anti-corruption institutions become politicised, and legal enforcement turns selective. In the Nigerian context, several studies highlight the “defection-for-protection” hypothesis, with Ojo (2022), Sahara Reporters (2025), and FIJ (2024) documenting cases in which politicians under investigation defected to the ruling APC and subsequently experienced notable relief from legal pressure. High-profile examples include Ifeanyi Okowa, David Umahi, Orji Uzor Kalu, Peter Nwaoboshi, Stella Oduah, and Musiliu Obanikoro, whose trajectories reinforce public distrust by suggesting that partisan alignment shapes legal vulnerability. The literature therefore concludes that defections compromise the independence of anti-corruption agencies and further entrench elite impunity.

### **Comparative Perspectives: Defection in Other Democracies**

To contextualise Nigeria’s experience, it is useful to examine defection patterns in other democracies. India offers the closest parallel, as its pre-1985 era was characterised by the “Aaya Ram Gaya Ram” phenomenon in which legislators routinely switched parties for cabinet positions, prompting the adoption of the Anti-Defection Law in 1985; however, scholars such as Mehta (2021) note that the law is still exploited through mass defections engineered to bypass legal sanctions, enabling the ruling BJP to expand dominance across state assemblies, a pattern that closely mirrors Nigeria’s experience between 2019 and 2025 when orchestrated mass defections enhanced APC dominance. Kenya experienced similar instability following the return to multiparty politics, as frequent defections weakened party coherence and encouraged alliances of convenience (Wanyande, 2019), leading to the adoption of anti-defection measures whose enforcement remains inconsistent. South Africa provides another important example, having abolished parliamentary “floor crossing” in 2009 after concluding that defections destabilised the legislature, encouraged internal sabotage, and undermined party mandates (De Vos, 2010); this demonstrates that democracies can reverse defection privileges when they threaten

institutional balance. In contrast, Ghana records far fewer defections, largely due to stronger party structures and internal discipline (Gyimah-Boadi, 2020), illustrating the stabilising effect of party institutionalisation. Collectively, these comparative cases show that while Nigeria is not unique, excessive defection without effective regulation is strongly correlated with democratic instability.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts a multi-theoretical approach to examine the effects of partisan defection on Nigeria's democratic system. Because defection in Nigeria is driven by a combination of institutional, behavioural, structural, and strategic factors, no single theory sufficiently explains its complexity. The framework therefore integrates four major theoretical perspectives: Rational Choice Theory, Patron-Clientelism Theory, Institutional Theory, and Dominant-Party System Theory. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive analytical lens for understanding why defections occur and how they shape Nigeria's democratic landscape.

Rational Choice Theory, advanced by scholars such as Anthony Downs (1957) and Buchanan and Tullock (1962), posits that political actors behave as rational individuals who make decisions based on calculated assessments of costs and benefits. Under this framework, politicians are expected to defect when doing so increases their prospects for electoral survival, political relevance, and career advancement, access to state resources, or protection from legal and disciplinary threats. Nigeria's experience between 2019 and 2025 strongly reflects these assumptions, as many defections occurred immediately before party primaries, election cycles, or corruption prosecutions. PDP lawmakers, for example, defected to the APC ahead of the 2023 elections to benefit from incumbency advantages, while several high-profile politicians facing EFCC investigations crossed to the ruling party to minimise legal risks. Entire state assemblies in Rivers, AkwaIbom, and Cross

River also defected to align with the federal centre and ensure continued political relevance. These patterns demonstrate that defections were strategic calculations consistent with Rational Choice Theory.

Patron-Clientelism Theory, advanced by Richard Joseph (1987) and Bratton and van de Walle (1997), views politics in many African states as a system of personalised exchanges in which political loyalty is traded for access to material rewards, protection, and future opportunities. In this framework, patrons—such as presidents, governors, and powerful political elites—distribute benefits, while clients, including lawmakers and party structures, reciprocate with political loyalty. Defection becomes a mechanism for renegotiating patronage alignments. This dynamic was evident in Nigeria between 2019 and 2025, as many defections were driven by promises of federal appointments, access to state resources, or campaign support. Governors in Cross River, Ebonyi, and Zamfara defected with large blocks of supporters, signalling patron-led realignments, while political godfathers in states such as Rivers, Oyo, and Kano directed the movements of subordinate politicians. In many cases, defections followed negotiations tied directly to political rewards, confirming that Nigeria's political order remained deeply embedded in patronage logic rather than ideological commitments.

Institutional Theory, articulated by Douglas North (1990) and W. Richard Scott (2014), argues that political behaviour is shaped by formal and informal rules, norms, values, and enforcement mechanisms. When institutions are weak or inconsistent, political opportunism thrives. Nigeria's constitutional and institutional arrangements between 2019 and 2025 exemplify this scenario. Section 68(1)(g) of the Constitution, which regulates defections, is ambiguous and easily manipulated, while INEC lacks the power to sanction illegal defectors. Judicial inconsistency—most evident in contrasting rulings in the Cross River and Rivers defection cases—further fuels uncertainty. Weak

internal party democracy exacerbates factional crises, pushing politicians to defect when their interests are threatened. Selective enforcement by anti-corruption institutions also encourages defection as a strategy for protection. These institutional weaknesses collectively created fertile ground for the massive defection wave witnessed during this period.

Dominant-Party System Theory, associated with T.J. Pempel (1990) and Greene (2007), explains political systems in which one party maintains overwhelming power over extended periods by leveraging structural advantages, elite co-optation, and institutional control. Defections often serve as key instruments for consolidating such dominance. Nigeria's political landscape from 2019 to 2025 aligns strongly with dominant-party dynamics. The APC expanded its representation in the National Assembly from 235 seats in 2023 to 260 seats by 2025, largely through defections. Many governorship and legislative victories were complemented by post-election defections that bolstered APC control. Politicians defected to avoid marginalisation, while opposition parties, including the PDP, LP, and NNPP, were hollowed out by internal crises and elite exits. Defections therefore acted both as a cause and an effect of the APC's emerging dominance during this period.

Taken together, these four theories provide a comprehensive framework for analysing partisan defection in Nigeria. Rational Choice Theory explains why politicians defect for career gains; Patron-Clientelism Theory clarifies why defections cluster around powerful patrons and resource hubs; Institutional Theory accounts for the frequency of defections in an environment where weak institutions fail to enforce discipline; and Dominant-Party Theory shows how defections transform the party landscape, weaken the opposition, and push the system toward one-party dominance. Collectively, the theories offer a robust explanation of both the motivations behind defection and its broader impact on Nigeria's democratic system between 2019 and 2025.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative documentary case study design to analyse party defections in Nigeria and their implications for democratic stability from 2019 to the present. Data were drawn from a wide range of publicly available sources, including National Assembly Hansards, order papers, voting records, committee reports, and official publications of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Judicial decisions of the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court on defection and constitutional interpretation were reviewed alongside political party constitutions, disciplinary decisions, and official releases from major parties (APC, PDP, LP, NNPP). Analytical reports from reputable media archives and peer-reviewed academic literature, provided further theoretical grounding and cross-verification. The study applied content analysis to identify recurring themes, patterns, and institutional consequences of defections, including leadership changes, committee reassignments, coalition shifts, and constitutional debates. The document selection covered materials produced between January 1, 2019, and early 2025, focusing only on those that directly reported, adjudicated, or analysed a defection and its institutional outcomes. To ensure validity, sources were assessed for credibility of authorship, proximity to events, corroboration by at least one independent source, and internal consistency. Unverifiable accounts, duplicate reports, anonymous commentaries, and purely opinion-based materials without factual grounding were excluded.

### **Presentation and Analysis of Defections (2019–2025)**

Between 2019 and 2025, defections reshaped Nigeria's political order at three levels: national, state, and executive. The tables below illustrated further

**Table 1: Senate Defections (2019–2025)**

Senator	State/Constituency	Original Party	New Party	Year
Peter Nwaoboshi	Delta North	PDP	APC	2021
Stella Oduah	Anambra North	PDP	APC	2023
Elisha Abbo	Adamawa North	PDP	APC	2020
Orji UzorKalu	Abia South	APC	APC (legal context)	2019–2023
Jimoh Ibrahim	Ondo South	PDP	APC	2023
Ibrahim Shekarau	Kano Central	APC → NNPP → PDP → APC	Multi ple	2022–2024
David Umahi	Ebonyi South	PDP	APC	2020

Source: researcher computation from Kosisochukwu&Chinaza (2025)& Premium Times (2025)

According to the table above, between 2019 and 2025, defections in the Nigerian Senate were driven primarily by a combination of personal ambition, strategic alignment with the ruling party, and efforts to evade legal scrutiny. Several senators, including Peter Nwaoboshi, Stella Oduah, and David Umahi, switched parties while facing EFCC investigations, suggesting that defections were sometimes employed as a mechanism to mitigate the consequences of corruption probes. Others, like Elisha Abbo, moved following internal party disputes, reflecting opportunistic attempts to preserve political relevance and maintain influence within the legislative process. The cumulative effect of these defections was the rapid consolidation of an APC majority in the Senate, which weakened the opposition’s capacity to exercise oversight and eroded public confidence in both legislative independence and anti-corruption institutions. Frequent party switching also destabilized the

Senate’s internal cohesion, undermining predictability in legislative decision-making and eroding trust in representative democracy.

**Table 2: House of Representatives Defections (2019–2025)**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Number of Defectors</b>	<b>States</b>	<b>Parties Involved</b>
Dec 2020 – Feb 2021	15+	Nationwide	PDP → APC
2022–2023	Multiple	Nationwide	LP, NNPP, SDP → APC
May 2025	6	Delta State	PDP → APC

Source: researcher computation from Kosisochukwu & Chinaza (2025)& Premium Times (2025)

In the House of Representatives, defections were particularly widespread, often occurring immediately before or after party primaries. Many lawmakers defected after losing nominations, seeking alternative platforms to secure re-election, federal appointments, or access to state resources. Some defections were coordinated in blocs, demonstrating a collective strategy to align with dominant political power. These movements hollowed out opposition parties such as the PDP, LP, and NNPP, reducing their capacity to challenge the ruling party or provide meaningful legislative scrutiny. The result was an environment in which electoral outcomes were increasingly overshadowed by post-election realignments, reinforcing APC dominance and weakening multi-party competitiveness, ultimately undermining the principle of representative democracy.

**Table 3: Governorship-Level Defections (2019–2025)**

<b>Governor</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Original Party</b>	<b>New Party</b>	<b>Year</b>
David Umahi	Ebonyi	PDP	APC	2020
Ben Ayade	Cross River	PDP	APC	2021
Bello Matawalle	Zamfara	PDP	APC	2021
Mai Mala Buni	Yobe	APC	APC	2020–2023

Source: researcher computation from Kosisochukwu & Chinaza (2025)& Premium Times (2025)

Governorship-level defections had even broader implications. Governors such as David Umahi, Ben Ayade, and Bello Matawalle not only switched parties themselves but also triggered mass defections among state lawmakers, commissioners, and party executives. These shifts fundamentally altered state legislative majorities, dismantled opposition structures, and strengthened the ruling party’s control over both state and national politics. Such defections demonstrated how individual strategic choices could cascade into systemic transformations, often subordinating electoral legitimacy to party allegiance and personal political advantage.

**Table 4: Selected State Assembly Defections (2019–2025)**

<b>State</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Defectors</b>	<b>Party Movement</b>
Rivers	2023–2024	27	PDP → APC
Cross River	2021	18/25	PDP → APC
Zamfara	2019–2021	Large bloc	PDP → APC
AkwaIbom	2025	24/26	PDP → APC
Delta	2024–2025	Several	PDP → APC
Kano, Edo, Plateau, Imo	2019–2025	Multiple	Various → APC

Source: researcher computation from Kosisochukwu&Chinaza (2025)& Premium Times (2025)

At the state assembly level, large-scale defections, particularly in Rivers, Cross River, AkwaIbom, and Zamfara, were frequently driven by internal party crises, factional disputes, and alignment with dominant national power. In Rivers State, for instance, the defection of 27 lawmakers in 2023 precipitated a constitutional crisis, paralyzing governance and undermining public trust in state institutions. Across these cases, the systematic weakening of opposition, coupled with contradictory court rulings and institutional ambiguity, compromised the integrity of state legislatures and exposed significant gaps in Nigeria's democratic architecture.

Overall, the motives underlying these defections—including personal ambition, protection from corruption investigations, internal party crises, alignment with ruling power, and pre-election survival strategies highlight a political culture in which individual and party advantage often supersedes democratic principles. The combined effect was the entrenchment of APC dominance, erosion of internal party democracy, diminished oversight capacity, and a growing perception among citizens that political loyalty and legal accountability could be negotiated rather than institutionally enforced.

### **Effects of Defection on Nigeria's Democratic System (2019–2025)**

Between 2019 and 2025, the widespread wave of partisan defections in Nigeria had profound and far-reaching consequences for the country's democratic system. One of the most evident effects was the weakening of the opposition. Major parties such as the PDP, Labour Party (LP), and NNPP lost key legislators, governors, and party executives, effectively crippling their legislative minorities and rendering them incapable of mounting effective challenges to the ruling APC. For instance, the mass defection of 27 PDP lawmakers in Rivers State in 2023 not only shifted the state assembly majority but also created internal factional crises that left the opposition disorganized and politically impotent (INEC, 2024; Vanguard, 2024). This trend

contributed to the gradual drift toward a dominant-party system, in which political competition became increasingly unbalanced.

Defections also eroded legislative oversight, as parliaments packed with ruling-party loyalists struggled to hold the executive accountable. In both the National Assembly and various state legislatures, legislators who defected often aligned with governors or the federal executive, thereby undermining the independence of parliamentary scrutiny. The realignment of Ebonyi, Cross River, and Zamfara state assemblies following gubernatorial defections exemplifies how legislative oversight was weakened, allowing executives to consolidate power with minimal challenge (Udejah, 2023; Sahara Reporters, 2022).

Electoral mandates were similarly distorted. Citizens elect candidates based on party platforms, policy proposals, and ideological alignment; defections effectively betrayed these mandates, as legislators switched parties post-election without voter consent. The defection of multiple Delta State House members in May 2025 illustrates how electoral outcomes could be transformed within a single day, undermining the principle of representative democracy (Afrobarometer, 2024). The resulting increase in executive dominance further weakened checks and balances, as both state and federal executive's leveraged legislative realignments to push through policy agendas with minimal resistance.

