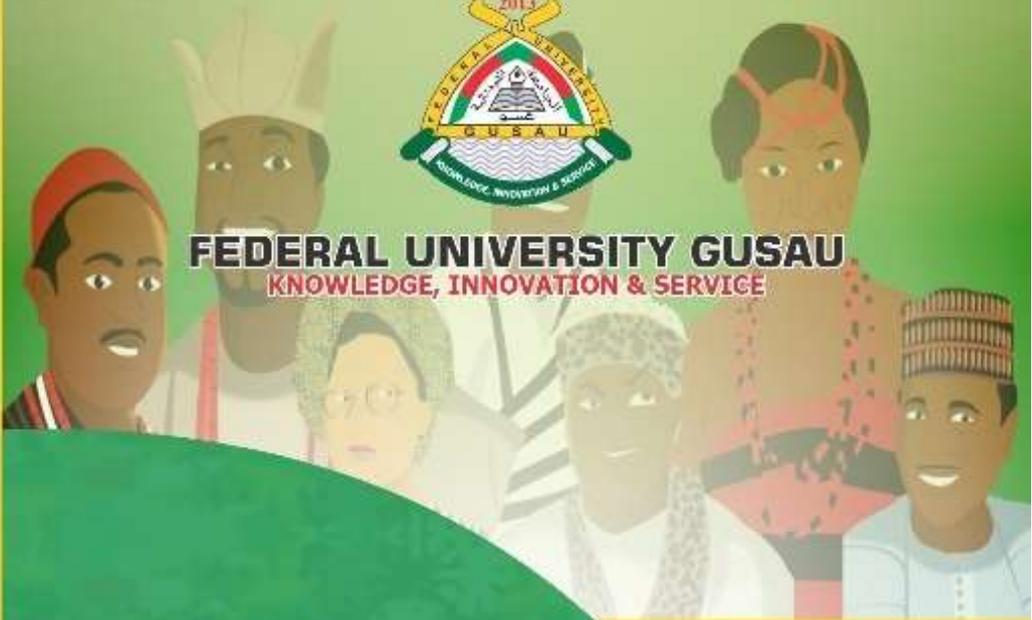


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The *Gusau Journal of Sociology*, is a biannual, blind peer-reviewed publication of the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria. It seeks to publish both original empirical or theoretical articles addressing wide-ranging academic and policy issues relevant to, but not limited to the fields of Sociology, Criminology, Anthropology, Public Health, Demography, Development Studies, Medical Sociology, Industrial Relations and Social Work. To ensure global visibility and wider audience base, the Journal boasts of modern publication features such as **Digital Object Identifiers (DOI)**, **WorldCat** and **CrossRef Content**, among others. Publish with us today, and you will be glad you did!

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**COPING STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HEALTH-RELATED CHALLENGES AMONG ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS IN KADUNA NORTH AREA OF KADUNA STATE - NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This study examined the coping strategies adopted by elderly individuals in managing socio-economic and health-related challenges in Kaduna North Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, data were collected from elderly respondents through surveys and in-depth interviews. The findings reveal that the most commonly reported challenges include inadequate food supply, lack of social and emotional support, inability to purchase medication, isolation, and poor housing. In response to these difficulties, the most frequently adopted coping mechanisms include prayer and seeking spiritual comfort, medical treatment, self-control, and social engagement. However, fewer respondents reported engaging in health-promoting behaviors such as maintaining a healthy diet and regular physical activity. Financial challenges were primarily managed through reliance on financial support from children, engaging in economic activities, and, to a lesser extent, depending on pensions or informal employment. The study highlights the critical role of spirituality and family support in the well-being of elderly individuals, while also identifying gaps in self-care practices and financial security. Based on these findings, the study recommends policy interventions to improve access to healthcare, nutritional support programs and economic empowerment initiatives to enhance the quality of life for elderly individuals.

**Keywords:** Coping strategies; Elderly individuals; Financial challenges; Health care; Healthy diet.

## **Introduction**

The aging population is a global phenomenon, with the number of individuals aged 60 and above projected to double by 2050, reaching over 2.1 billion (United Nations, 2023). This demographic shift poses challenges such as increased dependency ratios, healthcare burdens and social exclusion, necessitating effective coping mechanisms for the elderly. In developed nations, robust pension schemes, accessible healthcare, and structured social support systems are common (WHO, 2022). However, in Africa, where the elderly population is expected to triple by 2050 (African Union, 2022), aging individuals face unique challenges due to weaker institutional frameworks and eroding traditional family support systems (Akinyemi & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2021).

In Nigeria, the elderly confront financial insecurity, inadequate healthcare, and social isolation, exacerbated by urbanization and economic instability (Okoye, 2023). Traditional family-based care is diminishing, forcing many elderly individuals to rely on informal economic activities, religious networks and community support (Adepoju & Oyewole, 2022). In Northern Nigeria, faith-based organizations, traditional healing practices and communal networks, are critical coping mechanisms (Usman & Danjuma, 2023). Kaduna, with its diverse socioeconomic dynamics, provides a unique context to explore these strategies and inform policies for elderly well-being.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria's aging population is growing, yet the country lacks a comprehensive framework to support the elderly in managing economic, social and health-related challenges (Okoye, 2023). Unlike developed nations, older adults in Nigeria rely on informal mechanisms such as family support, religious networks and self-employment, which are weakening due to urbanization, economic hardship and shifting family structures (Adepoju & Oyewole, 2022). In Kaduna, these issues are compounded by economic instability, inadequate healthcare and rising social disintegration, leaving many elderly individuals vulnerable to neglect, poverty, and psychological distress (Bello & Yusuf, 2022).

Urban migration has further isolated the elderly, limiting access to traditional family support networks and increasing reliance on informal coping strategies. Despite these challenges, limited research has systematically examined the coping mechanisms of the elderly in Kaduna. Existing studies focus on national-level policies, neglecting localized experiences and adaptive strategies (Adebayo & Olawale, 2023). Understanding how the

elderly in Kaduna navigate financial constraints, health issues and social isolation is crucial for developing targeted interventions to improve their well-being

### **Research Questions**

- a. What are the major socio-economic and health-related challenges faced by elderly persons in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State?
- b. What coping strategies do elderly persons adopt to manage socio-economic and health-related challenges in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State?

### **Research Objectives**

- a. To examine the major socio-economic and health-related challenges faced by elderly persons in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State
- b. To identify the coping strategies adopted by elderly persons in managing socio-economic and health-related challenges in the study area.

### **Stress and Coping Theory**

The stress and coping theory, developed by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman, focuses on how individuals adapt to stressful situations by regulating emotions. Stress arises when environmental demands exceed an individual's perceived ability to cope, leading to negative emotions. Coping strategies are central to this theory and are categorized into two types: emotion-focused coping (managing emotional distress) and problem-focused coping (directly addressing the stressor). Older adults, for instance, often face significant stressors like chronic illnesses and their ability to cope depends on their appraisal of the situation and available resources. Problem-focused coping is particularly effective in promoting successful aging.

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted in Kaduna North Local Government Area, Nigeria, to explore coping strategies among the elderly facing financial, health and social challenges. Kaduna North, a socio-economically diverse and urbanized area, comprises 12 wards and is home to various ethnic groups, with Islam and Christianity being the predominant religions. Key economic activities include trading, small-scale businesses and agriculture, supported by markets like Kanti Kwari and healthcare facilities such as the Barau Dikko Teaching Hospital.

The study focused on elderly individuals aged 65 and above from diverse ethno-religious and socio-economic backgrounds, including differences in marital status, employment and education levels. Village heads and health workers were also included to provide insights into community-based support systems.

A multi-stage sampling method was used in which five wards were randomly selected from the 12 in Kaduna North. Systematic random sampling was employed to select 275 elderly participants (55 from each ward). Key informant interviews (KII) were conducted with 25 key informants, including village heads, health workers, and elderly individuals, to gather qualitative data.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to elderly participants, covering demographics, family support, healthcare access, and financial assistance, while KII was conducted with key informants to explore perceptions of social support systems. Questionnaire copies were administered orally for illiterate respondents, while others completed them independently.

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21.0, with descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, and chi-square tests to examine relationships between and among variables. While qualitative data were transcribed, translated, and thematically analyzed to identify key themes, supported by direct quotations from respondents.

## Results

### Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (Part A)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
	65	59	21.8
	66	46	17.0
	67	43	15.9
	68	34	12.5
	69	28	10.3
	70 years and above	61	22.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Sex</b>			
Male		138	50.9
Female		133	49.1
<b>Total</b>		<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>Religion</b>		
Islam	219	80.8
Christianity	52	19.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	7	2.6
Married	162	59.8
Divorced	17	6.3
Widow	64	23.6
Widower	21	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Educational Status</b>		
No formal education	100	36.9
Primary school	70	25.8
Secondary school	43	15.9
Post-secondary education	58	21.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Out of the 271 respondents surveyed, 50.9% were males while 49.1% were females. Of the total respondents, 21.8% were within 65years of age and 17.0% were within 66years while 15.9% were within 67years. Those who were within 68years and 69years were 12.5% and 10.3% respectively. Those who were 70 years and above were 22.5% of the total respondents involved in the study. The minimum age was 65 years while the maximum age was 81 years. The findings on religious affiliations revealed that 80.8% of the respondents were of the Islamic faith and 19.2% were of the Christian faith. This distribution disparity is largely because the study area is predominantly occupied by Muslims.

**Table 2: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
<b>Level of Income</b>		
Below N30,000	73	26.9
N31,000 - N50,000	136	50.2
N51,000 - N70,000	30	11.1
N71,000 - N91,000	26	9.6
Above N91,000	6	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>With Whom Do You Reside?</b>		
Spouse only	88	32.5
Children only	40	14.8
Spouse and children/grandchildren	48	17.7
Living alone	25	9.2
Living with grandchildren	19	7.0
Living with other relatives	31	11.4

Living with others	20	7.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Living Place</b>		
Own house	116	42.8
Self-rented apartment	67	24.7
House built by children	23	8.5
Living with children	6	2.2
House rented by children	57	21.0
Others	2	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family Type</b>		
Monogamy	135	49.8
Polygyny	136	50.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Number of Children</b>		
No child	4	1.5
1-4 children	52	19.2
5-10 children	183	67.5
Above 10 children	32	11.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Current Employment Status</b>		
Retired with pension	54	19.9
Employed in formal sector	20	7.4
Employed in informal sector	50	18.5
Retired without pension	48	17.7
Unemployed	99	36.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2024.**

It was also observed that majority of the respondents (59.8%) were married, 2.6% were single and 6.3% were divorced from their spouses. Those who were widows and widowers were 23.6% and 7.7% respectively. In terms of educational attainment, 36.9% of the respondents had no formal education. Those with primary school certificate as their highest qualification were 25.8% and 15.9% had secondary school as their highest educational qualification while 21.4% had post- secondary school qualifications. The distribution implies that although 36.9% had no formal education at all, most of the respondents could be said to have some relatively basic level of education.

Table 2 also revealed that the income levels of the respondents were generally low as majority of them (50.2) earned within N31, 000.00 - N50, 000.00. 26.9% earned below N30, 000 and 11.1% were earning between N51, 000.00 – N70, 000.00. Those who were earning

between N71, 000 - N91, 000 were 9.6% of the total respondents, and only 2.2% of the respondents were earning above N91, 000.00.

Findings on whom respondents resided with showed that majority of the respondents (32.5%) resided with their spouses and 14.8% were living with their children while 17.7% live with their spouses, children and grandchildren. Those who were living alone were 9.2% of the total respondents and 7.0% were living with their grandchildren. Of the total respondents involved in the study, 11.4% were living with their relatives while 7.4% were living with other persons. On the places of abode, 42.8% lived in their own houses, 24.7% lived in self-rented apartments, 8.5% lived in houses built by their children while 2.2% lived with their children and 21.0% lived in houses rented by their children. Only 0.7% of the respondents did not specify their places of abode. This distribution implies that although a significant percentage (42.8%) of the respondents lived in their personal houses, the majority of respondents did not own a house as implied by the distribution of those living in rented apartments, and with children.

Of the total respondents, 49.8% were from monogamous families and 50.2% were from polygamous families. Most (67.5%) of the respondents had between 5 and 10 children. Those with children of between 1 and 4 in number were 19.2% and 11.8% had above 10 children among the respondents. Only 1.5% of the respondents had no child. As for their current employment statuses, majority of the respondents (36.6%) were unemployed, 19.9% were retired with pension and 17.7% were retired without pension. Another 18.5% were employed in informal sector, and only 7.4% were employed in the formal sector.

**Table 3: Respondents' Major Socio-Economic and Health Related Challenges**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
None	38	14.0
Inadequate food supply	60	22.1
Poor housing	30	11.1
Inability to access healthcare	13	4.8
Inability to purchase medication	43	15.9
Lack of social/emotional support	44	16.2
Isolation/loneliness	40	14.8
Others	3	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

As shown in table three, only a marginal 14% reported that they were not burdened with any form of challenge. From the overwhelming majority that reported that they faced challenges, 22.1% disclosed that inadequate food supply was the major challenge they faced, 16.2% stated that lack of social and emotional support was their major challenge, 15.9% reported that inability to purchase medication was their major challenge, 14.8% that isolation/loneliness was their major challenge and 11.1% stated that poor housing was the challenge they were confronted with. Only 4.8% identified inability to access health care as a challenge for them.

The findings of the IDIs on the challenges faced by older persons align with the quantitative data in table 3. The elderly persons highlighted various issues which were challenges for them. A male elderly explained that:

“It has been very tough to have enough food to eat these days. Since I retired, my income has reduced significantly, and I can no longer afford to buy the kind of food I used to enjoy. The rising cost of food in the market makes things worse. I now rely on cheaper foods that I don’t really enjoy even though as they don’t provide the nutrients I need”.

**Table 4. Coping Strategies Adopted by Respondents for Socio-Economic and Health Challenges**

Coping strategies adopted	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Spending leisure time	39	14.4	232	85.6
Problem solving	17	6.3	254	93.7
Making efforts to change the stress inducing situation	33	12.2	238	87.8
Self-control	50	18.5	221	81.5
Distancing	23	8.5	248	91.5
Prayer/seeking spiritual Comfort	132	48.7	139	51.3
Acceptance	47	17.3	224	82.7
Wish to die	15	5.5	256	94.5
Living in the moments	11	4.1	260	95.9
Contact with siblings	16	5.9	255	94.1
Seek medical treatment	122	45.0	149	55.0
Visit prayer house	41	15.1	230	84.9
Visit sorcerers/traditional medicine practitioner	36	13.3	235	86.7
Dependence on relatives for medical care	18	6.6	253	93.4

<b>Healthy diets/physical exercises</b>	26	9.6	245	90.4
<b>Self-medication</b>	28	10.3	243	89.7

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

The most adopted coping strategy noted by the respondents as indicated in table 4 were prayers and seeking of spiritual comfort as 48.7% of the respondents adopted this coping strategy while a slightly lower percentage of respondents (45%) indicated seeking medical treatment as their coping strategy. Other strategies adopted by the respondents include: self-control (18.5%), acceptance of the situation (17.3%), visiting prayer houses (15.1%), spending leisure time (14.4%), visit sorcerers/traditional medicine practitioners (13.3%) and making efforts to change the stress inducing situation (12.2%). The least adopted coping strategies were healthy diets and physical exercises reported by 9.6% of the respondents, distancing self from others indicated by 8.5%, dependence on relatives for medical care stated by 6.6% and problem solving noted by only 6.3% of the respondents.

The findings of the IDIs on coping mechanisms among older persons are consistent with the quantitative data on Table 4. The interviewees reported various strategies they use to manage their various challenges. A male informant shared that:

“I try to maintain self-control when dealing with issues. I know I am no longer as strong as I used to be, so I focus on what I can change. When I experience any health issues that feel serious, I don’t hesitate to seek medical help. I go to the hospital to see a doctor instead of waiting and worrying”.

A female respondent also explained:

“When things get too much for me, I pray. Talking to God about my worries helps me feel better and gives me strength to keep going. I also visit prayer houses to pray with others. When I go there, the pastors give me advice and pray for me, and their words give me so much comfort and hope”.

The study further investigated the coping strategies employed by the respondents to specifically to manage financial challenges.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study explored the coping strategies employed by elderly individuals in managing their socio-economic and health-related challenges. The findings align with Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) Stress and Coping Theory, which posits that individuals

employ various coping mechanisms both emotion-focused and problem-focused to manage stressors.

### **Coping Strategies for Health-Related Challenges**

The study found that elderly individuals predominantly relied on emotion-focused coping strategies to manage health-related difficulties. The most commonly adopted mechanism was prayer and seeking spiritual solace, demonstrating a reliance on faith-based approaches to cope with physical and psychological stressors. This aligns with Adedeji et al. (2023), who also found that spirituality, including prayer and scripture reading, was a major coping strategy among elderly populations. The strong reliance on spiritual coping suggests that many elderly individuals perceive their health conditions as beyond their direct control and thus turn to faith as a source of emotional strength and resilience.

In addition to spirituality, some participants adopted problem-focused coping strategies, such as seeking medical treatment, exercising self-control, and engaging in leisure activities. These approaches indicate an attempt to actively manage health-related stressors through direct intervention. However, the study also found that less commonly used strategies included maintaining a healthy diet and engaging in physical exercise. This finding contrasts with Adedeji et al. (2023), who reported higher engagement in health-promoting behaviors such as diet regulation and physical activity. The limited adoption of these strategies in this study suggests potential barriers, including financial constraints, lack of awareness, or cultural attitudes toward aging and health maintenance.

An alarming coping mechanism identified in extreme cases was the expression of a wish to die. This reflects maladaptive emotion-focused coping, where individuals feel overwhelmed by their health conditions and perceive little hope for improvement. This finding underscores the need for psychological and social support systems to prevent feelings of despair among elderly individuals facing chronic health challenges.

These findings support Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) assertion that coping strategies are dynamic and context-dependent. Elderly individuals adapt their coping mechanisms based on available resources and perceived stress levels, demonstrating a balance between emotion-focused (spirituality, reliance on family) and problem-focused (economic activities, seeking medical care) coping strategies

## Conclusion

This study explored the coping strategies used by elderly individuals to manage socio-economic and health-related challenges. Findings revealed that spiritual coping mechanisms, such as prayer and seeking spiritual solace, were the primary strategies for addressing health-related difficulties. Other notable strategies included seeking medical treatment and practicing self-control. However, engagement in proactive health-promoting behaviors, such as maintaining a healthy diet and regular physical exercise, was minimal. These findings underscore the importance of spirituality as a key coping mechanism while highlighting gaps in proactive health management among the elderly.

## Recommendations

To enhance the well-being of elderly individuals, it is essential to promote health-enhancing behaviors through awareness campaigns, balanced diets, and regular physical activity. Expanding access to affordable healthcare via mobile clinics, home-based medical services, and subsidized programs can ensure timely medical care. Mental health interventions, including counseling and support groups, should be prioritized to address psychological distress. Family education programs focusing on intergenerational relationships, financial planning, and caregiving can strengthen family support systems. Additionally, religious institutions should provide faith-based counseling and social outreach initiatives to offer both spiritual and practical support.

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## PREVALENCE OF KIDNAPPING OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND THE EROSION OF SOCIAL ORDER IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

The core responsibility of the government is to protect lives and property. In the last decade, Catholic priests had been the target of kidnappers in Nigeria, thereby negatively impacting the Church and social order. This study examined the kidnapping of Catholic priests and the erosion of social order in Nigeria. The study was guided by the assumptions of the social contract theory developed by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Utilizing secondary data obtained through media reports, journal articles, government publications and church publications, the paper employed thematic-content analysis to make sense of the data elicited for the study. The results revealed a widespread threat, with the Port Harcourt Diocese reporting the highest number of cases (20.65%), followed by Owerri Diocese (17.03%), Kaduna Diocese (11.23%) and Onitsha Diocese (10.87%). The kidnapping of Catholic priests in Nigeria spanning the period of 2015 and 2025, has been a systemic and escalating crisis with far-reaching consequences for social order, undermining security, disrupting religious life and weakening public trust and communal stability. The implication of the finding for the study is that the widespread and targeted kidnapping of these harmless men of God, reflects a deepening security crisis in Nigeria, revealing the country's inability to protect religious figures and emphasizing the pressing need for comprehensive security and socio-political interventions. Addressing this requires comprehensive security reforms, socio-economic interventions and enhanced collaboration between the Church, communities and the government, to restore public safety, religious dignity and societal stability.

**Keywords:** Catholic Priests; Kidnapping; Men of God; Prevalence; Social Order

## Introduction

Kidnapping, as noted by Adebola and Temidayo (2023), is a widespread global issue and it is universally condemned (Abang *et al.*, 2025), Ibrahim and Mukhtar, 2017), observed that kidnapping in Nigeria affects not only foreigners but also locals of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds. This heinous crime has a devastating effects on the individuals and society as at large. Terrorist groups have been known to use kidnapping as a means of financing their operations (Okorie, 2023). Kidnapping for ransom has become a tactic of terrorists seeking to blackmail concessions from governments and officials (Abang *et al.*, 2025; Ohanikhere, 2010). Statistically, John (2011), submitted that globally, there are an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 kidnapping incidence that occur annually. Gala (2025), observed that as at 2023, South Africa had the highest kidnapping rate among African countries. It had 9.57 kidnappings out of 100,000 inhabitants. Benin Republic reported the second highest kidnapping rate. In tandem with that, Akubuike (2024), noted that between May 2023 and April 2024, 2,235,954 kidnap cases were recorded in Nigeria, with 1,668,104 in urban centres and 567,850 in rural areas.

A more recent trend is the issue of kidnapping Catholic priests in Nigeria (Uroko, 2024a). Constellis Report (2020), submitted that among the top 10 countries of the world, Nigeria ranked second in kidnapping between November 2019 and October 2020. Olofin (2023), and Abang *et al.* (2025), noted that Nigeria has experienced a sharp increase in kidnapping incidents, with victims drawn from diverse social and professional groups, including religious leaders, highlighting the growing insecurity and targeting of high-profile or symbolic individuals. In their submission, Adebola and Temidayo (2023), noted that Catholic priests are the most vulnerable groups in Nigeria's kidnapping crisis, with numerous abductions recorded across various dioceses between 2015 and 2025, some resulting in the safe return of victims, while others ended in tragedy, raising alarm over the safety of the clergy and religious, deepening national insecurity and far-reaching socio-political consequences of such targeted violence.

Cismas (2023), observed that the Catholic Church in Nigeria plays a crucial role in spiritual guidance, education, healthcare and social development. Priests serve as community leaders, offering moral direction and engaging in various humanitarian efforts. However, their increasing vulnerability to kidnapping disrupts their mission and threatens the Church's capacity to serve society more effectively. Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2017), observed that one of the motives behind kidnapping in Nigeria ransom demands. Asangausung and Brown (2025)

concluded that the targeted attacks on priests reflect the deepening insecurity in different parts of the country, particularly in regions beleaguered by banditry, insurgency and communal crisis.

The consequences of these kidnappings extend beyond the immediate victims (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017). d’Avillez (2023), assumed that kidnapping instils fear among the clergy and church members, hinder pastoral activities and weaken the Church’s influence in fostering peace and development. d’Avillez (2023,) noted further that the financial burden associated with ransom payments divert resources that could otherwise support the Church’s mission. To curb kidnapping, the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies have created specific units for prompt kidnapping response (Ugwuoke *et al.*, 2023). However, the response to kidnapping incidents are often inadequate, giving concerns about the social contract between the government and the led (Okorie *et al.*, 2024).

Previous studies have explored various dimensions of kidnapping in Nigeria. For instance, Abang *et al.* (2025), investigated the causes and effects of kidnapping in selected coastal communities of Akwa Ibom State, as well as the effectiveness of preventive strategies. Adebola and Temidayo (2023), focused on the impact of kidnapping for ransom on Nigeria’s international image, while Uroko (2024a) and Uroko (2024b), examined the kidnapping of Roman Catholic Church priests. Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2017) analysed the causes and consequences of kidnapping across the country, and Uzorma and Nwanegbo-Ben (2014) studied the challenges of hostage-taking and kidnapping in southeastern Nigeria. Building on these earlier works, the current study specifically examined the kidnapping of Catholic priests and the erosion of social order in Nigeria between 2015 and 2025, with focus on the prevalence, patterns and broader societal implications of the menace.

## **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **Concept of Kidnapping**

Kidnapping is widely recognized as a serious offence that involves the unlawful abduction and detention of an individual, typically carried out through force, deception or coercion. Scholars such as Uzorma and Nwanegbo-Ben (2014), described kidnapping as a forceful or deceptive act often driven by ransom demands, noting how it has become a lucrative enterprise for various armed groups, including bandits, militants, pirates and terrorists who exploit Nigeria’s weak law enforcement systems and high-profit margins.

Similarly, researchers like Ottuh and Aituf (2014), as well as Odeku (2020), regard kidnapping as a legally and morally prohibited, yet, widespread offense, often carried out for financial gain, political leverage or ideological reasons.

Odoma and Akor (2019), extended this understanding by emphasising the organised and violent nature of kidnapping, identifying it as a tool for criminal objectives such as extortion, intimidation and coercion. Olulowo *et al.* (2021), reinforced this view by defining kidnapping as the act of seizing and detaining an individual through force or fraud, often with the intention of collecting ransom or resolving personal or political grievances. Ohakhire (2010), categorised the motives behind kidnapping into what he terms the “3Rs” (ransom, revenge and ritual), highlighting the diversity of motivations behind this crime.

Further literature points to the socio-economic and structural drivers of kidnapping in Nigeria. Olulowo *et al.* (2021), and others attribute the prevalence of kidnapping to factors such as widespread poverty, unemployment, the proliferation of arms and military uniforms, the influence of drug abuse, systemic corruption, poor governance, moral decline and the quest for quick wealth. Additionally, the inefficiency and under-equipment of law enforcement agencies, the weakening of state authority and perceived social injustice further compound the issue. In the context of this study, kidnapping is conceptualised as the act of unlawfully holding an individual against their will, with the aim of securing some form of benefit, whether financial, social or political, at the expense of the victim. It represents not just a breach of individual liberty but also a symptom of deeper societal issues, reflecting a broader breakdown in security, governance and morality.

### **Concept of Social Order**

The concept of social order is broadly understood as the framework that sustains stability, cohesion and predictability within a society. Scholars such as Mboho and Udoh (2019), emphasize that social order involves the interplay of various societal elements working collectively to preserve the existing structure and ensure continuity. It encompasses the adherence of individuals to shared expectations, rules and norms that govern behaviour, as reflected in the view of Jaxon and White (2023), who describe social order as the outcome of individuals honouring social contracts, whether formal laws or informal codes of conduct. These shared values and standards form the bedrock of societal stability, enabling organised, productive and culturally meaningful interactions.

In the context of this study, social order is regarded as the condition that allows society to function harmoniously, either through voluntary conformity driven by mutual agreement or through coercive mechanisms that enforce obedience. It is sustained when members of society consistently act in ways that respect and reinforce these shared understandings, making it possible for communities to operate in a stable and cooperative manner.

### **Prevalence of Kidnapping among the clergy in Nigeria**

Recent scholarly and institutional reports have consistently highlighted the alarming rate of kidnapping among clergy in Nigeria, particularly targeting Catholic priests. This trend has not only raised concerns about the security of religious leaders but also underscored the complex socio-political and economic factors driving these abductions. Uroko (2024a), investigated the reasons behind the frequent targeting of Roman Catholic priests by kidnapers and Islamic extremists. Using documentary analysis of classified documents, national and international gazettes and periodicals, the study found that Catholic priests are primarily targeted due to their active political engagement, efforts to promote Christianity, advocacy for civil rights and the expectation of large ransom payments from their relatives.

In a complementary study, Uroko (2024b), focused on north-central and southern Nigeria, where the perceived affluence and influence of Catholic priests render them high-value targets. These abductions serve both financial and ideological purposes, as terrorist and extremist groups aim to instill fear and assert dominance in these regions. Statistical evidence reinforces these scholarly insights. As at November 13, 2023, ACN International (2023), reported that 23 clergy members including Reverend Fathers, Reverend Sisters and Seminarians were kidnapped in Nigeria within the year. While 22 were released, one was brutally murdered. Additionally, two Reverend Fathers and one Seminarian were reported separately killed in the same period, confirming that kidnapping remains the greatest threat to the clergy in the country.

Nobert (2025), further elaborated on the extent of this crisis, documenting 63 kidnapped Reverend Fathers across several dioceses. Out of these, 51 were eventually released, while 12 were killed. The affected dioceses include Kaduna, Benin City, Minna, Otukpo, Warri, Pankshin, Idah, Yola, Lafia, Isele-Uku, Wukari, Sokoto and Kafanchan. The highest number of fatalities occurred in the Archdiocese of Kaduna (4 priests) and Sokoto Diocese (2 priests, including a seminarian). Broader data across a ten-year period further

highlight the persistence of this threat. Agenzia Fides (2025) and Zengarini (2025), reported that 145 Reverend Fathers were kidnapped between 2015 and 2025, with 11 killed and 4 still missing. Similarly, Akinselure (2025), estimated that at least 204 Reverend Fathers and Seminarians were abducted in the last decade, 15 of whom were killed in captivity. Ezeh (2025), echoed these concerns, noting that 133 Reverend Fathers were kidnapped during the same period, resulting in 13 deaths. Collectively, these findings revealed a disturbing pattern of targeted violence against Catholic Reverend Fathers in Nigeria. The motivations range from financial extortion and political intimidation to religious extremism, placing priests and seminarians at significant risk across Nigeria.

### **Strategies of Kidnapping Catholic Priests in Nigeria**

Literature revealed a disturbing and consistent pattern in the kidnapping of Catholic priests in Nigeria, characterised by violence, intimidation and a growing sense of insecurity within religious communities. Chimtom (2025), noted that many Catholic priests have fallen victim to abduction, with some losing their lives and others only released after paying substantial ransoms. These incidents often occur in transit, such as the kidnapping of Rev. Fr. John Ubaechu while en route to a religious retreat, underscoring the calculated nature of these attacks. The reports suggest a level of coordination and sophistication among the kidnapers, who frequently use unmarked vehicles, masks and dangerous weapons to carry out their operations, as observed by ACN United States (2024). The All Africa (2025), report highlights one of such instances in Anambra State, where a Reverend Father was abducted at a gas station by individuals in a white SUV without license plates, though he was later rescued by a combined effort of various security forces.

In many cases, as detailed by Chimtom (2025), kidnapping activities involve violent break-ins and gunfire, such as the incident involving Rev. Father Philip Ekweli and a major seminarian in Edo State, where the attackers destroyed property and overpowered local vigilantes through superior firepower. This pattern not only reflects the growing boldness and tactical planning of the perpetrators but also points to the vulnerability of religious figures and institutions in the face of limited security infrastructure. The recurring use of threats, ransom demands and lethal force has deeply unsettled the religious community, revealing the grave risks Catholic clergy face and the broader implications for religious freedom and safety in Nigeria.

## **Implications of Kidnapping on Social Order in Nigeria**

The literature on the implications of kidnapping on social order in Nigeria presents a comprehensive picture of a crisis that profoundly disrupts the nation's social, economic and moral stability. Kidnapping has emerged as a deeply rooted phenomenon with wide-reaching consequences that touch virtually every aspect of Nigerian life. It does not only promote fear and insecurity among individuals and communities, but also significantly undermines social cohesion, interpersonal trust and public confidence in security systems. As Olofin (2020), emphasises, the social costs include a deterioration in community relationships, fear of social interaction and reluctance to offer public assistance, while the economic costs are seen in the form of ransom payments, the flight of capital and escalating investments in security. These consequences demonstrate how kidnapping weakens the very structures that sustain a stable and functioning society.

Beyond the immediate community effects, kidnapping has broader national and international implications. As Osegboun and Oladipo (2023), observed, the persistence of kidnapping contributes to the erosion of Nigeria's global image, creating a perception of widespread insecurity that deters tourism, hampers migration and repels foreign direct investment. The ripple effects of these dynamics affect national development, economic progress and international relations. Religious institutions are not spared either. Olulowo *et al.* (2021), examined the spiritual and organizational impact of kidnapping on churches, where fear and anxiety among congregants result in declining attendance, reduced commitment to church programmes and limited capacity for evangelism and outreach.