Another critical effect was the politicisation of anti-corruption efforts. Several high-profile defectors, including senators facing EFCC investigations, appeared to benefit from implicit immunity after joining the ruling party, creating the perception that defection was a tool for legal protection. This phenomenon eroded public trust in institutions such as the EFCC and ICPC, reinforcing a broader culture of political impunity (Obi, 2023). Policy instability also emerged as a consequence, with constant realignments disrupting budget processes, appointments, and development planning across multiple states, delaying governance

initiatives and complicating national coordination (Premium Times, 2023).

Judicial inconsistency further exacerbated the democratic strain. Contradictory rulings in defection cases, such as those in Cross River and Rivers States—created legal ambiguity that politicians exploited to retain seats illegally, undermining the rule of law. Collectively, these developments fostered public disillusionment, as citizens increasingly perceived politicians as opportunistic and unprincipled, eroding trust in parties, legislatures, and the broader political system (Afrobarometer, 2024). In summary, the 2019–2025 defection wave reshaped power dynamics, hollowed out opposition structures, reduced accountability, empowered political opportunism, and posed one of the most significant challenges to Nigeria’s democratic stability since the advent of the Fourth Republic in 1999.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study reveal that partisan defections between 2019 and 2025 significantly reshaped Nigeria’s democratic landscape, undermined institutional balance, and contributed to a progressive drift toward a dominant-party political order. These outcomes are best understood through the study’s theoretical framework, which combines Rational Choice Theory, Patron-Clientelism Theory, Institutional Theory, and Dominant-Party System Theory. Collectively, the evidence demonstrates that defections were not random occurrences but strategic, calculated manoeuvres reflecting broader systemic and individual incentives.

Firstly, the patterns observed strongly support Rational Choice Theory. Politicians across both federal and state levels defected when doing so promised increased access to resources, electoral security, or protection from political vulnerability. Lawmakers often switched parties before primaries to secure nomination tickets unavailable in their original

parties, while entire state assemblies realigned after recognising the influence of the federal government on political fortunes. High-profile politicians facing EFCC investigations, such as Peter Nwaoboshi, Stella Oduah, and David Umahi, defected to the ruling APC and subsequently experienced diminished prosecutorial pressure. These moves were clearly not principled or ideological but calculated strategies to maximise personal advantage, reinforcing scholarly arguments that Nigerian political parties function primarily as career platforms rather than ideologically coherent entities. The rationalisation of defection as a normal political strategy erodes ethical norms and creates confusion among voters regarding the meaning of party platforms and electoral mandates.

The study further confirms the relevance of Patron-Clientelism Theory, highlighting how resource-based networks drive political realignment. Governors' defections—including those of David Umahi in Ebonyi, Ben Ayade in Cross River, and Bello Matawalle in Zamfara—were often accompanied by mass defections of local government chairmen, commissioners, and lawmakers, demonstrating the cascading effect of elite decisions. Political godfathers, particularly in Rivers, Kano, Lagos, and Oyo States, orchestrated structured movements of party loyalists, aligning state-level actors with the dominant federal patron. Defections were frequently tied to anticipated benefits such as ministerial appointments, campaign financing, or strategic alliances. This dynamic illustrates that Nigerian democracy is increasingly resource-driven, where loyalty follows access to material and political rewards rather than ideological commitment or citizen representation.

Institutional weaknesses and legal ambiguities also enabled widespread defections, supporting Institutional Theory. Section 68(1)(g) of the 1999 Constitution, which governs defections, is ambiguous and easily exploited. Courts issued contradictory judgments in Rivers, Zamfara, Cross River, Ebonyi, and Kano, while INEC lacked the enforcement power to declare seats vacant without judicial intervention. Political

parties themselves were often complicit, facilitating defections for strategic gains, and anti-corruption agencies acted inconsistently, reinforcing perceptions of bias. Consequently, defections occurred with minimal risk of sanction, demonstrating that institutional fragility creates fertile ground for political opportunism and undermines the rule of law.

The study also confirms the explanatory power of Dominant-Party System Theory. Through strategic cultivation of defections, the APC consolidated its control, increasing its National Assembly strength from 235 seats in 2023 to 260 seats in 2025, while the PDP lost 62 seats during the same period. Opposition parties, including the LP and NNPP, experienced internal fragmentation that precipitated further defections. Entire state assemblies, such as those in Rivers, AkwaIbom, Cross River, and parts of Delta, shifted in blocs, underscoring how defections were instrumental in reinforcing APC dominance. This consolidation diminishes competitive democracy and risks pushing Nigeria toward a de facto dominant-party system if left unregulated.

Another critical finding is that defections undermined electoral mandates and public trust. Voters elect representatives based on party affiliation, yet defections routinely shifted those mandates to parties initially rejected by the electorate. This instability renders legislative composition unpredictable and dependent on elite bargaining, rather than the electorate's will. Afrobarometer (2024) recorded rising public distrust in political institutions during this period, reflecting growing perceptions of opportunism and betrayal among political elites. Defections also intensified internal party conflicts. Rather than leaving parties due to crises, defectors often escalated factionalism, as observed in the PDP between 2021 and 2023, the post-2023 collapse of the LP, and factional disputes within the NNPP in Kano. Such dynamics perpetuate instability, complicating efforts to institutionalise democratic norms within parties.

State governance was directly destabilised by mass defections. In Rivers State, competing assemblies paralyzed governance between 2023

and 2024. AkwaIbom experienced a sudden shift of 24 out of 26 lawmakers in 2025, disrupting policy continuity. Zamfara's political fragmentation between 2019 and 2021 undermined state-level authority, while Cross River's opposition ceased functioning effectively following gubernatorial defections in 2021. These examples demonstrate that defections extend beyond party loyalty, destabilising state institutions and obstructing governance processes.

Finally, the study highlights how defection functioned as a tool for immunity and political protection. Politicians facing legal scrutiny—including Ifeanyi Okowa, Stella Oduah, Peter Nwaoboshi, Musiliu Obanikoro, David Umahi, and Orji UzorKalu—often defected to the ruling party, after which many cases stalled or lost momentum. This correlation reinforces public suspicion that defections serve as bargaining mechanisms to influence prosecutorial discretion, undermining the credibility of anti-corruption institutions and entrenching elite impunity.

In sum, the findings demonstrate that partisan defections between 2019 and 2025 reshaped Nigeria's democratic landscape by enabling political survival strategies, consolidating ruling-party dominance, weakening opposition, destabilising state governance, and eroding public trust. These patterns illuminate the complex interplay between individual ambition, patronage networks, institutional weaknesses, and systemic political incentives, offering critical insights into the vulnerabilities of Nigeria's democratic system.

## **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that partisan defections in Nigeria between 2019 and 2025 had profound consequences for the country's democratic system, reshaping political power structures, weakening institutional accountability, and reinforcing a dominant-party trajectory. The analysis shows that defections were predominantly strategic, motivated by personal ambition, alignment with ruling-party power, protection from legal scrutiny, and pursuit of material or political rewards. These

behaviours are consistent with Rational Choice and Patron-Clientelism theories, highlighting that Nigerian political actors often prioritise self-interest and resource access over ideological commitment or citizen representation.

Institutional weaknesses, particularly ambiguities in Section 68(1)(g) of the Constitution and inconsistent judicial rulings, provided fertile ground for these defections, as predicted by Institutional Theory. The resulting legal and procedural gaps allowed legislators and governors to exploit loopholes, undermining accountability mechanisms and eroding the rule of law. Moreover, the consolidation of power by the APC, facilitated by mass defections at both national and state levels, confirms the relevance of Dominant-Party System Theory, revealing a political landscape in which opposition parties were hollowed out and competitive democracy was significantly weakened.

The democratic implications are substantial. Electoral mandates were distorted, public trust in institutions declined, legislative oversight was diminished, and state governance was destabilised in multiple cases, including Rivers, AkwaIbom, and Zamfara States. Defections also created a perception of immunity from anti-corruption prosecution, further eroding confidence in Nigeria's political and legal institutions. Overall, the findings indicate that defections during this period were not isolated acts of political expedience but part of a systemic pattern that threatens the integrity, predictability, and accountability of Nigeria's democratic system.

### **Recommendations**

To strengthen Nigeria's democratic resilience and mitigate the destabilising effects of partisan defections, several measures are recommended. First, legal and institutional reforms are necessary to clarify and enforce anti-defection provisions. Section 68(1)(g) should be reviewed to reduce ambiguity, and INEC's powers should be

strengthened to sanction illegal defections promptly without relying solely on judicial intervention. Courts should be encouraged to adopt consistent interpretations to prevent conflicting rulings that politicians can exploit.

Second, political parties must institutionalise internal democracy, ensuring transparent nomination processes and reducing elite manipulation. Strengthening internal party mechanisms will decrease incentives for opportunistic defections and foster ideological coherence. Third, anti-corruption institutions, including the EFCC and ICPC, should be insulated from political influence, ensuring that prosecutions are conducted impartially and are not circumvented through party realignment.

Fourth, the establishment of mechanisms to preserve electoral mandates is crucial. Legal frameworks could require legislators who defect to seek fresh mandates through by-elections, thereby reinforcing voter consent and accountability. Fifth, civil society, media, and voter education programmes should be expanded to increase public awareness of the consequences of defections and to pressure political actors to prioritise democratic norms over opportunism.

Finally, a broader cultural shift is needed in Nigerian politics, moving away from resource-based loyalty and towards issue- and policy-based political engagement. Promoting transparency, ethical governance, and political accountability will help ensure that defections no longer serve as instruments for personal gain or impunity but are regulated in a manner that protects the integrity of the democratic system. Collectively, these measures can restore balance, reinforce accountability, and strengthen multi-party competitiveness in Nigeria's democracy.

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**Role of Public Relations in Educational Leadership in Nigerian  
Tertiary Institutions: Challenges and Prospects**

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**Abstract**

Public relations is, and has become an invaluable tool in the management of every human organization including educational institutions. Every educational leader therefore, cannot afford to toy with it, especially in the face of incessant crises in Nigeria's educational institutions, advent of new media, growing competition, and dearth of funding among other challenges. This article seeks to educate educational leaders on the veritable role that public relations could play in the management of their academic communities, through the use of extant and innovative persuasive tools. The excellence theory and the two-way symmetric model underpins this study. The discourse is theoretically based and the method is approached from the descriptive and analytical perspectives.

This paper recommends amongst others, the need to adopt a more purposeful, innovative and digital components of the PR communications mix in the management of educational institutions, in order to foster the much needed mutual understanding among stakeholders in the Nigeria's educational system.

**Keywords:** *Public Relations, Educational Leadership, Innovation*

**Introduction**

Public relations, an adjunct of mass communication means different thing to different people, while some people think it simply means bribery or “*Kola*” in local parlance, some other people liken PR to nicety or friendliness to people. However, there are definitions that are given by some scholars and experts which explicitly explained the nitty-gritty of public relations to anyone that come in contact with it. John Marston (1973) defined public relations as “the top management function which evaluates public attitude, identifies the policies of procedures of an organization with the public interest, and executes a programme of action to earn public understanding and acceptance”.

On his part, Danny Moss (1990) defines public relations as:

- (a) a part of every manager’s portfolio of responsibility;
- (b) a means of understanding and influencing the perceptions held of an organization.
- (c) a strategic counseling function
- (d) a potentially valuable and cost effective marketing support function;
- (e) a means of monitoring and managing internal communications;
- (f) an issues management function;
- (g) an effective crisis management function;

In essence, he says public relations is;

- (h) reputation management, reinforcing reputations, enhancing reputation and combating damage to reputation.

He explains that reputation is made up of everything that is known, understood, believed, rumoured, thought, perceived and reported by those concerned in anyway with an organization. Similarly, Rex Harlow cited in Ajala, V.O (2005) found 472 definitions of public relations after examining books, journals and magazines on public relations and asking 83 public relations leaders for their definition of public relations. Harlow then synthesized these to arrive at the following definition:

Public relations is the distinctive management function which helps to establish and maintain lines of communication, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues, helps management to keep informed on and responsible to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management to keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends;; and uses research and sound ethical communication technique as its principal tools.

In 1978, however, several PR practitioners from different countries of the world met in Mexico and came out with what has been regarded as the most modern and acceptable definition of public relations. The definition, known as the 1978 Mexican Statement states:

Public relations is the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization's leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which serve both the organization and publics' interest.

Similarly, in the words of Ajayi B.O (1997:5) since the objectives of public relations is to achieve and maintain maximum understanding between the organization and the individuals groups of people with whom that organization makes contact, its definition implies two-way communication; thoughtful and strategic analysis, planning and execution. The public relations philosophy is to act as bridge builders and mediators; incorporate relations through evaluation and interpretation of situation and attitude internally and externally before counselling the management.

He said that is why the British Institute of Public Relations(BIPR) defines the practice as “the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics (pg.5).

The most vital words and their meanings which the above definition contains according to Balan, K.R (2010) are, deliberate because nothing happen by accident in PR as objectives are created, planned as PR is always in control of what is being done, nothing is left to chance; sustained because PR is always trying to implement a thought or an idea that will remain with the person at whom it has been aimed and the pressure must therefore be maintained. Understanding, because of the difficulty in bridging the awful gap in any process of communication between what the ‘sender’ means and what the ‘receiver’ thinks he means as they are not necessarily the same; organization because no man can work in a vacuum, everybody works for somebody and it is the job of PR to see that the organization is understood and appreciated; publics because the organization for which the public relations practitioner works wants to be understood and appreciated by the people around it, who affect what it does or are affected by what it does.

Nkwocha, J (1999) isolate from different definitions, some basic elements of public relations which he calls “the eight self-evident truths”:

1. Public relations is a top management activity. It involves planning, organizing, directing and controlling the resources of an organization to achieve corporate objectives.
2. Public relations revolves around building and sustaining a good image, reputation and integrity. An organization or individual must work hard to deserve such a good name.
3. Public relations is a profession, not just an occupation, vocation or trade.

4. Public relations involves deliberate, systematic, planned and sustained programmes of action. The programmes are not carried out in a sporadic or fire-brigade manner.
5. Public relations involves two-way communication between an organization or individual and its publics (or target audience). The publics include employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers, the media, government, the community, opinion leaders etc.
6. Public relations is aimed at winning, securing, earning, retaining and maintaining the mutual understanding, cooperation, respect, goodwill, support, acceptance, friendship and loyalty of the publics based on high performance, quality product and service, transparency, truth, honesty, knowledge, full information and public interest.
7. For public relations to be trusted and respected it must be credible. That is why Frank Jefkins (1985) insists that public relations must never be confused with propaganda which is principally based on falsehood, half-truth, intimidation, blackmail, misinformation and disinformation.
8. Public relations is both art and social science. It is an art because it involves decision making and choice from alternatives which are mainly based on personal judgment. It is also a social science because it revolves around fundamental truth of general validity (an outcome of scientific enquiry) which help to predict future courses of action.

Perhaps, the most important of all the words in the definition of public relation is ‘understanding, without which public relations cannot achieve its objectives. It can be deducted thus from the aforementioned definitions that the words public relations is used in at least three senses. The relationship with those who constitute an organization’s publics or constituents, the ways and means to achieve favorable relationship. Thus, the one term is used to label both ‘means’ and ‘ends’ to name a

condition and to express the conduct of actions related to that condition (Baran, K.R pg 18).

As could be discerned from the plethora of definitions earlier given, public relations work in all spheres of human endeavours such as business, industry, non-commercial, non-profit as well as educational organizations.

Therefore, public relations has enormous tasks to render in the area of education and that is why it is imperative for educational leaders to understand the process of public relations in their efforts towards enlisting and grinding the talents and energies of teachers, pupils and parents/other stakeholders with a view to achieving common educational aims.

However, educational leadership should recognize the fact that education in the digital age involves the development of skills derived from creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration. In other words, what education leaders need now is innovative leadership, Horth, D.M and Buchner, D (n.d) defines innovative leadership as the use of innovative thinking and the leadership that support it is the key to finding what is new, what's better and what's next.

Key explained that education leaders need it for themselves as they learn to operate in challenging, unpredictable circumstances. They also need to create a climate for innovation within organizations. Innovative system, tools and thinking are essential for organizations' health and future viability and public relations is not left out with regard to the promotion of innovative activities which are critical to its continued relevance in organizations. In fact, PR is said to be central to defining an organization's leadership strategy.

### **The Problem**

Generally, there seems to be greater appreciation of public relations' contribution to effective management in commercial, industrial and

government organizations, but such could not be said of our educational institutions as there is a dearth of studies especially at the tertiary level of education. Therein lies the challenge that this paper seeks to proffer solutions to; in order to stem the disturbing and disruptive tide of conflicts, crises and other emerging technology-induced problems militating against smooth academic work flow; and ensure mutual relationship among stakeholders in educational institutions.

This is inline also with the fact that educational leadership in many of our institutions of higher learning seems to have lose sight of the complex nature of the educational organizations they are managing and the attendance demands of different stakeholders in and outside the four walls of such academic environment.

The problem statement of this paper could best be situated in the analysis given by Folarin, B (1998) on the complex nature of higher institution especially a university and the crucial role that public relations could play not only to promote the institutions but also to avoid and or settle conflicts:

A higher institution of learning such as a university, polytechnic or College of Education may be put into the category of organizations usually classified as “complex organizations”. As a matter of fact, there must be very few comparable organizations which can be ascribed greater complexity than a full- fledged higher institution of learning, especially a university. And such few comparable organizations are probably spared most of the intractable elements in the makeup of a university scarcely any other civil organization harbour such as large concentration of social-non-conformists as a university does, whether you are thinking of students, or of “teaching and non-teaching academic staff”. And scarcely any other organization revels as much on so many freedoms. The connection between such a welter of freedoms and public relations is that no group of people is more difficult to manage than one whose members cherish their freedoms as much as members

of a higher institution of learning do. And public relations, we must remember is at its best management functions.

Also, strategic in this problem statement is the seeming over reliance on traditional public relations tools and neglect of innovative tactics/strategies that could make up for the drawbacks that often arises in the use of conventional tools by many educational leaders in the community.

Thus, there is need to synthesis these problems in tertiary education in order to afford educational leadership, the best PR communication mix; both conventional and digital tools that could help to manage efficiently and effectively, educational institutions, which is the thrust of this paper.

### **Research Objectives and Questions**

This study has three objectives namely to:

- (a) examine the role of public relations in tertiary educational leadership and innovation;
- (b) examine the work assignments of public relations in tertiary educational leadership and innovation;
- (c) Identify innovative thinking skills for public relations in tertiary educational leadership and innovation

This research therefore raises the following questions to guide the study:

1. What is the role of public relations in tertiary educational leadership and innovation?
2. What are the work assignments of public relations in tertiary educational leadership and innovation?
3. What are the innovative thinking skills for public relations in tertiary educational leadership and innovation?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Roles of Public Relations**

Public relations in Nigeria has become a strategic function as many global corporate organizations have full public relations departments or out-source the services to PR consultants. This is because PR is now recognized as a major tool in achieving socio-economic, political and strategic goals and objectives of organizations and individuals. The following are the roles that public relations play in an organization as identified by Folairn, B (1997):

- i. A counsellor- advising institutional leaders on policies and activities to ensure mutual understanding between the institution and its various publics and attracting goodwill from them.
- ii. An advocate/A lobbyist - explaining the institution's cause to the publics and eliciting from them, through professionally designed persuasive messages, cooperation or collaboration as the case may be.
- iii. An image-maker- seeking to preserve or revive a good corporate (institutional) image through expertly conceived and designed corporate identify symbols through appropriate corporate social responsibility activities and through issues management carried out along professional lines.
- iv. A publicist- ensuring widespread dissemination of information about the institution's good deeds for which the institution deserves to get credit, but doing so in a refined manner.
- v. A decision maker: helping management to see its way through in taking decisions bordering on the institution's relations with the publics.
- vi. A researcher – regularly scanning the environment for material to use in forecasting the fortunes of the institution, in evaluating public relations campaigns already completed by the institution, in assessing the current public image of the institution and advising the institution accordingly.

- vii. A media relations expert- liaising effectively with the mass media to ensure adequate and favourable coverage of the institutions activities.
- viii. An issues manager – trouble-shooting within and outside the institution to identify, analyse and manage current issues that generate or could generate conflicts and might bludgeon into crises for the institution.
- ix. A conflict manager- professionally facilitating effective arbitration, mediation and resolution of extent conflicts within the institution
- x. A crisis manager-effectively getting the institution’s position across to the publics in times of unavoidable crises and working with all the facilities at his disposal to ensure an early cessation of each crises.

Similarly, Robinson, E (cited in Nkwocha, 1997) also provides an outline of PR functions. He stated that “public relations as an applied social and behavioural science is the function which:

- Measures, evaluates and interprets the attitudes of various relevant publics
- Assist management in defining objectives for increasing public understanding and acceptance of the organization’s products; plans, policies and personnel; and
- Develops, executes and evaluates a programme to earn public understanding and acceptance.

There are however, things public relations will not do. Balan, K.R (2010) note that:

A public relations man is not a magician who will white-wash a spotted image nor is he the good natural huffer who will keep inquisitive newspapers away from management. Nor is he a man who churns out goodwill for the organization year after year if the origin of the goodwill does not exist. A public relations man is fundamentally a

catalyst, upon his initiative, management takes action to obtain favourable consensus from its various publics (pp. 48-49).

It should be noted however that the roles that can be assigned and have been ascribed to public relations is inexhaustible as the most important thing is that there should be a clear-cut understanding of the implications of any assigned role on the organization. Put succinctly, public relations, just like one cannot carve out of dead wood, cannot create a magic wand that can revive a dead image, neither can it exist in an un-conducive and unfriendly organization environment, unless, of course, such organization create the enabling environment; and agreed to accept the prescriptions of public relations expert and most importantly, recognizes the fact that only with acceptance of the public can it stand.

### **The Public Relations Process**

Public relations like most professions has a laid down process that must be followed before set objectives are achieved in any organization. Specifically, public relations as a scientific management function is regarded as part of an organization's problem-solving process and planning is an essential part of problem-solving which is a continuous process and as emphasized by Center and Walsh (cited in Ajala, V.O, 2005). The process of responding to a PR problem is like any other decision making process by professionally trained managers.

According to Ajala, V.O (2005), there is rarely one absolutely right to a public relations problem but knowing how to proceed within a structure is however better than having to operate on impulse.

Although, a number of scholars/authors have clearly set out the basic steps to solve managerial problems with public relations input including "A typical public relations activity" of Sam Blade (1999), Seitel's (1987) 'A typical public relations campaign plan', Frank Jefkin's (1988) "Six points public relations planning model" and Cutlip, Center and Broom's (1985) steps which they called "the four step process".

But, according to Ajala, V.O (2005)' Seitel and Jefkin's campaign plan/planning model seem to be more detailed by identifying the components than the rest.

This plan entails:

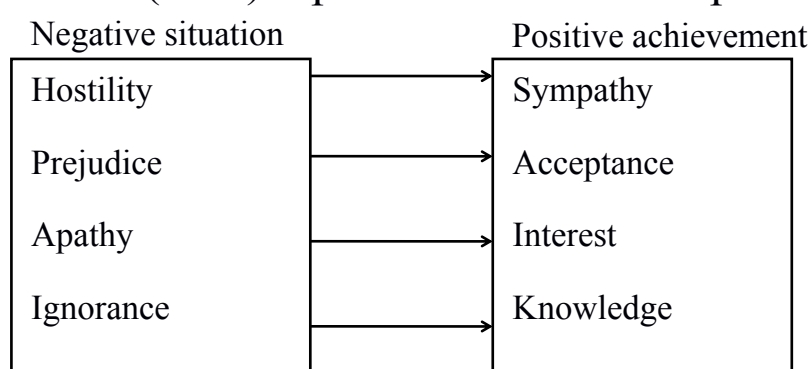
1. Background the problem
2. Programming
  - Identifying target audience
  - Considering research methods
  - Selecting specific messages and appeals
  - Considering communication vehicles
3. Activating the plan
4. Evaluating the campaign

It is quite imperative to note that a process must tie to an achievement of a set objectives; and in public relations, the public relations transfer process developed by Jefkins, F (1988) involves techniques of turning negative situation to positive achievement.

According Jefkins, F (1988: 9) "when the negative situation is converted into positive achievement – through knowledge, the result is the primary objective of public relations: understanding". Jefkins anticipate the use of public relations tools by practitioners to achieve sympathy where there is hostility, acceptance where there is prejudice, develop interest where there is apathy and communicate to achieve knowledge where there is ignorance.

By this transfer process, Ajala, V.O (2005: 23) believe "public relations" practice would have moved from mere recognition to maturity when practitioners increase the public's knowledge by providing information through media and by channelling feedback from publics to management.

Jefkins (1988) represents the transfer process in the following diagram.



Source: Frank Jefkins Public Relations, Oxford: Heinemann Professional Publishing, Ltd, (1988:9)

### **Scope of Public Relations**

Public relations by its nature required a wide range of skills and experience to deliver on whatever work assignment is given to it. However, the mix of work assignments differs from organization to organization; among positions and departments. These work assignments, according to Ajala, V.O (2005:19) could be any or all of the following, again, depending on the size of the organization:

- i. Writing- news releases, product information, speeches, newsletter, radio and television copy.
- ii. Editing- any communication directed at internal and external publics
- iii. Media relations- contacting news media and responding to media requests for information
- iv. Special events – arranging press conferences, anniversary celebrations, fundraising events, award programmes
- v. Speaking – appearing and speaking before groups of people and monitoring public relations programmes effectiveness, evaluating programme impact
- vi. Management – administering the operation of public relations functions.
- vii. Training – working with executives and other organizational figures to prepare them for television presentation/interviews, debate or other public appearance.
- viii. Image making – projecting a favourable corporate identify that is respected by internal and external public.

This researcher believe that a work assignment that deal with internet/multi-media skills should be added in line with the dictates of the digital age where innovations in communication technology have either improve/alterd the traditional work assignments of public relations professionals.

## **Public Relations in the service of Education**

Public relations has been a strategic tool for discerning leaders in different life endeavours. However, PR, to a large extent is moulded by the publics it respond to; and the types of organization it serves (Ajala, V.O, 2005), d,

Defining public relations practice within higher education system, Keen and Greenhall (1987) say that:

Public relations are affected in at least some way by everything that college does, every letter that goes out (or remains unanswered), each public speech, the appearance of buildings, the attitudes of porters, drivers and receptions the actions of principals, academics and administrators; they all add to or detract from the goodwill that exists between a college and one or more of its audience.

This definition of educational public relations is reflective of what PR in general entails as every staff of organization that embrace public relations, from the lowest worker to the highest executive perform one form of public relations function or the other; and failure to do so could result in public relations deficit for such organization.

According to Callahan, M (n.o), public relation is a strategic way for both public and private schools in which “schools can connect with their communities typically using the media to deliver message. She gave a number of reasons a school should consider developing a public relations strategy. These are:

- (a) An crises and solutions
- (b) Media relations
- (c) Connect with the community
- (d) Build budget-help in revamping lose of funding

Educational leaderships are expected to take ownership of these strategies to further the progressive cause of their institutions.

The acknowledged role played by PR in educational institutions is to manage the flow of both internal and external communication; manage their organizations' reputation with various groups including internal and external publics (Ojomo et al 2006). But today, the role of educational public relations is seen as much broader. Flatt (2002). Listed (20) roles for the contemporary PR specialist. These leadership roles emphasized a variety of skills; publicizing, advertising, marketing of existing and new product services, editing and knowing basic graphic design, conducting budget and building campaigns, PR in service for administrators and staff, relating effectively to adults and youths in community, problem solving situations, dealing with oral and with complaints and organizing and administering communication plans for school crises, keeping accurate distinct PR records, determining alternative futures amongst others.

However, there are areas of special focus for educational public relations especially in Nigeria where incessant crises and conflicts among stakeholders in education occur regularly. These special areas according to Folarin, B (1997) are issues management, conflict management and crises management. He described issue amongst others as a matter or an event that has potential or realized consequences for a public or the publics of an organization or institution. Folarin (1997:45) states that issues begets conflict and conflict begets crises. So in order to forestall or at least reduce the frequency and/or magnitude of crises in our higher institutions of learning, there is a need to allow issues management and conflict management to become routine aspects of PR practice in tertiary institutions.