Further insight from Inyang and Ubong (2013), as well as Ilechukwu *et al.* (2015), adds depth to the understanding of the implications of kidnapping by differentiating between its direct and indirect economic impacts. Directly, families bear the heavy financial burden of paying ransoms, often targeting primary breadwinners, which disrupts household functioning, stalls businesses and leads to financial distress. Indirectly, resources are diverted toward preventive measures such as hiring private security, while governments are compelled to increase spending on security infrastructure and operations. These economic disruptions can force companies and businesses to shut down, trigger capital flight and increase unemployment, conditions that may further heighten national insecurity. Additionally, the psychological and physical trauma inflicted on victims, including cases of sexual abuse during captivity, adds a disturbing human dimension to the crisis.

Altogether, the literature paints a sobering picture of how kidnapping destabilizes the social order in Nigeria, it undermines economic activities, damages interpersonal and institutional trust, weakens social and religious bonds and exacerbates the sense of fear and vulnerability. The cumulative effect is a society increasingly fractured, insecure and struggling to maintain the structures necessary for peace, progress and collective wellbeing.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by the assumptions of the Social Contract Theory. This theory was developed by political philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes (1651), John Locke (1689) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762). The SCT argues that individuals consent to surrender some of their freedoms and submit to the authority of a state in exchange for protection, security and the maintenance of social order. The state, in turn, derives its legitimacy from its ability to safeguard life, liberty and property.

Applying this theory to Nigeria, the persistent kidnapping of Catholic priests reflects a fundamental breakdown of this social contract. The prevalence of kidnapping, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas, is indicative of a systemic failure by the government to provide security to its citizens, especially those who are non-violent, morally upright and central to community life. Catholic priests, often seen as symbols of peace and moral guidance are increasingly targeted by kidnappers for ransom, not only because of their perceived influence and the resources of the Church, but also because they are typically unarmed and vulnerable. This pattern suggests a calculated criminal enterprise that exploits both the symbolic and financial value of religious leaders, pointing to a deteriorating public safety landscape.

The implications for social order are profound. As the government fails to protect clergy and citizens alike, public trust in government institutions diminishes, leading to rising fear, social anxiety and diminished participation in communal and religious activities. The targeting of priests destabilizes religious communities, weakens moral authority and disrupts the Church's role as a stabilizing force in society. This vacuum often leads to the emergence of informal security arrangements, such as community vigilantes or Church-funded protection, which further fragments the authority of the government and undermines formal law enforcement mechanisms.

Critically, social contract theory has been challenged on the grounds that it idealizes a rational agreement that may not reflect the historical or socio-political realities of many post-

colonial states like Nigeria. Critics argue that the theory assumes a level of equality and institutional functionality that does not exist in fragmented or neo-patrimonial states. In contexts where corruption, ethnic politics and resource inequality prevail, the notion of a unified social contract becomes more aspirational than actual.

However, despite these criticisms, social contract theory remains a useful tool for understanding the normative expectations of state-citizen relations. It offers a theoretical lens to assess state legitimacy and the consequences of governance failure. The theory's emphasis on the reciprocal obligations between the state and citizens justifies its application to the Nigerian situation, where the state's inability to ensure security not only violates its foundational obligations but also precipitates social disintegration. Thus, social contract theory effectively captures both the moral and structural implications of the kidnapping of Catholic priests, revealing it as a symptom of a deeper crisis in state capacity and social cohesion.

## **Materials and Methods**

This study relied exclusively on secondary data to examine the phenomenon of kidnapping of Catholic priests and its consequential erosion of social order in Nigeria within the ten-year period spanning from 2015 to 2025. The use of secondary data was essential due to the sensitive and often dangerous nature of the subject, which makes primary data collection, such as interviews with victims or security personnel, difficult and potentially unsafe. The study sourced relevant information from a diverse range of credible and verifiable secondary sources. These included media reports from reputable national and international news outlets, peer-reviewed journal articles, academic textbooks, government publications such as security and crime statistics, and church publications including diocesan statements and bulletins.

These sources were selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the scope and dynamics of priest kidnappings, offering both factual reporting and scholarly analysis. The data collected were systematically organised and examined based on three core analytical themes: prevalence, pattern and implications. Under prevalence, the study explored the frequency and geographical spread of kidnapping incidents involving Catholic priests. The pattern of kidnapping focused on the methods employed by perpetrators, timing, locations and the response of both security agencies and religious institutions. The implications dimension dealt with the broader impact of these kidnappings on Nigeria's social order,

including societal fear, religious insecurity, and disruption of spiritual life and weakening of community cohesion.

To process and interpret the data, the study adopted a qualitative analytical technique, thematic-content analysis. This method enabled the researchers to identify, analyse and interpret recurring themes and patterns within the textual data. It allowed for an in-depth exploration of how kidnapping has evolved over time and how it correlates with broader issues of social disorder, insecurity and institutional breakdown in Nigeria. Through thematic-content analysis, the study was able to draw meaningful conclusions on how the targeted kidnapping of religious figures, particularly Catholic priests, reflects and contributes to the ongoing destabilization of social norms, values and structures in the country.

## Results

**Table 1: Distribution on Cases of Kidnapped Catholic Priests in Nigeria (2015-2025)**

<b>Diocese</b>	<b>No. of Kidnapped Catholic Priests</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Wukari Diocese</b>	2	0.72
<b>Zaria Diocese</b>	1	0.36
<b>Sokoto Diocese</b>	5	1.81
<b>Kafanchan Diocese</b>	9	3.26
<b>Warri Diocese</b>	7	2.54
<b>Idah Diocese</b>	4	1.45
<b>Yola Diocese</b>	2	0.72
<b>Lafia Diocese</b>	1	0.36
<b>Archdiocese of Kaduna</b>	9	3.26
<b>Issele-Uku Diocese</b>	5	1.81
<b>Minna Diocese</b>	3	1.09
<b>Otukpo Diocese</b>	6	2.17
<b>Benin City</b>	4	1.45
<b>Shendam Diocese</b>	1	0.36
<b>Pankshin Diocese</b>	4	1.45
<b>Port Harcourt Diocese</b>	57	20.65

<b>Kontagora Diocese</b>	1	0.36
<b>Jalingo Diocese</b>	1	0.36
<b>Maiduguri Diocese</b>	1	0.36
<b>Katsina Diocese</b>	1	0.36
<b>Ekwuolobia Diocese</b>	6	2.17
<b>Auchi Diocese</b>	7	2.54
<b>Uromi Diocese</b>	5	1.81
<b>Ekiti Diocese</b>	1	0.36
<b>Kaduna Diocese</b>	31	11.23
<b>Awka Diocese</b>	7	2.54
<b>Nsukka Diocese</b>	13	4.71
<b>Owerri Diocese</b>	47	17.03
<b>Onitsha Diocese</b>	30	10.87
<b>Uyo Diocese</b>	3	1.09
<b>Ikot Ekpene Diocese</b>	1	0.36
<b>Calabar Archdiocese</b>	1	0.36
<b>Total</b>	276	100

**Source:** Compiled by Abang and Asangausung (2025)

The data from table 1 revealed a significant geographic disparity in the incidence of kidnapped Catholic priests across Nigeria between 2015 and 2025. The figures indicated that a few dioceses bear a disproportionately high brunt of these abductions. Notably, Port Harcourt Diocese stands out with the highest number of recorded cases, accounting for 20.65 per cent of the total nationwide. This is followed by Owerri Diocese at 17.03 per cent, Kaduna Diocese at 11.23 per cent and Onitsha Diocese at 10.87 per cent. These four dioceses alone account for nearly 60 per cent of all reported kidnappings, suggesting that certain regions, likely in the South-South and South-East are particularly volatile or targeted.

In contrast, a majority of the dioceses recorded relatively low incidences, with many reporting only one or two cases and representing less than 1 per cent each of the total. This uneven distribution highlights possible regional security discrepancies, differences in the level of exposure or vulnerability of clergy, or varying levels of law enforcement

effectiveness. Overall, the data paint a troubling picture of clerical insecurity, especially in specific high-risk areas and underscores the urgent need for targeted security interventions and systemic responses to curb the menace of kidnapping within the clergy in Nigeria.

**Question 1: What factors contribute to the prevalence of kidnapping among Catholic Priests in Nigeria?**

**Table 2: Factors contributing to the prevalence of kidnapping among Catholic Priests in Nigeria**

S/n	Contributing Factors	Description	Remarks
1.	Financial Motivation	Priests are perceived as wealthy and able to pay large ransoms.	Major driver due to ransom demands
2.	Weak Security Infrastructure	Poor policing and inadequate protection in rural and urban areas increase vulnerability.	Enables kidnapers to operate freely
3.	Insider Information	Kidnapers often use insiders to track priests' schedules and locations.	Suggests organised crime networks
4.	Socio-Economic Issues	Poverty, unemployment and political neglect fuel crime and desperation among youth.	Root cause driving criminal activities
5.	Geographical Vulnerability	Priests working in remote, conflict-prone, or volatile regions face higher risks.	Certain dioceses are hotspots
6.	Routine and Predictable Movements	Priests' regular routes and predictable schedules make them easier targets.	Exploited by kidnapers
7.	Religious and Political Influence	Priests' involvement in politics and community leadership makes them targets for intimidation.	Heightens risk in certain areas

**Source:** Compiled by Abang and Asangausung (2025)

The analysis of the table on factors contributing to the prevalence of kidnapping among Catholic priests in Nigeria between 2015 and 2025 reveals a convergence of socio-economic, infrastructural and strategic vulnerabilities. A key driver is the financial motivation, where priests are perceived as affluent and capable of paying substantial ransoms, thus making them lucrative targets. This is compounded by weak security infrastructure, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, where law enforcement presence is minimal or ineffective, creating an enabling environment for kidnapers to operate with impunity.

The involvement of insiders, individuals with intimate knowledge of priests' routines and whereabouts, points to a troubling level of organisation and coordination within criminal networks. Furthermore, socio-economic pressures, such as high unemployment and poverty, serve as underlying causes that push many into criminality, while geographical factors increase the vulnerability of clergy working in remote or conflict-prone regions, often with little protection or community surveillance.

Additionally, the routine and predictability of priests' movements make them soft targets, as criminals can easily track and ambush them based on known schedules. Finally, the religious and political roles that priests sometimes play in their communities may draw attention from groups seeking to suppress dissenting voices or make political statements through violence. Altogether, these factors reveal a complex, systemic problem that reflects broader national challenges in governance, security and social equity.

**Question 2: What strategies are commonly used in the kidnapping of Catholic priests in Nigeria?**

**Table 3: Strategies Commonly Used in the Kidnapping of Catholic priests in Nigeria**

S/n	Strategies Used	Description	Remarks
1.	Ambush during travel	Priests are intercepted on the road, often while travelling alone or in isolated areas.	Most common method; linked to poor road security.
2.	Attacks at parish residence or rectory	Armed intruders invade rectories, especially at night, to abduct priests.	Indicates weak community surveillance.
3.	Posing as distressed parishioners or visitors	Kidnappers pretend to seek help or religious support to lure priests into vulnerable positions.	Exploits priests' roles in offering aid and hospitality.
4.	Use of insiders/informants	Criminals rely on local informants who provide schedules and locations of priests.	Shows organised nature of the crime.
5.	Kidnapping after Mass or religious functions	Priests are trailed and attacked after religious services or community events.	Exploits predictable routines.
6.	Use of motorcycles and fast vehicles	Motorcycles are used to quickly whisk victims away through rough or narrow terrains.	Facilitates rapid escape in difficult terrain.

7. Abductions during pastoral missions or evangelism	Priests are targeted in rural areas while engaging in outreach or missionary duties.	Highlights risk in remote, underserved regions.
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**Source:** Compiled by Abang and Asangausung (2025)

The analysis of table 3 detailing strategies used in the kidnapping of Catholic priests in Nigeria between 2015 and 2025 reveals a calculated exploitation of routine, isolation and institutional vulnerabilities. The most frequently used tactics involve ambushing priests during travel, which underscores the security risks associated with poor road infrastructure and inadequate patrols, particularly in rural or isolated areas. Kidnappers have also increasingly targeted priests in their own residences, revealing weaknesses in community vigilance and parish-level security measures.

Another significant pattern involves the use of deception, with abductors posing as distressed parishioners or visitors to gain access to priests, thereby exploiting the clergy's natural disposition toward compassion and service. This manipulation of trust highlights the moral dilemma that priests face in balancing openness with personal safety.

The involvement of insiders or informants further reflects the organised nature of the crime, with kidnappers obtaining detailed information about priests' routines and movements, making targeted abductions easier. The reliance on fast and adaptable transportation, such as motorcycles, enables swift getaways through terrains that are often inaccessible to police or community responders, reinforcing the tactical advantage of kidnappers.

Additionally, the timing of abductions such as after religious functions or during missionary work, demonstrates how kidnappers leverage the priests' predictable schedules and outreach responsibilities. This not only underscores their physical vulnerability but also emphasises the growing risks the clergy faces while performing pastoral duties. Overall, the methods used reflect a blend of opportunism, strategic planning and exploitation of institutional and societal weaknesses, pointing to the need for more robust, context-sensitive security measures for religious figures across Nigeria.

**Question 3: What are the implications of the kidnapping of Catholic priests on social order in Nigeria?**

**Table 4: Implications of Kidnapping Catholic Priests on Social Order in Nigeria**

S/n	Implication	Description	Remarks
1.	Erosion of public trust in security agencies	Continued abductions despite state security efforts reduce citizens' confidence in law enforcement.	Undermines government legitimacy and effectiveness.
2.	Psychological trauma within religious communities	Fear, anxiety and grief spread among church members and clergy.	Reduces spiritual participation and social cohesion.
3.	Disruption of religious and pastoral activities	Clergy limit movement and outreach due to fear of abduction.	Hampers the Church's mission and societal influence.
4.	Normalisation of criminality and violence	Frequent kidnappings without justice create a culture of impunity.	Encourages more criminal acts.
5.	Weakening of moral and spiritual authority	Priests, once seen as untouchable, are now seen as vulnerable.	Affects societal values and moral leadership.
6.	Decline in missionary and humanitarian engagement	Fear of abduction discourages priests and missionaries from working in volatile regions.	Reduces access to education, healthcare and charity services.
7.	Economic consequences on Church and families	Huge ransoms burden dioceses and families; financial drain weakens institutional stability.	Diverts resources from development projects.
8.	Religious tension and communal suspicion	Targeting of priests may be interpreted as religious persecution.	Fuels interfaith distrust and social unrest.

**Source:** Compiled by Abang and Asangausung (2025)

The data presented in table 4 reveal that the kidnapping of Catholic priests in Nigeria has far-reaching implications for the nation's social order, destabilizing both religious institutions and broader societal structures. One of the most critical consequences is the growing erosion of public trust in security agencies. Despite government claims of tackling insecurity, the persistent occurrence of priest abductions reflects a failure in state protection mechanisms, thereby undermining public confidence and the perceived legitimacy of law enforcement.

Psychologically, these abductions inflict trauma on religious communities, fostering fear, anxiety and grief among clergy and laity alike. This emotional toll diminishes participation in spiritual and communal life, weakening social cohesion. Furthermore, the constant threat of abduction disrupts pastoral duties, as clergy restrict their movements and activities, leading to a decline in religious outreach and the Church's influence in addressing community needs.

The normalization of such criminal acts fosters a culture of impunity, where violent crimes become increasingly tolerated due to the lack of justice and accountability. This atmosphere weakens the moral authority once held by priests, who were traditionally viewed as sacrosanct figures. Their vulnerability sends a troubling message about the shifting moral landscape and the diminishing reverence for religious and ethical values in society.

Moreover, the fear generated by these incidents discourages missionary and humanitarian engagement, especially in rural and volatile regions, thereby reducing access to vital services like education, healthcare and charity work. The financial burden associated with ransom payments places immense strain on both dioceses and affected families, diverting resources from development efforts and weakening institutional resilience.

Finally, these abductions risk igniting religious and communal tensions, as they may be interpreted as targeted attacks on Christian clergy. Such perceptions can fuel interfaith suspicion, deepen societal fractures and provoke unrest. Overall, the kidnapping of Catholic priests not only threatens the safety of religious figures but also significantly destabilizes Nigeria's socio-religious harmony, institutional credibility and national unity.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study revealed a deeply entrenched and systemic crisis concerning the kidnapping of Catholic priests in Nigeria, highlighting the convergence of financial, structural and socio-political factors that sustain this alarming trend. The widespread nature of these abductions between 2015 and 2025 underscores not just isolated criminal activity but a national security emergency with implications for religious freedom, public trust and social order. The data clearly showed that Catholic priests have become prime targets due to a combination of predictable routines, lack of personal security, perceived access to church wealth and their symbolic religious and community leadership roles.

The high prevalence recorded in dioceses such as Port Harcourt (20.65%), Owerri (17.03%), Kaduna (11.23%) and Onitsha (10.87%), reflects both geographical vulnerabilities and contextual variations in regional insecurity. These figures suggest that the threat is not confined to any single region but is rather a reflection of the broader deterioration of law and order across the country. This finding is corroborated by Nobert (2025), who documented 63 kidnapped priests, with 51 released and 12 killed, spanning several dioceses, including Kaduna, Benin City and Sokoto. The disproportionately high number of fatalities in places such as the Archdiocese of Kaduna and Sokoto Diocese confirms that certain regions are particularly volatile, possibly due to heightened religious extremism or insurgency activity.

The statistical data also reinforce the alarming frequency of these incidents. ACN International (2023), reported that 23 clergy members, including priests, religious sisters and seminarians, were kidnapped within a single year, with one brutally murdered; further evidence that clergy remain among the most vulnerable groups in the Nigerian society. Over a ten-year period, Agenzia Fides (2025) and Zengarini (2025), reported that 145 priests were kidnapped, with 11 killed and 4 still missing. Akinselure (2025), provided an even higher estimate, indicating that 204 Catholic priests and seminarians were abducted in the last decade, with 15 killed in captivity. These consistent figures across different sources reinforce the credibility of the present study's findings and demonstrate that the crisis is not abating.

The motivations behind these abductions are complex and multifaceted. The findings align with existing literature which identifies financial extortion as a primary driver, as kidnapers often demand ransoms with the assumption that churches and dioceses can pay. However, beyond ransom-seeking, political intimidation and religious persecution also feature as underlying motives, particularly in regions experiencing ethno-religious tensions or militant insurgencies. This pattern of targeted violence is consistent with Ezeh's (2025), observation that the kidnapping of 133 priests over the same decade resulted in 13 deaths, indicating that the danger to the clergy is both real and growing.

These findings underscore the critical failure of security systems to protect even high-profile, non-political citizens such as priests, whose work centers on peace building, charity and spiritual care. The persistence of these abductions points to weak intelligence operations, insufficient security infrastructure, insider collusion and a broader collapse of state control in certain areas. The involvement of armed groups with varying agenda, ranging from financial

profiteering to religious extremism, exacerbates the challenge, making priests easy targets due to their public visibility and predictable routines.

Ultimately, the study reinforces the notion that the kidnapping of Catholic priests is both a symptom and a driver of Nigeria's weakening social order. It reflects broader issues of governance failure, social inequality and moral decline, while also contributing to societal fear, erosion of public faith in institutions and the disruption of religious life. The sustained nature of the crisis demands urgent, multidimensional intervention at both national and ecclesiastical levels to protect clergy, restore security and uphold the sanctity of religious practice in Nigeria.

Another finding revealed that the kidnapping of Catholic priests in Nigeria follows a systematic and well-coordinated pattern, characterised by calculated planning, exploitation of routine behaviour and tactical use of violence. This emerging trend aligns closely with the literature, which underscores how perpetrators target priests in vulnerable moments and familiar environments. The consistent use of ambushes during travel, attacks on parish residences and impersonation of parishioners show that kidnappers are not only familiar with the routines and structures of the Catholic clergy but are also increasingly emboldened by the weak security systems that fail to deter or respond effectively to these crimes.

Chintom (2025), affirmed this by highlighting the targeted nature of such attacks, noting how Catholic priests are frequently abducted while traveling, such as in the case of Rev. Fr. John Ubaechu, who was kidnapped on his way to a religious retreat. This reflects the broader finding that travel routes, particularly those taken regularly or during church events, have become hotspots for abductions. Similarly, the use of motorcycles and unmarked vehicles for escape, as seen in multiple reported incidents demonstrates the tactical mobility of the kidnappers and the ease with which they operate in both rural and urban settings. The All Africa (2025), report provides further evidence of such tactics, documenting a priest's abduction at a gas station in Anambra State by individuals using an untraceable white SUV. That he was only rescued by the combined force of police, army and community vigilantes reflects the degree of threat these incidents pose and the difficulty in responding promptly.

The destructive nature of these kidnappings, involving physical force and property damage, further corroborates the findings. Chintom (2025), provided a vivid example in the case of Rev. Father Philip Ekweli and a major seminarian, where the attackers forcibly broke into the rectory and engaged in a gunfight with local vigilantes. This incident reveals not only

the level of firepower available to the assailants but also the insufficient capacity of community-based security structures to defend against such violent incursions. The kidnappers' willingness to use lethal force and cause destruction to achieve their goals supports the finding that these are not opportunistic crimes but deliberate acts carried out with considerable planning and aggression.

Moreover, the literature underscores that many of these attacks are not random but involve insider collaboration or surveillance, allowing kidnappers to exploit moments when priests are alone, after mass, or during routine pastoral duties. This corresponds with the study's finding that attackers often pose as parishioners or rely on inside information to gain access to clergy. The blending of external threats with internal vulnerabilities points to a deepening security crisis within the religious domain, where even sacred spaces and trusted circles can no longer be considered safe.

The recurrence of these patterns over time, combined with the rising number of incidents and the inability of existing security mechanisms to stem the tide has created a climate of fear and instability within the Catholic community. The findings from the literature reflect not just the operational tactics of kidnappers but also the broader erosion of religious freedom and safety. Catholic priests, by virtue of their visibility and symbolic leadership, have become high-value targets in a country where law enforcement is often reactive, under-resourced and overwhelmed.

Further findings revealed that the kidnapping of Catholic priests in Nigeria poses a serious threat to social order by destabilizing fundamental pillars of societal cohesion, trust and moral authority. This disruption is particularly pronounced within religious communities, where priests serve not only as spiritual leaders but also as social stabilizers and moral exemplars. The trauma inflicted by these abductions extends beyond the immediate victims to the broader community, as fear, anxiety and a sense of helplessness permeate congregations and religious institutions. These findings closely align with Olofin's (2020), analysis, which underscores how kidnapping fractures social relationships, inhibits social interaction and erodes public confidence in communal cooperation and security structures.

The study also highlights the psychological consequences of such kidnappings, especially among clergy and laity, as fear of abduction begins to define religious participation and community engagement. This mirrors the findings of Olulowo *et al.* (2021), who noted that persistent insecurity discourages church attendance, weakens commitment to religious

activities and undermines the Church's broader role in providing mentorship, charity and moral guidance. The declining capacity for outreach and spiritual programs ultimately diminishes the Church's influence, undermining one of the country's most vital moral institutions.

Moreover, the findings draw attention to the economic implications of kidnapping Catholic priests, especially as church communities are often forced to mobilize resources for ransom payments or security reinforcement. Inyang and Ubong (2013), as well as Ilechukwu (2015), provide further clarity here, noting that ransom payments represent a direct financial loss, particularly when the victims are central providers or leaders of communities. Indirectly, parishes and dioceses are compelled to invest in security personnel and protective infrastructure, which diverts funds from other vital developmental and social services. These financial pressures weaken institutional sustainability and disrupt the Church's capacity to function effectively as a support system for many Nigerians.

The findings also corroborate Osegboun and Oladipo's (2023), broader observation that kidnapping contributes to a national and international perception of Nigeria as unsafe and unstable. The repeated abduction of priests a class of individuals widely regarded as peaceful and non-political, amplifies fears of lawlessness and institutional failure. This tarnishes Nigeria's global image and discourages foreign investments and partnerships that could otherwise contribute to national development. Furthermore, the religious dimension of these kidnappings, especially when framed by political or ethnic motivations, fuels inter-communal suspicion and religious tension, thereby aggravating existing divisions within the country.

Lastly, the normalization of criminal behaviour and impunity, particularly in regions where kidnappers operate freely and are rarely brought to justice contributes to a broader erosion of social values. As criminality becomes more entrenched, especially when it targets respected religious figures without adequate response, public disillusionment with the justice system deepens. This finding aligns with the views of Odoma and Akor (2019), who highlighted how kidnapping is not merely an economic or security issue but a symptom of deeper structural weaknesses, including poor governance, unemployment and moral decay.

In sum, the findings strongly affirm that the kidnapping of Catholic priests has far-reaching implications for Nigeria's social order. It compromises moral leadership, generates fear and trauma, damages economic livelihoods and undermines both religious authority and

public trust in the state's capacity to ensure safety. These consequences, taken together, threaten the long-term stability and cohesion of Nigerian society.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the incidence of the kidnapping of Catholic priests and its implications on social order in Nigeria (2015-2025). Drawing on a wide range of secondary data sources; media reports, academic literature, church records and government publications, the study identified recurring patterns, motivations and consequences of this deeply troubling phenomenon. The findings revealed that the kidnapping of Catholic priests is not isolated or incidental, but rather a systemic and growing threat marked by coordinated attacks, insider collaboration, strategic ambushes and exploitation of weak security infrastructure. Priests are often targeted during travel, after religious functions or within parish residences, reflecting a disturbing trend of calculated violence.

The study also found that the implications of kidnapping on social order are far-reaching. These include a deterioration of public trust in security institutions, disruption of religious life, psychological trauma, weakening of moral and religious authority and significant financial burdens on communities. The crisis has compounded socio-political instability, encouraged capital flight and damaged Nigeria's international image. Religious institutions, once pillars of stability and community support, have been significantly affected, leading to decreased church attendance, reduced participation in spiritual programs and strained communal relationships.

In terms of contribution to knowledge, this study advances the academic discourse on security and religion by providing a focused analysis of how religious figures, particularly Catholic priests, have become targets in Nigeria's broader insecurity crisis. Moreover, by documenting statistical evidence across multiple dioceses and over a decade, the study established a comprehensive empirical base that future researchers and policymakers can draw upon.

For further studies, scholars may consider investigating the psychological impact of kidnapping of Catholic priests on congregants and seminarians, the role of non-state actors in securing the release of abducted clergy or a comparative analysis between Nigeria and other countries facing similar threats to religious leaders. A more in-depth qualitative study

involving interviews with victims, church leaders and community members would also enrich the current understanding and provide more grounded responses to the crisis.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Strengthen Security Infrastructure for Clergy and Religious Institutions: The Catholic Church, in collaboration with security agencies, should implement advanced security measures, including surveillance systems, designated safe zones and trained security personnel for clergy members, particularly in high-risk areas. Enhancing physical security at parishes, seminaries and priests' residences will deter potential kidnapers.
- ii. Enhance Law Enforcement and Judicial Response: The Nigerian government should enforce stricter anti-kidnapping laws, ensuring swift prosecution of offenders and dismantling kidnapping networks. Specialized security units should be deployed to monitor and respond to threats against clergy, while intelligence gathering must be intensified to pre-empt attacks.
- iii. Address Socio-economic Causes of Kidnapping: Long-term solutions require tackling the economic and social drivers of crime. Government and religious institutions should invest in youth empowerment programmes, job creation and poverty alleviation initiatives to reduce the financial desperation that fuels kidnappings.

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**ADOLESCENT–PARENT COMMUNICATION ON SEXUAL AND  
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ISSUES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS  
IN MAKURDI METROPOLIS, BENUE STATE-NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

Adolescent – parent communication on sexual and reproductive health issues have been a challenge in developing countries where culture and tradition have seemingly embargoed such discussions. The study investigated adolescent – parent communication on sexual and reproductive health issues among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State. The specific objectives were to: ascertain the level of awareness of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issue, the effects of SRH communication on sexual practices and behavior, and the factors affecting adolescent-parent communication on SRH issues. The study adopted the family communication theory as a theoretical guide and adopted a cross sectional survey design. A total of 394 respondents were selected using multistage sampling. Data were collected with the use of questionnaire. Data were analyzed and hypotheses were tested with the use of SPSS and descriptive statistics utilizing frequency tables and percentages. Findings revealed among others that the level of awareness of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues among secondary school students in the area was low; the major effects of SRH communication on the sexual practices and behaviour were increased knowledge and understanding of risky sexual behaviour, delay in early sexual debut, improved contraceptive use and reduced incidences of unplanned pregnancies. Factors affecting adolescent parent communication on SRH issues were identified as cultural and social norms like taboos and generational gap, fear of misconception, negative societal attitudes towards discussing sexuality which create shame and discomfort. The study recommends that parents should improve adolescent – parent communication on sexual and reproductive health issues to ensure the passage of genuine information to adolescents to enable them make informed choices concerning their sexual lives; parents should initiate discussions on SRH issues with their adolescents' children early in life to ensure that they make the right choices concerning their sexual life. Parents should also forge strong bonds with their children through an atmosphere of friendship and trust, to enable them freely discuss sensitive issues concerning sexual and reproductive health issues.

**Keywords:** Adolescents; Communication; Health; Parents; Sexuality.

## **Introduction**

Adolescence refers to the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescents are individuals that fall between the age group of 10 and 19 years (United Nation, 2022). The total world population stood at 7.3 billion in 2022 with 1.2 billion adolescents making up 16 percent of the world's population (UNICEF, 2022). Twenty-three percent of West and Central Africa is made up of adolescents and according to UNICEF projections this population is expected to grow further by thirty-two percent between year 2019 and 2030, from 124 million to 164 million. Nigeria has a population of 202,475,757, with over 30 million Nigerians aged between 10-19 years (Worldometers, 2019; Esiet, 2019; UNICEF, 2019).

Adolescence age is characterized by secondary sexual growth, physical, biological, mental, emotional and hormonal changes (Allen & Waterman 2019). Due to the predominance of adolescents' sexual activities globally and its health consequences among the adolescent population, UNICEF (2019), listed adolescents aged between 10-19 years as contributing to four percent out of the eleven percent of the world's population living with HIV/AIDS. Also, WHO (2019) report shows that more than one million sexually transmitted infections are acquired daily by adolescents. Lack of communication on sexual and reproduction health may account for the rising figure of sexually transmitted infection statistics globally among adolescents.

Globally, studies show that most adolescents have multiple sex partners, an act which endangers their lives as they are made susceptible to STIs/HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, abortions and other adverse consequences. This was revealed in the study conducted by Azuike, Iloghalu, Emelumadu, Batogun, Ebulue, Obi, Obi and Enweonwu (2015). The authors reported that more than half of the respondents had multiple sex partners and 74.7 percent of the adolescent respondents had unprotected sex during their first sexual intercourse while 83.3% of the females who got pregnant terminated the pregnancies.

In Africa, adolescent pregnancy remains a major contributor to maternal and child mortality. Pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of death among 15-19 years-old girls globally (WHO, 2015; WHO, 2016). Early pregnancy and childbirth could be a result of sexual violence, unprotected sexual intercourse, lack of information and communication on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Adolescent girls could risk challenges ranging from anemia, pregnancy -induced hypertension, premature birth and vesicovaginal fistula (VVF). Some other effects of unprotected sex are increase in school dropout, unsafe abortion, maternal mortality,

systemic infections and injury (WHO, 2018; NPC & ICF, 2019). Communication on SRH between parents and adolescents according to studies has been reported to be low as most adolescents are unaware of the need to use protection during sexual intercourse. Many are unaware of the types of contraception available, how to access such services or how they are used.

In sub-Saharan Africa, some factors have been identified as determinants of adolescent-parent communication on SRH. Some of these factors are; cultural orientation, religious affiliation, parental knowledge on SRH and communication pattern (Atitegeb & Feketo et al., 2016). Vilanculos & Nduna (2017), revealed through their study in 3 South African provinces that cultural and religious constructions of taboo made adolescent-parent communication on SRH difficult. Other factors are family size, place of residence and sex of adolescents (Vilanculos & Nduna, 2017; Titiloye & Ajuwon, 2017)

In Nigeria, the 2018 NDHS reported that 49.6 percent of female adolescents among others, reported cases of STIs and STI symptoms (NPC & ICF Macro, 2019). In the same vein, 39.4 percent and 2.7 percent of female and male respondents, respectively reported bad-smelling/abnormal genital discharges. Knowledge about the modes of HIV transmission and its prevention was reported to be low (46% for women and 45% for men) (NDHS, 2018). According to the National Demographic Health Survey, Benue State recorded almost 50 percent of STIs among adolescents (NPC & ICF, 2019). Azuike & Iloghalu et al. (2015), attributed this to low communication on SRH issues between parents and adolescents. The major factors associated with adolescent-parent communication on SRH need more and greater exploration. This study therefore attempts to examine adolescent-parent communication on sexual and reproductive (SRH) issues in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state

### **Statement of the Problem**

Adolescent-parents communication on SRH means passing information on menstruation, contraception, STIs, adolescent pregnancy, abortion, and sexual abstinence from parents to adolescents. Adolescents need reliable sexual and reproductive health information to make responsible choices. Proper adolescent-parent communication on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) has been identified from studies to contribute positively to adolescents' health and wellbeing (Odimegwu, Solanke & Oyedokun, 2017).