Meanwhile, it is imperative at this juncture to determine the publics that are likely to be involved in conflict or crises in educational institutions

since that is actually the starting point of any public relations programme designed for the academic community.

These publics varies from secondary to higher institutions. In secondary schools, they include teachers/administration Staff, Pupils, Parents, Local Government Authority, Media, Personnel, Alumni, and State Government etc.; while the public of higher institutions include students, lecturers/administrative staff, alumni, research conduction, examination bodies such as WAEC, NECO, JAMB NUC, NBTE Ministry of Education amongst others.

Thus, a careful delineation of educational institution's publics should be made as the specific functions of PR will be determined by the public in focus. In other words, whether we are dealing with council relations, senate relations, student relations, employee relations, Alumni relations, media relations, parent relations, community relations, government relations, corporate relations amongst others.

### **Educational Leadership**

The logical question to ask at this point is what is leadership? It is by so doing, we can then appropriate education, which is just a professional calling, to the concept. Awodiya (2013) states that leadership can be defined from different perspectives; it may be looked at from situational traits, functional and styles perspectives. However, communicational scholars take a communication approach to defining leadership and from this approach, leadership is seen as 'a process of using communication to influence the behaviours and attitudes of others to meet group goods' (Hackman and Johnson, 2003).

Two types of communication competencies according to Barker Wahlers & Watson (2001) make up the approach; and they are task and relational

Task competencies according to them are described as communication skills necessary to perform tasks and to manage group goals while

relational competencies refer to communication skills necessary for managing interpersonal relationships and group climate.

Task and consideration functions are identified as two major leadership activities. But while task functions are described as activities that help the group achieve its goals' (asking for suggestions, opinion, and information), consideration functions are activities that improve the emotional climate or increase the satisfaction of individual members for example, showing agreement, support or encouragement and gate keeping) Awodiya, D.O (2013). He states that leaders are molded by the situations that exist in the group and the different situations required sets of behaviour. To lead therefore, is to exert some desired influence over other group members in order to achieve a common goal (p. 245).

Similarly, Nayar (2013) conceived leadership as the ability to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute toward organizational success. Educational leadership, on the other hand is defined by carter, G.R &Cunningham, W.G (1997) as the process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teacher, pupils and parents toward achieving common educational aims.

Similarly, Learn.org (n.d) states that educational leadership involves working with and guiding teachers toward improving educational processes in elementary, secondary and pest secondary institutions.

By whatever definition one ascribe to leadership or educational leadership, one discerning, and recurring decimal that was not directly mentioned is the need to maintain mutual relationship between the leadership of educational institutions and the stakeholders which is central to public relations activities and without which leaders cannot earn the understanding, and exert influence, on their organizations.

### **Function of Educational Leadership**

Professionals working in educational institutions focus majorly on improving and sustaining educational programming According to Learn.com (n.d), they hire and manage teachers and staff, prepare

budgets, set curriculum standard and set school wide policies. They might work on tech building efforts, or restructure the organization to affect necessary change. Many educational leaders are involved with policy development or reform issues dealing with education on the local state or national level.

### **Innovation**

Leveraging on new ideas or products is not the forte of product producers only, service providers are also good in such a progressive undertaking, hence, innovation is key to the sustenance of every organization especially in the face of keen competition that characterizes contemporary world.

Innovation, according to Roger (2003) is an idea, practices, or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption arguments has been canvassed on the need for innovative leadership in organizations. One of such argument situates it thus:

Today, uncertainty is palpable planning for next quarter is a challenge. Even more difficult is committing to decisions that will play out in one to five years, what is the new process, the innovative product the game-changing service or the compelling vision in the word of our senior executive “we have left out crystal ball” (Horth, D.M & Buchner, D. n.d)

According to them, what leaders need now is innovation leadership as leaders ‘need it for themselves as they learnt to operate in challenging, unpredictable circumstances. They also need to create a climate for innovation within organization. Innovative systems, tools and thinking are essential for organizational health and future viability.

### **Innovation in Public Relations**

Public relations drives innovation in some ways, and the promotion of such innovation activities are critical, in view of the fact that PR is now

central of business and organizational strategy. In other words, PR is now a question of judgment, careful weighing of content and communication where an organization's reputation hangs in the balance as not enough information outflow about an organization's activities such as a firm can quickly become irrelevant while in case too much information outflow and a firm can overpromise to the disgust of the market/client.

As important as innovation in public relations is, closed innovation should be discouraged. According to Hoehn, R (n.d), "closed innovation is a thing of the past and communication and connection with your audience is essential to success. By engaging through at least four of eight channels (website, email, social media, public relations, partners, events, offline and beyond) a robust communication process can yield valuable insights to help you innovate better".

Public relations How Do.com states, "is the link between the public and an organization's innovation efforts". It explained that in the digital age, there is a long list of PR outputs to be leveraged: media releases, social media posts, launch events, partnership seeking, and crisis management. In fact, it is believed in public relations circles that the most challenging areas of PR in digital transfer (innovative development) is the increasing threats companies/organizations face from cyber security attacks, real-time social media, or product failure, which could quickly extinguish a hard earned brand reputation unless the PR is consistently, and persistently on target. (HowDo.com).

Communication technology innovations such as the new media which are forms of media nature to computers, computational and relying on computers for distribution that includes website, mobile apps, virtual worlds, multimedia, computer games, human computer interface, computer animation and interactive computer installations lend itself to public relations activities that should come handy for educational leaders that are dynamic and efficiency driven.

New media have had a huge impact on the practice of public relations such as the worldwide web that makes for two-way communication which is the core aim of any good media relations. The internet has equally given public relations practitioners a unique opportunity to gather information, monitor public opinion on issues and engage in direct dialogue with their publics about a variety of issues.

New media as an innovation in the service of educational leadership public relations helps to enforce productivity and efficiency in terms of speed of transmission and increased timeliness of messages that are always improved. This is because clients are easily reachable, as well as employees and other publics which is a key advance in the way internet should be viewed as a strong tool in increasing productivity efficiency and in effectiveness.

Similarly, in term of research and evaluation, technology advancement (innovativeness) allows PR to create on-line survey or research with better speed and cost much less as with one click, new media eliminates labour and time constraint, and allows the researcher to make faster analysis as data are received.

As educational leadership seeks to innovate through public relations practice in the digital age, they should be mindful of the fact that the speed at which online issues explode into crises is blinding. Consequently, they have to realize that without a good knowledge of the digital and social media, there is tendency that they will scramble while trying to manage their organization's reputation, spread goodwill, or parry off online attackers as noted by cooler insights.com.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

The study is grounded in a model and three inter-disciplinary theories. These are Two-way symmetric model, the Excellence theory, Relational leadership theories and Diffusion of innovation theory.

Two-way symmetric model provides a good framework for effective public relations practice as explained by Gruing and Hunt (1984) since

dialogue rather than monologue exists, under this condition, both management and publics of educational institutions will change somewhat after a public relations effort which is aimed at bringing the two groups together to make communication possible so that they understand the position of each other, that is, mutual understanding. Gruning and Hunt believe that two-way symmetric model is the ideal public relations model which when used in the practice of public relations ensures the achievement of what Jefkins (1987) calls “The PR Transfer Process”.

The excellence theory is a general theory of public relations that specifies how PR makes organizations, like those that falls under education such as schools, more effective, how they are organized and managed when it contributes most to organizational effectiveness, the conditions in organizations and their environments that make organizations more effective, and how the monetary value of PR can be determined.

The excellence theory resulted from a study about the best practice in PR, which was headed by Grunig, J.E in 1985. The theory is constructed upon a number of middle-range theories, and tested with surveys and interviews of professional and CEOs in the US, the UK and Canada. The excellence theory provides theoretical and empirical bench marks for PR functions. This theory is quite relevant to this study because of the holistic approach it adopts in delivering excellence to organizations of all kinds. More so, in the contemporary digital age, where the objective of innovation leadership is to achieve excellence in all functional areas of an organization and that of course, include educational institutions.

Relational Leadership Theories, also known as transformational theories was introduced by James V. Down-ton and further developed by James Macgregor Burns in 2004. This theory is based on a relationship between the leader and the follower; as the leader wants to motivate everyone to work for the group, not just for themselves. The

leader also strives for each individual to reach his or her potential so that in the end, the whole group or organization will benefit from everybody's efforts. This theory identified four components to transformational leadership viz:

- Idealized influence (II) – the leader serves as an ideal role model for followers, the leader “walk the talk”, and is admired for this.
- Inspirational Motivation (IM) – the leader has the ability to inspire and motivate followers through having a vision and presenting that vision combined. Thus, these first two's are what constitute the transformational leader's charisma.
- Individualized Consideration (IC) – Transformational leaders demonstrate genuine concern for the needs and feelings of followers and help them self-actualize.
- Intellectual Stimulation (IS) – The leader challenges followers to be innovative and creative, they encourage their followers to challenge the status quo. A common misunderstanding is that transformational leadership are ‘soft’, but the truth is that they constantly challenge followers to higher levels of performance.

In relating the theory to this study, educational leadership should and must put on the garb of transformation four components, bereft of any iota of selfish disposition as well conservative attitude in the running of their educational institutions in order to create enabling environment for mutual understanding, team work and innovation to thrive.

### **Diffusion of Innovation**

Roger's diffusion of innovation theory is the frequency used theoretical perspective for the study of technologies (innovations that have just been introduced (Grant and Wilkinson, 2009). The theory analysis how the social members adopt the new innovative ideas and how they made the decision towards it. Both mass media and interpersonal communication channel are involved in the diffusion process. The theory relies on human capital; it stresses the need for a wide adoption

of innovations in order to attain development and sustainability. Educational leadership will become more efficient if they adopt and discuss latest innovations in not only teaching aids and methods but also public relations tools especially in the use of digital and social media applications.

### **Research Method**

This study used library method and therefore, relies mainly on the secondary data from relevant previous studies, both empirical and theoretical, carried out by scholars in the field of study such as books, journals, online sources and conference papers. Thus, the study depended solely on secondary source of data to arrive at the conclusions made.

### **Findings**

The study set out to provide answers to the research questions that are key performance indicators for educational leadership in the utilization of public relations tools as part of requirements towards achieving the objectives of contemporary educational institutions.

Findings show that public relations has become a strategic function in most organizations because of its usefulness in achieving strategic good and objectives of individuals and organization. Therefore, a forward-looking educational leadership cannot perform maximally without inputs from public relations. This assertions is in line with Folarin, B (1997), who beside, stating the recognition now given to public relations as a major tool in achieving socio-economic, political and strategic goal and objectives of organizations and individuals, also identified specific roles that public relations play in an organization. Similarly, Robinson, E (cited in Nkwocha (1997) also provides an outline of public relations. The second research question is on the work assignment of public relations in educational institutions. Expectedly, educational leadership can connect with their communities and other stakeholders by using public relations tactics and strategies; and analysis from this study clearly lend credence to the same. This call for a wide range of skills

and experience to deliver on whatever work assignment is given to public relations. This is also in consonance with Ajala, V.O (2005: 19) assertion that “such work assignment could be any, or all of the following, again, depending on the size of the organization”.

Every forward-looking educational institution ought to know that innovation is key to attaining higher height in the management of both human and material resources and that calls for innovative leadership; and with regard to the focus of this study, using public relations to drive innovation as well as promote such innovation activities. This much Hoehn, R. (n.d) alluded to; while waving against closed innovation. HowDo.com also emphasized that public relations remains the link between the public and an organization’s innovation efforts while listing public relations outputs to be leveraged.

A warning note for educational leadership seeking to innovate however, came from cover insights.com on the need to realize that without a good knowledge of the digital and social media, effective and holistic management of organizations reputation cannot be assured.

### **Summary**

Public relations input has become inevitable for organizations that crave for effective leadership hinged on innovative ideas in order to maintain mutual understanding between them and their respective stakeholders. This is predicated on the ability of public relations to contribute; and strengthen every departments of an organization in line with its corporate social responsibility goal (CSR). Thus, the CSR is anchored on the different task that public relations seeks to perform in every organization such as counselling, strategy formulation, liaison, media relations, staging or managing event, issue and conflict management amongst others.

Public relations task are carried out responsibly in such a way that the organization concerned become a source of national/regional pride as the case may be, enjoys local community recognition, acceptance and

favourability. In the area of educational leadership, public relations corporate responsibility helps in bringing new horizons into lives of people especially the youths' through the adoption of innovative ideas and skills.

Evidence from various researches shows that public relations have given educational leadership ample opportunity to gratify their communication as well as innovation needs.

### **Recommendations**

In relation to the above findings, it is advisable, and better that public relations be used productively; and be exploited by all departments/units in an organization because of all embracing benefits for a better life now and in the future. The study therefore recommends that:

1. Educational leadership should have a good public relations exposure as such will help them create credibility for the organization which is key to successful implementation of policies and growth in an institution.
2. Educational leadership should change the way they work by adopting innovation as they seek to drive results at a tactical level; and look for new rules as well as public relations innovative skills that will give the organization a competitive edge in the education industry.
3. The two-way communication thrust of public relations should be designed and implemented by educational leaders that seek for excellence in service and innovation in order to develop effective relationship with both its internal and external publics such as employees, government, community, Alumni association, owners/stakeholders, media, competitors etc.
4. Educational leadership should work on their own participation gap either at home or in the office as well as through training and re-training about public relations trends, skills and technologies that drives innovations.



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The Practice of Syncretism among Yoruba Muslims

By

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**Abstract**

This paper examines the practice of syncretism among Yoruba Muslims by exploring its historical, cultural, and theological foundations. It begins with a conceptual clarification of syncretism as the blending of religious and cultural elements from different traditions. The study traces the deep-rooted presence of syncretic practices among the Yoruba prior to the advent of Islam, highlighting how indigenous beliefs, ritual systems, and cosmologies shaped their worldview. The paper then analyzes the Islamic perspective on syncretism, emphasizing Islam's strict monotheistic framework and its rejection of practices not derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Despite this doctrinal stance, the research shows that Yoruba Muslims have developed distinctive forms of religious expression in which Islamic teachings coexist with certain traditional customs and symbolic practices. By examining these hybrid religious patterns, the paper demonstrates that syncretism among Yoruba Muslims is both a product of cultural continuity and an adaptive response to local identity. The study underscores the need for

deeper contextual understanding and sustained religious education to address the tension between cultural heritage and Islamic orthodoxy.