Several studies have been carried out on adolescent-parent communication of sexual reproductive health (SRH) and many of them reported that parents rarely or partly communicate sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues with their adolescent children (Khamsiah, Raiiah and Hamid, 2016; Aperkor, 2016; Zakaria, Junfang, Farzana & Cheng, 2019). Adolescent-parent communication on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues may lead to deferring of sexual gratification. A study by Odimegwu & Solanke et al. (2017), on parental characteristics and adolescent sexual behavior in Bida Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria, confirmed that adolescents with whom parents had communicated sexual and reproductive health were less likely to be sexually active than those with whom parents had never discussed SRH issues with. Adolescent-parent communication in most homes center on menstruation and abstinence while barely or completely ignoring contraceptive use as reported by several studies (Nwangwu Ezea, Nwosuji& Achonwa, 2017; Iliyasu, Aliyu, Abubakar, & Galadanci, 2012).

Although there are considerable number of studies on adolescent-parent communication on SRH issues in Nigeria and Benue State, most of them focused only on adolescents. For instance, Azuike, Iloghalu Emelumadu, Balogun, Ebulue, Obi, Obi and Enweonwu, (2015), examined sexual behavior among senior secondary school students in Nnewi South LGA of Anambra State; Ogu, Arinze- Onya & Obionu (2019) also studied parental verbal communication on sexual knowledge of Senior secondary school students in South-East Nigeria while Odimegwu, Solanke and Oyedokun (2017), focused on parental characteristics and adolescent sexual behaviour in Bida LGA of Niger State. However, none of these studies included male and female adolescents. This study is therefore poised to fill the gap by investigating adolescent-parent communication on SRH using both male and female adolescents in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Ascertain the level of awareness of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State;
- ii. Determine the effects of SRH communication on sexual practices and behavior among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State
- iii. Examine the factors affecting adolescent-parent communication on SRH in the study area.

## **Research Hypotheses**

- H<sub>01</sub>.** Parents' educational level has no significant effect on the quality of communication with their adolescent children about sexual and reproductive health.
- H<sub>02</sub>** There is no significant association between the frequency of parent–adolescent communication and the level of knowledge adolescents have about sexual and reproductive health.
- H<sub>02</sub>** There is no significant level of awareness of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis.

## **Literature and Theoretical Framework**

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Adolescence**

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by rapid physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. During this transitional period, individuals begin to form their identities, establish autonomy, and develop lifelong habits that influence health and well-being. According to the (WHO, 2022), adolescence spans the ages of 10 to 19 years and is considered a time of both opportunity and vulnerability. Health outcomes during this stage are heavily influenced by factors such as family background, socioeconomic status, education, peer relationships, and access to healthcare.

#### **Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)**

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is a fundamental aspect of overall well-being, encompassing the ability to have a safe and satisfying sex life, the capability to reproduce, and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), defines SRH as not merely the absence of disease, but a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being related to the reproductive system. In sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, cultural taboos, gender norms, and inadequate SRH services often prevent young people from accessing accurate information and healthcare. Studies have shown that adolescents with greater SRH knowledge are more likely to engage in protective sexual behavior and seek reproductive health services (Okonofua et al., 2019; UNFPA, 2021).

## **Level of Awareness of Sexual and Reproductive Health among Secondary School Students**

Studies have reported that the level of adolescent parent communication on SRH issues is low. For instance, a study was carried out by Yohannes & Tsegaye (2015) on the barriers to parent adolescent communication on sexual and reproductive health issues among secondary and preparatory school students in Yirgalem, town, South Ethiopia; the study made use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and a sample population of 684 students taken from 9 - 12 grades. Focus Group Discussions were carried out separately for male and female parents. The result of the study showed that parent-adolescent communication on SRH issues were considered to be low because 59.1 percent discussed SRH issues with their parents. SRH communication is hampered by the culture of silence about sex and sexuality practiced in Africa. Khamsiah, Rafiah & Hamid (2016), conducted a study which examined communication sex- reproductive health issues with adolescents: A taboo among Malaysian parents. The study aimed at examining the sexuality and reproductive health issues that adolescents communicate with their parents and adolescents' views on matters related to the topics. The research data were collected from 504 urban, semi urban and rural geographical school locations zones in Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia using a quantitative method of analysis. The result showed that Malaysian teens were found to rarely discuss issues related to sexual and reproductive health with their parents but they would be willing to discuss with them as long as their parents would not turn them down.

## **Effects of Adolescent -Parent Communication on Sexual and Reproductive Health**

Adolescent parent communication has been noted to promote positive sexual behavior among adolescents. Odimegwu, & Solanke, et al (2017), carried out a study on the parental characteristics and adolescent sexual behavior in Bida Local Government Area of Niger State, which employed a structured interview using 200 adolescents aged 12- 24 years as the sample population. The findings showed that more than 1/3 of the adolescents interviewed had had sexual intercourse in the month preceding the survey period. Also, less than 1/5 of the sexually active adolescents were using a method of contraception to either prevent infections or avoid unwanted pregnancy. Further analysis confirmed that adolescents with whom parents had discussed family life issues were less likely to be sexually active than those with whom parents had never discussed family issues. Family instability was found to harm adolescents.

The main sources of sexual and reproductive health information among adolescents in Nigeria are mostly through peers and mass media while less come from the parents and teachers. A study by Onyenoro & Oshi et al (2015) on the sources of sexuality information and its effect on sexual practices among in school female adolescents in Osisioma Ngwa Local Government Area, South East Nigeria for instance, employed a quantitative survey using a sample population of 304 girls. The result of the findings showed that the primary sources of sexual information among the girls were media and peers as families and school were not involved in provision of early sex education. Knowledge of issues about sex was reported to be low whereas premarital sex, sexual initiations and unprotected sex was common. Unplanned pregnancies and induced abortion was prevalent. Due to late education on SRH many of the adolescents due to ignorance practice unsafe sex while sexual debut starts early in the adolescents' lives. Azuike & Iloghalu et al (2015) also did a study on the behavior of students in senior secondary school students in Nnewi North and South Local government areas of Anambra State, South Eastern Nigeria and utilized descriptive cross sectional study focusing on 394 students aged 12-24 years. The study reported that 24.1% of the adolescent respondents admitted to having their first sexual debut at 12+years. More than half of the adolescents had multiple sex partners while 74.7% did not use condoms during their first sexual intercourse and as much as 83.3% of the females who got pregnant terminated the pregnancies.

### **Factors Affecting Adolescent - Parent Communication**

Some cultures and religions view the discussion about sex as a taboo and this affects communication about sexuality issues. The findings of Iliyasu & Aliyu et al (2012) in their study on sexual and reproductive health communication between mothers and their adolescent daughters in northern Nigeria shows that adolescents and their mothers based their discussions on marriage, menstruation, courtship, premarital sex and sexually transmitted infections and stayed away from other sex education topics.

The level of trust and relationship between parents and their adolescent children can affect their discussions on SRH issues. Parents serve as the first agents of socialization for their children. Furthermore, in the quantitative study carried out among 365 secondary school students aged between 14 – 16years in Abeokuta LGA by Omozusi & Moyosere (2016) on the influence of parental guidance on teenage pregnancy among secondary school female adolescents discovered that adolescents were afraid to discuss some sensitive issues with their

parents and a result (67.9%) revealed that they received sexuality education from friends and (87%) acknowledged that they did not learn from their parents.

According to several studies, sexual debuts among the adolescent population in Nigeria start early. In the quantitative study carried out by Azuike & Iloghalu et al (2015) on the sexual behavior among senior secondary school students in Nnewi South L.G.A of Anambra state among 394 young people aged 12-24 years, it was discovered that 24.1% admitted to previous sexual debut at 12+ years and more than half of the adolescent respondents had multiple sex partners and 74.7% did not use condoms during their first sexual intercourse while 83.3% of the females who got pregnant terminated the pregnancies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study utilized the Family Communication Patterns theory. The Family communication patterns theory was developed by Fritze Patrick and Koerner in 2006 and it is a general theory of family communication that focuses on parent-child communication concerned with establishing a shared social reality. Shared reality exists when family members' cognitions concerning an object or issue are seen to be correct and in agreement. Families do this using a combination of two orientations, which include conversation and conformity. The conversation orientation encourages family members to share thoughts, feelings, and opinions to understand one another's view on the topic, while believers of orientation encourage all family members to participate in defining social reality. Social reality, when shared with others, makes it easier to understand and to be easily understood, and reduces misunderstandings and conflicts.

Therefore, conflicts are eliminated in families that share a social reality and who communicate with one another more accurately. This helps to support or enhance the child's self-esteem and at the same time, lowers the child's sexual risk behaviors (Enejoh et al, 2016). The Family Communication pattern theory is useful in adolescent parent communication as it explains how family members' communication about social realities, such as SRH issues, leads to a better understanding, creates support for adolescents, and raises their self-esteem. Family communication pattern theory was criticized based on the argument that FCPT is neither interpretative nor critical; it claims to describe what family communication is and how it functions, not how it might be interpreted within a given context (Braithwaite et al, 2017).

## Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional survey design was employed in eliciting data for this study. Survey is often a suited method for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes (Babble, 2013; Haralambos and Holborn, 2013). The total population of Makurdi local government is projected to be 433, 700, (NPC, 2022), with the population of adolescents 12-19 years is 89,352. The population of the study was adolescents who enrolled in secondary school in Makurdi metropolis at time of the study, so the population of secondary students enrolled in secondary schools in Makurdi metropolis stood at 29,416 as 2023 (State Ministry of Education Register of enrollment 2023). Therefore, our study population is 29,416 secondary school students. Taro Yamane, (1967) formula for sample size determination was used to determine sample size. The sample size was estimated at 0.05 level of confidence.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N (e)^2}$$

Where

n = Sample Size

N = Population Size

e = Level of Precision or (limit of tolerable error)

$$n = \frac{29416}{1 + 29416 (0.5)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{29416}{1 + 29416 (0.0025)}$$
$$n = \frac{29416}{1 + 73.54}$$

$$n = \frac{29416}{74.54}$$

$$n = 394$$

This study employed multistage sampling involving cluster, purposive, and simple random sampling. The assumption is that people of similar characteristics tend to cluster or live together in designated residential areas. Using cluster sampling, Makurdi was clustered into the six council wards that make up the metropolis into six clusters. Purposive sampling was used to select adolescents across secondary schools in the six councilwards. The secondary schools selected were both private and government-owned. The schools selected include: Government Secondary School (GSS) in North Bank I, Tilley Gyado College from North Bank II, Anglican Secondary School from Ankpa/Wadata ward, ECWA secondary School from Modern Market Ward, Government Model Secondary School from Central South Mission Ward, and Aggo College from Wailomayo Ward. Quota sampling was used to

select students per secondary school by (dividing the Population of the selected secondary school by the total population of all the schools and multiplying the result by the sample size. Finally, purposive sampling was used to select students in their classes from ages 12 – 19 years who were considered eligible for the study as shown in the table below;

**Table 1: Population of sample students per council ward**

<b>Council Ward</b>	<b>Number of Sec. Sch. per Ward</b>	<b>Name of Sampled Sec. Sch. Per Ward</b>	<b>Population of the Selected Sec. Sch.</b>	<b>Sample Students per Sch</b>
<b>North Bank I</b>	4	GSS North Bank	480	60
<b>North Bank II</b>	4	Tilley Gyado College	560	70
<b>Ankpa/Wadata</b>	5	Anglican Sec. Sch,	600	75
<b>Modern Market</b>	3	ECWA Sec. School	590	74
<b>Central South Mission</b>	5	Government Model Sec, Sch,	503	63
<b>Wailomayo</b>	5	Aggo College	420	52
<b>Total</b>			<b>3153</b>	<b>394</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The primary source of data collection was used in this study; this was done through questionnaire instrument. Questionnaires were administered to the selected secondary schools including GSS North Bank, Tilley Gyado College, Anglican Secondary School, ECWA Secondary School, Government Model Secondary School, and Aggo College to get data, so that the objectives of the study would be achieved. The questionnaire was self and other-administered. The questionnaire was designed in a structured format to collect data from sample respondents.

This study adopted quantitative technique of data analysis. Data gotten through questionnaire will be analyzed quantitatively using Statistical tools such as tables, frequencies and simple percentages. The One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was preferred to test the variance of parent’s educational level and quality of communication. This test statistic was significant at 0.05 level of significance (Alpha value) and a 95% confidence interval. Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test was appropriate to test hypothesis two, awareness level.

## Results

Analysis was based on 379 questionnaire copies that were retrieved from the field.

**Table 2: Socio-demographic Attributes of Respondents**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency N=379</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Male	178	47.0
Female	201	53.0
<b>Respondents Age</b>		
12 – 13	80	21.1
14 – 15	123	32.5
16 – 19	176	46.4
<b>Class</b>		
JSS 1 – 3	125	33.0
SSS 1 – 3	254	67.0
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	351	92.6
Islam	28	7.4
Traditional	-	-

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

Data presented in table 2 show that 47.0 (178) respondents were male while 53.0% (201) respondents were females. This implies that more female respondents participated in the study.

Respondents' ages were categorized into three broad groups. The categories were; 12-13, 14-15 and 16-19 years. Majority of the respondents 46.4% (176) were between ages 16-19 followed by 32.5% (123) were between 14-15 years old. Then 21.1% (80) were between ages 12-13 years. The majority were the ones who were matured and had the knowledge to openly discuss sexual and reproductive health.

Data on class of respondents show that majority of respondents, 67.0% (254) were in SS 1-3 classes, while 33.0% (125) were in JSS 1-3 classes. This data implies that the majority of respondents are in senior secondary school classes and their ages determined their participation in the study.

Data on religious affiliation showed that majority of the respondents were Christians, represented by 92.6% (351).

**Table 3: Level of Awareness of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Issues among Secondary School Students.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	175	46.2
Moderate	99	26.1
High	57	15.0
Don't know	48	12.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey 2024

In table 3 majority of the respondents, 46.2% (175) averred that the level of awareness of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis was low. 26.1% of the respondents reported it was moderate.

**Table 4: Effects of SRH Communication on the Sexual Practices and Behaviour among Secondary School Students**

Effects	Valid N	Mean	Percent	Std. Error of Mean
Increase knowledge and understanding of risky sexual behaviour	379	4.37	59.2	.058
Delay early sexual debut	379	3.45	52.6	.064
Improve contraceptive use	379	4.04	43.8	.070
Reduced unplanned pregnancies	379	3.43	44.2	.076
Enables and improve negotiations for safer sex	379	4.57	64.5	.050
Improve confidence in communication skills on the sexual issues with the opposite sex	379	4.04	43.8	.065
Increase awareness rights	379	3.49	53.4	.055
Prevent long term chronic health conditions	379	2.91	36.9	.067
Improves health relationships	379	3.62	40.6	.060
Improves open discussion with parents and their children	379	3.45	45.0	.057

**Note:** 1–1.8= strongly disagree, 1.81–2.60= disagree, 2.61–3.40= undecided, 3.41–4.20= agree, 4.21–5.0= strongly agree.

As shown in table 4, majority of respondents  $X = 4.37$ , 59.2% strongly agreed that, increase knowledge and understanding of risky sexual behaviour is one of the effects of SRH communication on the sexual practices and behaviour among secondary school students. Majority of respondents  $X = 4.04$ , 43.8% agreed with improve contraceptive use. Majority of respondents  $X = 4.57$ , 64.5% agree with enables and improve negotiations for safer sex  $X = 4.04$ , 43.8% also agree with improve confidence in communication skills on

the sexual issues with the opposite sex among others. As observed, results were reliable and consistent with the sample, hence the estimated standardized error of all means across the variables were  $\leq 1$ . This implies that estimates from sampled responses are consistent with population parameters, thus results reflect the reality of effects of SRH communication on the sexual practices and behaviour among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis.

**Table 5: Factors affecting Adolescent parent Communication on SRH issues among Secondary School Students**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Valid N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Std. Error of Mean</b>
Cultural and social norms like taboos and generational gap	379	3.88	49.1	.055
Lack of knowledge and communication skills	379	3.06	41.9	.061
Fear of misconception	379	3.66	53.8	.048
Cultural and religious beliefs	379	3.50	49.4	.064
Negative societal attitudes towards discussing sexuality can create shame and discomfort	379	3.88	49.1	.055
Adolescents and parents may feel embarrassed or awkward discussing intimate sexual issues	379	3.45	45.0	.047
Concerns about confidentiality may prevent open dialogue, especially if adolescents fear judgment or punishment	379	3.49	40.0	.069
In some cultures, gender roles dictate that certain topics should be discussed by specific genders, making communication challenging	379	3.96	41.9	.058
Expectations about what is appropriate for boys versus girls in terms of SRH discussions can be a barrier	379	4.23	59.8	.072
A positive, trusting relationship between parents and adolescents fosters open communication	379	3.57	44.0	.073
Parents and adolescents may have busy schedules, leaving little time for meaningful conversations	379	3.56	45.1	.056

Parental and adolescence educational background determines the level of sexual communication	379	3.96	41.9	.058
Lack of access to resource like internet, books and media	379	2.18	58.4	.052

**Note:** 1–1.8= strongly disagree, 1.81–2.60= disagree, 2.61–3.40= undecided, 3.41–4.20= agree, 4.21–5.0= strongly agree.

Table 5 shows common responses found among respondents as regards the factors affecting adolescent parent communication on SRH issues among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis. This result revealed that an average of  $X = 3.88$ , 49.1% of respondents agreed with cultural and social norms like taboos and generational gap as a factor. An average of  $M = 3.88$ , 49.1% of respondents agree that negative societal attitudes towards discussing sexuality can create shame and discomfort. Also an average of  $X = 4.23$ , 49.8% agreed that expectations about what is appropriate for boys versus girls in terms of SRH discussions can be a barrier among others.

### Test of Hypotheses

The first hypothesis for this study proposed that:

- H<sub>0</sub>.** Parents' educational level has no significant effect on the quality of communication with their adolescent children about sexual and reproductive health.
- H<sub>1</sub>:** Parents' educational level has a significant effect on the quality of communication with their adolescent children about sexual and reproductive health.

Having met the required statistical conditions of normality and reliability of distribution of variables, and given the nature of this hypothesis, the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was preferred to test the variance of parents' educational level and quality of communication

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for ANOVA**

Educational Level	N	Mean Comm. Score	Std. Deviation
No formal education	70	4.2	1.8
Primary education	95	4.9	2.0
Secondary education	110	5.6	1.9
Tertiary education	104	6.4	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>		

**Source:** Field Survey 2024.

The mean score value of both variables differs significantly, and this suggests a considerable difference in the level of education and effect on quality of communication between parents and adolescents.

**Table 7: One-way ANOVA Test Result**

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Statistic	p-value
Between Groups	282.45	3	94.15	26.71	< 0.001
Within Groups	1316.25	375	3.51		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1598.70</b>	<b>378</b>			

**Source:** Researchers Desk, 2024

Since  $p < 0.001$ , we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). This means that parents' educational level has a statistically significant effect on the quality of communication with their adolescent children about sexual and reproductive health.

### Hypothesis Test Two

The second hypothesis of this study proposed that:

- H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant level of awareness of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis.
- H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant level of awareness of SRH issues among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis. This statistical analysis was significant at 0.05 level of significance (Alpha value) and a 95% confidence interval.

**Table 8: Chi-Square Test Results**

Response	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	$(O - E)^2 / E$
Low	175	94.75	67.95
Moderate	99	94.75	0.19
High	57	94.75	15.03
Don't know	48	94.75	23.08
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>106.25</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

Since the calculated chi-square value (106.25) is greater than the critical value (7.815), we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, there is a statistically significant variation in the level of awareness of SRH issues among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis. This suggests that a larger proportion of students have low awareness, indicating a gap that may need targeted intervention.

## Discussion

Empirical finding revealed that level of awareness of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues among secondary school students was low. This finding agrees with Yohannes & Tsegaye (2015), on the barriers of parent-adolescent communication on sexual and reproductive health issues among secondary and preparatory school students in Yirggalem, town, South Ethiopia; that parent-adolescent communication on SRH issues were low because 59.1 percent discussed SRH issues with their parents. Also, Atitegeb, Feketo & Getachew (2016) argue that young people's parental discussion about sexual and health issues and its associated factors in Awabel Woreda, North East Ethiopia showed that communication on SRH between parents and young people is very poor and very low. Parents lack of interest in discussing SRH matters, shame, and cultural prohibitions about SRH also deter young people from discussing SRH with parents.

Another finding revealed that, effects of SRH communication on the sexual practices and behaviour among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis include; increased knowledge and understanding of risky sexual behaviour, delayed early sexual debut, reduced unplanned pregnancies, among others. This finding is in line with Odimegwu, & Solanke, et al (2017) that on the parental characteristics and adolescent sexual behaviour showed that more than 1/3 of the adolescents interviewed had had sexual intercourse in the month preceding the survey period. Also, less than 1/5 of the sexually active adolescents were using a method of contraception to either prevent infections or avoid unwanted pregnancy.

Finding also revealed that, the factors affecting adolescent parent communication on SRH issues among secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis were: cultural and social norms like taboos and generational gap, fear of misconception, negative societal attitudes towards discussing sexuality may create shame and discomfort among others. This finding also agrees with Musibau & Ajuwon (2017) that communication on SRH among adolescents and their parents was as low as 21% and further concluded that due most African parents failed in the communication of SRH issues with their children as the method utilized are usually to instill fear and always center on the negative implications of sexual practices. Omozusi & Moyosere (2016) opined that the level of trust and relationship between parents and their adolescent children can affect their discussions on SRH issues.

Parents serve as the first agents of socialization for their children. Hypotheses tests results confirmed that parents' educational level has a statistically significant effect on the quality of communication with their adolescent children about sexual and reproductive

health. Also, there is a statistically significant variation in the level of awareness of SRH issues among secondary school students in the area.

### **Conclusion**

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is a major challenge for the young people all over the world. Parent-adolescent communication on SRH issues is crucial in increasing adolescent awareness of SRH and reducing their involvement in risky sexual behaviour. The study concluded that, the level of awareness on SRH should be improved among adolescence, increased knowledge and understanding of risky sexual behaviour, delayed early sexual debut, reduced unplanned pregnancies, factors like taboos and generational gap, fear of misconception should be abolished to establish clear adolescence parent communication on SRH.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

- i. There should be improved adolescent – parent communication on sexual and reproductive health issues by the parents, by creating quality time to talk to the adolescents on SRH. This will ensure that genuine information are passed down to the adolescents to enable them make better choices concerning their sexual lives.
- ii. Parents should initiate discussions on SRH issues with their adolescents' children early in life. This will ensure that, the adolescents made right choices concerning their sex life.
- iii. Parents should create strong bond with their children and create the atmosphere of friendship and trust so that their children will trust them enough and feel free to approach them and discuss sensitive issues concerning their sexual and reproductive health issues.
- iv. Schools, hospitals, religious organization, and NGOs should complement the efforts of the parents in communicating SRH issues to the young people.
- v. Sexual and reproductive health should be integrated into local, State and National government programs (orientation, education and advocacy programs) to reach out to many young people.

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## **SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND THE 2020 #ENDSARs PROTESTS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACEBUILDING**

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### **Abstract**

Prior to the 2020 #EndSARs protests in Nigeria, various degrees of human rights abuses and impunity against the youths by the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad unit of the Nigeria Police Force were rampant in the country, with virtually no SARS' officer facing prosecution for violating the law. Consequently, in October 2020, there was an eruption of the #EndSARs protests by the youths in Nigeria, especially in the southern part of the country against the SARS over the gruesome murder of a young man in Ughelli, Delta State. While studies have blamed the 2020 #EndSARs protests on the abuses of the youths' rights by the officers of the defunct SARS, scarcely has any study looked in the direction of the prevailing social inequality at the time as a remote precursor to the protests, particularly in Ibadan, where this paper is centred. This paper therefore, examines social inequality as a precipitating remote factor for the 2020 #EndSARs protest in Ibadan Metropolis. The paper is theoretical in approach hence, secondary sources of data (i.e. published articles, textbooks, reports, the internet, etc.) were utilized, content-analysed and deductions drawn. Findings implicated the prevailing social inequality in Ibadan at the time as largely responsible for the 2020 #EndSARs protest in Ibadan Metropolis, notwithstanding its purported immediate trigger – rights abuses by the Police. It is therefore, recommended among others, that the Oyo state government should make concerted efforts in containing the high rates of unemployment, underemployment and poverty driving social inequality among the youths in the state.

**Keywords:** #EndSARs; Ibadan metropolis; Peace building; Protest; Social inequality

## Introduction

Globally, calls for higher standards of living are frequently the focus of civil disobedience and protests, as exemplified by the works of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. on non-violent actions which changed the course of the oppressed in India and the USA respectively. The same clamours for improved quality of life brought about the sustained protests against the South Africa's apartheid era 1948-1994 where the indigenous blacks were not allowed the same rights and privileges with the colonial minority whites; the Libyan revolution of 2011 over the gross misrule of late Gaddafi and the need for a regime change; and the United States of America's 'Blacks Lives Matter' protests of 2020 over the gruesome murder of Mr. George Floyd by Derek Chauvin, an officer of the Minneapolis Police (Williams, Mezey & Singh, 2021).

In Nigeria, experiences of protests over unfavourable policies of government are equally replete. For instance, there were the Aba Women riot of 1929 over imposition of unfavourable tax policy by the colonial government and the Egba/Abeokuta Women riot of 1947/8 over imposition of obnoxious tax policy by the colonial government. Similarly, we had the 'Ali Must Go' protests of 1978 over arbitrary increments in tuition fees in tertiary institutions; the subsidy-removal protest tagged (#OccupyNigeria) protest of 2012 over increment in pump price of fuel by the government; and the the #Not-Too-Young-To-Run protests of 2017/2018 aimed to amend the nation's constitution to accommodate and mainstream the youth age-range for political contest eligibility; etc.

Conflicts and acts of terrorism have been ubiquitous in Nigeria in recent years, which many academics have occasionally interpreted as a form of protest against the country's unequal resource distribution, corruption, injustice, and extreme alienation of its people from the nation's common patrimony (Pu & Scanlan, 2012; Power, 2018; Mamokhere, 2020; Tanyi, et al., 2022). However, because of inadequate methods for handling these demonstrations, they frequently turn into social malaise with detrimental impact on the nation (Alao, Atere & Alao, 2012; Aro, 2013; Aytac, Schiumerini & Stokes, 2018; Tanyi, et al., 2022).

As a corollary from the above, inadequate methods for handling demonstrations in Nigeria by the Nigerian government turned the 2020 #EndSARs peaceful protest into a violent one. In October 2020, there was an eruption of the #EndSARs protests by the youths in Nigeria, especially in the southern part of the country against the unprofessional conducts and human rights abuses against the youths by the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad

(SARS) unit of the Nigeria Police Force. The 2020 #EndSARs protest which is unarguably, regarded as one of the famous in the history of the country was geared toward the need to bring about significant changes in governance and people-oriented policies (Tanyi, et al., 2022).

Nigeria's economic disparity is unprecedented, with unemployment rates increasing from 23.1% in Q3 2019 to 27.1% in Q2 2020, and underemployment rising from 21.1% to 28.6% within the referenced period (Tanyi, et al., 2022). Additionally, the unemployment rates in Q4 2022 was 5.3%, Q1 2023 standing at 4.1%, Q2 2023 standing at 4.2%, Q3 2023 stood at 5%, Q1 2024 stood at 5.3% while Q2 2024 stood at 4.3% respectively (NBS, 2024; Nigerian Economic Submit Group, 2024). Consequently, the combined unemployment rate and time-related underemployment rate of the labour force nationally stood at 18.2% in Q4 2022 and 15.8% in Q1 2023 (NBS, 2023). While the combined unemployment rate and time-related underemployment rate of the labour force nationally was 15.3% in Q1 2024, as against 17.3% in Q3 2023 (NBS, 2024).

Furthermore, in all these harrowing experiences captured above, young people, particularly those without productive employment are mostly affected, with 13.9 million unemployed by Q2 2020. Similarly, youth unemployment rates for Q4 2022 was 8.3%, Q1 2023 standing at 6.9%, Q2 2023 standing at 7.2%, Q3 2023 standing at 8.6, Q1 2024 standing at 8.4% while Q2 2024 stood at 4.3% respectively (Tanyi, et al., 2022; NBS, 2024; Nigerian Economic Submit Group, 2024).

The main objective of the study was therefore, to examine social inequality and the 2020 #EndSARs protests in Ibadan Metropolis, with a focus at its implications for peace building. The specific objectives included:

- (a) To examine the concept of social inequality as the cause of the 2020 #EndSARs protest in Nigeria and particularly, Ibadan.
- (b) To identify the role of stakeholders in mitigating the 2020 #EndSARs violence in Ibadan Metropolis.
- (c) To suggest measures that can be adopted toward forestalling future occurrence of related protest in Ibadan Metropolis.

## **Literature Review**

Literature review is often considered the heart of a research. It has to do with a researcher relating their work to those of others and build on what they have done. To this end, the investigator will have to deploy the research strategy such that it takes an informed view of the literature on the subject vis-à-vis unraveling the achievements and lacunae that can be found in the works of previous investigators (Albert, 2014). In this section, attempt is made clarify some of the concepts used in this study as follows:

### **Social Inequality**

Social inequality is a social condition of unequal distribution of wealth and other socio-economic and political privileges among members of a society. Where the existence of such dichotomies among members of a society is embedded in the social structure of a society, such is referred to as 'structural/social inequality.' Nigeria's economic disparity is unprecedented, with unemployment rates increasing from 23.1% in Q3 2019 to 27.1% in Q2 2020, and underemployment rising from 21.1% to 28.6% (Tanyi, et al., 2022).

Additionally, the unemployment rates in Q4 2022 was 5.3%, Q1 2023 standing at 4.1%, Q2 2023 standing at 4.2%, Q3 2023 stood at 5%, Q1 2024 stood at 5.3% while Q2 2024 stood at 4.3% respectively (NBS, 2024; Nigerian Economic Submit Group, 2024). In the same vein, youth unemployment rates for Q4 2022 was 8.3%, Q1 2023 standing at 6.9%, Q2 2023 standing at 7.2%, Q3 2023 standing at 8.6, Q1 2024 standing at 8.4% and Q2 2024 stood at 4.3% respectively (Tanyi, et al., 2022; NBS, 2024; Nigerian Economic Submit Group, 2024).

Consequently, in all the forgoing harrowing experiences, young people, particularly those without productive employment became mostly affected, with 13.9 million unemployed by Q2 2020 (Tanyi, et al., 2022). Retrospectively, approximately 91 million Nigerians were estimated to be living in extreme poverty in February 2019 (living on less than \$1 per day), surpassing India as the country with the highest rate of poverty in the world at the time (Olasehinde-Williams, 2019; World Bank, 2022; Agidi, 2023; Ogunoye & Adeyemi, 2024).

Furthermore, the combined unemployment rate and time-related underemployment rate of the labour force nationally in Q4 2022 stood at 18.2% and 15.8% in Q1 2023 (NBS, 2023). Similarly, the combined unemployment rate and time-related underemployment rate of the labour force nationally was 15.3% in Q1 2024, as against 17.3% in Q3 2023 (NBS, 2024).

Nigeria was ranked as a country to watch in the Fund for Peace' global fragility index (Figure 2) in 2018 due to its poor ability to manage conflict, create and carry out public policy, provide basic services, or effectively respond to difficulties and crises (Olasehinde-Williams, 2019; Pompe & Turkewitz, 2022).

With the above expositions, it was therefore, no surprise that Nigeria was ranked 91 out of 156 countries on the 2018 World Happiness Report (Olasehinde-Williams, 2019; United Nations Sustainable Development Solution Network, 2019). While in 2022, Nigeria got a worse ranking on the 2022 World Happiness Report as she (Nigeria) occupied 114 positions out of 149 countries surveyed (United Nations Sustainable Development Solution Network, 2022).

Similarly, even though Nigeria ranking got improved on the 2023 World Happiness Report by its rank of 95 out of 137 countries surveyed (United Nations Sustainable Development Solution Network, 2023); this seemingly improved rank notwithstanding, was even still higher than those of the war-torn Russia and Ukraine who occupied 70 and 92 positions respectively. And the 2024 World Happiness Report ranked Nigeria 9 in Africa, and 102 out of the total 143 countries surveyed (United Nations Sustainable Development Solution Network, 2024).

It appears the undesirable factors that plunged majority of Nigerians into abject poverty before 2020 have largely remained unchanged, as 133 million Nigerians were multidimensionally poor in 2022 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). No wonder the Global Hunger Index (GHI) in 2022 reported that Nigeria's poverty and hunger level was 'serious', ranked 103 out of 121 countries (Guardian, 2022); while in 2024, Nigeria ranked 110 out of 127 countries surveyed (Global Hunger Index, 2024). In the same vein, the World Bank, in its 2022 Poverty and Prosperity Report, revealed that Nigeria contributed three million people to global extreme poverty hence, the country is home to a large share of the global extreme poor (World Bank, 2022).

The nature of the unfortunate experiences described above may have reflected the mind of De Tocqueville (1954, p. 266) when he said:

Remove the secondary causes that have produced the great convulsions of the world and you will almost always find the principle of inequality at the bottom. Either the poor have attempted to plunder the rich, or the rich to enslave the poor. If, then, a society can ever be founded in which everyman shall have something to keep and little to take from others, much will have been done for peace (Stewart, 2009, p. 1).

The foregoing is in consonance with the submission of Gurr (1970) in his ‘theory of relative deprivation’ that people rebel when there is a growing perception of a widening discrepancy between their expectations (mostly in economic terms) and actual rewards because of discrimination (Onapajo & Uzodike, 2017). The encapsulated economic inequality indices and the submission by Gurr (1970) above are believed by some scholars to perhaps, be remotely responsible for the eruption of the 2020 #EndSARs protests in Nigeria generally and Ibadan in particular.

### **Protest**

The right to protest is within the ambit of enabling laws and global treaties, especially as it concerns human rights violations. Protest is a form of individual or collective action or reaction to perceived unfavorable policy concerns and aims to convey thoughts, opinions or principles of disagreement, resistance or condemnation against a party, entity or government (Kiai, 2012). According to Aidonojie, Ikubanni & Oyebade (2022), a protest is a formal, nonviolent complaint, declaration, or expression made by a person or group of individuals expressing disapproval with an act that has been performed or is about to be performed.

Protest can take the form of interactions between and among people with similar interests either over the social media platforms such as Twitter (X), Instagram, Facebook, etc with the aim of ventilating their displeasures or grievances online over perceived unpleasant situations that they have no power to change; or via an offline assemblage of like-minds employing blockades, rallies, boycotts, etc to express grievances. Protest is a valid and essential means for citizens to demand solutions to problems that the government or decision-makers, especially in democracies overlook.

The right to peaceful protest is universally recognized, particularly in democracies, as a means to address state wrongs. This is supported by Articles 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and various international laws, including Article 11 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. In Nigeria, sections 39 and 40 of Nigeria’s 1999 Constitution (as amended) guarantee freedom of expression, assembly, and association, allowing people to protest peacefully (Aidonojie, Ikubanni & Oyebade, 2022).

It is however, pertinent to recall that despite the universal recognition of peaceful protest as a mechanism of calling state to order where it appears government vies off the mark of good public policies and good governance, the military regime of General Olusegun

Obasanjo on 16th February, 1979 made a Public Order Decree whose aim was to control public assemblies, meetings, and processions in Nigeria. To this end, Section 1 of the Public Order Decree empowered state governments to not only grant a license to any association that intends to host a public gathering, but also to specify the event's route and timing (International Labour Organisation, 2021).

However, in the case of *Inspector General of Police vs All Progressive Peoples Party & Ors*, the Court of Appeal, Abuja Division, quashed the 1979 Public Order Decree in 2007. The court ruled that the decree violated provisions of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) and other pertinent international laws to which Nigeria is a signatory. But surprisingly, however, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has persisted in suppressing or thwarting nonviolent demonstrations by intimidating or detaining demonstrators (Uwandu, 2020).

The non-adherence to the provisions of the Nigeria's 1999 Constitution (as amended) which guarantee freedom of expression, assembly, and association; and the Appeal Court ruling in 2007 espousing the above fundamental human rights of citizens, therefore, led the Nigeria Police to suppress with force, the 2020 #EndSARs peaceful protesters in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopted the Theory of Relative Deprivation as one of the most suitable socio-political theories to explain the subject of this paper. The most prominent proponent of the theory of relative deprivation in modern times is Ted Robert Gurr (1970), notwithstanding the fact that Aristotle (384–322 BC) is recognised as the original proponent of the theory, having demonstrated that deprivation and conflict are related (Toriola & Jacobs, 2021).

In the social sciences, the phrase “relative deprivation” is frequently used to characterise subjective or quantifiable indicators of economic, political or social deprivations that are relative rather than absolute. ‘Relative deprivation’ has been mentioned by social scientists, especially political scientists and sociologists, as a possible cause of social movements, riots or protests, deviance and terrorism. In severe cases, this might lead to political violence and revolution.

According to the theory of relative deprivation, there is a greater chance of some pockets of agitation and conflict in a society where the wealth disparity between the rich and the poor is quite large. The point of departure of this theory is the idea that resources are not allocated fairly to all parties, which causes people to feel as though they are being denied

something to which they are entitled. Comparing one's status to that of the rich and realising that one has less of what one feels one is entitled to than those around them is a common feeling among the less privileged and dissatisfied members of society. This may help to explain why Schaefer (2003) characterizes "relative deprivation" as the conscious perception of a negative disparity between reasonable expectations and current reality.

Deductions from this theory is that 'relative deprivation' produces feelings of 'social exclusion' on the part of those who feel deprived and alienated from their common patrimony hence, recourse to conflict behaviour toward what they perceive to be responsible for their unmet needs. Indicators of 'relative deprivation' in human society include mass unemployment, deliberate imbalance opportunities for citizens, sectional marginalisation, wide-spread poverty, social exclusion and hunger which were believed to be the experiences of most Nigerians, especially the youths prior to the eruption of the 2020 #EndSARS protests in parts of the country.

## **Methodology**

This paper utilized qualitative method hence, theoretical in approach. Due to the goal and scope of this study, the researchers sourced data through secondary sources (i.e. published articles, textbooks, reports, the internet, etc.). Data from the secondary sources were content-analyzed within the context of the 2020 #EndSARS protests in Ibadan Metropolis and deductions drawn.

## **Discussion**

### **The 2020 #EndSARS Protests in Ibadan Metropolis: Implications for Peace building in Focus**

Prior to the 2020 #EndSARS protests in Nigeria, the SARs faced accusations of intimidation, invasion, privacy violations, detention without trial, torture, unaccounted disappearances of crime suspects from its detention facilities nationwide, and forced bank account emptying of crime suspects before extra-judicial execution. For instance, between 2017 and 2020, SARs in Nigeria committed acts of extortion, torture and ill-treatment against the public, including physical and psychological torture against Nigerian youths (Amnesty International, 2020; Dajo & Akor, 2021; Abimbade, Olayoku & Herro, 2022).

The foregoing revealed the 2020 #EndSARS protests as a consequence of cumulative years of abuses and impunity against the Nigerian youths by the defunct SARS. For instance,

Mbombo (2020) submits that starting in 2009, certain Nigerian youths, referred to as “Yahoo Boys” became easy targets by the SARS for harassment, illegal profiling, extortion, torture, and even summary execution in the name of thwarting online fraud. To this end, disgruntled young people in Nigeria repeatedly called for the government to dissolve SARS, with 10,195 signing a petition in 2017 (Ojewale, 2020). However, despite police restructuring and decentralization measures, no SARS’ officer was prosecuted for violating the law (Mbombo, 2020).

Consequently, On October 3, 2020, a video depicting a young man’s death by SARS officers in Ughelli, Delta State, sparked social media uproar, especially on Twitter (X); with over 28 million tweets using the hashtag #EndSARs (Mbombo, 2020; Tanyi, et al., 2022). To this end, young people assembled peacefully in front of the Nigeria Police Force Headquarters in Abuja while those in Lagos State rallied peacefully in front of the Government House in Ikeja, asking for the dissolution of SARS (Mbombo, 2020).

However, reports of police brutality against peaceful youth protesters in Abuja – including the use of tear gas, water cannons, batons, as well as the murder of Jimoh Isiaka and other individuals in Oyo State turned the peaceful demonstrations in Lagos, Abuja, and Ibadan, as well as the majority of the nation’s state capitals, into violent protests. As a result, Mohammed Adamu, the Inspector-General of Police at the time, reluctantly announced the abolition of SARS on October 11, 2020 (Dajo & Akor, 2021; Abimbade, Olayoku & Herro, 2022). The dissolution of SARS was commended by demonstrators as a victory, but asked for justice for victims of police violence and to confront the “unemployment monster.”

Unsatisfied with the way the 2020 #EndSARs protesters were handled by security personnel in Abuja, Lagos and Oyo, youths in Ibadan Metropolis joined the nationwide October 2020 #EndSARs protests against the activities of the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit of the Nigeria Police Force, which resulted in destruction of public property, looting, arson, maiming and deaths among the youths as well as security personnel, particularly the Police in Ibadan Metropolis (The Blueprint, 2020; Toriola & Jacobs, 2021).

However, the 2020 #EndSARs protests in Ibadan Metropolis are particularly believed to be remotely linked to the socio-economic struggles in the Metropolis at the time. This is in addition to the three months lockdown occasioned by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic which confined the adventurous youths to unusual sedentary lifestyles, and exacerbated

existing socio-economic inequalities thus, suggesting a connection between these issues and the protests.

For instance, Oyo State experienced high unemployment and underemployment rates in Q2 of 2020, with unemployment figure standing at 521,216 and underemployment figure at 575,218 out of 3,174,707 workers (NBS, 2020, p. 70). Similarly, the state also had a high poverty headcount rate of 9.83, poverty gap index of 1.85, and 0.52 squared poverty gap index (severity) (NBS, 2020, p. 70; NBS, 2019, p. 15). Furthermore, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) surveyed by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2024 ranked Oyo State as the third most expensive state in Nigeria, highlighting social inequality and poverty among its population, particularly in Ibadan (NBS, 2024).

The rates of unemployment and underemployment for Oyo State by the NBS above are higher compared to most states in Nigeria within the referenced period. Hence, the statistics by the NBS above ironically denotes gross social inequality and poverty among the people of Oyo State, particularly Ibadan – the state capital. Whereas where gross social inequality and poverty exist, conflict behaviours are inevitable. This may, as a corollary, have accounted for a remote reason the 2020 #EndSARs protest in Ibadan was ignited in the first place, since Oyo State, of which Ibadan is a significant component was earlier reported by the National Bureau of Statistics to account for higher rates of unemployment, underemployment, poverty and inequality surveyed among the youths between 2017 and 2020 (NBS, 2017; 2019; 2020).

Therefore, the October 2020 #EndSARs protests in Ibadan, Nigeria, believed on the surface to be triggered by a viral video of a young man's murder by the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad in Ughelli, Delta State, is in fact, seen as more than just a call for action against SARS, as the protest occurred amid economic crisis and the three months lockdown occasioned by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic which exacerbated existing socio-economic inequalities in Ibadan Metropolis at the time. As captured by an opinion of a youth respondent in a study in Lagos by Tanyi, et al., 2022, p. 58),

The government cannot completely satisfy us, but the government needs to at least, try to solve some of the problems affecting us. We are hearing rumours of a second lockdown due to the second wave of Covid-19; we are against this and we will resist it. Many of us cannot feed daily if we do not go out to work and we will not steal. We are not salary earners and we cannot survive another lockdown. The people proposing lockdowns have food and other necessities stocked up in their houses and they care

nothing for the poor. I am willing to die in this struggle, so the government better act right.

Inferring from the evidence above, the Covid-19 pandemic caused estrangement and anger among young people who were already enmeshed in economic hardship due to lack of safety nets, closure of economic and educational activities, leading to unusual sedentary lifestyles for the adventurous youths. Amid the harrowing experiences by the youths above, former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration increased fuel pump prices and electricity tariffs amid inflation and youth unemployment; thus, creating an imagery of a "bomb in a keg" ready to explode at any given opportunity.

The calibrated indices of economic inequality, poverty and hunger above negate the ingredients required to foster peace building, which undoubtedly is the fulcrum of a peaceful and functional society. Peace building is primarily a post-conflict reconstruction mechanism that promotes peaceful relations and violence eradication through a positive altering of structural contradictions, and other various activities (Aigbovbioisa, 2021). Peace building process aims to improve conflict relations, promote constructive attitudes, and stimulate economic development through the provision of economic opportunities, social justice, reconciliation as well as humanitarian support, which are all capable of engendering social inclusiveness that fosters the transformation of negative peace into positive peace (Aigbovbioisa, 2021).

## **Findings**

The paper investigated social inequality and the 2020 #EndSARs protests in Ibadan metropolis with a look at its implications for peace building. To this end, critical interactions with literature on the subject showed a nexus between social inequality and the 2020 #EndSARs protests in Ibadan Metropolis. Of course, where gross social inequality and poverty exist, conflict behaviours are inevitable hence, these variables constituted a remote factor that ignited the 2020 #EndSARs protests in Ibadan Metropolis. This finding is attributable to the prevailing socio-economic struggles in the Metropolis at the time; in addition to the three months lockdown occasioned by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic which confined the adventurous youths to unusual sedentary lifestyles, and exacerbated existing socio-economic inequalities thus, suggesting a connection between these issues and the protests (Toriola & Jacobs, 2021; Tanyi, et al., 2022).

Another finding of the paper equally revealed that Oyo State, of which Ibadan is a significant component, accounting for higher rates of unemployment, underemployment, poverty and inequality surveyed among the youths between 2017 and 2020 (NBS, 2017; 2019; 2020), negate the ingredients required to foster peace building, which undoubtedly is the fulcrum of a peaceful and functional society. Therefore, the 2020 #EndSARs protests in Ibadan Metropolis was remotely a function of the undesirable factors calibrated above. This finding is consistent with the theory of relative deprivation by Gurr (2000) that 'relative deprivation' produces feelings of 'social exclusion' on the part of those who feel deprived and alienated from their common patrimony hence, recourse to conflict behaviour toward what they perceive to be responsible for their unmet needs.

The paper also showed that despite the initial entreaties by the Oyo State Command of the Nigeria Police to the protesting youths to suspend the protests, and the hurried interventions by other stakeholders such as state government officials, traditional rulers, community leaders, religious leaders, politicians and notable entrepreneurs appealing to the consciences of the protesting youths to desist from been violent in protest and embrace dialogue, the violent protest and destruction of public property went on unabated.

The non-adherence to the pleas by the above stakeholders by the protesting youths is attributed to the way and manner the security agents, particularly the Nigeria Police had handled the hitherto peaceful protest in an unprofessional manner, causing the deaths of some of the protesting youths in areas like Ojoo, where a Police Station was burnt down, Agodi-Gate, where a Police Outpost was also burnt down, Idi Odo/Iwo Road and Gbagi market areas where casualties were equally recorded among the youths and the Police personnel respectively (The Blueprint, 2020; Toriola & Jacobs, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

The paper has been able to unravel some expository facts on why the 2020 #EndSARs protests erupted in Ibadan Metropolis and ended up been destructive, unlike in some states of the federation. In this connection is a factor of unbridled social inequality pervading the Ibadan Metropolis at the time, including the three months lockdown occasioned by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic which confined the adventurous youths to some sort of sedentary lifestyles during the period.

The above undesirable variables therefore, remotely precipitated and sustained in a destructive manner, the 2020 #EndSARs protests in Ibadan despite the initial entreaties by the

Nigeria Police, Oyo State Command to the protesting youths to suspend the protests, and the interventions by other stakeholders such as traditional rulers, community leaders, religious leaders, politicians and notable entrepreneurs in the Metropolis.

### **Recommendations**

- i. The government of Oyo State and concerned stakeholders such as traditional rulers, community leaders, religious leaders, politicians, captains of industry and notable entrepreneurs must make concerted efforts in containing the high rates of unemployment, underemployment and poverty driving social inequality among the youths in the state so as to foster peace building. Good enough, the Nigerian government has approved Agenda 2050 (Vanguard, 2023), which aims to drastically reduce among others, unemployment, poverty and inequality. If the Oyo State government keys in as designed and proclaimed by the federal government, this would go a long way in engaging the youths economically while forestalling the occurrence of future similar protests in Ibadan and Nigeria at large.
- ii. Also, the proposed reform in the nation's secondary school curriculum by the Federal Ministry of Education (Channels TV, 2024), to accommodate vocational education encompassing carpentry, building, vulcanizing, plumbing, tiling, hairdressing, tailoring, satellite and CCTV installations, etc would catch the youths young while fostering entrepreneurship and economic prosperity among the youths, if encouraged to fester.
- iii. Although the SARs unit of the Nigeria Police Force has since been disbanded (Dajo & Akor, 2021; Abimbade, Olayoku & Herro, 2022), government should make concerted efforts at training and retraining of police officers on global best practices of handling peaceful protesters. Usage of live bullets on peaceful protesters is not only absurd but also barbaric and unfit for a democratic society like Nigeria in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- iv. Identified stakeholders such as traditional rulers, community leaders, religious leaders, politicians, captains of industry and notable entrepreneurs can play a complimentary role alongside the government by articulating and fostering initiatives capable of engaging the youths, particularly the unemployed graduates for economic benefits. Also, initiation of monthly or quarterly meetings by the isolated stakeholders, with the Nigeria Police to identify areas of possible breach of the peace, and thus, raise early warning signal accordingly, will be helpful, going forward.

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# ANALYSIS OF PROFITABILITY OF TOMATO (*Lycopersicum spp*) MARKETING AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN OLAMABORO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE-NIGERIA

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## Abstract

This study assessed the constraints to tomato marketing among rural women in Olamaboro Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study looked at the cost and returns of tomato marketing; ascertained the effects of tomato marketers' socioeconomic variables on their income; and identified major constraints to tomato marketing. These objectives were delineated to address the problems of tomato perishability due to absence of storage facilities and paucity of market information among the marketers. A purposive random sampling technique was used to select 120 respondents for the study. Primary data obtained through structured questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, gross margin model, Ordinary Least Square (OLS) multiple regression model, and mean score from Likert type of scale. Findings of this study revealed that 65.1% of rural women involved in tomato marketing were in their active age of 32 years with a mean household size of 7 members, and an average marketing experience of 11 years. Most (73.3%) had no extension contacts. The gross margin analysis indicated a gross margin from tomato marketing per month of ₦54,745 with a benefit cost ratio of ₦1.90k. Estimates of the OLS revealed that the semi-log was chosen as the lead equation due to its  $R^2$  of 0.877 which implied that about 88% of the variation in the changes in income from tomato marketing is influenced by the independent variables considered. The results showed that years of schooling, household size, and marketing experience positively influenced the income from tomato marketing at 1% level of significance. Major constraints faced by women involved in tomato marketing in the area included high perishability of tomatoes ( $M = 3.4$ ), poor storage facilities ( $M = 3.4$ ), disease and pest infestation ( $M = 3.3$ ), high transportation cost and low price of tomato ( $M = 3.2$  respectively), high labour cost and lack of operational cost constituted ( $M = 3.1$  respectively). The study therefore recommends that tomato marketers should expand their scale of operation as this will enable them enjoy economies of scale with positive effects on increased income, while both the Kogi State and Federal governments should improve rural infrastructure to address marketers' associated problems such as storage facilities, good road networks, markets and power supply.

**Keywords:** Rural women; Storage facilities; Tomato marketing. Tomato marketers; Tomato perishability.

## Introduction

Agriculture is an important sector in most developing countries of the world, contributing over 40% to Nigerian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Food & Agriculture Organization, FAO, 2020), and increase in agricultural productivity depends to a large extent on marketability of farm produce so as to improve its vital roles in the national economy. Efficient market does not only link seller and buyer in reacting to current situations in supply and demand but rather has a dynamic role to play in stimulating consumption of output which are essential elements of economic development. Tomato is one of such agricultural produce that is greatly marketed in Nigeria, especially, in the Savannah belt. Tomato (*Lycopersicum spp*) belongs to the family *Solanaceae* is one of the most popular and widely grown fruits in the world (Agrio, 2005; Sushma, *et. al.*, 2021) including Africa (Osemwegie, *et al.*, 2010). According to Onuk, *et al.*, (2018), the trend in tomato production in Nigeria from 2000 to 2013 was 1,860, 600 metric tons. It is native to South America (Nonneoke, 1989). But was introduced into West Africa by Portuguese traders and freed slaves from West Indies (Jones, 1999; FOASTAT, 2022). Tomato is the second most important vegetable crop worldwide, contributing great amount of vitamins and minerals to human diet. Nigeria produced an estimated 4.1 million tons of tomatoes in 2021, which places her as a major player in tomato production (FAOSTAT, 2022) and 27.8% increase in production since 2018.

According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (2013), an annual total area of one million hectare is reportedly used for tomato cultivation in Nigeria while it makes up about 18 percent of average daily consumption of vegetable in homes. Nigeria is ranked second largest producer of tomato in Africa after Egypt (FAOSTAT, 2022), and fourteenth largest in the world, producing 1.51 metric tons annually valued at ₦87 billion at an average of 25-30 tons per hectare under rain fed production (CBN, 2013). Tomato is grown and eaten all over the world. It is used in diverse ways, including raw in salads and also processed into tomato soup. Unripe green tomatoes can also be breaded and fried. Tomato sauce is sold as drink. Tomato is a highly nutritious vegetable extensively used in culinary dishes world-wide (Mahbubar, *et al.*, 2018). The fruit is preserved by drying, often in the sun and sold either in bags, baskets or in jars with oil. Tomato is rich in vitamin, mineral and lycopene, an excellent antioxidant that helps reduce risk of cancer and prostate. Tomato production requires a high level of management, large labour and capital inputs and close attention to detail. Its production is subject to weather variations which may result in severe crop damage and losses.

Tomato marketing involves its movement from the point of production to the point of sales. That is, from the farmer to the final consumer, and this mainly involves physical handling, transportation and selling. The involvement of rural women in tomato marketing forms an essential link in the distribution sectors of rural and urban areas and even in regional economics (FAO, 2008). Tomato marketing is an important issue in Olamaboro Local Government Area of Kogi State Nigeria, as it constitutes a major source of income to the marketers. Rural women in the Local Government are involved in crop production and processing, especially, tomato processing and marketing. Tomato marketing among rural women is under-estimated. This is because; when surveys are carried out women are often not captured as they are considered as “house wives” and not farmers. It is important to note here also that tomato, other fruits and vegetables constitute important parts of men’s food or diet as they are rich sources of vitamins, mineral, carbohydrate, proteins, and dietary fibre. Studies have shown that, human requirement for tomato is 285g per one day for a balanced diet (Nwochukwu and Onyeenweaku, 2007). Tomato production has been on the increase in most areas both in acreage and yield.

The FAO (2008), noted that the mean annual tomato fruit yield the world over, has increased from 52. 597 million metric tons to 77.07 million metric tons, while Onuk, *et al.*, (2018), assert a total annual yield of 1, 860, 600 metric tons. The main area of production in the world’s production comes from temperate country where cultivation is done under intensive glass house management: unlike what is obtained in tropical countries like Africa where the crop is exposed to high temperature and humidity. For this reason, tomato production is restricted to savannah area of Nigeria, but the major markets for tomatoes are located in south and other neighboring countries. Observation has shown that, most tomato production in Nigeria is grown under irrigation during the dry season (September – March) (Alagha and Sangodoyin, 2013) that is, it is produced between the periods of March to June though on limited bases because of the intense temperature.

Inefficient resources use has constrained food production, resulting in low farmers’ incomes nationwide (Sofoluwe and Tijani, 2020). Understanding production efficiency is therefore, crucial for addressing low productivity in tomato farming and marketing. Increasing input use and improving technical efficiency can enhance agricultural output and productivity (Dolapo, *et. al.*, 2022). Measuring production efficiency allows for evaluating farmer performance and identifying inefficiencies (Kassa and Demissie, 2019).

Rural women are actively involved in tomato marketing activities in Nigeria as a means of livelihood. This, they do on a subsistence level due to financial constraints and other associated factors that limit them. However, studies have shown that rural women are confronted with heavy losses of tomatoes due to wastage, perishability, large quantity of tomato littered around the place during the season in market places among others (Okonji and Awolu, 2021). A reconnaissance study of Olamaboro Local Government reveals enormous loss of tomatoes produced is witnessed hence, leading to low income of tomato marketers and producers. This loss of tomatoes could also be traced to high perishability of tomatoes, lack of information on market outlets, lack of storage facilities, poor power supply and low prices among others (Kader, 2005; Dalapo, *et al.*, 2022).

A decade ago, there were hopes that various forms of private advisory service providers would fill the gap created by weakened public agencies, and create awareness, to help scale up businesses that will profit their client. Input suppliers are increasingly providing information regarding new varieties and planting methods, but these usually fail to reflect the need for impartial advice and issues related to sustainable natural resource management. Literature is replete with information on marketing outlets for tomato farmers, processors and marketers in Nigeria, but none has tomato marketers in Olamaboro Local Government Area of Kogi State in mind, hence, this study which hopes to fill this knowledge gap.

## **Methodology**

The study area is Olamaboro Local Government Area, of Kogi State, Nigeria. Olamaboro Local Government Area has a land mass of 1,132km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 160,152 people as at the 2006 census (NPC, 2006). It is located on latitude 7° 11'N 7° 34'E and longitude 7° 18'N 7° 56'E. Olamaboro Local Government Area was carved out of Ankpa Local Government Area in 1989. The Local Government Area comprised of three districts: Imane, Okpo, and Ogugu, respectively, and has a total number of ten wards. Imane has two, Okpo has five wards and Ogugu, three wards, respectively. Olamaboro Local Government Area is bounded by Ankpa Local Government Area to the North, Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State to the East, Enugu State to the South and Ofu Local Government Area to the West.

The local government is dominated by the Igala speaking people with other minority groups like the Idoma and Igbo, among others. The major occupation of the people is farming, though civil service and trading constitute secondary occupations, among others. It

has two marked seasons; the dry season, which spans from November to March, while the wet season comes between April and October. The cash crops commonly grown in large commercial quantities include oil palm, and cashew, while food crops include cassava, maize, beniseed, guinea corn, Bambara nut, yam, pigeon pea and tomatoes, among others.

The three (3) districts of the local government area were purposively selected for the study due to their large volume of tomato production and marketing. Four (4) communities from Okpo (due to the presence of large number of marketers than the other two districts), and two (2) communities each from Ogugu and Imane respectively, were randomly selected from the three districts making a total of 8 communities. From the 4 communities sampled from Okpo district, 60 tomato marketers were selected, while 30 marketers each, were selected from Imane and Ogugu districts, making a total of 120 respondents for the study.

**Table1: Selection of Respondents from the Study Area**

Local government Area	District	Number of Communities Selected	Number of Marketers
Olamaboro	Okpo	4	60
	Imane	2	30
	Ogugu	2	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>120</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

For the purpose of data collection, primary sources of data were adopted using a well-structured questionnaire and personal interview based on the stated objectives. Descriptive statistics, gross margin analysis, mean score and regression analysis were used to analyze the data collected.

### **Model Specifications**

#### **Gross Margin Analysis**

Gross margin is the difference between the total revenue earned and total variable cost. Variable costs are the cost which varies with changes in output, i.e. it is a function of output level (Adegeye, 2009). Formula for this analysis is shown below:

$$GM = TR - TVC$$

Where GM = Gross margin (₦)

TR = Total Revenue (₦)

TVC= Total Variable Cost (₦)

## Multiple Regression Analysis

A multi-factor benefit function analysis in this study is equated mathematically as;  $Y =$

$f(x_s)$

$Y = (x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5, x_6, e)$

$Y = B_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3 + B_4X_4 + B_5X_5 + B_6X_6 + e_i$

Where

$Y =$  Profit (₦)

$B_0 =$  Intercept (₦)

$B =$  Marginal effect of  $X_s$  and  $Y$

$X_1 =$  Age (years)

$X_2 =$  Marital status (dummy Married = 1; Otherwise = 0)

$X_3 =$  Gender (dummy, Male = 1; Female = 0)

$X_4 =$  Level of education (Years)

$X_5 =$  Household size (Number)

$X_6 =$  Experience (Years)

$X_7 =$  Quantity of tomato sold (Kg, or baskets)

$X_9 =$  Marketing experience (years)

$X_{10} =$  Error term

## Results and Discussion

### Costs and Benefit in Tomato Marketing

**Table 2: Gross Margin analysis in Tomato Marketing per Month**

Items	Value (₦)
<b>A. Variable Costs</b>	
Acquisition	41,550
Taxes and Levies	1,205
Transportation	12,870
Loading and offloading	2,430
Sanitation	1050
<b>Total Variable Cost (TVC)</b>	<b>59,105</b>
<b>B. Fixed Cost</b>	
Rent	990
<b>Total Fixed Cost (TFC)</b>	<b>990</b>
Total Cost (TC)	60,095
<b>C. Return</b>	
No of basket	23
Price per basket	4,950
Total Revenue (TR)	113,850
Gross Margin (TR – TVC)	53,755
Return per Naira Invested (TR/TC)	1.93

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

The average costs and return among tomato marketers in the area is presented in table 2. The costs and return analysis of tomato marketing presented in the table showed variable cost (98.4%) and fixed cost (1.7%) of the total cost of tomato marketing in the study area. The results indicated that the cost of acquisition (₦41, 550) was the major variable costs incurred by tomato marketers. Based on the results, the total variable cost of tomato marketing per month in the study area was ₦59, 105 while a total revenue of ₦113, 850 was realized. The gross margin from tomato marketing per month was ₦53, 755.00. This implies that tomato marketing in the area was profitable as indicated with a positive gross margin. The return on Naira invested was 1.93. By implication, every one naira invested on tomato marketing, yields a return of ₦1.93k.

### **Effect of Socioeconomic Characteristics on Tomato Marketers' Income**

Output of Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression model on the effect of selected socioeconomic variables of women involved in tomato marketing on their income from the enterprise is as presented in table 3 below:

**Table 3: OLS Estimates on the Effects of Socioeconomic Variables on Marketers' Income**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Linear</b>	<b>Semi-Log</b>	<b>Exponential</b>	<b>Double-Log</b>
Constant	5218.051 (0.918)	-240839.865 (-14.491) <sup>***</sup>	10.126 (53.212) <sup>***</sup>	14.463 (12.959)
Age (years)	-510.441 (-4.532) <sup>***</sup>	-3328.015 (-1.068)	-0.020 (-5.356) <sup>***</sup>	-1.330 (-5.222) <sup>***</sup>
Yrs Schooling	-1272.609 (-5.589) <sup>***</sup>	-6026.579 (-6.351) <sup>***</sup>	-0.019 (-2.546) <sup>**</sup>	-0.066 (-0.810)
Hhd size (number)	8186.030 (17.410) <sup>***</sup>	25280.012 (12.273) <sup>**</sup>	0.136 (8.635) <sup>***</sup>	0.682 (3.968) <sup>***</sup>
Marketing Exp	702.971 (4.307) <sup>***</sup>	2230.858 (3.280) <sup>***</sup>	0.007 (1.222)	0.075 (1.658) <sup>**</sup>
Qty of tomato	0.218 (4.187) <sup>***</sup>	815.849 (0.848)	-0.016 (2.510) <sup>**</sup>	0.054 (1.645) <sup>**</sup>
Expenses on food	-0.167 (-0.868)	412.243 (1.400)	-0.081 (-4.663) <sup>***</sup>	-0.095 (-3.872) <sup>***</sup>
R <sup>2</sup>	0.759	0.877	0.491	0.567
F-value	146.059 <sup>***</sup>	268.900 <sup>***</sup>	44.653 <sup>***</sup>	16.049 <sup>***</sup>

**Source:** Computed from Field Survey Data, 2023

\*\*\*, \*\* and \* = coefficient significant @ 1%, 5% and 10% respectively; Values in parenthesis are t-values

After due econometric consideration, estimate of the Semi-log regression model was chosen as the lead equation. Hence, discussion was based on this output. The Semi-log regression model's estimates as presented in Table 3 indicated a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value of 0.877 which implies that about 88% of changes in income from tomato marketing were accounted for by the independent variables considered in this study. The remaining 12% is attributed to error term. Also, a significant F-value showed that the model was a good fit. The findings revealed that except for age, quantity of tomato handled, and expenses on food, all other variables investigated in this study significantly influenced income from tomato marketing in the area.