**Introduction** Syncretism, understood as the blending of Islamic teachings with elements of indigenous religious traditions, has long been a significant feature of Yoruba Muslim religious expression. When Islam entered Yorubaland between the 14th and 19th centuries, it encountered an already sophisticated religious culture rooted in reverence for *òrìṣà*, divination systems, ancestral veneration, and communal ritual practices (Peel, 2016). Instead of displacing these traditions entirely, Islam was gradually accommodated into existing cultural structures, giving rise to a hybrid religious landscape in which Yoruba Muslims adopted Islamic identity while maintaining selected indigenous practices (Ayandele, 2005). This cultural blending reflects a pragmatic orientation to religion—one that values social cohesion, respect for tradition, and spiritual versatility over rigid Understanding syncretism among Yoruba Muslims, therefore, provides valuable insights into the broader dynamics of religious change, cultural resilience, and identity formation in southwestern Nigeria. It sheds light on how global religions adapt to local contexts and how communities negotiate their dual heritage in ways that maintain cultural continuity while embracing religious transformation. As Islam continues to grow and diversify in the region, examining these syncretic patterns becomes essential for understanding both the historical foundations and contemporary expressions of Yoruba Muslim religiosity doctrinal boundaries (Adedeji, 2020). Today, the practice of syncretism among Yoruba Muslims remains visible in various forms, including the use of amulets (*tẹ̀lẹ̀*), participation in culturally symbolic festivals, reliance on traditional healers, and the insertion of indigenous cosmology into interpretations of Islamic spirituality (Ogunnaike, 2020). Such practices raise important questions about how Yoruba Muslims conceptualise orthodoxy, negotiate identity, and interpret Islamic principles within their socio-cultural environment. Investigating these dynamics is

crucial not only for understanding the internal diversity of Islam in Nigeria but also for appreciating how global religions adapt to local contexts through processes of continuity, resistance, and transformation. Thus, the study of syncretism among Yoruba Muslims offers valuable insight into the dynamic interaction between Islam and Yoruba culture in shaping contemporary religious life. The persistence of syncretism among Yoruba Muslims demonstrates that religion in the region is not merely doctrinal but deeply woven into cultural identity and social continuity. Many Yoruba Muslims continue to observe certain cultural practices that align with indigenous cosmology, such as using protective amulets (*tèlè*), consulting traditional healers, or participating in festivals that retain pre-Islamic symbolic meanings (Ogunnaike, 2020). These practices reflect a historically flexible approach to spirituality, where religious identity is shaped as much by cultural belonging and communal norms as by strict theological prescriptions. For many adherents, Islam's moral and spiritual frameworks coexist with Yoruba ritual heritage, creating a hybrid religious experience that is both culturally resonant and personally meaningful. Although Islam has been widely embraced among the Yoruba, the persistence of syncretic practices presents a complex challenge for defining Muslim identity in the region. Many Yoruba Muslims continue to blend Islamic teachings with pre-Islamic customs, resulting in practices that raise questions about religious authenticity, doctrinal purity, and the boundaries of acceptable Islamic behaviour (Adedeji, 2020). Reformist groups often criticise these blended practices as deviations from true Islamic teachings, while many adherents view them as expressions of cultural heritage rather than religious compromise. This tension produces confusion among young Muslims, contributes to doctrinal disagreements within communities, and creates challenges for religious leaders striving to maintain unity and orthodoxy. Despite these concerns, syncretism remains understudied, and there is limited scholarly attention specifically analysing its nature, extent, and effects among Yoruba Muslims. The problem this study

seeks to address is the lack of systematic understanding of how and why syncretism persists, how it shapes religious identity, and what implications it has for the practice of Islam among Yoruba Muslims today.

The study focuses specifically on the practice of syncretism among Yoruba Muslims in southwestern Nigeria. It examines historical foundations, cultural influences, contemporary practices, and community perceptions. While recognising that syncretism may also occur among Yoruba Christians or other Nigerian Muslim groups, this research limits itself to Yoruba Muslims due to their unique historical and cultural context. The study draws on literature, field observations, interviews, and cultural analysis but does not extend to comparative studies of syncretism across other ethnic groups.

### **Syncretism in Yoruba Religious Life before the Advent of Islam**

Syncretism has been a defining feature of Yoruba religious culture from antiquity. Long before the introduction of Islam into Yorubaland between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, Yoruba societies had developed a religious worldview that emphasized cosmological plurality, ritual flexibility, and pragmatic spiritual adaptation. Rather than adhering to a rigid theological boundary, the Yoruba integrated spiritual elements from neighboring cultures, political powers, and trading partners, weaving them seamlessly into their indigenous religious system anchored on the worship of *Olódùmarè* and the *òrìṣà*. This essay examines the pre-Islamic manifestations of syncretism among the Yoruba, focusing on its cosmological, political, ritual, and sociocultural dimensions. It also highlights the ways through which Yoruba religious systems historically accommodated external influences, preparing the ground for later encounters with Islam and Christianity.

The Yoruba religious worldview is inherently pluralistic. Scholars such as Idowu (1962) and Abimbola (1976) note that the Yoruba do not

conceive of religion as a closed system but rather as a dynamic interaction between spiritual forces whose effectiveness determines their level of acceptance. The Yoruba cosmology consists of a supreme deity—*Olódùmarè*—intermediary divinities known as *òrìṣà*, ancestral spirits (*egungun*), deified kings, and various nature spirits. This structure provided a flexible framework that easily accommodated new divinities and spiritual technologies.

For instance, many *òrìṣà* themselves are products of syncretic evolution. Scholars argue that *Ògún*, the deity of iron, may reflect interactions between early Yoruba groups and neighboring iron-working communities who contributed to the ritual and symbolic development associated with smithing and warfare (Drewal & Drewal, 1983). Similarly, *Ṣàngó*, the thunder deity, evolved through the historical deification of an Alaafin of Oyo, blending political history with cosmological myth—a classic case of religious syncretism where a king becomes an object of worship (Law, 1977).

The flexibility of Yoruba cosmology meant that foreign spirits, gods, and ritual practices encountered during trade, migration, and warfare could be incorporated into the pantheon if considered spiritually potent. This helped produce a religious environment in which syncretism was not only natural but celebrated as part of the collective cultural identity. Before Islam reached Yorubaland, the region was far from isolated. The Yoruba engaged in extensive interactions with neighboring peoples such as the Edo, Nupe, Igala, Fon, and Borgu. These interactions—through trade, diplomacy, and conflict—influenced the religious landscape and promoted syncretic adaptations.

For example, the Yoruba deity *Ṣòpòná* (the smallpox deity) reflects syncretic elements drawn from cross-border exchanges with the Nupe and other groups from the Middle Niger region, who also had smallpox-related deities and priests with rituals similar to Yoruba practices (Babalola, 1984). The cult of *Ifá*, central to Yoruba divination, also shows trans-regional elements, as scholars have traced the spread

of Ifá-related practices to Dahomey, Togo, and the Fon-speaking regions, where *Fa* divination bears close resemblance to Yoruba Ifá (Bascom, 1969). The similarities suggest historical diffusion, mutual borrowing, and the fusion of techniques and mythological corpuses.

In addition, the Yoruba imperial state of Oyo maintained significant political and military contact with the Borgu kingdom. This contact led to religious borrowing that influenced certain royal rituals, sacrificial forms, and mythic narratives in Oyo (Smith, 1969). These examples demonstrate that syncretism was not accidental but structurally embedded in the Yoruba ethos of cultural integration.

Ritual life among the pre-Islamic Yoruba was deeply syncretic. Ritual specialists—including *babalawo* (diviners), herbalists, priests, and court functionaries—regularly integrated non-Yoruba ritual techniques and objects into their practices as long as they proved effective. Bascom (1969) emphasizes that Yoruba religious authority is often judged by the efficacy of rituals rather than strict orthodoxy; therefore, priests were encouraged to consult, adapt, and innovate.

One of the most illustrative examples is the Ifá divination corpus, which contains verses and narratives that reveal encounters between the Yoruba and other ethnic groups. Some *oduIfá* verses contain words and references derived from other languages, demonstrating a long history of cultural mixing (Abimbola, 1976). Moreover, medicinal practices among Yoruba herbalists' often featured imported herbs or ritual paraphernalia obtained through trade networks, which were assimilated into local healing traditions.

Another dimension of ritual syncretism is visible in festivals such as the *Egungun* masquerade. While the Yoruba developed a sophisticated ancestral masquerade tradition, certain mask styles and ritual performances show clear influences from Igala and Nupe cultural zones (Morton-Williams, 1960). This indicates that masquerade traditions

evolved in dialogue with neighboring communities, resulting in a shared religious aesthetic across the region.

Yoruba mythology is rich with syncretic narratives that blend various cultural histories. Myths, as recorded by scholars like Idowu (1962), Abimbola (1976), and Drewal and Drewal (1983), serve not only as religious texts but as historical records of cultural fusion. For example, myths recounting *Odùduwà*'s descent and the founding of Yoruba kingdoms have parallels with creation stories among Benin and Igala peoples, suggesting shared mythic structures or mutual borrowing shaped by intergroup alliances and migration patterns.

The myth of *Moremi Ajasoro* is another example: Moremi's captivity among the "forest people"—believed by some historians to represent the Igbo or related groups—ends with her acquisition of secret knowledge that she later uses to defend Ife (Law, 1977). This narrative encapsulates the Yoruba theme of gaining spiritual power from foreign sources and incorporating it into indigenous religious identity.

Pre-Islamic Yoruba kingship also reflects high levels of syncretism. The institution of monarchy in Yorubaland is bound to ritual, spirituality, and divine legitimacy. Kings were seen as earthly representatives of specific *òrìṣà* or as embodiments of ancestral spirits. Through political expansion, Yoruba kings adopted rituals, titles, and court customs from other cultures, weaving them into Yoruba political theology.

The Oyo Empire, in particular, offers an excellent case of syncretic kingship. The Alaafin's royal cult incorporated elements from Borgu, Nupe, and even Hausa traditions encountered through trade and military campaigns (Smith, 1969). Ritual items such as royal drums, regalia, and praise poetry also contain linguistic and stylistic borrowings from non-Yoruba sources, demonstrating the cultural permeability of the palace.

Kingship rituals across Yoruba towns vary widely, reflecting diverse histories of settlement and intermarriage with neighboring groups. This regional diversity further highlights the extent of internal syncretism within Yorubaland itself.

Syncretism was not an occasional phenomenon but a foundational feature of Yoruba religious life before Islam. It shaped their cosmology, rituals, kingship structures, ethical systems, and intergroup relations. The openness of Yoruba religion allowed the incorporation of spiritual elements from neighboring peoples such as the Nupe, Igala, Borgu, and Fon. This adaptability enriched Yoruba religious expressions and created a vibrant, pluralistic tradition receptive to new influences. Consequently, when Islam later penetrated the region, it encountered a culture already accustomed to religious integration. Yoruba pre-Islamic syncretism therefore stands as a testament to the historical dynamism, flexibility, and creativity that continues to characterize Yoruba spirituality today.

### **The Concept of Syncretism in Islam**

Syncretism is a significant and widely debated concept within the study of religions, particularly when examining how Islam interacts with diverse cultural environments across the world. Broadly, syncretism refers to the blending, fusion, or integration of religious beliefs, rituals, and symbolic systems that originate from different cultural or spiritual traditions. In Islamic contexts, syncretism encompasses situations in which the teachings, doctrines, and ritual practices of Islam become intertwined with indigenous customs, pre-Islamic traditions, or the practices of other religious systems within the same community. This concept is especially important for understanding how Islam spreads, adapts, and manifests across various societies, particularly where Muslims constitute a minority or where Islamic practice is influenced by strong local cultural identities.

From the orthodox Islamic perspective, syncretism is generally regarded as an undesirable development, as it is assumed to dilute the purity of *Tawhīd*—the absolute oneness of Allah—which stands as the foundation of Islamic belief and practice. Classical Islamic scholarship asserts that Islam is a complete and self-sufficient way of life revealed by God through the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad, and therefore does not require supplementation from external religious practices. However, historical and anthropological studies demonstrate that syncretism is almost inevitable when a universal religion like Islam enters new cultural environments. In such cases, Muslims may retain certain indigenous beliefs or incorporate local rituals into their Islamic practice, either consciously or unconsciously, often as a means of cultural continuity or social stability (Esposito, 2018).

One important consequence of syncretism in Islam concerns the question of religious authority. When Islamic teachings become mixed with local practices, it often creates tension between traditional religious leaders and reformist scholars who attempt to standardize Islamic practice. This tension can lead to internal debates about what constitutes “authentic” Islam. Islamic reform movements, such as the Sokoto Jihad in West Africa or the modern Salafi movement, frequently emerged in response to practices that were perceived as syncretistic or heterodox. These reforms aimed to re-establish scriptural authority by emphasizing the Qur'an and Sunnah and discouraging practices rooted in cultural syncretism.

In contemporary times, syncretism continues to shape Muslim identity in many parts of the world. The coexistence of Islam with local cultural practices is often misunderstood as a sign of weak religious commitment, but researchers argue that syncretism can also signify the adaptability and resilience of Islam as a global religion (Esposito, 2018). In fact, syncretism reveals the ways in which Islam engages with cultural diversity while providing spiritual meaning to its followers. For Muslim minority communities, syncretism may also reflect the struggle

to maintain religious identity within environments that are shaped by different religious norms and cultural expectations.

The concept of syncretism in Islam provides valuable insight into how religious traditions interact with cultural environments. While Islamic theology strongly opposes the blending of Islamic teachings with non-Islamic practices, history shows that syncretism has played a significant role in the spread and localization of Islam across different regions. Syncretism arises due to social, cultural, and historical circumstances, reflecting the complex ways in which communities negotiate their religious identities. Although it remains a controversial concept from the perspective of Islamic orthodoxy, syncretism continues to be an important factor in understanding the lived experience of Muslims worldwide. A comprehensive study of syncretism highlights both the challenges and the cultural richness that arise when Islam encounters diverse cultural traditions.