The coefficient of household size was positive and significant at 1%. This result indicates that an increase in the number of persons per household will increase the income from tomato marketing. Members of the household are expected to serve as source of family labour. Number of years spent in tomato marketing was positively related to tomato marketers' income at 1% level of significance. This direct relationship implies that marketers with more experience in terms of years tend to have higher income from tomato marketing compared to their counterparts with lower years of experience. Years spent in marketing can increase marketers' skills and this could lead to higher return. This finding agrees with Ibitoye (2015; personal communication) who reported that the length of time in trading business can be linked to higher income from the enterprise. Marketing experience can lead to increase in income and competency in tomato marketing as a means of livelihood.

This finding could mean that tomato marketing serves as source of major income and livelihood for women in the area. Part of the income is usually used for the purchase of food items and other essential commodities.

## Constraints to Tomato Marketing

The major constraints to tomato marketing identified by women tomato marketers in the area are presented in table 4 below.

**Table 4: Mean Score of Constraints to Tomato Marketing**

Constraints	Response				TSS	MS
	SA	A	D	SD		
High perishability	2	1	44	39	292	3.4*
High acquisition cost	4	18	41	23	255	2.9*
High labour cost	2	15	42	27	266	3.1*
Lack of operational funds	3	7	50	26	271	3.1*
Disease and pest infestation	0	5	50	31	284	3.3*
Low price	0	11	47	28	275	3.2*
Poor storage facilities	2	7	32	45	292	3.4*
Transportation	1	12	38	35	279	3.2*

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023 : SA=Strongly Agreed, A=Agreed, D=Disagreed, SD=Strongly Disagreed, TSS=Total Sum of Score, MS=Mean Score; \*=Major Constraints.

The sampled respondents agreed to all the items investigated in this study as major constraints to tomato marketing in the area. However, high perishability of tomato and poor storage facilities (M= 3.4 respectively), disease and pest infestation (M=3.3) and transportation (M=3.2) were major constraints. Findings on poor storage facilities and perishability are interwoven. Perishability of tomato might be due to bulk handling of the produce which could lead to wastage. Consequently, adequate storage/processing facilities are needed to reduce loss and physical damage of the produce. This finding also agrees with Kader (2005) who confirmed poor storage facilities as the most serious problem encountered in the marketing of vegetable. The authors also reported lack of access to storage facilities, lack of market information, lack of credit for farming, poorly developed village markets, poor producer prices, and high perishability of produce, among others as major constraints to vegetable marketing, especially, tomatoes.

## Conclusion

This study examined the constraints to tomato marketing among rural women in Olamaboro Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to ascertain the cost and returns of tomato marketing; determine the effects of tomato marketers' socioeconomic variables on their income; and identify the major constraints to tomato

marketing. From the findings of the study it is apparent that tomato marketing among women in the area is profitable while marketers' income was influenced by quantity of tomato sold, experience, household size, age and expenses on food. A key takeaway from the study is that the income of tomato marketers generally depends on how fast they are able to sell off the tomatoes due to its perishable nature.

### **Recommendations**

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

- i. The Kogi State Government and other stakeholders should encourage tomato marketers in the area to expand their scale of operation as this will enable them enjoy economies of scale with its effect on increased income. This could be achieved by educating the marketers to adopt modern processing and storage technique to add value to their product.
- ii. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations should sensitize tomato farmers to form cooperative societies to attract loans from financial institutions to cushion their financial crisis.
- iii. Infrastructural facilities such as storage facilities, roads, power, good markets, etc. should be provided by government or other private bodies to enable marketers scale up their business.

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# RETHINKING DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION OF COMBATANTS IN 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA'S ARMED FORCES

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## **Abstract**

Nigeria contends with entrenched armed conflicts involving state and non-state actors, severely impacting national security and socio-economic stability. Despite longstanding Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) efforts aimed at transitioning combatants to civilian life, challenges persist in effectively reintegrating ex-combatants, particularly in economically marginalized regions like the Niger Delta. This study critically assesses current DDR programs in Nigeria, highlighting their shortcomings and proposing innovative 21st-century strategies. Drawing from conflict theory, it examines socio-economic, political, and psychological factors influencing ex-combatants' reintegration. This study employs a documentary research design, relying on the systematic analysis of existing reports, policy documents, and academic literature to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs in Nigeria. Key findings underscore significant gaps in economic support and societal acceptance, hindering sustainable reintegration efforts. The study advocates for tailored interventions that prioritize economic empowerment, community engagement, and psychosocial support to mitigate re-mobilization risks and promote lasting peace. Policy recommendations include enhancing vocational training aligned with local job markets, supporting entrepreneurial initiatives through microfinance, and implementing robust monitoring frameworks to ensure effective program evaluation and adaptation.

**Keywords:** Combatants; Demobilization; Disarmament; Microfinance; Reintegration.

## **Introduction**

Nigeria's armed conflicts have severely impacted security and stability. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) are crucial for transitioning combatants back into civilian life and ensuring stability. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) (2021) reported that Nigeria has faced multiple armed conflicts involving state and non-state actors, significantly impacting national security and socio-economic stability. Combatants, including armed forces and militias, play critical roles in perpetuating these conflicts (Asala & Udoka, 2022). Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs have historically aimed to transition combatants to civilian life, fostering peace amidst evolving conflict contexts and changing warfare dynamics globally (Nnanta, 2023).

Updating DDR strategies for the 21st century is crucial to effectively address modern challenges such as asymmetric warfare and transnational threats (The DDR Bulletin, 2024). These strategies must ensure inclusivity, fairness, and sustainable reintegration, mitigating the risk of re-mobilization and promoting reconciliation (USIP, 2021). By enhancing DDR initiatives tailored to contemporary conflict environments, Nigeria can better manage armed conflicts, reduce their impacts, and foster long-term stability and development (Aver, 2020).

Despite the existence of DDR programs, their effectiveness in Nigeria has been limited, failing to achieve long-term peace and socio-economic stability. This research addresses the following questions: (i) what are the limitations of existing DDR programs in Nigeria? (ii) how can DDR strategies be rethought to better address current and future challenges? (iii) what innovative approaches can enhance the effectiveness of DDR in Nigeria?

The focus is on Nigeria's armed forces and militias, examining DDR programs from the past two decades (2009-2019) and conducting a comparative analysis with DDR programs in other regions to draw lessons and insights. While current DDR programs in Nigeria have had some success, they require significant rethinking and adaptation to effectively address the complexities of modern conflicts and ensure sustainable peace and reintegration.

## **Conceptual clarification and Literature Review**

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) are integral components of peace building efforts aimed at transitioning societies from conflict to stability. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) encompasses the collection and destruction of

weapons (disarmament), the demobilization of armed groups (demobilization), and the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life (reintegration). These processes are crucial for restoring peace and fostering sustainable development in post-conflict settings (The DDR Bulletin, 2024).

### **Disarmament**

Disarmament, as the initial phase of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) processes, plays a crucial role in post-conflict settings by facilitating the reduction of violence and enhancing community security. It involves systematic efforts to collect, control, and dispose of weapons that combatants possess, thereby mitigating the potential for renewed hostilities (Rodríguez-Castellón, 2024; The DDR Bulletin, 2024). Effective disarmament requires well-structured mechanisms for the collection, verification, and destruction of weapons, often overseen by impartial entities such as international organizations or peacekeeping missions.

In specific contexts such as the Niger Delta, disarmament efforts have encountered significant challenges due to the widespread proliferation of weapons among militant groups involved in conflicts related to oil resources (Wununyatu & Solomon, 2020). These challenges include identifying and securing hidden weapons caches, as well as convincing diverse armed factions to surrender their arms without assurances of security and viable alternatives for livelihoods. The reluctance of armed groups to disarm often stems from concerns about their future safety and economic sustainability post-conflict, highlighting the complexities involved in achieving successful disarmament in volatile regions (World Bank, 2022).

### **Demobilization**

Demobilization, a pivotal phase in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) processes, involves formally disbanding armed groups and ceasing hostilities to transition combatants from military to civilian status. This phase aims to reintegrate former combatants into society, thereby reducing the likelihood of their remobilization into conflict (Wununyatu & Solomon, 2020).

In regions plagued by conflict and resource competition, such as the Niger Delta, demobilization efforts face significant challenges. Militant groups involved in conflicts over oil resources often exhibit fragmented membership structures, making it difficult to identify

eligible combatants (Mai-Bornu, 2019; Nnanta, 2023). Addressing the grievances and aspirations of ex-combatants is crucial to preventing their potential return to violence. Effective demobilization requires ensuring that former combatants feel integrated into society, with access to viable livelihood opportunities and support mechanisms that mitigate the risk of relapse into conflict.

The Niger Delta's socio-economic and environmental dynamics further complicate demobilization efforts. Natural resources, particularly oil, play a central role in both livelihoods and conflict in this region (Mai-Bornu, 2019; Ukhurebor et al, 2023). Therefore, integrating conflict-sensitive natural resource management (NRM) practices is essential. Sustainable NRM practices can help alleviate resource-related tensions and create stable livelihood opportunities that support demobilized combatants and affected communities. Effective demobilization in resource-rich conflict zones like the Niger Delta necessitates holistic approaches that integrate DDR processes with sustainable NRM strategies (Babatunde, 2020; Ukhurebor et al, 2023).

### **Reintegration**

Reintegration constitutes the final and most critical phase of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) processes, focusing on the sustainable return of ex-combatants to civilian life. This complex process encompasses social, economic, and psychological dimensions aimed at facilitating the reintegration of former combatants into their communities as productive members of society as observed by the United Nations DDR Resource Centre (UN DDR), (2022).

Successful reintegration of ex-combatants requires several key components. Providing opportunities for vocational training and education helps ex-combatants develop new skills and acquire knowledge, facilitating their transition into civilian livelihoods and promoting self-sufficiency (Obafemi, & Oluranti, 2022). Ensuring sustainable sources of livelihood is also crucial, which involves connecting ex-combatants with job placements, small business support, and other income-generating activities (Ebiede et al, 2020). Additionally, implementing community reconciliation initiatives is essential to promote social cohesion and reconciliation between ex-combatants and their communities, addressing past grievances, building trust, and preventing a return to violence. These elements are critical for achieving lasting peace and development in post-conflict regions like the Niger Delta (Nnanta, 2023; Ukhurebor et al, 2023).

Efforts to reintegrate ex-militants in Nigeria's Niger Delta face significant challenges, including socio-economic disparities, limited employment opportunities, and inadequate infrastructure. The region's lack of development complicates finding viable economic opportunities for ex-combatants. Limited job availability and poor infrastructure, such as roads and healthcare facilities, further hinder the reintegration process (Mai-Bornu, 2019). Successful reintegration requires tailored livelihood support programs that address local socio-economic, cultural, and political dynamics. Comprehensive support should include vocational training, job placement, psychosocial counselling, and community reconciliation initiatives. Effective coordination among the government, civil society, and international partners is essential for sustainable reintegration efforts (United Nations DDR Resource Centre (UN DDR), 2022).

S/N	Area of Specialisation	Number Trained
1	Education:	
	- Nigerian universities	1,620
	- Foreign universities	1,454
2	Welding and fabrication.	5,194
3	Entrepreneurship	2,798
4	Maritime	1,086
5	Crane and heavy duty	1,030
6	Pipefitting	250
7	Boat building	299
8	Agriculture	239
9	Automobile	207
10	Electrical installation	89
11	Aviation:	
	- Engineers	138
	- Pilot (fixed wing)	71
	- Helicopter	21
	- Instructors	5
12	Diving	230
13	Drilling	197
14	Health, safety and environment	104
15	Industry automation.	86
16	Entertainment	60
17	Instrumentation	46
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15,224</b>

**Source: A 2015 Reintegration Register (Ebiede, Langer, & Tosun, 2020)**

## **Socio-economic Reintegration**

Socio-economic reintegration is a critical aspect of DDR, aiming to address the root causes of conflict by providing ex-combatants with viable alternatives to violence. This includes access to education, skills training, microfinance initiatives, and job placement services tailored to local economic opportunities (Ebiede, Langer, & Tosun, 2020). Sustainable reintegration efforts not only benefit ex-combatants but also contribute to broader community stability and economic development (Wununyatu & Solomon, 2020).

## **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is anchored on the conflict theoretical perspective. Conflict theory, formulated primarily by Karl Marx in the mid-19th century, asserts that society is in a constant state of conflict due to the competition for limited resources. It highlights power imbalances and social inequalities that provoke societal conflicts (Hayes, 2024). Conflict theory is grounded in the philosophical ideas of Niccollo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Karl Marx, and it suggests that people are inherently competitive and contentious when vying for resources and power. This theory gained prominence during the Civil Rights Movement, when the traditionally dominant power of Whites and men in society was challenged (Paige & Fredrick, 2014). The key components of conflict theory are:

- (a) **Class Struggle:** Central to Marx's argument is the conflict between social classes, particularly the bourgeoisie (owners of production) and the proletariat (working class) (Paige & Fredrick, 2014).
- (b) **Unequal Distribution of Power:** Power disparities exist in society, with those in power leveraging their resources to maintain dominance, often at the expense of the less privileged (Mashal, 2023).
- (c) **Social Change through Conflict:** Social change is often driven by marginalized groups challenging existing power structures, leading to significant societal transformations (Hayes, 2024).

Critics argue that conflict theory places too much emphasis on economic factors and class struggle, neglecting other social conflicts such as those based on gender and race. Additionally, it is said to underestimate the potential for stability and cooperation within societies, focusing primarily on conflict and change (Hayes, 2024; Mashal, 2023). Critically, Conflict Theory views social change as a product of conflict. It posits that struggles between

conflicting groups—whether based on class, race, gender, or other dimensions—can lead to significant transformations in societal norms, policies, and power structures.

The theory has faced criticism for its deterministic outlook, which sometimes overlooks cooperative interactions and gradual reforms as pathways to social change. Critics also argue that Conflict Theory may underemphasize the role of cultural values, norms, and ideologies in shaping social relations and conflicts, potentially oversimplifying complex societal dynamics (Paige & Fredrick, 2014).

In practical application, Conflict Theory provides valuable insights for understanding and addressing conflicts in diverse contexts, including conflict-affected regions like the Niger Delta. Here, conflicts over natural resource exploitation have persisted due to underlying power imbalances among multinational corporations, local communities, and governmental authorities. Conflict Theory helps illuminate how these structural inequalities contribute to social unrest and violence, highlighting the need for policies and interventions that promote equitable resource distribution, community empowerment, and participatory decision-making.

Schulhofer-Wohl and Sambanis (2010), in their studies for the Folke Bernadotte Academy, examine the effectiveness of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs in reducing post-conflict crime and violence. Their analysis reveals that failures in DDR implementation often leads to increased involvement of former combatants in crime, highlighting the importance of effective reintegration efforts for maintaining security and stability. While successful DDR programs can potentially reduce crime rates, the authors caution against generalizing these findings due to the varied socio-economic and political complexities of post-conflict environments. They advocate for comparative analyses between DDR participants and non-participants to better understand the program's impact. In conclusion, their research underscores the potential of DDR programs to address post-conflict crime, while emphasizing the need for rigorous, context-specific evaluations to accurately assess their outcomes.

Munive and Steppulat (2015) introduced the special issue on DDR and 'Armed Non-Statutory Actors' (ANSAs) which we prefer to the less precise label of Armed Non-State Actors. The understanding that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs are essential in helping to prevent the recurrence of war in post-conflict situations is at the heart of current peacebuilding practice and the academic literature on peacekeeping and

stabilization. But the changing strategic context of DDR programs and in particular the proliferation of ANSAs presents new challenges, the responses to which have been characterized as 'second generation' DDR. The changing context poses new questions and forces us to rethink assumptions and templates of DDR as the concept is blurred and expanded. The question is if it makes sense to hold on to the concept or whether the assumptions associated with it will get in the way of rethinking templates for violence reduction in the future.

Kperogi (2016), investigates Nigeria's Niger Delta post-conflict situation post-2009 amnesty program aimed at reintegrating ex-combatants. Focused on Okrika, a key area of resistance, the study uses interviews, focus groups, and observations to analyse social, economic, and political reintegration challenges. It finds successes in social and political integration but highlights economic reintegration difficulties. Applying John Burton's Human Needs Theory, Kperogi argues that unmet needs prolong conflict and emphasizes their importance for successful reintegration. Despite government efforts, issues like inadequate stipends and social stigma persist, affecting ex-combatants' employability. The study suggests broader research across the Niger Delta to improve government reintegration strategies, offering insights into DDR's complexities in post-conflict environments.

Muggah (2015), asserts that the process of disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating ex-combatants is an age-old practice, central to modern peace, security, and development efforts. They highlight the uneven results of these DDR initiatives, despite their prominence in post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction. As global conflict dynamics evolve, DDR approaches must adapt to new challenges, such as disengaging groups like Al Shabaab, Jihadi fighters, the Taliban, and Boko Haram. The article explores the complexities and legal challenges in DDR programs and offers insights into future trajectories for scholars and practitioners in the 21st century.

Daniels (2020), examines the role of amnesty in ending civil wars, questioning the effectiveness of trading justice for peace. The article explores the impact of amnesty in different conflict outcomes, including negotiated settlements, rebel victories, government victories, and conflict reductions. By analysing a cross-national dataset of amnesties in dyadic conflicts from 1975 to 2011, Daniels finds that the primary effect of amnesty is not as an incentive but in reducing commitment problems, which can facilitate negotiated

settlements or provide a military advantage to the government. These findings offer significant insights for negotiations and conflict resolution strategies.

Ndiyun (2023) explores whether prioritizing justice over peace is beneficial in conflict-prone countries, with a focus on the Central African Republic (CAR) and other African states that have used amnesties to resolve conflicts. Advocates of prioritizing peace suggest that pursuing justice can worsen conflicts, while others argue that lasting peace necessitates justice. The study analyses the effects of amnesties and criminal trials on sustainable peace, deterrence, and political stability in CAR. It contends that justice is crucial for peace, examining amnesty under international law, which requires the prosecution of international crimes. The research concludes that justice, rather than amnesty, provides a more effective route to durable peace in CAR, as amnesty often results in impunity and recurring conflicts.

Nwobueze and Inokoba (2017) assess the effectiveness of various government interventions in Nigeria's Niger Delta, a region plagued by resource-related conflicts. Despite the temporary "cold peace" achieved by the Amnesty Programme, the authors argue it fails to establish genuine and lasting peace, as it only addresses the symptoms rather than the root causes of conflict. Post-amnesty, the region continues to experience issues like kidnapping, hostage-taking, oil bunkering, and attacks on oil infrastructure, reflecting a superficial peace. Utilizing descriptive qualitative methods and case study research informed by the structural violence paradigm, the study concludes that sustainable peace and security will remain elusive until the fundamental causes of unrest and violence are fully addressed.

The UN (2021), report highlights the overlap between organized crime and conflict, noting that weakened institutions and war economies in conflict zones foster illicit activities like human, drug, and weapons trafficking. These activities provide combatants with incentives to continue fighting. Successful DDR processes must address ex-combatants' involvement in organized crime by promoting alternative livelihoods, reconciliation, and strengthening national and local capacities. Good governance, transparent policies, and community engagement are essential to offer alternatives to illicit economies and address conflict drivers. Strengthening the state institutions and civil services through training and improved conditions is crucial for governance and rule of law. The sustainability of DDR efforts relies on robust systems and stakeholder cooperation. The report urges DDR practitioners to incorporate insights on organized crime into DDR processes, emphasizing

age- and gender-sensitive approaches, enhanced cooperation, and stakeholder dialogue to support the transition from conflict to sustainable peace.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a documentary research design, relying on the systematic analysis of existing reports, policy documents, and academic literature to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs in Nigeria. Given the study's focus on synthesizing knowledge rather than generating primary data, this approach allows for a comprehensive assessment of past and present DDR strategies, their challenges, and their implications for sustainable peace in Nigeria. To ensure relevance and rigor, the study adopted clear criteria for selecting secondary sources. Only materials published between 2010 and 2024 were included, ensuring that the analysis reflects recent developments in DDR practices within Nigeria's evolving conflict landscape.

The selection process prioritized documents that directly addressed DDR's socio-economic, political, and operational dimensions, including peer-reviewed journal articles, government and NGO reports, United Nations publications, and conflict resolution literature. Sources that fell outside the specified timeframe, lacked empirical grounding, or were unrelated to Nigeria's DDR context were excluded. The analysis followed a thematic synthesis approach. First, the collected literature was systematically coded to identify recurring themes, such as reintegration barriers, community engagement, and policy inconsistencies. These themes were then cross-examined across different sources to assess areas of consensus or contradiction in the literature. Finally, the findings were interpreted within Nigeria's broader socio-political and conflict dynamics, drawing on theoretical insights from peace building studies and political economy to contextualize the successes and shortcomings of DDR programs.

## **Findings**

### **Research Question 1: What are the limitations of existing DDR programs in Nigeria?**

#### **(i) Failures in DDR Implementation and Crime Increase:**

Failures in DDR implementation, particularly in the reintegration phase, can lead to an increase in crime rates among ex-combatants (Schulhofer-Wohl & Sambanis, 2010). This

highlights a limitation in the current DDR programs, as reintegration efforts are often inadequate or poorly executed.

**(ii) Complexity of Post-Conflict Environments:**

Some DDR programs may reduce crime locally, but the complexity of post-conflict environments makes it challenging to establish a direct causal link between DDR programs and crime reduction (Schulhofer-Wohl & Sambanis, 2010). This indicates that existing programs may not fully address the complex socio-political and economic realities faced by ex-combatants, limiting their overall effectiveness.

**(iii) Lack of Comparative Studies:**

There is a need for comparative studies of crime trends between DDR participants and non-participants to gain nuanced insights into the actual effectiveness of DDR programs (Schulhofer-Wohl & Sambanis, 2010). This gap suggests a lack of comprehensive evaluation in existing DDR strategies.

**Research Question 2: How can DDR strategies be rethought to better address current and future challenges?**

**(iv) Addressing Ex-Combatants' Reintegration Needs:**

Effective DDR must address the economic, social, and political reintegration needs of ex-combatants to ensure long-term success and contribute to sustainable peace (Kperogi, 2016). Rethinking DDR strategies should involve a more holistic approach that integrates the diverse needs of ex-combatants.

**(v) Promoting Alternative Livelihoods and Reconciliation:**

DDR strategies should focus on promoting alternative livelihoods, reconciliation, and the strengthening of local capacities to mitigate the involvement of ex-combatants in organized crime (UN, 2021). This rethinking of DDR programs would enhance their ability to address the root causes of conflict and criminal behavior.

**(vi) Context-Specific and Evidence-Based Strategies:**

DDR strategies should be context-specific, comprehensive, and evidence-based, ensuring they are tailored to the unique circumstances of Nigeria's conflict and post-conflict environments (UN, 2021). This approach would increase the relevance and impact of DDR programs.

### **Research Question 3: What innovative approaches can enhance the effectiveness of DDR in Nigeria?**

#### **(vii) Good Governance and Transparent Policies:**

Innovative approaches to DDR should emphasize the importance of good governance, transparent policies, and strong state institutions, which are essential for addressing the drivers of conflict and supporting successful DDR implementation (UN, 2021). Strengthening governance structures can create an enabling environment for DDR programs to succeed.

#### **(viii) Comprehensive and Long-Term Strategy Development:**

The development of a comprehensive, long-term strategy that integrates security, development, and peace building efforts can enhance DDR outcomes. Ensuring that DDR programs are not isolated but embedded within broader national policies will contribute to sustained peace and stability.

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **What are the limitations of existing DDR programs in Nigeria?**

The research consistently highlights that failures in the reintegration phase of DDR programs can exacerbate insecurity and contribute to higher crime rates among former combatants in post-conflict settings. Schulhofer-Wohl and Sambanis (2010) found that ineffective reintegration efforts are directly associated with increased involvement of former combatants in post-conflict crime, underscoring how inadequate reintegration can undermine the overall success of DDR programs. This challenge is exemplified in the case of Nigeria's Niger Delta, where the Amnesty Programme achieved only a temporary "cold peace" rather than lasting stability (Nwobueze & Inokoba, 2017). Despite government efforts, the region continues to experience persistent issues like kidnapping, oil bunkering, and attacks on infrastructure, reflecting the superficial nature of the peace due to unaddressed root causes.

Kperogi's (2016) study on the Niger Delta further highlights the economic reintegration challenges ex-combatants face, such as inadequate stipends and social stigma, which negatively impact their employability and long-term prospects. These unmet economic, social, and political needs can prolong conflict, as opposed to facilitating sustainable peace. The UN (2021) report emphasizes that successful DDR must directly address ex-combatants' involvement in organized crime by promoting alternative livelihoods, reconciliation, and strengthening national and local capacities. Ineffective reintegration can

allow combatants to simply return to illicit activities, undermining the intended outcomes of DDR programs.

### **How can DDR strategies be rethought to better address current and future challenges?**

To address the root causes of conflict and achieve sustainable peace, DDR programs must go beyond disarmament and demobilization to tackle the underlying economic, social, and political grievances that perpetuate violence. Nwobueze and Inokoba (2017) argue that DDR in Nigeria's Niger Delta has often addressed only the symptoms rather than the root causes of conflict, resulting in a superficial "cold peace."

Enhancing the economic reintegration component of DDR is crucial for improving its overall effectiveness. Strategies must prioritize providing sustainable livelihood opportunities, skills training, and addressing the structural inequalities that drive conflict (Kperogi, 2016). Economic reintegration efforts should be tailored to local contexts to ensure relevance and impact.

As the strategic contexts in which DDR is conducted continue to evolve, with the proliferation of armed non-state actors and changing conflict dynamics, there is a need for more flexible and adaptable "second generation" DDR approaches (Munive & Steppulat, 2015). DDR frameworks must accommodate the diverse nature of armed groups and adapt to new forms of conflict to remain fit for purpose.

### **What innovative approaches can enhance the effectiveness of DDR in Nigeria?**

A key innovative approach highlighted by the research is the need to address ex-combatants' involvement in organized crime as part of DDR processes in Nigeria. The UN (2021) report emphasizes that the overlap between conflict and organized crime, such as human, drug, and weapons trafficking, can provide combatants with incentives to continue fighting. Successful DDR must therefore incorporate strategies to promote alternative livelihoods, enhance governance, and strengthen local capacities to prevent former combatants from returning to criminal activities. This integrated approach aims to disrupt the war economies and illicit networks that can undermine the stability and security gains of DDR.

The research also highlights the importance of adopting context-specific and evidence-based approaches to DDR in Nigeria. The UN (2021) report stresses that effective DDR requires an in-depth understanding of the local dynamics and crime trends. This

involves conducting comparative analyses to understand the differences in outcomes between DDR participants and non-participants. By tailoring interventions based on this evidence, DDR programs can be more responsive to the unique challenges and needs of the target communities. This context-specific approach is crucial for maximizing the impact and relevance of DDR efforts.

Lastly, the research emphasizes the critical role of strengthening state institutions, improving governance practices, and ensuring transparent policies for the success of DDR initiatives in Nigeria. The UN (2021) report underscores that sustainable DDR efforts rely on robust systems and stakeholder cooperation. By enhancing governance and the rule of law, DDR can promote stability, reduce corruption, and build trust between ex-combatants and the government. This, in turn, facilitates the successful reintegration of former fighters and supports the transition from conflict to lasting peace.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the dynamics and challenges of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) process in Nigeria's Niger Delta, focusing on the reintegration of ex-combatants into mainstream society. The problem addressed was the ineffectiveness of current DDR programs in fully integrating ex-combatants, particularly in terms of economic reintegration. Key findings revealed that while social and political reintegration efforts have seen relative success, economic reintegration remains significantly inadequate. Factors such as insufficient government stipends and social stigma have hindered ex-combatants' ability to secure employment and achieve economic stability. The position of the paper is clear: for DDR programs to be effective in the Niger Delta and similar conflict-affected regions, there must be a paradigm shift towards tailored, context-specific strategies that account for the unique socio-economic and political landscapes of these areas. Such an approach is vital for the successful reintegration of ex-combatants and the sustainable resolution of conflict.

The policy implication of this study is that DDR programs in Nigeria's Niger Delta must be restructured to focus more on economic reintegration, which has been a significant challenge. Policymakers need to allocate more resources for job training, employment opportunities, and microfinance initiatives tailored to the specific needs of ex-combatants in this region. Moreover, DDR programs should involve community-based strategies to reduce social stigma and promote acceptance of ex-combatants. This calls for a shift in government

priorities, ensuring that both financial and social reintegration efforts are aligned with the realities of the region's socio-economic conditions. Effective DDR policies should be more adaptable and context-specific, integrating local governance structures and community involvement to address underlying causes of conflict and foster long-term peace.

The research contributes to advancing knowledge by providing a comprehensive analysis of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs in conflict-affected regions like Nigeria's Niger Delta. It identifies critical gaps in current DDR strategies, particularly in economic reintegration, and proposes context-specific recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of these programs. By focusing on the unique socio-economic and political dynamics of the Niger Delta, the study offers insights into tailored approaches necessary for sustainable peace building and conflict resolution.

Further studies should explore the long-term impacts of DDR programs, the role of international collaboration in enhancing DDR efforts, and the continuous adaptation of DDR strategies to evolving conflict scenarios. These areas of research are crucial for developing more effective and sustainable approaches to post-conflict reintegration and peace building.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends the following:

- i. The Federal government should provide job market-aligned training to enhance the employability of ex-combatants.
- ii. The Federal government should further support entrepreneurship through microloans and business development services to create sustainable livelihoods.
- iii. State governments should conduct community sensitization campaigns to highlight the importance of reintegrating ex-combatants.
- iv. Governments should establish committees involving community leaders and ex-combatants to ensure local perspectives are incorporated into DDR programs.
- v. Ex-combatants should be included in local governance processes to promote social cohesion and reduce criminal re-engagement.
- vi. The Ministry for Niger Delta should facilitate the formation of advocacy associations for ex-combatants to support their reintegration.

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# HERDER-FARMER CRISES AND FOOD SECURITY IN AGATU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

Herder-farmer crises have become frequent occurrences especially among rural communities in recent years. Farmers have decried their inability to undertake farming activities due to such crises. Thus, this incidence has brought about food scarcity and hike in food prices not only in the affected communities but across the globe. This study therefore assessed herder-farmer crises and food security in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. Specifically, the study investigated the causes of herder-farmer crises and the consequences on food security. The study adopted the frustration-aggression theory and utilized cross-sectional survey design. A sample of 394 respondents was drawn from a population of 166,900 using multistage sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was semi-structured interview. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics tool such as frequencies and simple percentages. Findings identified land encroachment, inadequacy of security personnel and absence of anti-open grazing law as causes of the crises. Findings indicated that herder-farmer crises affect food availability, accessibility and stability in the study area by denying farmers access to farmlands to cultivate crops. The study therefore recommends that the Benue State Government in collaboration with the Federal Government should as a matter of urgency deploy adequate security personnel to Agatu land. The Federal Government should also compensate victims of the crises as most of them lack shelter, adequate food and access to quality health care, amongst others.

**Keywords:** Herder-farmer crises; Food availability; Food security; Rural communities; Shelter.

## **Introduction**

Conflict no doubt, is an inevitable phenomenon that has been with mankind since creation. Most of these conflicts are mainly struggle over scarce resources. This is why Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels opined that, “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”. Abass (2019), noted that the tendency towards conflict is a basic element of human nature primarily on account of competition over scarce resources. Conflicts are all over the world in time past and present. Both developed and developing countries have had a share of conflicts that they have experienced. Globally, there has been a recent surge in both the number of armed conflicts and the number of countries involved, with the most consequential being the conflicts in Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine, leading to a sharp rise in fatalities (Mia, 2024).

Conflicts or crises differ across societies or nations. These crises include war, genocide, terrorism, banditry, communal, ethno-religious and herder-farmer crises. Herder-farmer crises are not recent occurrences. The crises are a series of disputes over arable land resources between nomadic Fulani herders and indigenous farmers. The extent of these crises cannot be exhausted in a hurry as both human and material resources are affected. The frequency and intensity of herder-farmer crises are enormous In West and Central African regions where herder-farmer crises are known to occur most due to open grazing practices, Brottem (2021), noted that over 15,000 deaths were linked to herder-farmer conflicts since 2010 and half of those have occurred since 2018. According to Jones-Casey and Knox (2011), farmer-herder crisis in Mali is significant, with approximately 42% land use conflicts in the country involving herders and farmers. Adigun (2022), analyzed the trends and dynamics of Nigeria’s farmer-herder conflicts between 2014 and 2019, and found out that there was a steady increase in the incidents. In Benue State, Abah (2023), reported that a total of 5,138 people have been killed within 87 months.