### **Yoruba Muslims and Syncretism**

Syncretism comes from the Arabic root *At-Takhlit*, which simply means mixing or dilute. It is an attempt to unite or create a union between two or more religious beliefs, philosophies, theories, or practices. Balogun observes that:

Muslim theologians define it as a practice whereby one professes Islam, performs Islamic acts such as Ṣalāt, Ṣawm etc., but at the same time, engages in some practices that are opposed to fundamental beliefs of Islām, for instance, divination. They are known as syncretic or mixers (Mukhliṭūn). Both Imām Muhammad al-Maghili and Shaykh Uthman ibn Fodio give character sketches of syncretists and deliver a verdict of infidelity on them. Shaykh ‘Uthmāni bn Fodio in his book *Nūrulal-Bāb* lists ten items

that constitute syncretism and states that such practices and beliefs emanate from none except the disbelievers and polytheists. They include: veneration of trees and stones by offering slaughtered animals on them, casting cotton on stones or at the foot of the tree, putting clothes or food on tombs of the scholar as votive offering, charming people (magic of love and separation), writing the Qur'ān and Allah's names on filthy objects or writing it with blood spilled during slaughter, divination, and consulting diviners.

From this passage therefore, it could be submitted that syncretism refers to practicing Islam side-by-side with other religious beliefs and practices. It also means blending or mixing of different religious beliefs and practices with Islamic teachings. In other words, especially as related to this discourse, syncretism is to incorporate or dilute local cultural practices with Islamic practices, with the understanding to create a blend between the two. The passage also states that the act of syncretism constitutes infidelity, hence it is capable of taking one out of the fold of Islam.

Syncretism used to be occasioned by different reasons and factors. Such as inadequate knowledge of Islamic principles or the zeal to make Islam relevant to the prevailing practices in a given society. This can be observed in various places across Yoruba land, such as Ijebu, Egba, Ijesha, Igbomina, Ibolu and Ondo among others where Muslims engage in masquerade (Egungun festivals), Sango and other traditional worships that run contrary to Islamic tenets. Muslim involved in them under the pretense that they know the limits they should not transgress, but later discovered their indulgence beyond

the set limits. The expansion of Islam has brought in into contact with different religious and cultural settings that are local to the people, who later accepted the religion along with their background. The process of syncretism involves there interpretation and adaptation of Islamic principles to accommodate other cultural and beliefs systems, while still maintaining the principles of the faith.

Islam in Yoruba land has been struggling in the hands of the Muslims with many of cultural practices that Muslims find it difficult to completely abandon. Islamic scholars have made concerted efforts to explain and distinguish between what is Islamic and what is not and what should be the limits between there ligion and cultural interactions but with results that are not up to what was desired. One of the ways through which the practice is a wrongful interpretation of Islamic text, especially the Qur'an, hence there levance of this discussion to this work. Many verses of the Glorious Book were literally interpreted to enable the indulgence of these cultural practices, out of ignorance and sometimes deliberately. The instances shall be given in the next chapter of this work. Some Muslims were also made to engage in acts that constitute syncretism due to challenges of life that they wish to overcome and put in the past. All these made Islam in Yoruba feature different strange elements that make it different from other places or what a pristine Islam should be.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the practice of syncretism among Yoruba Muslims by tracing the concept across historical, cultural, and religious dimensions. It established that syncretism—understood as the fusion of different religious and cultural elements—has deep roots within Yoruba society, particularly before the advent of Islam, when indigenous religious systems shaped the people's worldview, cosmology, and ritual practices. These pre-Islamic traditions created a cultural framework that

continued to influence religious expression even after the arrival and spread of Islam in Yorubaland.

The paper also explored the Islamic understanding of syncretism, emphasizing that while Islam advocates strict monotheism and discourages the incorporation of practices not grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah, the realities of cultural interaction have resulted in varying degrees of religious blending among Muslim communities. Within the Yoruba context, the coexistence of Islamic teachings and indigenous cultural values has produced distinctive patterns of religious practice. These include the retention of certain traditional rites, symbolic objects, and ritual worldviews that persist alongside formal Islamic worship.

Ultimately, the study highlights that syncretism among Yoruba Muslims is a product of historical continuity, cultural identity, and religious adaptation. While it poses theological challenges from the standpoint of Islamic orthodoxy, it also reflects the dynamic ways through which communities negotiate their spiritual lives. The persistence of syncretic practices underscores the need for continuous religious education, contextual understanding, and culturally sensitive approaches to Islamic reform. By examining these patterns, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how Yoruba Muslims interpret, practice, and sustain their religious identity within a rich cultural heritage.

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## **Translating 'Allah' as 'God' in English: A Linguo-Theological Analysis**

By

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### **Abstract**

This study undertakes a linguo-theological analysis of the divine names Allah and God, examining whether translating one as the other constitutes mere lexical equivalence or risks obscuring crucial doctrinal, historical, and sociolinguistic distinctions. Grounded in a qualitative literature-review methodology, the research synthesizes evidence from classical and contemporary theological texts, translation studies literature, and primary religious scriptures, including Qur'an translations and English Bible versions. Findings reveal that Allah, rooted in Semitic morphology, is largely inseparable from the Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd*, emphasizing oneness, transcendence, and indivisibility, whereas God, emerging from an Indo-European lineage, largely carries Christian Trinitarian and relational connotations. Translation strategies—formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, and retention—interact with theological integrity, audience comprehension, and sociolinguistic identity, with concrete examples drawn from Qur'anic verses (e.g., Surah Al-Ikhlāṣ 112:1–4), biblical texts (e.g., John 1:1–3), and documented translation cases. The study demonstrates that while simplistic equivalence risks doctrinal misrepresentation and interfaith misunderstandings, such interchangeable usages are correct if used within the right contexts and environments. It proposes a context-sensitive framework for translators, educators, and practitioners that

preserves theological specificity while fostering comprehension and mutual respect in multilingual and interfaith settings. The study also identifies limitations arising from its secondary-literature focus and suggests directions for empirical, comparative, and pedagogical research.

Key words: Allah, God, translation, tawhīd.

## **1. Introduction**

Scholarly treatment of divine nomenclature reveals that names for the deity are rarely neutral: they carry historical sediment, grammatical constraints, confessional commitments, and cultural connotations that shape how religious communities conceive of ultimate reality. Two such names—**Allah** in Arabic and **God** in English—are often treated in translation practice as straightforward equivalents. Yet a closer examination of their etymologies, historical trajectories, and embedded theological assumptions indicates a more complicated relationship. The present study undertakes a linguo-theological analysis of the terms *Allah* and *God* to determine whether translating one as the other is merely a matter of lexical equivalence or whether such translation risks obscuring important doctrinal and semantic differences that matter for theology, translation studies, and interfaith communication (Jeffery, 2007).

The research is motivated by three interlocking observations. First, historical and epigraphic evidence indicates that the lexical item *Allah* predates Islam in the Arabian peninsula and functioned within polytheistic, henotheistic, and nascent monotheistic registers before being redefined by Qur'anic revelation into an exclusive name for the One God (Macdonald, 2009). Second, the English *God* emerges from a distinct Indo-European lineage and semantic field—rooted in Proto-Germanic and Proto-Indo-European morphemes connected to invocation and ritual—which renders it morphologically and functionally different from the Semitic root system that yields *Allah*

(Partridge, 1977; Shipley, 1984). Third, modern sociolinguistic and legal disputes (for example, contested uses of *Allah* in non-Muslim religious texts in Southeast Asia) demonstrate that lexical choice has public consequences that extend beyond abstract philology into identity, law, and interreligious relations (BBC News, 2021). Together, these observations suggest that the translation question is not purely lexical but both theological and pragmatic.

The introduction of this paper thus situates the problem at the intersection of three disciplinary conversations: historical linguistics (which traces the roots and formal features of the words), comparative theology (which examines the doctrinal content those names index), and translation theory (which evaluates strategies for rendering sacred terms across languages). From a linguistic standpoint, *Allah* is most often analyzed as the contraction of “al-Ilāh” (الإله), meaning “The God” formed within a Semitic morphological system that resists pluralization and gender attribution; by contrast, *God* historically functioned as a common noun referring to multiple deities before Christian monotheism recast it as a singular, proper referent (Ibn Manzūr, 1990; Partridge, 1977; Kluge). From a theological viewpoint, *Allah* in Islamic discourse connotes the uncompromising unity of the divine (tawhīd) and a set of attributes fixed by Qur’anic revelation, whereas *God* in English theological registers may carry Trinitarian or metaphysical resonances that differ from classical Islamic formulations. From the standpoint of translation studies, the debate turns on whether translators should aim for formal equivalence (preserving original lexical form, e.g., keeping *Allah*) or dynamic equivalence (rendering the functional meaning in the receptor language, e.g., using *God*), and what the pragmatic effects of either choice will be in interfaith and public contexts (Nida & Taber, 1969; Jakobson, 1959).

This research contributes to those conversations in three ways. First, it compiles and synthesizes philological, epigraphic, and literary evidence for the pre-Islamic and post-revelatory usage of *Allah*, emphasizing

continuity as well as re-semanticization that occurred with the rise of Islam. Second, it contrasts this evidence with an account of the Indo-European origins and subsequent Christian theological shaping of the English *God*, highlighting morphological and semantic differences that bear on translation choices. Third, it offers practical recommendations grounded in translation theory and interfaith praxis for when translators, educators, and public communicators should retain *Allah*, render it as *God*, or employ combined/explanatory strategies (e.g., “God (Allah)” with glosses). These recommendations are designed to preserve theological integrity while promoting intelligibility and mutual respect in plural societies.

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. Section 2 sets out the problem more precisely and identifies the study’s objectives. Section 3 reviews the literature across linguistics, theology, and translation studies, paying special attention to primary sources (epigraphy, pre-Islamic poetry, Qur’anic usage) and secondary scholarship on etymology and semantics. Section 4 presents a comparative discussion and findings derived from the literature review, and Section 5 draws conclusions and offers targeted recommendations for translators, educators, and policy makers concerned with religious language in multilingual contexts. By treating *Allah* and *God* not merely as lexical items but as nodes of cultural-religious practice, the paper aims to move the conversation beyond simplistic equivalence claims toward nuanced, context-sensitive guidelines for scholarship and public communication.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Despite the widespread assumption that *Allah* and *God* are interchangeable designations for the monotheistic deity of the Abrahamic traditions, contemporary scholarship, interfaith discourse, and public controversies reveal that the relationship between the two terms is far more complex and contested. The core problem underlying this study is the persistent ambiguity surrounding whether *Allah* should

be translated as *God* in English, whether the two terms are theologically and semantically equivalent, and what consequences arise—linguistic, doctrinal, social, and political—when they are treated as synonymous. The confusion stems from a convergence of historical, linguistic, and theological factors that are frequently overlooked in translation practice and public conversation, resulting in misunderstandings among Muslim and non-Muslim communities alike.

At the heart of the problem is a **linguistic asymmetry**. The Arabic name *Allah*, though used by pre-Islamic Arabs, Jewish communities, and early Christians in Arabia, functions within a Semitic morphological system that assigns it a unique grammatical and theological status. The term resists pluralization (no “*Allahs*”), gender marking (no *feminine or masculine variant*), and adjectival modification (no “*Allah-like*”), making it a proper name with a high degree of semantic fixity. Conversely, the English *God* evolved from an Indo-European root connected to invocation and sacrifice, originally applied to multiple deities and retaining plural forms (“*gods*”), gendered derivatives (“*goddess*”), and adjectival forms (“*godly*,” “*godlike*”) (Partridge, 1977; Shipley, 1984). These differences generate problems for translators and readers who may assume structural equivalence where none exists.

A second dimension of the problem arises from **theological divergence**. In Islamic theology, *Allah* is not merely a generic designation for a divine being; it is the proper name of the one, indivisible God, whose attributes are exclusively defined by Qur’anic revelation. The term is inseparable from the doctrine of *tawhīd*, which asserts absolute monotheism and denies any form of internal division or incarnation. In many English-speaking contexts, however, the word *God* often carries implicit associations with Christian theological categories, particularly Trinitarianism. For Muslim audiences, this overlap can lead to the misconception that translating *Allah* as *God* entails acquiescing to a Christianized understanding of the divine. For Christian or secular

audiences, it can produce the mistaken assumption that *Allah* refers to a different or foreign deity rather than the same God worshipped by earlier Abrahamic communities. These mutual misunderstandings frequently manifest in media discourse, interfaith dialogue, and public policy debates.

A third layer of complexity concerns **historical consciousness**. Because *Allah* existed in pre-Islamic Arabian religious vocabulary, its meaning has undergone shifts—from being recognized as a high god or supreme deity among other deities to becoming the exclusive name of the God of Islam following the Qur’anic revelation. English speakers, however, often lack awareness of this layered history and instead encounter the term primarily through modern representations of Islam. As a result, when English translations simply render *Allah* as *God*, they may inadvertently flatten the historical nuances that distinguish Islamic conceptions of the divine from pre-Islamic or other Semitic conceptions. This historical flattening contributes to the perception that translation is simple equivalence, even though philological evidence suggests that the evolution of each term followed distinct trajectories (Macdonald, 2009).

Furthermore, there are **sociopolitical and interfaith implications** of mistranslating or oversimplifying the relationship between the two terms. Public controversies—such as the legal restrictions on the use of “Allah” in certain Christian publications in Malaysia—demonstrate that the term has become a marker of communal identity and religious boundary-setting. Whether one chooses to translate *Allah* or retain it in English texts can therefore become a politically charged act, shaping perceptions of inclusion, exclusion, or doctrinal fidelity. In Western contexts, media portrayals often reinforce misconceptions by treating “Allah” as a uniquely Islamic deity, thereby fueling Islamophobic narratives that portray Muslims as worshipping a radically different God. This misrepresentation stems partly from translation practices that fail to clarify either the linguistic universality of the term among Semitic languages or its role in pre-Islamic Arabia.

Another aspect of the problem concerns translation methodology. Translators are frequently caught between competing goals: ensuring semantic faithfulness to the source language, ensuring readability for target audiences, and navigating theological sensitivities across religious communities. Rendering *Allah* as *God* might achieve dynamic equivalence for English-speaking readers familiar with monotheistic concepts, but it risks distorting the theological specificity that the term carries for Muslims. Conversely, retaining *Allah* in English translations can create barriers to comprehension for readers unfamiliar with Arabic terminology or fuel misconceptions that Muslims worship a separate deity. This tension raises a methodological question: what translation principles should govern the rendering of sacred divine names, especially when linguistic and theological equivalence is not straightforward? Scholars of translation studies highlight the need for contextual, purpose-based strategies when dealing with culturally charged terminology, but no consensus exists for this particular lexical case (Nida & Taber; Jakobson).

The problem is sharpened by pedagogical and scholarly inconsistencies. Academic discussions often acknowledge the differences between *Allah* and *God*, yet textbooks, popular literature, and even comparative religion curricula frequently gloss over these nuances. This inconsistency leads to fragmented understanding among students, researchers, and the general public. A coherent framework is needed to integrate linguistic, historical, and theological insights into a unified explanation that can guide scholarly writing, interfaith dialogue, and public education. Taken together, these linguistic, theological, historical, sociopolitical, and methodological issues demonstrate that the translation of *Allah* as *God* is not a simple lexical matter but a complex scholarly problem with practical consequences. Without a systematic analysis that bridges philology, theology, and translation theory, misunderstandings will persist, affecting academic discourse, interfaith relations, and public perceptions of Islam. This study therefore seeks to

address these gaps by providing a comprehensive linguo-theological examination of both terms and by developing clear, context-sensitive guidelines for their appropriate usage.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

The overarching objective of this study is to examine the linguistic, historical, and theological relationships between the terms *Allah* and *God* in order to determine the extent to which they may be considered equivalent or distinct within scholarly, translational, and interfaith contexts. To achieve this overarching aim, the study pursues the following specific objectives:

To trace the etymological origins and semantic evolution of the term *Allah* across pre-Islamic, Qur'anic, and post-Qur'anic contexts, drawing on classical Arabic lexicons, pre-Islamic poetry, and historical inscriptions to clarify how its meaning developed over time.

To analyze the historical development of the English word *God* within its Indo-European linguistic lineage, examining how its meaning shifted from a general term for multiple deities to a singular proper name within Christian theology, and how this history affects its semantic flexibility.

To compare the theological meanings encoded in the terms *Allah* and *God*, particularly how each term functions within Islamic monotheism and Christian theological frameworks, and to assess how these differences influence doctrinal interpretation.

To evaluate the suitability of different translation approaches—including formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, and functionalist models—for rendering *Allah* in English, and to determine the contexts in which each approach is most appropriate for accuracy and clarity.

To examine the sociopolitical, interfaith, and public-communication implications of translating *Allah* as *God* or retaining it in its Arabic

form, especially in regions where the term is contested or misunderstood.

To synthesize linguistic, theological, and sociocultural analyses into a coherent framework that can guide translators, educators, scholars, and interfaith practitioners in making context-sensitive decisions when employing the terms Allah and God.

#### **4. Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in a systematic literature review, aiming to explore the theological, translational, and sociolinguistic dimensions of the divine names Allah and God. Given the study's focus on conceptual, doctrinal, and linguistic analysis, qualitative inquiry provides the most suitable framework for synthesizing diverse perspectives, identifying patterns, and generating interpretive insights. Data were drawn exclusively from secondary sources, including classical and contemporary theological texts, translation studies literature, sociolinguistic research, and primary religious texts in English and Arabic, such as Qur'an translations by Abdel Haleem and Pickthall, as well as English Bible versions including the King James Version and the NIV. Sources were selected for scholarly credibility, relevance to the study's objectives, and the balance between historical and contemporary perspectives.

Data collection followed a systematic review process involving identification, screening, extraction, and organization of literature relevant to theological meaning, translation approaches, and sociolinguistic implications. Analysis was conducted using thematic content analysis, where key concepts were coded, grouped into thematic categories, and synthesized to reveal convergences, divergences, and gaps in the literature. Particular attention was paid to concrete examples, including Qur'anic verses, biblical passages, and documented translation case studies, to support an evidence-based interpretation. Ethical rigor was maintained through accurate citation,

faithful representation of theological viewpoints, and sensitivity to the cultural and doctrinal significance of divine names, ensuring that the analysis is both academically robust and respectful of religious traditions.

## **5. Literature Review**

### **5.1 The Etymological and Linguistic Evolution of Allah**

#### **5.1.1 Semitic Roots and Morphological Structure**

Linguistic scholarship broadly affirms that the Arabic term *Allah* is derived from the contraction of *al-Ilāh* (“the God”), following recognizable patterns of phonological assimilation in classical Arabic (Jeffery, 2007; Ibn Manzūr, 1990). The combination of the definite article *al-* with the noun *Ilāh* yields a unique lexical form that functions exclusively as a proper name. Classical lexicons—including *Lisān al-‘Arab*—highlight the distinctive morphology of *Allah*, noting that it does not take plural or gender forms, distinguishing it from *ilāh*, which behaves as a regular common noun (Ibn Manzūr, 1990). These grammatical features reinforce the semantic exclusivity of the term and anchor its usage in monotheistic discourse.

Some early grammarians proposed that *Allah* is not derived but rather a primordial proper noun (Sībawayh, as cited in Lane, 1984). Although modern linguists largely favor the derivational explanation, the debate illustrates how early Muslim scholars themselves recognized the theological singularity of the name. Modern Semitic linguistics situates *Allah* within a broader family of cognates, such as the Hebrew *El*, *Eloah*, *Elohim*, and the Aramaic *Alāhā*, reflecting a shared linguistic heritage of designating the high deity in ancient Near Eastern religious cultures (Smith, 2020; Rubin, 2011).

#### **5.1.2 Pre-Islamic Usage of Allah**

Archaeological and literary research confirms that *Allah* was neither conceptually nor linguistically novel at the advent of Islam. Epigraphic evidence from Safaitic, Thamudic, and Sabaic inscriptions refers to a

supreme deity invoked in oaths, petitions, or appeals for protection (Macdonald, 2009; Robin, 2012). Similarly, pre-Islamic Arabic poetry contains invocations of *Allah* as a creator or a deity with superior authority over other gods of the Arabian pantheon. The Qur'an's introduction did not invent the name but reoriented its semantic field by asserting *Allah* as the exclusive deity of monotheism and rejecting all forms of association (Crone, 2010). This semantic narrowing, described by Islamic intellectual historians, represents a key transition from a henotheistic religious environment to Qur'anic monotheism (Hawting, 1999). It demonstrates that the theological meaning of *Allah* crystallized through revelation rather than linguistic innovation.

In Sharī'ah, the term Allah—and its equivalents in other languages such as God in English, Ọlórún in Yorùbá, Ubangiji in Hausa, Oghene in Urhobo, and similar names in Southern Nigerian languages—reflects the natural diversity of human expression. This linguistic variety is acknowledged in the Qur'an as a sign of the Creator's authority and as a basis for humans to recognize and understand one another. The Qur'an states in Surah Ar-Rūm (30:22): “And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge.” Likewise, Surah Al-Ḥujurāt (49:13) affirms: “O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another.”

However, the belief attached to these names determines whether they align with the Islamic understanding of Allah. Pre-Islamic Arabs used the name Allah but still believed in lesser gods as intermediaries to the Supreme God. This system of associating partners with Allah is shirk. For this reason, the pre-Islamic Arabs, and even Jews and Christians in the Arabian Peninsula who also used the word Allah, were not regarded as believers in the Qur'anic sense. Therefore, the theological meaning behind the use of the name Allah remains the key distinguishing factor. If a person calls upon Allah with a belief consistent with the Sharī'ah,

there is no fault in doing so—even if the name used in their language differs from Arabic. In the same light, if the English speaking audience use the word "God" with the exact Islamic intents and notion of Oneness and nontrinitarian, then it also plays exactly the same role the word "Allah" plays as used in Arabic and Islam. However, for specific religious rights, such as salat, hajj and co, it would be best to retain the Arabic terms and usage. This retains the religious sanctity and fear of nonconformity with the Prophetic teachings in totality.

### **5.1.3 Allah among Arabic-Speaking Jews and Christians**

Historical evidence from early Arabic Christian literature confirms that *Allah* was widely used by Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians to refer to the God of Israel long before Islam's rise (Griffith, 2002). Early translations of the Bible into Arabic—such as the Sinai and Vatican manuscripts—consistently employ the term *Allah* for “God,” including in contexts referring to the Father of Jesus (Sidarus, 2014). Modern Christian communities across the Middle East continue to use *Allah* liturgically and devotionally, demonstrating that the name is inherently Semitic rather than exclusively Islamic (Brock, 2013).

This interreligious continuity is critical for understanding contemporary debates in Southeast Asia and other multilingual regions. Restrictions on Christian or Jewish usage of *Allah* often reflect political, not linguistic, boundaries (Carstens, 2014). Linguistically and historically, *Allah* has always been shared across Abrahamic communities.

## **5.2 Linguistic and Historical Development of God**

### **5.2.1 Indo-European Origins of the English God**

Etymological research situates the English God within the Indo-European linguistic family, tracing its root to the Proto-Germanic *gudan* or *guthan*, which itself is linked to the Proto-Indo-European root *ǵʰu-tó-*, meaning “that which is invoked or sacrificed to” (Partridge, 1977; Shipley, 1984; Kluge, 2002). This root indicates an early connection to ritual invocation and sacrificial practice rather than

metaphysical monotheism. Linguists note that the earliest uses of god in Germanic cultures referred to any deity or supernatural entity within a polytheistic pantheon (Orel, 2003).

This background establishes god as a common noun with broad semantic range, lacking the inherent singularity or grammatical fixity observed in Allah. It further emphasizes that the English term's monotheistic meaning is a later historical development tied to Christianization, not an intrinsic linguistic feature.

### **5.2.2 Semantic Transformation through Christianization**

The conversion of Germanic-speaking populations to Christianity precipitated a major semantic shift in the term *god*. Through liturgy, biblical translation, and missionary teaching, the term gradually became singularized and capitalized as *God*, functioning as the proper name of the Christian deity (Wood, 2001). Yet, as scholars of historical linguistics note, English retained its earlier polytheistic morphology—e.g., “gods,” “goddess,” “godlike”—revealing that the Christian semantic layer was imposed on an underlying structure designed for polytheism (Harper, 2015).

This morphological flexibility distinguishes *God* from *Allah* in fundamental ways. The fact that English maintains plural and gendered forms demonstrates that its structure accommodates both monotheistic and polytheistic concepts, creating complexities for translators who must navigate these layers of meaning when rendering *Allah* into English.

## **5.3 Theological Significance of the Names Allah and God**

### **5.3.1 Theological Meaning of Allah in Islam**

Within Islamic theology, *Allah* serves as the proper and ultimate name of the divine essence. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes the unicity, transcendence, and incomparability of *Allah*, anchoring Islamic monotheism (*tawhīd*) in the name itself (Rahman, 1980). Classical theologians such as al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī describe *Allah* as the singular, eternal, and uncaused deity who possesses all divine attributes—knowledge, power, will, life, hearing, and sight—without composition or plurality (Frank, 1978; Hoover, 2019). These attributes are understood as inherent and inseparable

from the essence of *Allah*, who remains utterly unlike creation (*laysaka-mithlihishay*’, Qur’an 42:11).

Legal and theological literature throughout Islamic history maintains that *Allah* is not merely a generic designation but the most comprehensive divine name (*ism al-jāmi*’), from which all other names of God derive their meaning (al-Ghazālī, 1992). The name is thus both semantically and doctrinally fixed. Islamic scholarship consistently rejects any implication of plurality, incarnation, or genealogical relationship in the divine essence, differentiating the Islamic conception from theological models that accommodate divine persons or manifestations (Nasr, 2002).

### **5.3.2 Theological Meaning of God in Christianity**

The English term *God* is embedded in a Christian doctrinal landscape shaped by the Trinitarian understanding of the divine as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christian theologians affirm that God is one in essence (*ousia*) but three in persons (*hypostases*), a formulation articulated in the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds (Pelikan, 1971). Within this framework, the word *God* often serves as a reference to the divine essence as well as a relational reference to the First Person of the Trinity (Barth, 1958). These semantic layers mean that the English term carries theological assumptions rooted in centuries of Christian thought.

Biblical translation traditions reinforce these associations. English Bible versions consistently use *God* to render Hebrew *Elohim* and Greek *Theos*, embedding the term within an interpretive tradition that assumes Trinitarian doctrine (Wright, 2012). Even within secular contexts, cultural memory causes many English speakers to associate *God* primarily with Christianity, thereby affecting how the term is apprehended in public discourse (McGrath, 2017).

### **5.3.3 Comparative Theological Considerations**

Comparative theologians often explore whether Islam and Christianity refer to the same divine reality. Scholars such as Cragg (2000) argue that the two traditions share an “Abrahamic referent,” pointing to a single transcendent deity, though their conceptualizations differ. Others highlight divergences

in divine attributes, incarnation, revelation, and relationality (Thomas, 2008). These differences underscore that the names *Allah* and *God* operate within distinct doctrinal ecosystems, each shaped by its own theological presuppositions.

The theological literature thus converges on three insights: (1) semantic equivalence cannot be assumed simply because each term refers to the supreme deity; (2) the doctrinal content embedded in each name shaped its meaning over centuries; and (3) theological frameworks must be considered when translating or comparing these divine terms.

Thus, if at any point in time, the use of the word “God” by its users bears the exact connotation and belief bore by the users of “Allah” in their intents whenever they use “God”, there and then, the theological meaning are same and interchangeable. This is exactly the same as what is obtainable in the usage of “Allah” by the Arabs through the epochs of history hitherto – just like an English speaking Muslim may use it.

## **5.4 Translation Theory and the Rendering of Divine Names**

### **5.4.1 Translation Approaches for Religious Terminology**

Translation scholars identify religious terminology as one of the most challenging categories in cross-linguistic communication (Nida & Taber, 1969; Jakobson, 1959). Sacred names often carry centuries of theological, cultural, and affective resonance that resist straightforward lexical substitution. Nida’s distinction between **formal equivalence** and **dynamic equivalence** has been central to translation studies. Formal equivalence prioritizes structural and lexical fidelity, while dynamic equivalence seeks to reproduce the meaning and impact of the source text in the target language.

Religious translation often demands a hybrid approach. Hermans (2002) notes that sacred texts embody “cultural untranslatability,” whereby certain terms retain so much doctrinal significance that translators risk distorting meaning if they seek functional equivalents rather than preserving the original term.