Herder-farmer crises have manifold triggers and they are similar or dissimilar among countries that are affected by such crises. According to Adams et al. (2023), resource scarcity and insecurity due to climate change, coupled with ethno-religious and identity politics have strained peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders in West and Central Africa over the last few decades. A further review of herder-farmer confrontations in Ghana, Tanzania, Mali and Nigeria by Adams et al. (2023), identified climate induced-environmental factors, land tenure insecurity, resource competition and intergroup conflicts and prejudices as the drivers. Ifedayo (2023), isolated conflict over grazing right and farming, climate change

which obstructed grazing routes as well as changes in livestock and cropping systems as the major the causes of herder-farmer conflicts in Benue State. For Dauda and Davru (2024), the farmer-herder conflict in Benue State was primarily rooted in the struggle for land between pastoralists and farmers. Additionally, intolerance between these two warring groups significantly contribute to the escalation of tension and violence in the state.

Herder-farmer crises have significant implications on food security particularly in the developing countries of Africa. Nnaji et al. (2022), cited Okwulu et al. (2024), stated that conflict between farmers and herders arises when itinerant herders graze their livestock on farm lands, leading to low yield and income losses for farmers. They noted that the conflict directly threatens rural household food security by limiting their ability to cultivate land and access food through the market. The conflict impacts the four main pillars of food security; availability, accessibility, utilization, and stabilization and reduces food security by adversely affecting agricultural labour supply, production decisions, and outputs. Adama et al. (2017), observed that herder-farmer crises in Nigeria and other African nations have added a new twist to the countries' fragile socio-political system and pose a huge challenge to the food security of those countries. The country is a hotspot for herder-farmer conflict in West and Central Africa, with an estimated annual loss of 14 billion dollars and 3641 casualties between 2016 and 2018 (Amnesty International, 2018 cited in Uchenna et al., 2025).

In Northern Nigeria, Benue State remains one of the most hard-hit areas where conflicts between Fulani armed herdsman and farmers over grazing land have led to the killing of people and razing down of houses as well as food storages facilities. Similarly, Onwunyi and Anekwe (2020), noted that herdsman and farmers conflicts have negatively affected food production in Benue State. The armed nomadic herders have continued to pose significant threat to the lives and property of the local communities in the state.

Due to the severity of herders-farmers crises, there have been various interventions aimed at resolving the crises to boost food security. The Federal Government of Nigeria enacted the grazing law between 1964 and 1965 to allocate lands for pastoralists where they can graze their cattle. In April 2014, the then President Goodluck Jonathan's government inaugurated an inter-ministerial technical committee on grazing reserves, tasked with proposing strategies for ending the conflict. The government set up a Committee on Grazing Reserves, chaired by then Benue State Governor, Gabriel Suswam (International Crisis Group, 2020). The committee recommended the recovery and improvement of all grazing

routes encroached upon by farmers and suggested that the Central Bank of Nigeria release a total of N100 billion (\$317 million) to the country's 36 state governments for ranch construction. In Benue, the state government introduced laws banning all open grazing (International Crisis Group, 2020).

However, it seems these interventions have done little or nothing in resolving or reducing herder-farmer crises as they have remained unabated. Thus, this study is undertaken to assess the impact of the herder-farmer crises on food security in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Investigate the causes of herder-farmer crises in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State; and
- ii. Determine the effects of the crises on food security in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was anchored on the frustration-aggression theory to explain the herder-farmer crises vis-a-vis the implications on food security. Frustration-aggression theory also known as the 'frustration-aggression-displacement theory' is a theory of aggression proposed by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer and Robert Sears (1939) and further developed by Neal Miller (1941) and Leonard Berkowitz (1961). The theory argues that aggression is the result of blocking, or frustrating a person's efforts to attain a goal (Friedman, 2014).

The herders-farmer crises is a struggle over values and claims to scarce resources in which the former aims are to neutralize, injure or eliminate the host communities in a bid to fend for their animals. The violent activities of the herders occur because of the accumulation of residual instigator effects of frustration. The activities of the herders are traceable to the desertification that has caused depletion in grazing opportunities or scarcity of pasture for their animals which in the long-run, affects their economic wellbeing. If a herdsman loses his flock to drought and water scarcity, he may be frustrated because of the loss of means of livelihood. Consequently he may become aggressive and since, he cannot channel his frustration to natural causes, he may in the long-run vent it any person or group that obstructs his migration to a safe area. On the side of farmers and host communities in Nigeria, frustration also occurs whenever animals of the herders trample on their farmlands

and destroy their crops. The resultant frustration may make them to become aggressive and channel their aggression to the herdsmen and their livestock, thereby leading to a circle of conflict and confrontation.

### Materials and Methods

The study adopted cross-sectional survey design. The study was conducted in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. Agatu Local Government Area is one of the 23 local government areas of Benue State. The population of this study included adult males and females between the ages of 18 years and above who are inhabitants of Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. According to the projected population of the area as at 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2022, the local government had a population of 166,900 people (National Population Commission, 2024). A sample of 400 respondents was drawn from the population of Agatu LGA using the Taro Yamane formula presented as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N}$$

Where;

n = the sample size required (?)  
 N = the population size (166,900)  
 e = level of confidence (0.05)

Substitutively;

$$n = \frac{166,900}{1 + 166,900}$$

$$n = \frac{166,900}{1 + 166,900 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{166,900}{1 + 417.25}$$

$$n = \frac{166,900}{418.25}$$

$$n = 400$$

Thus, the sample size for this study was 400 respondents.

Cluster, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting respondents for the study. Cluster sampling was used to group Agatu Local Government Area into three (3) existing zones such as Zone A (Icho), Zone B (Ahepa) and Zone C (Eche). Purposive sampling technique was used to select council wards within these clusters or zones selected. Council wards within the zones include: Zone A (Okokolo, Udugbeho and Egba), Zone B (Obagaji, Ogbaulu and Oshigbudu) and Zone C (Enungba, Usha, Ogwule-Ogbaulu and Ogwule-Kaduna). This technique was used to select wards which suffered more

from farmer-herder conflict. Purposive sampling was also used to select communities within these council wards. Finally, accidental sampling technique was used to select fifty (50) respondents from each of the eight (8) communities. This is because anyone whom the researcher met on ground and makes himself or herself available was included in the study. Semi-structured interview was the method used for data collection, while the data were quantitatively analysed using frequencies and percentages.

## Results and Discussion

### Results

#### *Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents*

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency (N=394)</b>	<b>Percentage (%=100)</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	218	55.3
Female	176	44.7
<b>Age</b>		
18-28yrs	81	20.6
29-39yrs	54	13.7
40-50yrs	126	32.0
51-61yrs	93	23.6
62yrs & above	40	10.1
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	113	28.7
Married	202	51.3
Separated/divorced	28	7.1
Widow/widower	51	12.9
<b>Educational attainment</b>		
Non-formal education	40	10.2
Primary education	93	23.6
Secondary education	196	49.7
Tertiary education	65	16.5
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farming	164	41.6
Fishing	83	21.1
Teaching	31	7.9
Business/trade	60	15.2
Civil service	35	8.9
Others	21	5.3

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 1 presents data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Accordingly, the sex distribution of the respondents shows that, 55.3% (218) were male, while 44.7% (176) of the respondents were female. The data also indicate that respondents between the ages of 40-50 years were the majority, constituting 32.0% (126), followed by 23.6% (93) of the respondents who were within the age bracket of 51-61 years; 20.6% (81) of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 28 years. Under the age bracket of 29-39 years was 13.7% (54) of the respondents, while 10.1% (40) of the respondents were between ages 62 years and above. The data on marital status show that, 51.3% (202) of the respondents were married who also formed the majority, 28.7% (113) of the respondents were single, 12.9% (51) of the respondents were under the category that lost either their husbands or wives, while 7.1% (28) of the respondents were no longer in any conjugal relationship either because they had separated or divorced their partners.

With regards to educational attainment the data specify that majority of them attended secondary school. This data was represented by 49.7% (196) of the respondents. Those who had primary education were 23.6% (93); respondents who had tertiary education were 16.5% (65), while those with non-formal education were 10.2% (40). Lastly, data on occupation of the respondents reveal that majority of them were farmers as indicated by 41.6% (164); respondents who were fishermen accounted for 21.1% (83) of the responses, while businessmen or women and traders constituted 15.2% (60) of the respondents. Furthermore, 8.9% (35) of the respondents were within the civil service category, 7.9% (31) of whom were teachers, while those that fell under the ‘others’ category numbered 5.3% (21).

***Causes of Herders-Farmers Crises in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State***

**Table 2: Causes of herders-farmers crises in Agatu LGA according to the respondents**

<b>Causes of herders-farmers crises</b>	<b>Frequency (N=394)</b>	<b>Percent (%=100)</b>
Collaboration with insiders to attack members of the community	305	77.4
Inability to settle differences arising between community members and Fulani herdsman	239	60.7
Refusal of herdsman to pay compensation to farmers on damaged crops	296	75.1
Population explosion	290	73.6
Illegal land deals among community members with the pastoralists	352	89.3
Availability of grasses for the cattle to feed	301	76.4
Denial of access to grazing fields	217	55.1
False allegations by Fulani herdsman on theft of cows by	315	79.9

community members		
Encroaching on cultivated lands and damaging of crops	384	97.5
Ill-conception of the Fulani herdsmen to retaliate at anytime	291	73.9
Pollution of water sources by cattle	106	26.9
Enactment of open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law	347	88.1
Ethno-religious sentiments	272	69.0
Lack of adequate security personnel to protect lives and property	351	89.1
Political differences	183	46.4

Source: **Field Survey, 2024.**

Data in table 2 show that herder-farmer crises in the study area was caused by encroachment on cultivated farm lands and damage to crops by herders' cattle. This was identified by 97.5% (384) of the respondents, while 89.3% (352) of the respondents noted that illegal land deals among community members with pastoralists was the cause of clashes between herders-farmers in the study area. Another 89.1% (351) of the respondents stated that inadequacy of security personnel to protect lives and property of the indigenes was the reason adduced by herders to attack the people of Agatu, while 88.1% (347) of the respondents blamed the enactment of the open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law by the Benue State Government for the attacks or crises between herders and farmers in the study area.

Other causes of herder-farmer crises in Agatu Local Government Area were the false accusation of cattle theft among community members, collaboration with insiders to attack members of the community, availability of grass for the cattle to feed, refusal of herdsmen to pay compensation to farmers on damaged crops, and ill-conception of the Fulani herdsmen to retaliate at point in anytime. These causes were indicated by 79.9% (315), 77.4% (305), 76.4% (301), 75.1% (298) and 73.9% (291) of the respondents, respectively.

Furthermore, 73.6% (290) of the respondents attributed the cause of herder-farmer crises to population increase, 69.0% (272) of the respondents attributed it to ethnic and cultural sentiments, 60.7% (239) of the respondents indicated that the inability to settle differences arising between community members and Fulani herdsmen was the cause of the crisis in Agatu Local Government Area. Denial of access to grazing fields as constituted by 55.1% (217) of the respondents was one of the triggers of herders-farmers crises in the study area. Finally, political differences and pollution of water sources by cattle were indicated by 46.4% (183) and 26.9% (106) of the respondents as the enablers of crises in the study area.

*Effects of Herders-Farmers Crises on Food Security in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State*

**Table 3: Respondents’ opinion on effects of herders-farmers crises on food availability in Agatu LGA**

<b>Effects on food availability</b>	<b>Frequency (F)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Fear to cultivate crops on farm lands	145	36.8
High cost of herbicides and fertilizers	51	12.9
Insufficient labour force	102	25.9
Farms with overgrown weeds	42	10.7
Crops with stunted growth	15	3.8
Presence of insect-pest on crops	20	5.1
No response	19	4.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

The data in table 3 under the effects of herder-farmer crises on food availability as indicated by the respondents shows the effects to include fear to cultivate crops on farm lands, insufficient labour force, high cost of herbicides and fertilizers, farms with overgrown weeds, presence of pest on crops and crops with stunted growth. This data was therefore represented by 36.8% (145), 25.9% (102), 12.9% (51), 10.7% (42), 5.1% (20) and 3.8% (15) of the respondents respectively.

**Table 4: Respondents’ opinion on effects of herder-farmer crises on food accessibility in Agatu LGA**

<b>Effects on food accessibility</b>	<b>Frequency (F)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Non-functional periodic markets	72	18.3
Absence of buyers	38	9.6
Fear of accessing farms	41	10.4
Unable to harvest farm crops	116	29.4
Destruction of crops by herdsmen and herds	106	26.9
No response	21	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Data in table 4 show that herder-farmer crises also affected food accessibility, as 29.4% (116) of the respondents indicated that because of the crises they were unable to harvest farm crops, 26.9% (106) of the respondents identified destruction of crops by herdsmen and their herds as effect of herders-farmers crises on food accessibility and 18.3% (72) of the respondents said that nonfunctional periodic markets is the reason food was not accessible in Agatu Local Government Area. Fear of accessing farmlands and absence of buyers, represented by 10.4% (41) and 9.6% (38) of the respondents were other side effects of herder-farmer crises on food accessibility in the study area.

**Table 5: Respondents' opinion on effects of herders-farmers crises on food stability in Agatu LGA**

<b>Effects on food stability</b>	<b>Frequency (F)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
High cost of food	219	55.6
Incessant herdsmen attack on farmers	95	24.1
No response	80	20.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 5 presents data on the effects of herders-farmer crises on food stability in Agatu LGA. The effects were identified as high cost of food as a result of the incessant herdsmen's attacks on farm lands. Thus, 55.6% (219) and 24.1% (95) responses represented the two views by the respondents.

### **Discussion**

The data on causes of farmers-herders' crises in Agatu LGA show that herders are easily drawn to an area due to the presence of some natural features such as water and pasture. There is also provision in the Nigerian Constitution that make reservation for grazing routes but due to the influx of herders from other neighbouring African countries and increasing herds, the grazing areas earmarked are not sufficient for the herds to graze on, thus leading to encroachment of other green areas which the farmers already have taken possession of. The encroachment therefore results to crises between the herders and farmers and caused massive destruction of food crops and death of livestock. This has been one of the reasons for the continuous escalation of the crises in Agatu and other places where such features are prominent. According to Ikyur (2022), suspected Fulani herdsmen have sent threat messages to residents in some communities in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State to vacate their ancestral homes or face serious attack. In the report, it was further revealed that the gunmen sent mercenaries and issued threat to people living in Torkula village in the same local government area to vacate the community or face the consequence. This statement by the author confirm fears of impending invasion of host communities by herdsmen to permanently takeover their ancestral lands

Another cause of herders-farmers crises in Agatu LGA was encroachment on cultivated farm lands and damaging of crops. The data agrees with Brottem (2021), who noted that the most common trigger of farmer-herder conflict is crop damage caused by grazing livestock. As the region's rural population has grown dramatically, many herders have seen their grazing lands put into cultivation thus making their livelihoods more challenging.

Illegal land deals among community members with the pastoralists also resulted to crises between herders-farmers in the local government. Unfortunately, such deals were leaked as the herdsmen refused to pay any additional amount of money for the coming years to graze their cattle. Therefore, the persuasion from the indigenous people for the herdsmen to vacate the lands often degenerates into crises. Inadequacy s of security personnel to protect the lives and property of people of Agatuwas indicated by the respondents as the reason for continuous attacks by herders on their communities and people.

The data show that the enactment as well as enforcement of open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law was a serious course of concern and worry to the herders, and therefore they resisted the institution of the law. The enactment and enforcement of the law witnessed massive arrest of herdsmen's cattle, which they were expected to claim back by paying prescribed fees. According to Ojemire (2023), ranching is viewed suspiciously by many seminomadic pastoralists as it requires dramatic changes in lifestyle. That the initiative is strongly supported by anti-Fulani media voices makes its implementation even more polarizing.

The data indicate that false allegations by Fulani herdsmen on theft of cows by community members led to crises between herders and farmers in Agatu LGA. The data is in consonance with the view of Brottem (2021), who identified theft as another cause of herder-farmer crises. According to the author, livestock is the most valuable resource across many rural communities and is a common target of thieves. Increased frequency and magnitude of livestock theft is a cause of violent conflict. Armed groups use stolen cattle to fund their activities. The risk of theft causes herders to arm themselves to protect their animals. The increased demand for arms enriches criminal syndicates involved in arms trafficking. All these factors raise the risk of violent altercation. Meanwhile, aggrieved groups may perceive stealing livestock from communities with which they have been in conflict as a form of justice. This has led to a rapid expansion in the number of community-based armed groups to ostensibly guard against livestock theft, though such groups can also be engaged in reprisal violence.

One of the other predominant causes of herders-farmers crises in Agatu Local Government Area is denial of herders access to grazing fields by the farmers. This shows that grazing lands are grossly insufficient, which is largely as a result of population expansion. The lands which were not cultivated by the farmers are being under utilized. These lands

were used as grazing areas for the herders, but as the population increases, the lands become scarce and the need for tussle over ownership and usage arise. Denial of access to land most times has led to conflicts. The study by Accord (2018), a human rights forum confirmed this position. According to the forum, struggle over grazing land and scarce resources has over the years, resulted in perennial and growing violent conflicts in terms of frequency and intensity and geographic scope. Underpinning the escalation in frequency of conflicts in Nigeria is a confluence of environmental and demographic forces, especially desertification caused by climate change and population explosion.

The data on effects of farmers-herders' crises on food security specifically food availability indicate that due to crises between herders and farmers in Agatu LGA, there is likelihood that farmers will be afraid to cultivate crops on farm lands, especially those that are far away from their permanent or temporal residence of the farmers. Thus, this affects the quantity of food that would have been produced in that area. Due to continuous crises between herders and farmers, the labour force expected to have been working on the farms to make food available for the populace relocate to other peaceful environments where they can easily get hired labour, hence insufficient labour force also affects food availability. The quantity of food produced during crises cannot be the same as without crises. The data also show that because of crises between herdsman and farmers, herbicides and fertilizers are purchased at high cost, therefore most farmers who already are faced with crises or attacks by herdsman cannot afford such high cost of herbicides and fertilizers to apply on their farms. Moreover, the farms are small in size since most of them due to fear of being attack on their way to distant farms by herders lose interest. Also, there is virtually no market available for agrochemicals in crisis zones.

The data further indicate that cultivated farmlands of farmers were overgrown with weeds because they were afraid to work on their farms as attacks by herders were incessant, and also that the Fulani herdsman were always in possession of raffle, at least AK47 to strike at any time. Weeds usually compete with crops when they are not properly tackled. It affects the growth of the crops and by implication brings about scarcity or non-availability of food particularly in the area where there is crisis. Untreated weeds breed insects as well as pests that feed directly on the crop. That affects the nutritional composition and size of the crops. All these leads to stunted growth of crops and therefore affects the availability of food.

Existing literature indicates that conflicts reduce food security through their adverse effects on agricultural labour supply thereby cause drastic effect of food availability (Verwimp et al., 2015), production decisions (Arias et al., 2019), and outputs (George et al., 2021). The herder-farmer crisis is a health and human crisis threatening the food security and nutrition of millions of people in Nigeria as hundreds of millions of people suffer from hunger and malnutrition (WHO, 2016).

The data on effects of farmer-farmer crises on food accessibility suggest that due to the ravaging conflicts, it is challenging to harvest produce on farmlands within the crises area as those who dare to risk their lives may lose them. Thus accessing food becomes difficult because most crops planted are not easily harvested except with special arrangement involving security personnel for escort. These farm produces are not equally accessed because of the destruction by herdsmen. Periodic markets are originally meant to serve the interest of rural farmers and buyers from far and near, however crises disrupt such market activities. These are places selling and buying takes place, and such access is denied when shutdown. Most markets have been closed down due to crises, which affect access to food.

The data conform to Simmons' (2013), findings that crisis reduces physical security, even for people not directly engaged as combatants or victims of violence. Insecurity disrupts normal commerce, directly reducing flows of food through market channels, as marketing agents face high risks of losses through theft and high costs if they try to protect their stocks. Apenda (2016), stated that a total of 664.4 hectares (56.4%) of farmland were destroyed in Benue State between 2010 and 2015 in three local governments of Agatu, Guma and Logo as a result of farmers and herdsmen crises. This development poses a great danger to food production in Nigeria since the state is the hub of the nation's food security.

The data on farmers-farmers' crises and food stability indicate that high cost of food and incessant herdsmen attacks on farmers affects food stability. Similarly, Okoli and Handerior (2018) noted that inspite of the tremendous amounts of resources budgeted to maintain internal security, including food security in Nigeria by the government, it appears that the Fulani herder-farmer crises in Benue State is intractable leading to food shortage.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the discussion of findings, the study concluded that the causes of herder-farmer crises in Agatu LGA revolved on encroaching on cultivated lands and damaging of crops, inadequacy of security personnel to protect lives and property, enactment of open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law and alleged cattle rustling. Others were, collaboration with insiders to attack members of the community, availability of grass for the cattle to feed, refusal of herdsmen to pay compensation to farmers on damaged crops, ill-conception of the Fulani herdsmen to retaliate at any time, population explosion, ethno-religious sentiments, etc.

The study further established that herder-farmer crises affect food security in Agatu LGA in three dimensions, namely availability, accessibility and stability. Under food availability, the study concluded that due to fear to cultivate crops on farm lands, insufficient labour force, high cost of herbicides and fertilizers, farms with overgrown weeds, presence of pest on crops and crops with stunted growth food caused by herders-farmers crises, food in the area was rarely available. For food accessibility, the study concluded that due to herder-farmer crises, farmers were unable to harvest farm crops, destruction of crops by herdsmen and herds, non-functional periodic markets, fear of accessing farms and absence of buyers, food was not easily accessible. The study established that herder-farmer crises also affected food instability in Agatu Local Government Area due to high cost of food and incessant herdsmen attack on farmers.

## **Recommendations**

- (i) The Benue State Government, in collaboration with the Federal Government, should as a matter of urgency, deploy more security personnel to affected communities in Agatu. This will rekindle confidence in the farmers to return and cultivate their farmlands to boost food security in the study area.
- (ii) The Federal Government should provide adequate compensation to victims of herder-farmer crises in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State
- (iii) The Benue State Government should empower farmers in Agatu Local government area with farm inputs.
- (iv) The National Assembly should amend the Constitution to accommodate the open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law.
- (v) The two factions (farmers and herders) should always learn to reconcile when there is an infringement over the right of the other for peaceful coexistence.

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**PROTESTS AND THE CHALLENGE OF ADDRESSING UNRESOLVED  
SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES IN NIGERIA’S 2024 “END BAD  
GOVERNMENT” MOVEMENT**

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**Abstract**

Nations exist because of the people, and the people make democracies endearing. Public protest has remained a basic right and important activity in a democracy. Over the years, Nigeria has faced numerous environmental, political, and socio-economic problems begging for attention and answers. The government seems unperturbed about finding lasting solutions to these challenges as the political leadership is more concerned with capturing and holding on to power. In the long run, the people have resort to protests demanding solutions to these recurring societal challenges. This study interrogated protests and the challenge of addressing unresolved socioeconomic and political issues in Nigeria’s 2024 “End Bad Government” Movement. The study adopted David Easton’s System theory as a theoretical framework for analysis and the secondary method of data analysis. Thus, the study examined whether bad leadership and unresponsive governance result in protests in Nigeria, and whether suppression of dissenting voices results in protests in Nigeria. The findings revealed that bad leadership, infringement on rights and inability to access basic social amenities, among others, have often resulted in protests in Nigeria. Also, insensitive leadership significantly affected protests, and in most cases, affects government policies. The study concludes that protests have ignited conversations about governance, accountability, and human rights in Nigeria. The “End bad government” protest also created awareness of social issues, activated civic activism necessitated by political consciousness and engagement, leading to policy reforms. As such, comprehensive reforms, when put in place to ensure that rights are protected, the well-being and welfare of the people are realized, and basic social amenities are accessible, will surely prevent protests in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Democracy; Dissent; Governance; Protests, System theory

## **Introduction**

A social system comprises units that are themselves entities, and each of these units performs many roles in complex societies where it exists. Therefore, the quality of social interaction and the adaptive and problem-solving possibilities of the entire society directly affect the responses of the units comprising the whole. Democracy has continuously been described as a type of government, highlighting the central place of the people as the government itself and also beneficiaries of the policies and programmes of the government. As such, it cannot be negated that the people, as the main focus of every democracy, remain what makes a democracy endearing and acceptable among alternatives (Ndubuisi & Uduma, 2025). Though democracies have written constitutions and courts as referees, they can only function and endure in countries where these written constitutions are supplemented with unwritten laws or codes. When these societal codes are swept aside, they ultimately result in societal anomalies, which in most cases, lead to agitations.

Thus, for every inaction or action, there is always a reaction, and this is so especially in cases of anti-people policies and leadership that is not in touch with the aspirations and needs of the people (Obasanjo, 2024). Agitations and protests have arisen in most cases due to social and civil discontent arising from indifference from the government and a deviation from welfare-driven governance. Protests have historically enabled some of the most potent social movements, bringing abuse and injustice to light, calling for responsibility, and encouraging people to hope for a better society. The citizens have inalienable rights, such as the freedom of expression and dissent, and in cases where the welfare of the citizens is not considered, these inalienable rights may be put to good use.

Through expressions and agitations in the past and present, the people have helped by lending their voices in shaping society for the better. The 1930 Salt March against British colonial rule in India, the pride marches that followed the Stonewall Riots in 1969, and the Black Lives Matter protests in recent years have all highlighted how compelling the people's voice through their expression and agitation has been, in constantly shaping our society for the better. There are countless cases where people came together because rights and liberties were trampled upon (Tharoor, 2011; Walsh & Write, 2019; Hatfield, 2023).

Therefore, it is inarguable that peaceful protests can have many effects, such as raising awareness, building support, achieving political goals and facilitating change in policies or programmes through pressing for reforms. In many nations, protests have ensured

that the people are heard and that democracy reflects the people as active stakeholders and not just onlookers, remotely controlled and exploited by the political elites. For example, in South Korea, peaceful demonstrations led to the impeachment of South Korean President Park Geun-hye (Sang-Hun, 2017). It is observable that in developing countries like Nigeria, protests overtime have always centred around insecurity, poor governance, exclusion from political decision-making, unemployment, high costs of living, inequality, hunger, corruption, and leadership weaknesses, and there has not been thorough commitment to address these issues (Akpofa, 2010; Obasanjo, 2024). Protests in Nigeria have always ended up pitching the people as enemies of the government in power, with little or no attention given to the reasons for the protests (Daghagba, 2009; Ejike, 2024).

Over the years, issues like bad governance, kleptocratic leadership, corruption, rise in the cost of living, infringement on the rights of citizens and more, have remained motivators of agitations by the people for action by the government, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. According to the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (2022), the highlights of the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) survey for Nigeria reveal that with a population of over 200 million people, 63% of persons living in Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensionally poor. The National MPI is 0.257, indicating that poor people in Nigeria experience just over one-quarter of all possible deprivations.

In the case of Nigeria, just like most developing countries of Africa, the political leadership in most cases are observed to continuously dish out wishy-washy policies and programmes to address the call for action by the people, and the most embarrassing thing about these programmes and policies is that the people continuously are alienated from governance as these actions by the government have failed to address these critical concerns raised by the people (Aborishade, 2012). In the case of the “End bad government” protest, the following were identified as the specific issues that led to the protest: the removal of fuel subsidy and its resultant inflation and rise in cost of living, high cost of food prices, social inequalities, increasing unemployment and poverty rate, security challenge, and the *laissez faire* approach of government towards addressing these growing concerns. Thus, the specific demands made by protesters to the government range as follows: a stop to anti-masses policies, return of fuel subsidy, creation of employment opportunities, improved security of lives and properties, and comprehensive policy reforms. All these are puzzles yet to be solved by the Nigerian leadership.

## **The Concept of Protest**

In democratic societies, protest is a legitimate and necessary means for the public or members of communities to seek redress for issues that decision-makers or leadership have ignored. It is a social mechanism for seeking redress in contentious situations, especially between communities, a group or groups, and the government or leadership. Protests seek to bring about social or political change by influencing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of the public or the policies of an organisation or institution, or even government (Loya and Macleod, 2011). Lavender and Peets (2022), explain that Protests are expressions of discontent or disapproval towards a particular idea or course of action, be it political or social, taking place across media, spaces, countries, and constituencies. This involves protesters organizing protests to voice their opinions and views in an attempt to influence public opinion (Shuman et.al, 2023). While protests exist in the form of systematic and peaceful campaigns for the realization of interests, there are cases where protests turn violent and go beyond government control, leading to destruction of properties, hurt, and even loss of life (Jones and Smith, 2021).

## **Methodology**

The paper adopted a secondary data analysis method, focusing on a review of the literature through secondary sources of data obtained from books, journals, newspapers, websites, and government publications. Thus, this identifies patterns, themes and gaps in the provided literature related to specific research questions presented in the study.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Protests have been described as holding dissents or expressing discontent through public marches (Eesuola, 2015). In most cases, protests are aimed at creating required social awareness to social issues, and necessitating civic activism intended to ensure policy reforms. The expression of dissent, ventilation of anger or resistance against a particular phenomenon or policy direction through riots, demonstration or strikes, seeking for attention encapsulates protests. Thus, considering the instrumentality of protests in a democracy, the study adopted the System Theory by David Easton for a deep understanding of the correlation between protests and resolving socioeconomic and political issues, especially the 2024 “End bad government” protest in Nigeria.

Easton (1953), analytically viewed the political system as integrating parts with functions and roles, through which social policy is formulated and executed. The system consists of inputs in the form of demands and supports coming from the people, and these are analysed and processed through the system to emerge as output (decisions, actions, policies and programmes) constituting the authoritative allocation of values for the wellbeing of the people by the political leadership (Ndubuisi & Uduma, 2025).

Considering Easton's analysis of how society functions, it has been argued that political stability would require a level of system maintenance. This can be realised depending on the level of attention given to the demands made into the system as reflected in programmes and policies of political leadership. Hence, considering the analysis of Easton, it can be argued that demands made into the system can also be in the form of protests or agitations since these reflect the expectations of the people from the political leadership manning the political system.

Demands and supports constitute the two principal categories of the input made into the political system. Every responsive and responsible leadership will reflect, to an extent, if not totally, the demands made on the system as it affects its policies and programmes. In a democracy, the quality of social interaction and the adaptive and problem-solving possibilities of the entire society directly affect the responses of the units comprising the whole political system. Demands made into the system can emanate from pressure groups, political parties, associations, and others (Davies, 2018). In most cases, these demands do not initially emerge as agitations or protests but highlight the welfare needs or aspirations of the people. In cases where these demands are not attended to or reasonable impacts are not seen in policies and programmes of government to address these demands, a protest or agitation, which in most cases may be violent or non-violent, may ensue. Therefore, for a level of stability to be realisable, the welfare needs and aspirations of the people as reflected in programmes and policies of government or political leadership are important and to an extent determine how responsible and responsive a leadership is.

### **Analytical Overview of Protests in Nigeria**

Social and civil discontent arising from the indifference and a deviation from welfare-driven governance in which the people are involved often results in agitations for a change for the better, expressed through protests. Citizens have inalienable rights, such as the freedom of expression and dissent, and may put them to use when and where necessary to

ensure their concerns are considered. In developing countries like Nigeria, reoccurring agitations have always centred around issues such as insecurity, poor governance, exclusion from political decision-making, unemployment, high costs of living, inequality, hunger, corruption, and leadership weaknesses, and no matter the body language of the political leadership towards addressing these issues they keep resurfacing again (Akpofa, 2010; Obasanjo, 2024).

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (As amended) have remained commitments both within the international and local conventions acknowledging the right to freedom of expression and dissent as depicted in peaceful protests (Human Rights Committee, 2019). While protests remain one of the mediums to ensure that leadership entrenches purposeful dialogue towards finding answers to questions about the security of lives and properties, accountability, fairness, equity, justice and social wellbeing, if not handled well, can pose a security threat to society (Ives & Lewis, 2019).