### **5.4.2 Sacred Names and Strategies of Retention**

Many religious terms—such as *Yahweh*, *Brahman*, *Nirvāṇa*, and *Jñāna*—are frequently left untranslated in English-language academic literature because they have no true equivalents (King, 1999). The retention approach helps preserve semantic precision, theological nuance, and cultural context. Venuti (1995) calls this strategy “foreignization,” which deliberately introduces the reader to the linguistic world of the source text rather than domesticating its concepts.

Arguments for retaining *Allah* in English translations often appeal to these principles: the name carries a doctrinal specificity linked to Islamic monotheism that may be diluted if replaced with *God*. However, others argue that dynamic equivalence—translating *Allah* as *God*—may enhance readability for audiences unfamiliar with Arabic and facilitate interreligious understanding (Haleem, 2011).

#### **5.4.3 Translational Controversies and Contextual Constraints**

Contemporary debates surrounding the translation of *Allah* illustrate the intersection of language, identity, and politics. In Malaysia, court disputes over whether Christian publications may use the term *Allah* reveal how translation choices can become charged with issues of communal identity and religious authority (Carstens, 2014). Scholars argue that such controversies stem less from linguistic principles and more from sociopolitical anxieties (Yee, 2021). Translation studies literature thus highlights that the rendering of *Allah* as *God* cannot be evaluated solely on linguistic grounds. The appropriate translation depends on audience, context, and purpose. What may be viable for academic writing may not be appropriate for liturgical settings, interfaith dialogue, or public discourse.

### **5.5 Sociolinguistic and Interfaith Contexts**

#### **5.5.1 Divine Names as Identity Markers**

Sociolinguists emphasize that divine names often function as markers of collective identity. As Fishman (1972) notes, religious terminology carries not only semantic meaning but also symbolic social value. In English-speaking contexts, the term *Allah* is frequently perceived as “Muslim,” even though Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews use the same term. Conversely,

*God* is often perceived as “Christian,” even when employed by adherents of other traditions (Woodhead, 2016).

These perceptions create sociolinguistic boundaries that may reinforce communal identities, shape intergroup relations, and influence public interpretation of religious discourse.

### **5.5.2 Public Misunderstandings and Media Representation**

Research shows that popular media often portray “Allah” as the name of a different deity rather than the Arabic term for the One God of Abrahamic monotheism (Saeed, 2007). Such representations perpetuate misconceptions and may contribute to Islamophobic narratives. The lack of public awareness regarding the shared Semitic roots of divine nomenclature further reinforces misunderstandings (Sells, 1999).

### **5.5.3 Interfaith Dialogue and Terminological Sensitivity**

Interfaith practitioners argue that clarity in terminology significantly affects the quality of dialogue between religious communities (Cornille, 2013). When participants assume that lexical differences reflect fundamentally different theological referents, conversations may become strained or unproductive. Conversely, sensitivity to linguistic nuance facilitates mutual understanding. Thus, accurate and context-aware use of Allah and *God* is vital in interfaith engagement.

## **5.5 Summary of Literature Review**

The literature demonstrates that the terms *Allah* and *God* possess deeply rooted yet distinct linguistic histories: one emerging from the Semitic traditions with morphological invariability, and the other from the Indo-European tradition with a flexible grammatical structure shaped by polytheistic origins. Theologically, Islamic scholarship conceives of *Allah* in relation to the doctrine of *tawhīd*, while Christian theology embeds *God* within a Trinitarian framework. Translation theory reveals significant challenges in rendering divine names across languages, as choices between formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, or retention can alter theological meaning and sociocultural reception. Sociolinguistic research shows that

divine names serve as identity markers and influence interfaith relations and public perception.

Despite this substantial scholarship, a major gap remains: many studies examine the linguistic, theological, translational, or sociolinguistic dimensions separately, yet few offer a holistic, integrated analysis that synthesizes all these perspectives into a coherent framework for understanding and translating the terms Allah and God. Furthermore, existing discussions often lack practical, context-sensitive guidance for translators, educators, and interfaith practitioners. This study addresses this gap by providing an interdisciplinary linguo-theological analysis and developing practical guidelines for appropriate usage and translation of divine nomenclature in multilingual and interfaith settings.

## **6. Discussion and Findings**

### **6.1 Theological Insights and Comparative Analysis**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the theological conceptualization of divine names profoundly shapes intra-religious understanding and interfaith perceptions. In Islam, *Allah* functions not merely as a nominal identifier but as a term deeply embedded in the doctrine of *tawhīd*, emphasizing the absolute oneness, transcendence, and incomparability of the divine. The Qur'an repeatedly affirms these attributes, as in Surah Al-Ikhlās (112:1–4), which declares: “*Say: He is Allah, [who is] One. Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent.*” This verse exemplifies the inseparability of the name *Allah* from the Islamic theological conception of an eternal, uncaused, and singular deity. Classical theologians such as al-Ash‘arī and al-Māturīdī reinforce this understanding by articulating that the divine attributes—knowledge, power, will, life, hearing, and sight—are inherent and indivisible from the essence of *Allah* (Frank, 1978; Hoover, 2019).

In contrast, *God* within the Christian doctrinal framework is inseparable from the Trinitarian model of the divine. As articulated in the Nicene Creed, the divine essence is one (*ousia*) yet exists in three persons (*hypostases*): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Pelikan, 1971). The biblical tradition

reinforces this relational dimension, as seen in John 1:1–3, 14: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*” Here, the relationality of God through the incarnation of the Son illustrates theological nuance that cannot be captured by a purely monotheistic term like *Allah*. The study finds that while both terms refer to the supreme deity, the embedded doctrinal assumptions of each make direct equivalence problematic.

Comparative analysis indicates that while Islam and Christianity share an Abrahamic referent, their theological frameworks diverge in key areas such as unicity, relationality, and incarnation. Islam foregrounds the indivisibility of God, whereas Christianity foregrounds relationality within the Godhead. This divergence underscores the semantic and doctrinal challenges of mapping *Allah* directly onto *God*, corroborating prior scholarship that warns against assuming simple equivalence (Cragg, 2000; Thomas, 2008). Translators, educators, and interfaith practitioners must therefore account for these conceptual distinctions to avoid misrepresentation.

## **6.2 Translation Challenges and Approaches**

The study confirms that translating divine names involves complex linguistic, cultural, and theological considerations. Translation strategies fall broadly into formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, and retention. Formal equivalence preserves the original term, ensuring theological fidelity but potentially alienating non-Arabic readers. Dynamic equivalence renders *Allah* as *God*, enhancing readability but risking doctrinal dilution. Retention, exemplified by leaving *Allah* untranslated in English texts, preserves semantic precision and cultural context while introducing readers to the source linguistic world (King, 1999; Venuti, 1995).

Concrete translation cases illustrate these dynamics. The **Malaysian context**, where the use of *Allah* in Christian publications has been legally contested, demonstrates how translation decisions can be intertwined with communal identity, politics, and legal authority (Carstens, 2014). Conversely, in English translations of the Qur’an, translators like M.A.S. Abdel Haleem retain *Allah* rather than substituting *God*, providing footnotes

to explain theological implications, thereby exemplifying a hybrid approach that balances doctrinal fidelity with accessibility (Haleem, 2011). Similarly, the King James Bible’s use of *God* to render Hebrew *Elohim* and Greek *Theos* reflects centuries of interpretive choices embedded within a Christian doctrinal framework (Wright, 2012). These examples demonstrate that translation is not merely lexical but also theological, cultural, and sociopolitical.

**6.3 Sociolinguistic Patterns and Identity Implications**

The study’s findings show that divine names operate as markers of identity and social affiliation. Sociolinguistic data reveal that English-speaking communities commonly associate *Allah* with Muslim identity, even though Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews also use the same term. Conversely, *God* is widely perceived as a Christian referent. Media representations amplify these distinctions, often portraying *Allah* as a separate deity, contributing to misconceptions and Islamophobic narratives (Saeed, 2007). The historical roots of both terms—Semitic for *Allah* and Indo-European for *God*—also influence their sociolinguistic reception, highlighting that lexical differences cannot be interpreted purely semantically.

Interfaith dialogue is particularly sensitive to these patterns. When participants assume lexical differences correspond to fundamentally different theological referents, dialogue may become strained. However, when participants are informed about the historical, theological, and linguistic dimensions of divine names, conversations become more productive. The study thus underscores the importance of terminological clarity and sensitivity in fostering mutual understanding (Cornille, 2013; Sells, 1999).

**Table 6.1: Translation Approaches for Divine Names and Their Implications**

Translation Approach	Description / Method	Theological Implications	Sociolinguistic Considerations
Formal Equivalence	Retains the original term	Preserves doctrinal	May be less accessible to

	(Allah) exactly in the target language	fidelity; maintains unicity of Allah	audiences unfamiliar with Arabic; reinforces religious identity markers
Dynamic Equivalence	Translates Allah as God to convey functional meaning	Risks theological dilution; may obscure Islamic monotheism (tawḥīd)	Easier comprehension for non-Muslim audiences; may facilitate interfaith understanding but can create misconceptions
Retention with Explanation	Keeps Allah untranslated, accompanied by footnotes or commentary	Preserves theological specificity while providing contextual clarity	Educates readers about source culture and doctrine; supports interfaith dialogue; mitigates public misunderstanding
Contextual Adaptation	Adjusts translation based on audience, setting, or purpose	Balances doctrinal integrity with communicative clarity	Sensitive to sociopolitical and communal identity factors; often used in liturgical or academic contexts

Table 6.1 summarizes the main translation approaches for divine names, illustrating how each method interacts with theological precision and sociolinguistic perception.

#### **6.4 Integrative Analysis of Theological, Translational, and Sociolinguistic Dimensions**

A key contribution of this research lies in synthesizing the theological, translational, and sociolinguistic dimensions of *Allah* and *God* into a coherent analytical framework. The findings demonstrate that

translation decisions are inseparable from doctrinal content and sociolinguistic context. For example, the rigid theological attributes associated with *Allah* necessitate retention in English translations, whereas sociolinguistic awareness may require supplemental explanations for non-Muslim audiences. Conversely, translating *God* into a context informed by Islamic theology may necessitate clarification to prevent misunderstandings regarding divine unity or relationality.

The integrated framework reveals that an effective approach to translating divine names must account for doctrinal particularities, audience background, and sociopolitical implications. Such an approach bridges the gap identified in prior research: whereas most studies examine linguistic, theological, or sociolinguistic dimensions in isolation, this study demonstrates that holistic analysis enables accurate, context-sensitive translation, education, and interfaith engagement.

### 6.5 Practical Implications and Recommendations

The findings have several practical applications. Translators are advised to retain *Allah* in English-language texts where very strict doctrinal accuracy is essential, providing explanatory notes to guide comprehension. However, when the belief is the same and one, there are no issues with the interchangeability in the usage of both words, like when used by English speaking Muslim audience who bear the Islamic belief. Educators can employ comparative theological examples—such as Qur'an 112:1–4 and John 1:1–3—to illustrate differences and foster nuanced understanding. Interfaith dialogue practitioners should prioritize clarifying semantic and doctrinal histories to prevent misunderstandings. Media professionals are encouraged to contextualize *Allah* accurately to avoid perpetuating stereotypes. Finally, curricula in religious studies, theology, and translation studies should integrate modules on the sociolinguistic and doctrinal nuances of sacred nomenclature, equipping students to navigate multilingual and interfaith communication effectively.

## 6.6 Summary of Findings

In conclusion, the study establishes that *Allah* and *God* cannot be treated as semantically interchangeable in strict theological contexts. However, when the audience and context of usage bear the exact Islamic monotheistic belief, it is very accurate to use both words interchangeably without any fears. Theologically, *Allah* reflects unicity and indivisibility when used by Arab Muslims and Muslims at large, and not Arab Christians and Jews, whereas *God* is understood relationally within a Trinitarian framework, which also differs from when being used by English speaking Muslims. Translation strategies must balance formal fidelity, dynamic accessibility, and retention, while sociolinguistic factors influence public perception and identity formation. By integrating these dimensions, the study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding, translating, and teaching divine names in multilingual and interfaith contexts. This interdisciplinary approach directly addresses the research gap identified in the literature, offering practical guidance for translators, educators, and interfaith practitioners while contributing to scholarly discourse on sacred nomenclature.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has examined the theological, translational, and sociolinguistic dimensions of the divine names *Allah* and *God* through a qualitative, literature-review-based approach. The analysis demonstrates that while both terms refer to the supreme deity within their respective traditions, they are embedded in distinct doctrinal frameworks that shape meaning, perception, and usage. *Allah* is largely inseparable from the Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd*, emphasizing oneness, transcendence, and indivisibility, whereas *God* operates largely within a Trinitarian framework, emphasizing relationality, incarnation, and a multi-personal understanding of the divine. Translation and linguistic analysis further reveal that rendering *Allah* as *God* risks theological dilution if not guarded, while retention strategies, particularly when

paired with explanatory commentary, best preserve doctrinal fidelity and cultural nuance. Sociolinguistic analysis highlights that these divine names function as markers of identity, influencing interfaith dialogue, public perception, and media representation. By integrating these dimensions, the study addresses a notable gap in scholarship by providing a holistic framework for understanding, translating, and teaching about divine names in multilingual and interfaith contexts.

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge for practice and scholarship. First, translators of religious texts are advised to retain *Allah* in English-language translations when doctrinal accuracy is strictly essential, accompanied by explanatory notes or footnotes to guide comprehension. Educators and interfaith practitioners should incorporate comparative theological examples and historical context to foster nuanced understanding and minimize misconceptions. Media professionals are encouraged to report on divine names with terminological precision to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or misunderstandings. Finally, curricula in theology, religious studies, and translation studies should explicitly address the sociolinguistic, translational, and doctrinal nuances of sacred nomenclature, equipping students with the analytical tools necessary for multilingual and interfaith engagement.

While this study provides an integrative qualitative analysis, its reliance on secondary literature constitutes a limitation, as it does not include primary empirical data from religious communities, translators, or media consumers. Consequently, findings are interpretive rather than directly experiential. Future research could adopt mixed-methods or ethnographic approaches to capture the perceptions and interpretations of diverse audiences regarding the use of *Allah* and *God*. Comparative empirical studies involving speakers of multiple languages, practitioners of interfaith dialogue, and media consumers could further validate the theoretical insights presented here. Additionally, research could explore the pedagogical effectiveness of different translation

strategies in religious education, providing practical guidance for both educators and translators in increasingly multilingual and multicultural contexts.

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