Protests are collectively embarked upon with unity of purpose and shared concerns for the well-being of society and the need to address an identified societal problem (Davenport, Johnston and Mueller, 2005). When protests are embarked on and a follow-up assessment is done with facts that highlight that after the protest has taken place, the issues of concern for the protest persist, showing that nothing tangible has been done to address them, such a protest can be described as an unsuccessful protest. Protests and demonstrations in Nigeria, since 1929, have focused on societal issues but have revolved mainly around social, political, and economic factors determining the well-being of the Nigerian population (Aniche & Iwuoha, 2022). Since Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the demand for the government to show responsibility and accountability has echoed repeatedly.

**Table 1: List of Protests in Nigeria and Areas Affected**

S/N	YEAR	PROTEST	AREA AFFECTED
1.	1929	Aba Women Protest (addressed reductions in women's economic independence, discriminatory levies, and the establishment of warrant chiefs as local authorities)	South-South and South-East
2.	1947	Abeokuta Women's Union Protest (addressed disproportionate taxes on individuals, particularly in Abeokuta)	South West (Abeokuta)

3.	1978	Ali-Must-Go Protest (addressed the unilateral hike in fees and levies for the canteen and student Residence halls.	Nationwide
4.	1989	Anti-SAP Protest (addressed the IMF-induced Structural adjustment program)	Nationwide
5.	1993	June 12 Protest (addressed the annulment of the 1993 Election won by M.K.O. Abiola)	South West, but visible nationwide
6.	2001	Implementation of Sharia law Protest (addressed the implementation of Sharia law in the country's northern region)	North
7.	2003	Increase of Petrol Price Protest (addressed the deliberate increase of petrol price by the government)	Nationwide
8.	2012	Removal of Fuel Subsidy Protest (addressed the removal of fuel subsidy)	Nationwide
9.	2014	Bring Back Our Girls Protest (addressed the illegal abduction of female students from a school in Chibok.	National and International
10.	2016	Biafra Agitation Protest (addressed the agitation for the secession of Biafra)	South-East
11.	2018	Minimum Wage Increment Protest (addressed wage increment)	Nationwide
12.	2020	END SARS Protest (addressed police brutality, corruption and bad governance)	Nationwide
13.	2023	Naira Scarcity Protest (addressed the scarcity of Naira due to the CBN Naira redesign policy)	Nationwide
14.	2024	The End Bad Governance Protest (addressed high cost of living, the elimination of fuel subsidies, corruption, rapidly rising inflation, executive abuses)	Nationwide

**Source:** Okwuwada, 2025

### **The End Bad Government Protest: A Search for Answers to Nigeria's Socioeconomic and Political Problems**

Poverty is an economic state where people experience scarcity or lack of necessities such as food, healthcare, sanitation, education, and assets. The main factors that cause poverty in sub-Saharan Africa include: inadequate access to employment openings, no access to physical assets such as land and capital, inadequate access to the means of supporting rural development in poor regions, poor access to markets where goods and services can be vended, the low endowment of human capital, degradation and reduced productivity, inadequate access to assistance for low and middle class, and the victims of transitory poverty, and eventually failure to involve people in the design of development programmes that directly affect their living standards (Obadan, 1997).

Adeyemi, Ijaiya, and Raheem (2009), posit that Nigeria, like many other Sub-Saharan African countries, has been ravaged by poverty, considering the declining per capita income, increasing hunger, rising unemployment, and environmental degradation. Despite all the efforts made by various governments in Nigeria to provide solutions to the plight of the people through the various poverty alleviation programmes, the economy has remained limping.

Over the years, issues like bad governance, kleptocratic leadership, corruption, rise in the cost of living, infringement on the rights of citizens and more have remained motivators of agitations by Nigerians for action by the government in power. In recent times, there has not been a clear demarcation of the ugly experiences of the military era and the brutal stifling of the voice of Nigerians on their demand for welfare-driven governance. The transition to democratic rule has ushered Nigeria into democracy, even with redundant institutions and a culture that should have strengthened the democracy. It has been observed that the resultant effect of Nigeria's dysfunctional leadership and its endemic corruption has remained an unending cycle of poverty, unemployment, insecurity and decay of social institutions such as education and health institutions.

Opp (2009), describes protests as a sustained challenge of actions and policies of power holders in the name of the disadvantaged population living under the influence of these power holders. The "End bad government" protest was caused by issues related to the removal of subsidies resulting in inflation, rising living costs, increasing food prices, increasing social inequalities, increasing unemployment and poverty rate, and security challenges. The laissez faire approach by the Nigerian government to address these issues have fuelled unrest, necessitating a call requesting for action by the government. The protesters' demands include a stop to anti-masses policies, the return of fuel subsidies, measures to create employment, improved security, and comprehensive policy reforms. Though the "End bad government" protest created awareness to social issues, much impact regarding the demands made by the protesters have not been recorded. The subsidy removal is still in place with its resultant rising inflation and rise in cost of living. Prices of food have not reduced and the nation is still battling with increasing cases of insecurity. The Nigerian government is yet to show commitment towards addressing the concerns raised during the protest through embarking on a comprehensive policy reform.

Since May 2023, Nigeria has struggled with unprecedented economic hardship following the removal of fuel subsidy, which was introduced in the 1970s to ensure the affordability of petrol and help the naira increase in value (Angbulu, 2024). Though the Nigerian President and his handlers keep reassuring the Nigerian masses that the policies are meant to reposition Nigeria for economic growth and are long overdue, there has been a huge gap between the reality of this statement, considering the ostentatious lifestyle of the people in government and the widening poverty gap among the masses.

As the masses are enmeshed in untold hardship and the future is shaky, agitations and requests to alleviate the people's pain have increased. It is on record that with the end of fuel subsidy on 29th May 2023, as announced by President Tinubu, by June 2023, inflation rose to 22.8 percent, and by May 2024 it increased to an alarming 34 percent, and 34.2 percent by June 2024 (National Bureau of Statistics Report, 2024). With the surging increase of inflation, implied high cost of food items and the ravaging insecurity challenge chasing farmers away from their farms in the North Central region and other parts of the nation, the reality of the hard living conditions facing the Nigerian population led to the hunger protest, also known as #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest (Maclean & Alfa, 2024).

It becomes imperative to speak truth to those in authority, soliciting action in areas that affect the Nigerian people. Therefore, it is inarguable that solving Nigeria's insurmountable socioeconomic cum political problems is hinged on effective and responsible leadership, accountability, people-centred representation, effective policy articulation, and implementation and evaluation mechanisms.

## **Conclusion**

Issues like bad governance, kleptocratic leadership, corruption, rising cost of living, infringement on citizens' rights, and more have often fanned the embers for agitations and protests, demanding actions from the government in power. The effect of Nigeria's indifferent leadership and the menace of corruption have led to an unending cycle of poverty, unemployment, insecurity and utmost decay of social institutions like the education and health sectors. The "End bad government" protest was necessitated by increasing economic hardship and inflation, increasing poverty and unemployment, and most especially, a lack of commitment to comprehensive policy reforms to address these issues, which have lingered over the years. Hence, the call to stop anti-masses policies, return the fuel subsidy, create employment and improve security by protesters was a request for a change which is long

overdue. Comprehensive policy reforms in Nigeria to address the concerns for these protests will emphasise welfare-driven policies and programmes intended to better the lives of the Nigerian masses. Also, accountability, justice and fairness must be promoted in all spheres of society, regardless of class or status.

### **Recommendations**

Throughout history, people have protested their displeasure with policies infringing on their right to personal freedom and well-being. Protests have remained a viable tool to promote social inclusion and fairness through dialogue and engagement between political leadership and followers. Protests can be strategic towards getting answers to Nigeria's humongous unsolved socio-economic and political problems. Thus, considering the need to find answers to how protests like the 2024 “End bad government” protest can help address unresolved socioeconomic and political issues in Nigeria, the paper recommends the following:

- i. The right to protest should not be seen as a threat to democracy, but its lifeblood, ensuring inclusiveness.
- ii. The government and the civil society should encourage platforms for amplifying marginalised voices, building coalitions and mobilizing support through digital activism.
- iii. Protesters should show openness to dialogue and negotiation during protests to achieve the desired purpose for these protests.
- iv. Focus on clear intersectional issues, advocating for policy changes should be paramount during protests.
- v. The Nigerian government must embrace and adopt a new approach to governance, going beyond protest management and focusing more on citizens' engagement, continuous dialogue, inclusiveness and continuous consultation.
- vi. The Nigerian government, through its policies and programmes, should show commitment towards addressing the unemployment challenges, thereby creating opportunities for human capital development.
- vii. Political and economic elites in Nigeria should show commitment towards accepting and promoting policies of greater social inclusion.

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# IMPACT OF SOCIOCULTURAL BELIEFS ON MATERNAL HEALTH-SEEKING BEHAVIOR AMONG WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE IN ZAMFARA STATE

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## **Abstract**

Maternal health outcomes in Nigeria remain among the poorest globally, particularly in northern states such as Zamfara, with socio-cultural factors playing pivotal roles in influencing women's health-seeking behavior. This study explored how cultural norms, religious beliefs, gender roles, and traditional healthcare systems affect the utilization of maternal health services among women of reproductive age in Zamfara State. Employing a mixed-methods design, data were collected from 150 women through surveys and 12 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions across three local government areas: Gusau, Kaura Namoda, and Anka. The findings revealed that early marriage, low level of women's autonomy, practice of spiritual healing, reliance on traditional birth attendants, and minimal male involvement, pose significant obstacles to accessing antenatal and skilled birth care. Even though there is an awareness of the advantages of formal healthcare, cultural preferences, financial limitations, and interpretations of religious beliefs affect women's choices. The study recommends culturally sensitive health interventions, community engagement, and policy reforms to enhance maternal healthcare utilization.

**Keywords:** Health-seeking behaviour; Gender roles; Maternal health; Sociocultural beliefs; Traditional Birth Attendants

## Introduction

Nigeria plays a significant role in global maternal mortality, contributing to nearly 20% of maternal deaths worldwide (World Health Organisation, 2023). In northern Nigeria, particularly in Zamfara State, maternal health indicators are extremely poor (high rate of home deliveries, limited use of skilled birth attendants, and inadequate access to postnatal care within 48 hours after delivery), largely due to deeply rooted sociocultural norms that obstruct women's access to skilled care (Opara, Iheanacho, and Petrucka, 2024). The relationship between cultural beliefs, religious ideologies, gender roles, and health-seeking behaviour requires academic investigation to inform targeted strategies (Adetoro, Adegoke, and Adedokun, 2016).

Maternal health-seeking behaviour refers to a woman's actions in recognizing and addressing health needs throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum phase (Magaji, Bello, and Yusuf, 2018). It is essential to understand how sociocultural factors influence this behaviour, especially in traditional, conservative communities like those in Zamfara. This study examines the socio-cultural factors affecting maternal health-seeking behaviour among women in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Early marriage, common in northern Nigeria, reduces women's educational attainment and autonomy, both of which are strongly correlated with lower health service utilization (United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF, 2021).

Religious teachings significantly affect maternal care decisions. While Islam encourages seeking medical care, local interpretations often emphasize divine will over medical intervention, leading many women to prioritize prayers or spiritual rituals over hospital visits (Abor, Abekah-Nkrumah, Sakyi, Adjasi, and Abor, 2009). This religious fatalism contributes to delays in seeking skilled birth attendance.

Gender norms in patriarchal societies place men in decision-making positions, often requiring women to seek their husbands' permission before visiting health facilities (Shamah-Bright, Uchendu, Jalo, Danlamin, Ogunlayi, 2022). In some cases, male disapproval, mistrust of male doctors, or financial constraints lead to the abandonment of formal healthcare services (Afful-Mensah, Osei, and Asiedu, 2014).

Traditional birth attendants (TBAs) play a central role in many rural communities. Their cultural familiarity, accessibility, and affordability make them the preferred choice for childbirth despite evidence linking unskilled attendance to poor maternal outcomes

(Ogunyemi & Odusanya, 2005). In Nigeria, cultural perceptions about childbirth being a natural, private event often dissuade women from seeking skilled care (Dada, 2018). According to Kea, Tulloch, Theobald, and Kok (2018), TBAs often bridge the cultural gap between local beliefs and health systems. Health system-related barriers, including poor infrastructure, lack of female healthcare providers, distance to clinics, and disrespectful provider behaviour, further discourage women from seeking care (Bohren, Hunter, Munthe-Kaas, Souza, Vogel, Gulmezoglu, Tunçalp, 2017). Additionally, shame, shyness, or the stigma of exposing one's body to a male healthcare worker contribute to low facility births (Ogundairo & Jegede, 2016).

Efforts to improve maternal health outcomes must therefore go beyond biomedical approaches. A culturally competent healthcare system, community engagement, gender equality, and integration of TBAs into formal systems have all been recommended as effective interventions (Kifle, Azale, Gelaw, Melsew, 2017; Opara et al., 2024). This paper explores impact of sociocultural beliefs on maternal health-seeking behavior among women of reproductive age in Zamfara State.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Health Belief Model (HBM) serves as the framework for this study, providing insights into individual perceptions and factors that affect health behaviour. According to the HBM, behaviour is shaped by perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, and perceived barriers, along with cues to action and self-efficacy (Rosenstock, 1974). These elements help to illuminate the psychological and sociocultural factors that impact women's decisions. HBM constructs include perceived barriers (such as cultural norms and male authority), perceived susceptibility (underestimating the risk associated with home births), and cues to action (like guidance from religious leaders or media initiatives) surfaced as prominent themes. Examining maternal health behaviour through the Health Belief Model aids in understanding why some women postpone or reject formal healthcare despite being aware of its advantages.

### **Methodology**

A convergent mixed-methods approach was adopted to capture both the breadth and depth of maternal health-seeking behaviour. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and analysed separately before integration.

The study was conducted in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Zamfara State: Gusau, Kaura Namoda, and Anka. These areas were selected due to their ethnic diversity, health service distribution, and high maternal mortality prevalence.

The target population comprised women aged 18–49 who were pregnant or had delivered within the last two years. A total of 150 women were selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling to ensure representation of different marital, educational, and religious backgrounds. Structured questionnaire was used to gather data on demographics, health-seeking behaviour, and service utilisation while 12 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions were held with different community stakeholders among them, women, traditional birth attendants, male spouses, and healthcare workers. Discussions explored cultural beliefs, religious practices, and gender norms related to maternal care.

Quantitative data were processed and analysed using SPSS version 26 to generate descriptive statistics and identify patterns while audio recordings were transcribed, coded, and analysed thematically. Emerging themes from the data were aligned with the HBM constructs. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Zamfara State Health Research Ethics Committee, Ministry of Health, on behalf of the Author’s organisation of affiliation, Lonibu Health Development Foundation, on 08<sup>th</sup> September, 2023.

## Results

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 150)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age Group (years)	18–24	40	26.7%
	25–34	67	44.7%
	35–49	43	28.6%
Marital Status	Married	142	94.7%
	Single/Divorced/Widowed	8	5.3%
Age at Marriage	Below 18 years	113	75.3%
	18 years and above	37	24.7%
Educational Level	No formal education	96	64.0%
	Primary	28	18.7%
	Secondary	18	12.0%
	Tertiary	8	5.3%

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Religion	Islam	146	97.3%
	Christianity/Other	4	2.7%

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

As shown in table 1, the majority of the respondents (44.7%) were aged between 25–34 years, with an additional 26.7% aged 18–24. A significant proportion (75.3%) got married before the age of 18, and 64.0% had no formal education. Most participants (97.3%) were Muslim, and 94.7% were currently married.

**Table 2: Maternal Health-Seeking Behaviours and Influencing Factors (N = 150)**

Health-Seeking Indicator	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Antenatal Care Attendance (last pregnancy)	Yes	86	57.3%
	No	64	42.7%
Place of Last Delivery	Health facility	63	42.0%
	Home/TBA	87	58.0%
Permission Needed to Seek Care	Yes	101	67.3%
	No	49	32.7%
Use of Traditional Remedies During Pregnancy	Yes	109	72.7%
	No	41	27.3%
Belief in Spiritual Protection Over Medical Care	Agree	91	60.7%
	Disagree	59	39.3%

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 2 shows that only 57.3% of respondents attended antenatal care during their most recent pregnancy, while 58.0% delivered at home or with a traditional birth attendant. Two-thirds (67.3%) of women reported needing spousal permission to access healthcare services. Additionally, 72.7% used traditional remedies during pregnancy and after delivery, and 60.7% believed in spiritual protection as an alternative to medical care.

Disaggregated data from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) revealed that early marriage was widely accepted and often led to early pregnancies, with limited knowledge of maternal health. Herbal remedies were the first line of treatment for symptoms, and many believed complications could be spiritually addressed. TBAs were widely trusted, seen as culturally aligned, and more spiritually grounded than health worker.

Furthermore, Islamic teachings were interpreted in ways that either supported or discouraged clinical visits. While some imams encouraged facility-based care, others emphasised that childbirth outcomes were preordained. Practices such as Rubutu (spiritual water) were commonly used alongside or in place of clinical services.

Participants often cited the need for male approval before accessing health services. Male spouses expressed concerns about finances, exposure of wives to male staff, and cultural expectations. This control contributed to delays in or rejection of formal healthcare.

Respondents described healthcare facilities as distant, overcrowded, and often lacking in respectful treatment. Women shared that nurses were perceived as rude or judgmental. As a result, many preferred to deliver at home with TBAs, whom they found to be more empathetic and accessible.

## **Discussion**

This research reaffirms previous findings that sociocultural and religious factors play a crucial role in influencing maternal health-seeking behaviours in northern Nigeria. Of the 150 women surveyed, 75.3% were married before turning 18, and 64.0% lacked formal education, which limits their independence and access to skilled healthcare. Additionally, 67.3% needed permission from their spouses to seek medical assistance, while 72.7% depended on traditional remedies, demonstrating a strong commitment to cultural practices and limited decision-making authority.

Although more than half of the respondents attended antenatal care (57.3%), the preference for home births (58.0%) and traditional birth attendants indicates a gap between knowledge of biomedical services and their actual use. These behaviours suggest a low perceived susceptibility of complications and significant perceived barriers; two important elements of the Health Belief Model (HBM). Religious interpretations also play a role in this pattern: 60.7% of women preferred seeking spiritual protection rather than clinical care, which aligns with studies indicating that faith-based fatalism hinders formal health-seeking.

Traditional birth attendants are deeply woven into maternal care systems, serving not just as cultural symbols but also as accessible and trusted healthcare providers. Incorporating TBAs into the formal health system by offering training and establishing referral pathways could help align traditions with safe practices. Likewise, involving men as partners in

maternal health through focused education and community discussions may help tackle permission-related delays and foster collaborative decision-making.

Ultimately, systemic enhancements are vital. Reports of disrespectful treatment and a lack of female healthcare providers contribute to the reluctance to use clinical services. Improving respectful maternity care, increasing the availability of female healthcare workers, and decentralising services to lessen travel challenges could greatly enhance maternal health outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

Maternal health-seeking behaviours in Zamfara are influenced by cultural, religious, gender-related, and systemic factors, including early marriage, low women's autonomy, practices of spiritual healing, reliance on traditional birth attendants, and minimal male involvement. To tackle maternal mortality effectively, it is essential to implement localized interventions that are sensitive to the culture and operate within these established frameworks. Enhancing women's empowerment, educating men, engaging traditional birth attendants (TBAs), and reforming the healthcare system can collectively improve maternal health outcomes in the area.

## **Recommendations**

- i. **Culturally Sensitive Campaigns:** Government health education initiatives must engage religious and traditional leaders to reinterpret and challenge harmful cultural beliefs.
- ii. **Male Involvement:** Couple-focused reproductive health programs promoting spousal support and male participation in maternal health can enhance decision-making.
- iii. **Community-Based Interventions:** Employing and training TBAs in safe delivery and referral practices can bridge cultural gaps in the study area.
- iv. **Health System Strengthening:** Improving clinic accessibility, staff attitudes and female-provider availability is essential to mitigating the factors identified to negatively impact maternal health-seeking behavior among women of reproductive age in Zamfara State.

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**PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF TYPE2 DIABETES AND FACTORS INFLUENCING HEALTH-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR IN KATAGUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BAUCHI STATE**

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**Abstract**

This research examined knowledge of type2 diabetes among members of the public in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State, Nigeria. It assessed the factors that shape health-seeking behaviour among the public in general and people with type 2 diabetes in particular as well as provide insights into healthcare practices in the region. Through a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including surveys and interviews, the study succeeded in bringing to the fore, salient issues impacting health-seeking practices in this population. The study recommends that tailored interventions should consider working with religious leaders to spread awareness about Type 2 Diabetes as religious leaders could be powerful allies in disseminating health messages that will increase not only public awareness, but patient care strategies in managing type 2 diabetes as well.

**Keywords-** Health-seeking behaviour; health messages; Knowledge; Misconceptions; Type 2 diabetes,

## **Introduction**

Diabetes has been identified as one of the major causes of premature deaths as well as health complications that can lead to heart attack, stroke, blindness, kidney failure, and lower limb amputations. Global reports (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2016; International Diabetes Federation (IDF), 2021) have shown that the number of people with diabetes is on the increase across all regions with the greater burden on developing countries. In spite of this, studies in Nigeria (Ubangha, Odugbemi, and Abiola, 2014) have shown that awareness about the major causes of diabetes and its preventive measures was very low among the general population. This has the potential of increasing the scourge which, invariably, may have a negative effect on the social structure especially when more people assume the sick role.

Nigeria has the greatest number of diabetes in Africa which is estimated at about 3.6 million adults aged 20 -79 years while more than half remain undiagnosed and with a current prevalence of 4.3% (IDF, 2025; Oputa and Chinenye, 2015). It therefore affects people within the productive age who contribute to national development which if left unattended may have negative consequences on the socio-economic wellbeing of the country. There is also the problem of undiagnosed cases of diabetes. A report by DébboAfrica (2023), revealed that 54% of people with diabetes in Nigeria remain undiagnosed. And once it remains undiagnosed, it can develop into serious and fatal conditions. Consequently, people who develop chronic diabetes complications are most likely to incur larger healthcare expenditures than those diagnosed early. Because those diagnosed early have better chances of preventing harmful and chronic conditions associated with diabetes that may incur additional treatment expenditure.

Similarly, attribution of symptoms to myths and other superstitious interpretations have been identified in some studies (Ogbemera and Ekpebegh, 2014; Oguejiofor, Odenigbo, and Onwukwe, 2014), as other factors responsible for the high number of undiagnosed cases of diabetes in Nigeria. Indeed, cultural schema regarding the aetiology of disease predisposes peoples' health-seeking behaviour which determines the type of care to be sought. Similarly, labelling disease from cultural lens may sometimes carry element of stigma which potentially affect not only health-seeking but the very social existence of the individual. Therefore, investigating how diabetes is interpreted among the general population will provide ground for effective response.

The main objective of the study is to identify knowledge and prevailing factors influencing health-seeking behaviour among type2 diabetic patients in Katagum Local Government Area, Bauchi State, Nigeria.

### **Literature review and theoretical framework Type2 diabetes; causes, risk factors and prevention**

Diabetes usually occurs when there is high blood glucose in the body due to its inability to produce enough insulin which regulates blood sugar and convert it into energy for use in the body (IDF, 2021). This leads to high level of blood glucose which results into diabetes. Diabetes mellitus is classified into three types; Type1 Diabetes, Type2 Diabetes, and Gestational Diabetes. The causes of Type2 Diabetes are not completely understood, but it is mostly associated with being overweight and obese, physical inactivity and increasing age as well as with ethnicity and family history (IDF, 2021). When a person develops diabetes and remains undiagnosed or inadequately treated, it develops into a life-threatening health condition with a fatal consequence, which affects social roles and responsibilities.

The IDF (2021), identified the risk factors for diabetes mellitus to include family history, overweight, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, increasing age, high blood pressure, ethnicity and impaired glucose tolerance. Some studies (Sliwinska-Mosson and Milnerowicz, 2017; Liu, Yang, and Guo, 2018), have confirmed a significant effect of cigarette smoking on the development of diabetes in adults. Similarly, alcohol drinking was also found to result in severe health consequences that can worsen diabetes-related complications (Wu, Liu and Li; 2021). As such, alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking are also among the risk factors for developing Type2 Diabetes in adults.

Some of these risk factors are modifiable through the adoption of healthy lifestyle which includes the adoption of a healthy diet, increased physical activity, maintenance of a healthy body weight, as well as quitting smoking and alcohol consumption (WHO, 2022). It is presumed that once knowledge of diabetes risk factors is acquired, people are more likely to adhere to appropriate preventive measures.

## **Health-Seeking**

Health-seeking usually results from an array of inherent behavioural influences interfaced with external environmental influences. It involves how an individual undertakes personal action to reduce the risk of disease. Such a change in behaviour is usually influenced by some enabling factors (Erinosho, 2012).

It is obvious that the decision to engage with a particular illness response is influenced by a variety of factors such as symptoms awareness, sex, age, socio-economic status, the type of illness, access to services, perceived quality of the service and of course, family influence (Cockerham, 2011; MacKian, 2003). In a study in Nigeria Onwujekwe, Onoka, Uzochukwu, and Hanso (2011), reported that as many as 71% of rural dwellers have reported inappropriate health seeking behaviour during their last illness while only 53% of urban dwellers reported inappropriate health seeking behaviour during their last illness. Similarly, Ononokpono and Odimegwu (2014), also reported differences in health seeking behaviour in relation to access to a health facility.

Consequent upon these therefore, health seeking may likely be influenced by peoples' knowledge about the disease, their socio-economic status, access to health services, pre-existing beliefs about the likely meaning of the symptoms and disease causation as well as affordability of the services.

## **Knowledge of type2 diabetes**

One of the many factors that influence health seeking behaviour is for the individual to have knowledge of perceived symptoms of a disease. Inadequate knowledge which leads to misconceptions was found to be a barrier to proper diabetes management (Ferreira, Morais, Primenta, Ribeiro...2024). Studies have shown inadequate knowledge of diabetes among populations. For example, Agofure and Oghenerume (2022), in their study on secondary school students found poor knowledge of diabetes symptoms, risk factors, and complications.

A similar trend was found in Poland (Sekowski, Grudziak-Sekowska and Pinkas. 2022) which reported that only 17% of respondents declared a good level of knowledge of diabetes despite the fact that 43% declared that they have a history of diabetes in the family. Although overall knowledge of the disease was found to be adequate (86.9%) among patients in Tanzania (Luambano, Mwinuka, Ibrahim and Kacholi, 2023), yet knowledge of symptoms was reported to be lower (48%).

Lack of knowledge about a disease may lead to misconceptions which influence a person's health seeking and management behaviour. Nalavadey, and Baliga (2022), found misconceptions about diabetes mellitus in a study in India, that eating bitter food controls elevated sugar level in the body, and that diabetics cannot take part in sports. Similarly, in South Africa, Mdongolo et al (2003), found that lack of knowledge about a disease and the misconceptions regarding its symptoms influenced patients to seek care through traditional healers prior to seeking biomedical care services. However, diabetes misconceptions were found to be more common among uneducated and low income people (Akbar, Aqeel, Nasim, and Dhingra, 2016). Consequently, once a person is not aware of the symptoms of a disease, that person may likely not take the appropriate action needed.

### **Social Factors**

Health seeking behaviour is sometimes influenced by social factors. For example, education, gender, age, cultural values and family influence are likely to influence health related behaviour (Deeks, Lombard, Michelmore and Teede, 2009). Several studies indicated that educational level is closely related to awareness which has significant influence on a person's health-seeking behaviour. In this direction, a study in Nigeria (Jasper, Ogundunmande, Opara, Akinrolie, Pyiki, and Umar, 2014), revealed that level of education, along with other factors, was found to be associated with better knowledge of diabetes mellitus which is also assumed to enhance better health seeking practices.

Similarly, in another study in Ibadan, Latunji and Akinyemi (2018), found that low level of education is associated with a reduction in the likelihood of seeking healthcare from formal sources. Concordant with this finding, Sankar, Lipska, Mini, Sarma and Thankappan (2015), reported in an Indian study that low education status was found to be responsible for non-adherence to treatment regimen among diabetic patients. Hence, the assumption that the higher the level of education, the likelihood to be more aware of diabetes.

### **Economic Factors**

The economic status of patients plays a significant role in determining their health-seeking behaviour. Patients in the lower economic stratum may have difficulty coping with daily subsistence and maintaining proper healthcare at the same time. Some patients give precedence to pressing basic needs of life such as food and children's school fees over managing their health problems as reported by Musinguzi et al (2018). This shows that the financial status of patients is critical in influencing the health-seeking behaviours as well as

compliance to medication among patients with type 2 diabetes. The study reported that non-adherence to regular medication will have the potential of aggravating the condition and affect other social activities.

### **Materials/Methods**

This research used a descriptive cross-sectional study design aimed at investigating knowledge factors that influence health-seeking behaviour among in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State. Data were collected through primary source which involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data were elicited through semi-structured questionnaire administered on 1150 respondents while the qualitative data were collected through In-depth interviews (IDI) with twenty (20) participants. Probability and Non-probability sampling techniques were adopted. The probability sampling included multi-stage cluster, systematic and simple random sampling methods. Katagum L.G.A. Master-list Settlement obtained from the Local Government secretariat was used as the sampling frame. It consisted of all the three districts, nineteen wards, and the one thousand-one-hundred-and-thirty-two (1132) communities in the local government area.

At the first stage, the three districts were used as clusters and two (2) wards were selected from each district using the lottery method making a total of six (6) wards to represent the local government. Secondly, these wards were further used as clusters and three settlements from each ward were selected using the lottery method. Therefore, the total number of settlements covered by the study within the local government area was fifteen (15). In the last stage, systematic sampling technique was employed using interval of 3 to select households within the settlements. By this procedure, the first house was randomly selected followed by every third house until the required sample was obtained. For the non-probability purposive sampling was used.

Katagum Local Government Area has a projected population of 523,200 (five hundred and twenty-three thousand, two hundred inhabitants). However, the population of this study consisted of people aged 15 years and above who are domiciled within the local government area, whose projected population, as at December 2022 was 274,680 (National Population Commission (NPC) Bauchi State office, 2023). It also included all adult males and females diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes who visit the diabetes clinic at the Federal Medical Centre and the General Hospital Azare from January-December 2022.

Letters of clearance were obtained from both hospitals before the commencement of the interviews. Similarly, all the participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and assured of confidentiality. Their informed consent was sought.

### Data Analysis

In the course of analysing the quantitative data, simple descriptive statistics such as range, frequency and percentage were used to analyse the demographic characteristic of the respondents. The data were analysed using the Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23, and the results displayed in tabular forms.

Consequently, analysis for the qualitative data involve three basic procedures; data reduction, data display and conclusion. Therefore, all the transcriptions, research memos, and notes that were gathered during the course of the interview sessions were developed into themes, sub-themes and concepts were identified and interpreted, in line with the study objectives. Overall, interpretive and narrative analyses were used.

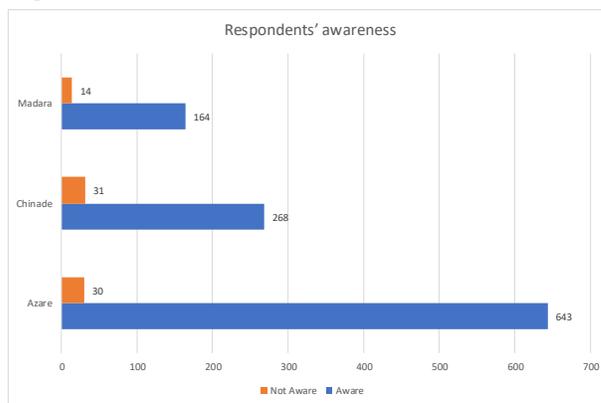
### Data Presentation

**Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

<b>District</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Azare District	673	58.5
Chinade District	299	26.0
Madara District	178	15.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1150</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age of respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
15 – 34	794	69.0
35 – 54	275	23.9
55 – 74	64	5.6
75 and Above	17	1.5
<b>Total Mean age = 32 years</b>	<b>1150</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	813	70.7
Female	337	29.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1150</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Tribe</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hausa	918	79.7
Fulani	141	12.3
Yoruba	11	1.0
Igbo	10	0.9
Others	70	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1150</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Religion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>

Islam	1068	92.9
Christianity	76	6.6
Traditional	4	0.3
Others	2	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1150</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Married	531	46.2
Single	542	47.1
Divorced	64	5.6
Widowed	9	0.8
No Response	4	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Figure 4.1**

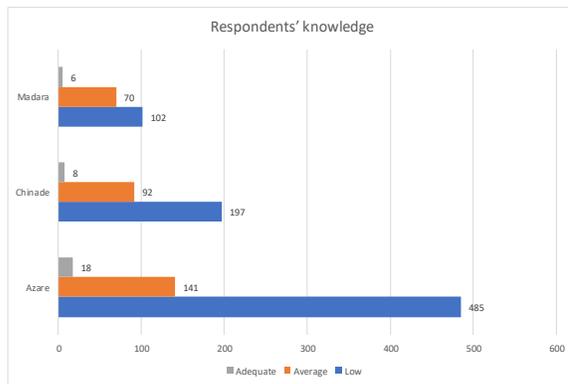


The above distribution shows that, of the one thousand one hundred and fifty (1150) respondents involved in this survey, majority of them, constituting about 93.5% are aware of diabetes as a disease. From the descriptive statistics in Table 4.3, it is revealed that 58.5% are from Azare district out of which 95.5% of them are aware of diabetes which is significantly high. Respondents from Chinade district constitute 26% and the data shows that 89.6% of them are equally aware of diabetes, and those from Madara district constitute 15.5% of the total respondents out of which 92.1% of them are aware of diabetes. The finding shows that a significant majority of all the respondents across the three districts in the study area are aware of diabetes.

### **Knowledge of diabetes among the public**

This section investigates respondents' knowledge of the causes of type2 diabetes, risk factors for developing type2 diabetes (including conditions associated with the disease, people at risk of developing type2 diabetes, ways to reduce the chance of having the disease), and type2 diabetes symptoms.

**Figure 4.2**



### **Causes of type2 diabetes**

Respondents were asked to identify the factors that cause type2 diabetes and multiple options were allowed. The responses are presented below:

**Table 4.2**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Excessive Sugar Intake	327	28.4
Excessive Sugar Intake, and Genetic Factors	168	14.6
Excessive Sugar Intake, Genetic Factors and Life-Style Factors	30	2.6
Excessive Sugar Intake and Life-Style Factors	69	6.0
Genetic Factors	272	23.7
Genetic Factors and Life-Style Factors	62	5.4
Genetic Factors, Life-Style Factors and Other Causes	2	0.2
Genetic Factors and Other Causes	4	0.3
Life-Style Factors	157	13.7
Other Causes	28	2.4
No Response	31	2.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1150</b>	<b>100</b>

The presentation in table 4.2 above shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents' opinion of the factors that may be the causes of type 2 diabetes. The item allows for multiple options hence respondents were at liberty to select more than one option. Majority of the respondents (28.4%) indicated excessive sugar intake as the cause of type 2 diabetes. This may probably be unconnected with the name the disease is called in Hausa language (Ciwonsuga) which literally means 'Sugar disease'. A study by Sabra et al (2010) in Saudi Arabia also reported that 65.9% of respondents believed that excessive sugar intake can directly cause diabetes. However, this view has an element of truth in it, because excessive

sugar consumption can lead to obesity which is one of the high-risk factors for diabetes mellitus.

Other respondents (23.7%) suggested genetic factors, while 14.6% think type2 diabetes is caused by both excessive sugar intake and genetic factors. Similarly, 13.7% of the respondents think that type 2 diabetes is caused by life-style factors, another 6% opted for life-style factors and excessive sugar intake, 5.4% think that the disease is caused by life-style and genetic factors while only 2.6% of the total indicated the trio of life-style factors, excessive sugar intake and genetic factors as the causes of type 2 diabetes. Similarly, some respondents during the In-depth interview also expressed various misconceptions regarding the aetiology of type2 diabetes. One of the respondents expressed;

“Hunger can cause it (diabetes) and so can un-balanced diet”.

Another respondent also expressed her opinion;

“There are things we eat nowadays which I think causes diabetes. For example, the seasonings we use in cooking like Maggi cubes, Agino moto seasoning and the like causes diabetes, because in the past, we did not eat such foods and we did not have diabetes. When we were young our parents don’t use salt, what they use was bakinmanda (a locally prepared food seasoning with a salty taste) as it was called, but it has now disappeared and people no longer use it”. (IDI- Female Patient, FMC, 2022)

The above response indicates that misconceptions about the causes of diabetes mellitus are prevalent among the population. Furthermore, some respondents have the belief that there are other causes, apart from the ones suggested, that may pose the risk of having type 2 diabetes as presented in the table. These include genetic factors and other causes (0.3%) other causes (2.4%), and genetic factors, life-style factors and other causes (0.2%) respectively. It is presumed that once knowledge of diabetes risk factors is acquired, people are more likely to adhere to appropriate preventive measures and best health-seeking practices.

The ranking was made based on the items presented in the questionnaire to test respondents’ knowledge of type2 diabetes. The items presented are six (6) and ranked according to the number of options selected. Six (6) and five (5) are ranked as adequate, four (4) and three (3) as average while two (2) and one (1) are ranked as low.

**Table 4.3 Ranking of Respondents' Knowledge of Type 2 Diabetes**

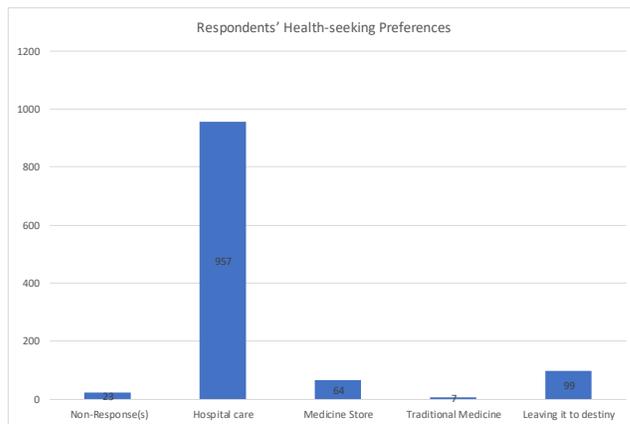
	Respondents' Knowledge		
	Low	Average	Adequate
Madara	102(9.1)	70(6.3)	6(0.5)
Chinade	197(17.6)	92(8.2)	8(0.7)
Azare	485(43.3)	141(12.6)	18(1.6)
<b>Total</b>	<b>784(70.1)</b>	<b>303(27.1)</b>	<b>32(2.9)</b>

The finding shows that majority of the respondents (70.1%) have low knowledge of the causes of diabetes, 27.1% have average knowledge, and only 2.9% were found to have adequate knowledge of the causes. This is similar to the finding of Okolie et al (2009) in Umuahia, Nigeria that majority of the respondents (70.0%) did not know the major causes of diabetes and its preventive measures.

**Health- Seeking among the respondents**

This section presents data on respondents' health-seeking preferences, their access to healthcare facility, and information on diabetes received from those facilities.

**Figure 4.3**



This study found that respondents' preferences of health-seeking vary. In response to the type of care they will seek when they notice any of the symptoms of type2 diabetes mentioned above, 83.2% of the respondents chose to report their case to the hospital as presented in the above table. This shows that a significant majority have positive attitude towards health seeking.

This study also found that health-seeking among diabetic patients is usually influenced by an array of certain factors. These include personal decisions on how to tackle the risk of the disease, symptoms awareness, the magnitude of the illness, perceived quality of the

service, having a husband and family influence, among others. Some patients revealed a variety of reasons which seems to influence their decision to seek treatment at the onset of symptoms. These include, influence of family and friends, prior knowledge of the symptoms due to having had a family with diabetes, self-volition, and fear and anxiety. People sometimes seek healthcare due to the influence of one or a combination of these factors. The feeling of illness and advice by family members or friends are mostly the motivating factors towards health seeking mentioned by the respondents. Some of the respondents disclosed that their relatives, friends or spouses encouraged them to seek medical advice for the complications they experienced. A participant expressed;

“My brother who happened to be a medical doctor took me to the hospital when he realised, I was losing weight. And after investigations I was diagnosed with diabetes”. (IDI-Female patient, FMC 2022).

This shows that some participants remain passive without taking appropriate action and waited for their significant others to intervene, even after the symptoms manifested and have started to experience a condition of ill-health. There are others who noticed a change in their condition they are not comfortable with hence sought advice from associates before taking the necessary measures. This was expressed by a participant;

“When I discovered I was urinating abnormally I complained to a friend’s elder brother who happened to be diabetic, and he advised me to go to the hospital for check-up because it might be a symptom of diabetes”. (IDI-Male patient, FMC 2022).

This finding is concordant with the one in Ghana by Asante et al (2023) which found out that, individuals who received prompts from family members and friends towards a particular healthcare facility have a higher likelihood of engaging that facility.

In a patriarchal society women tend to be more dependent on their husbands even in taking healthcare decisions. One of the respondents revealed that when she started to experience pain on her legs and weakness of the body, her husband invited an herbalist. Even though her preference was to go to the hospital but she could not object because it appears from her statement that the husband’s decision was final. One of the patients narrated;

“I started having pain in my legs and that was the beginning...my husband called a traditional herbalist who conducted surgery on my legs...though I prefer going to the hospital but my husband called the herbalist”. (IDI-Female patient, FMC 2022).

This concurs with the finding from a study in Malaysia (Low, Tong and Low, 2016) which revealed that some patients, as part of expressing their sick roles, remain passive and allow their family members or friends to take decisions concerning their personal health. The study discovered that family members and friends may even recommend alternative treatments for the patients and persuade them in that direction.

The above finding reaffirms the construct of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Subjective norm, which states that the perceived pressure from important people in the individual's life to engage or not to engage in certain behaviour weighted by his or her motivation to comply with those important people are the motivating factors toward a particular behaviour. It also reaffirms the postulation in Igun's stages of health seeking which states that health seeking in the African context has usually been a family affair.

However, this study found that there are other wives who seemed to be less subservient when it comes to taking decision on their personal health. Even though they could refer their cases to their husbands but when the wrong decisions are taken, they may resort to their own volition. One of the patients expressed;

“I informed my husband about my condition and he said we should go to the hospital...even if my husband said otherwise, I would insist on going to the hospital because the hospital is where correct and appropriate measures would be taken”. (IDI-Female patient, GH 2022).

Most patients identified having experienced the symptoms of diabetes before being diagnosed with the disease, such symptoms like tingling of the feet, dry mouth, severe thirst, frequent urination, weight lose etc. However, their responses in addressing the symptoms differed. Some of the patients, especially those who have relatives or neighbours that are diabetic, seek medical attention at the onset of symptoms identification knowing that the symptoms are those of the disease. One of the patients recounted her ordeal;

“My father had it (diabetes). Many years before my marriage my father suffered it. Twelve years after I was married off, I became so obese. One night I felt feverish and became so pressed for urination. In the morning I told my husband that I thought I was also diabetic and would go to hospital (sobs) and that was how I was diagnosed with it”. (IDI-Female patient, FMC 2022).

One of the participant explained her situation when the symptoms persisted;

“When I noticed the changes in my condition, such as the incessant urination, I started to suspect that I might be diabetic because I was not like that before. I

therefore recalled how my mother started (her illness) so I just locked my room and rushed to the hospital”. (IDI-Female Patient, FMC, 2022).

These findings indicate that people with family history of diabetes are more likely to have good knowledge of diabetes risk factors and therefore take prompt action. This finding is concordant to the one reported in a Ugandan study (Heljm and Atwine, 2011) which also revealed that some patients seek medical attention at the onset of symptoms which immensely assist in putting the condition under control. Azuogu et al (2018) also found a statistically significant relationship between family history of diabetes and general knowledge of diabetes risk factors. Our finding therefore reaffirms the construct of perceived threat in the health belief model (HBM), which combines the constructs of perceived susceptibility and perceived severity, as a motivating factor towards health seeking. The fear held by the patients that any unnecessary delay in seeking medical attention may exacerbate the condition and consequently affect their social being serves as the driving force for taking prompt action.

Some patients however, did not take swift response to the symptoms when they manifested, they were rather reluctant in taking measures. One of the participant explained the reason for her reluctance;

“At first I thought it was not serious because I was not aware of the disease then and could not relate the symptoms to be those of diabetes”. (IDI-Female Patient, FMC, 2022).

In a study in Tanzania, Metta (2016) found out that none of the patients who participated in the study had initial knowledge that the symptoms they were experiencing were indicative of diabetes. This may obviously delay a person’s effort in taking appropriate measure. And the implication is that, such a delay may result in the patient developing chronic condition that will have more adverse social and health consequences. This is similar to another finding in Uganda (Musunguzi et al, 2018) which reported that some patients with mild symptoms mostly self-treated with herbal or modern medicines or patronise drug shops and pharmacies, whereas only patients with severe symptoms sought care from hospitals or higher-level health centres.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study found that awareness about the existence of diabetes among the general population was high as 93.8 percent indicated having known the disease from different sources with family being the major source of awareness (36.3%). However, respondents’

general knowledge of type2 diabetes was found to be very poor as only 2.9% demonstrated adequate knowledge while those who demonstrated poor knowledge are found to be 70.1%.

Our finding is a little higher than the figure reported by Adebayo et al (2015) which shows the percentage of patients who prefer to consult a doctor if they were ill at 49%. However, the study revealed that 5.6% of our respondents think they would rather go to a medicine store for an over-the-counter treatment which coincides with what Muhammed et al (2013) reported that majority of households (53.6%) prefer to utilize patent medicine stores or pharmacies as the first line of therapy.

Similarly, this study found that 0.6% respondents thought of using traditional herbs to address such symptoms while 8.6% of the respondents would rather leave it to destiny which implies taking no action. Therefore, the finding shows that health seeking among the respondents involves an array of different of approaches, while some are willing to report any change they notice in their health conditions to the hospital, others prefer resorting to alternative care. This reaffirms one of the assumptions in Igun's stages in health seeking model which is the Self-treatment stage. This stage, according to the model, is dependent upon the belief that the person understands and attaches a label to the symptoms which makes him/her to determine the type of treatment he/she adopts.

Health seeking among type2 diabetes patients was found to be influenced by array of predisposing factors. Patients with family history of diabetes were found to have better knowledge of its symptoms hence sought medical attention at the onset of symptoms. Those who do not have a family history of diabetes and are ignorant of the symptoms tend to ignore them as not serious, hence took no action or resort to over-the-counter treatment, until the condition became severe. There are others who remain passive after they notice the symptoms and allow significant persons in their lives to take necessary action and decide on the type of care to seek. This reaffirms the constructs of perceived susceptibility and perceived threat of disease as motivating factors towards health seeking behaviour. It also supports the postulations in Igun's stages in health-seeking which describes the processes of health seeking in African societies to be a family affair.

## **Conclusion**

Awareness of type2 diabetes is found to be high among the public irrespective of their demographic identities. However, the study finds that knowledge of diabetes, in terms of its causes, risk factors and symptoms was very low among the public despite the high awareness.

The prevailing influence and relative dominance of significant others, especially husbands, on health care decisions may have its negative repercussion especially when wrong decisions are taken. The findings from the study reaffirm some of the theoretical constructs of the HBM, and Igun's stages of health-seeking which show synergy between different actors in the process of seeking care. There are psycho-social problems associated with living with diabetes which have adverse effect on the individual. However, with adequate sensitization and counselling from healthcare professionals and relevant stakeholders, and social support from family and community members, such problems would be overcome and those living with type2 diabetes can live a healthy life.

## **Recommendations**

Diabetes mellitus is a complex health condition that affects not only the individual but the society as well, in different respects. Therefore, any attempt to curtail its scourge will require a well-coordinated and comprehensive approach through massive sensitization campaign involving governments at all levels, healthcare providers, communities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and donor agencies both local and international.

Possible interventions should consider working with religious leaders to spread awareness about Type 2 Diabetes. Religious communities often trust their leaders for health-related information, and these leaders could be powerful allies in disseminating health messages. Such collaboration will sensitize religious institutions to incorporate health education into their community outreach programs, exploiting their influence for widespread impact.

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# EXAMINING THE ROLE OF POLITICAL GODFATHERISM IN SHAPING DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

Political godfatherism remains a pervasive and deleterious phenomenon within Nigerian politics, posing significant challenges to democratic consolidation and political development. This paper interrogates the multifaceted roles of political godfathers, who exert undue influence over elected officials through financial patronage and sponsorship. Such influence undermines electoral integrity and governance. Utilizing a documentary review methodology, the study synthesizes historical records, contemporary analyses, and academic literature, selected based on relevance and credibility, for the period 2015-2024, to contextualize the entrenchment of godfatherism in Nigerian politics. Systematic content analysis was applied to these documents, enabling the identification of key themes and patterns. The analysis is anchored on the theory of neopatrimonialism, which demonstrates how personalistic power relations, clientelism, and informal patronage networks within formal bureaucratic structures subvert democratic institutions. Findings reveal that political godfatherism restricts electoral competitiveness, debilitates civic culture, exacerbates socio-economic inequalities, and perpetuates elite dominance in governance. Godfathers manipulate candidate selection, influence policy decisions, and foster political violence, thereby eroding public accountability and cultivating widespread apathy towards political participation. These dynamics significantly hinder Nigeria's progress towards democratic maturity. The study recommends enhancing civic engagement and political participation, promoting public interest journalism, reforming electoral laws to facilitate the emergence of alternative political platforms, and revising internal party regulations as antidotes to elite manipulation. Such interventions will serve to recalibrate political structures toward inclusive and accountable governance.

**Keywords:** Democracy; Elections; Personalistic power; Political Godfatherism; Politics.

## **Introduction**

Around the world, political systems such as liberal democracies and single-party states have evolved in response to distinct socio-historical contexts and development challenges; in Nigeria, comparable factors have similarly shaped the development of its political system. After gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria experienced a relentless cycle of civilian and military regimes, which deeply affected governance-citizen engagements. The transition to democracy in 1999 marked a significant milestone in Nigeria's political trajectory; however, persistent fractures, such as electoral malpractice, weak institutional frameworks, and widespread corruption-continued to undermine democratic consolidation. Amidst these challenges, the phenomenon of godfatherism, rooted in neopatrimonialism, emerged as a defining feature of the Nigerian political system.

Neopatrimonialism describes a form of governance that blends contemporary bureaucracies with archaic patronage systems. Jean-François Bayart (1993) and Larry Diamond (2005), define neopatrimonialism as characterized by domination through personalistic power relations, dominant clientelist networks, and elite concentration of authority. This system often compromises democratic governance in favour of personal loyalty to the institutions, and this undermines the rule of law and democratic principles (Oso et al., 2009).

In Nigeria, godfatherism shows the difficulties associated with this neo patrimonial form of governance (Onayinka, 2015a). Political godfathers are powerful actors who control an elected officeholder's political life through various means of patronage, payment, financing, and influence. Such a reality builds an environment where loyalty to godfathers is often preferred to accountability to voters, which leads to the eradication of civic engagement at the most basic level and fosters a corrupt and incompetent governance system. This social reality undermines the attainment of democratic principles to a considerable extent because the requirements of the ruling elites are prioritised over the general populace (Rufai, 2018, 2023).

The impacts of godfatherism are wide-reaching and long-lasting. First, it stifles the chances for less privileged socio-economic groups to participate in power struggles as emerging political actors. Elections can also regress to mere displays of power in favour of contesting godfathers rather than a veritable political competition predicated on public goodwill and merit. This undoes democracy as a system that is meant to embody fair

competition and representation. In addition, the existence of godfathers can perpetuate socio-economic divides where resources are held by few, worsening poverty and unemployment (Onayinka, 2011, 2015b). Moreover, the impact of political godfathers regarding the governance of Nigerian states, especially the Southern region, is monumental. These regional godfathers tend to micromanage appointments, policymaking, and other policies on a national level, which impacts hundreds of millions. Along with increasing political patronage and clientelism, unequal distribution of power is a contributing factor to the rise of violence and political conflict as different factions try to gain from and capitalise on control (Onayinka, Opele, et. al., 2022; Rufai & Salawu, 2021).

While scholarly discussions on neopatrimonialism and godfatherism are becoming more prevalent, there remains limited understanding of how these phenomena specifically impact Nigeria's political landscape (Onayinka, 2011, 2012). Despite the growing global discourse on political patronage, existing literature on Nigerian political godfatherism tends to emphasize theoretical and conceptual analyses, with insufficient attention to the nuanced, empirical realities of governance and the specific conflicts stemming from godfather-client relationships. Although empirical works such as those of Albert (2005), Smith (2008), and Omilusi (2016), have explored influences on electoral processes, candidate selection, and governance outcomes, there remains a lack of context-specific examination, particularly regarding the implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria's Southern region.

Therefore, this paper seeks to address these gaps by investigating the multifaceted relationship between political godfatherism and democratic consolidation in this context.

### **Research Objectives**

In order to attend to these issues, the case study suggests the following research objectives:

- i. What is the impact of godfatherism on political activities and the actual governance system in Southern Nigeria?
- ii. What is the impact of the elite clientelist system on the level of democracy, especially with regard to political and electoral participation?
- iii. In what ways do the analysis of godfatherism impact aid in formulating strategies that foster civic democracy and responsive governance in Nigeria?

## **Methodology**

This article adopts a documentary review methodology to investigate the phenomenon of political godfatherism and its impact on democratic processes in Nigeria. The study draws on secondary data sourced from scholarly articles, books, government and policy documents, as well as reputable journalistic sources. The selection of documents was guided by clear inclusion and exclusion criteria: only materials published between 2015 and 2024 that directly addressed themes such as godfatherism, neopatrimonialism, clientelism, or political violence in Nigeria, and were deemed credible and relevant based on authorship, source, and peer-review status, were considered. Conversely, documents lacking sufficient empirical grounding, failing to address the Nigerian context, or merely duplicating existing findings without offering new insights were excluded from the analysis.

To analyse these sources, a systematic content analysis was applied, involving the coding and categorization of data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and theoretical perspectives related to the influence of political godfathers on electoral actors and democratic governance. By triangulating information from these varied sources, the study develops a detailed understanding of the challenges and implications associated with godfatherism for both governance and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. This methodological approach enables a comprehensive and critical synthesis of the literature, integrating multiple perspectives to provide an in-depth account of the ways in which godfatherism shapes the country's political landscape.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The governance intricacies in Nigeria that merge patrimonialism with modern legal-rational authority are analysed using the Neopatrimonialism Theory by Jean-François Bayart (1993) and Larry Diamond (2005). Neopatrimonialism highlights the existence of personalistic power relations, clientelism, and the disproportionate concentration of power among a narrow elite (Diamond, 2005). This theory seeks to demonstrate the overlap and interdependence of traditional and modern features of governance in Nigeria by emphasizing the patronage and loyalty systems in place (Bayart, 1993).

Opponents of neopatrimonialism argue that it lacks a comprehensive perspective on other relevant elements such as ideology, institutions, and social set-up, which play essential roles in influencing the political picture (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). Thandika Mkandawire also claims that labelling African states neopatrimonial often overlooks the diversity and

complexity of politics on the continent (Mkandawire, 1998). Furthermore, the vague definitions of neopatrimonialism render its application and measurement difficult, thus restricting its analytical usefulness (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1997).

Even with these criticisms, the neopatrimonialism theory contains valuable nuances of political conflict and power dynamics. With a focus on personalised bonds and clientelist networks, the theory explains the political behaviour of powerful people – Godfathers, particularly in areas such as South West Nigeria (Alemika, 2003).

In this case, the relevance of the neopatrimonialism theory becomes clear in explaining the deeply personal nature of governance and political authority as well as the vast networks of allegiance and loyalty in Nigeria. These sociopolitical relations enable the identification of the structures and institutions that perpetuate political godfatherism and conflict politics. This viewpoint illustrates the overwhelming concentration of power within a narrow elite, which deepens inequalities and underscores the emergence of corruption. This evidence helps design governance strategies that seek to address the imbalanced political power relations in Nigeria. Therefore, the theory is essential for analysing the complex interplay between godfatherism, power, politics, and democracy in Nigeria.

### **Concept of Godfatherism in Nigerian Politics**

In the scope of Nigerian politics, godfatherism shows a patron-client relationship system where powerful individuals, known as “godfathers”, dominate their political apprentices, referred to as “godsons”. This system has an immense potential to influence governance and the processes of democracy in Nigeria (Idowu, 2018). More specifically in focus for this study is how godfatherism creates political violence and political power structure, usually through a system of resource transaction and loyalty (Adetula, 2011).

In Nigeria, political "godfathers" frequently provide their protégés, commonly referred to as godsons, with substantial financial and logistical support during election campaigns, with the expectation of political loyalty and the promotion of their personal or group interests once those protégés attain public office. For example, in Anambra State, Chris Uba admitted to playing a decisive role in funding and securing the 2003 electoral victory of Governor Chris Ngige, subsequently demanding significant influence over key appointments and policy decisions, an arrangement that ultimately resulted in a public falling out and legal disputes (Vanguard, 2011). Similarly, in Oyo State, the "godfather" Lamidi Adedibu was

instrumental in the political ascent and administration of Governor Rashidi Ladoja, reportedly dictating appointments and seeking control over state resources, which eventually led to a prolonged political conflict (ThisDay, 2006; BBC News, 2006). These cases exemplify the recurring and well-documented pattern of resource exchange for political influence within Nigeria's political system. Such practices often undermine intra-party democracy by imposing candidates who may be unqualified or lack popular support, thereby eroding internal party competition and transparency (Osaghae, 2015).

The consequences of godfatherism go beyond the mere selection of candidates, as it also impacts governance and policy formulation. Godfathers usually try to propel their godsons for their personal or sectional interests, which detracts from greater societal good and undermines democratic ideals (Ojo, 2008). Furthermore, the rivalries emanating from competing godfathers can exacerbate violent conflicts, undermine political processes, and diminish public confidence in the government (Osaghae, 2015).

Several efforts have been made to mitigate political godfatherism in Nigeria, including legal reforms aimed at promoting internal party democracy and enhancing the transparency of candidate selection processes. For instance, the introduction of the Electoral Act 2022 and increased oversight by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) are intended to reduce undue influence in party primaries. Despite these measures, the persistence of godfatherism reflects deeply entrenched cultural and sociological factors that require broader societal change to strengthen Nigeria's democratic institutions. Ultimately, the prevalence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics highlights challenges to the effectiveness, stability, and integrity of democratic systems, underscoring the need for continuous reforms to promote accountable and participatory governance.

### **Concept of Conflict in Nigeria's Democratic Landscape**

In the global context, conflict is inherent in all societies, manifesting as disagreements, rivalries, and discord within social and political frameworks. Classic scholars such as Marx and Engels (1848) emphasised that conflicts are rooted not simply in personal animosity, but in structural differences in values, goals, and access to resources between opposing groups, especially social classes. Such interests shape the frameworks of antagonism found within political systems, particularly in capitalist societies, where power relations are constantly negotiated and contested.

In Nigeria's democratic evolution, conflict carries distinctive features shaped by both its colonial history and ongoing developmental challenges. Disputes and opposition frequently surface in Nigeria's political arena, reflecting deep-seated divisions relating to ethnicity, region, religion, and class. This environment provides fertile ground for the emergence and entrenchment of political godfatherism, a phenomenon where influential individuals or elites ("godfathers") wield disproportionate power over political processes, candidates, and resource allocation. Here, the Marxian view of conflict as an outgrowth of structural inequalities is particularly resonant: godfatherism exemplifies the battle between different social strata seeking dominance or survival within the political landscape.

Furthermore, conflict in the context of political godfatherism is often neither neutral nor innocuous. As Morton Deutsch (1973), observed, conflict can be either constructive, leading to innovation and clarity of purpose or destructive, fostering hatred and, at times, violence. In Nigeria, godfatherism has frequently led to the latter, as unresolved rivalry between competing "godfathers" and their protégés often erupts into electoral violence, manipulation, and a general undermining of democratic ideals.

Conflict resolution models such as the Thomas-Kilmann framework highlight the diverse strategies actors may employ, ranging from competing and collaborating to compromising, avoiding, or accommodating (Kilmann, 2008). In the Nigerian context, godfathers often rely on assertive and competitive approaches, leveraging their power and networks to enforce their interests, sometimes at the expense of wider democratic engagement and collaboration.

Ultimately, understanding the underpinnings of conflict and adopting strategies for its constructive management is vital for Nigeria's political development. Properly managed, political contests can invigorate democracy and promote inclusive governance. However, when personalities and interests dominate over transparent processes, as seen with godfatherism, conflict tends to reinforce systemic inequalities and hinder political progress. Thus, addressing the roots and dynamics of conflict in Nigeria is central to curbing the adverse impacts of godfatherism and fostering a more equitable democratic culture.

### **Concept of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria**

Democratic consolidation, as described by Omotola (2007), refers to the phase wherein a democracy achieves institutional stability, widespread acceptance of democratic

norms, and broad citizen participation. Around the world, the consolidation of democracy often faces unique obstacles tied to each country's history and political culture. In Nigeria a nation emerging from decades of military rule and chronic political instability the path to democratic consolidation has been particularly complex and multi-layered.

The transition to civilian governance in 1999 marked a significant milestone in Nigeria's democratic journey. Yet, true consolidation has proven elusive, due largely to enduring challenges in establishing strong, functional core institutions. Persistent problems such as weak judicial independence, a constrained civil society, and limitations on press freedom continue to undermine transparency and accountability (Mustapha, 2012). Of these, an empowered civil society is especially critical for counterbalancing disproportionate power. However, civil society organizations, like other democratic actors, remain vulnerable to financial constraints and interference by entrenched political elites.

A key pillar of democratic consolidation is meaningful citizen engagement—active participation by people in the political process. In Nigeria, persistent voter apathy and disenfranchisement have stemmed from widespread mistrust of political actors. While reforms such as the introduction of biometric voter registration have been implemented to rebuild public trust and enhance electoral integrity, these efforts are often undermined by recurring issues with political culture.

Central among these cultural issues is the phenomenon of political godfatherism. This practice, where a handful of influential individuals 'godfathers' dominate the political process, poses a serious threat to democratic consolidation. Godfatherism subverts democratic norms by entrenching patronage networks, stifling healthy political competition, and facilitating the emergence of unrepresentative leaders. As a result, political offices are often occupied not by those duly elected by the people, but by individuals handpicked by powerful elites, further deepening citizens' alienation from politics.

Additionally, ethnic and regional tensions continue to impede Nigeria's democratic consolidation. Effective management of diversity and the promotion of inclusivity are vital for long-term democratic stability.

Consequently, advancing democratic consolidation in Nigeria requires more than institutional reforms; it demands a transformation of political culture and the dismantling of practices such as godfatherism. Only by strengthening institutions, fostering genuine citizen

participation, and addressing the deep-seated challenges of elite dominance can Nigeria achieve an inclusive, representative, and resilient democracy.

### **Historical Context of Political Godfatherism in Nigeria**

Godfatherism in Nigerian politics is a phenomenon that dates back to the colonial period (Albert, 2005). At this time, there existed a form of patronage where powerful figures supported younger politicians. Powerful elders and chiefs sponsored the political ambitions of youths, fully expecting political loyalty and various forms of recompense in the future (Nnadi, 2023). This normalized practice served both to manage political chaos and secure the allegiance of emerging political actors. It also demonstrates the cyclic nature of community leadership and political power (Albert, 2005).

When it comes to Nigeria's post-independence period, these systems of sponsorship began evolving in Nigerian politics. The collapse of colonialism, and with it the governance system in 1960, saw increased competition among different ethnicities and political parties. There was a power struggle where numerous politicians heavily relied on established sponsors, who were mostly contentious political figures or traditional leaders keen on preserving their power and influence. However, the form of sponsorship known as godfatherism underwent considerable change after multiparty democracy was reintroduced in the late 20th century.

The 1999 reestablishment of civilian rule in Nigeria deepened the challenges associated with political godfatherism within the country's democracy. With heightened political contestation came the emergence of godfathers as powerful media with the resources to vote, socialise, and work the elections politically. Today, political godfathers continue to wield significant influence over candidate selection, party primaries, and even the implementation of public policies. For instance, in Lagos State, Bola Ahmed Tinubu's longstanding political influence has often determined the emergence of gubernatorial candidates and shaped policy direction within the state (Okoli, 2022).

The evolution from the more primitive form of clientelistic patronage to sophisticated types of godfatherism illustrates the extent to which these relations have been integrated within the political and institutional system of Nigeria. Moreover, the financial muscle of godfathers has increasingly become very important, enabling them to dominate the political order and politically leverage undue influence on office holders. The outcome is the

consolidation of unofficial power structures that command allegiance rather than responsibility to subjects, deepening the patron-client network while undermining democracy.

In the context of godfatherism, examining the dynamics of political godfatherism reveals how traditional patronage systems have merged with modern practices to shape the networks of power in Nigeria's contemporary politics. Understanding this evolution is crucial for addressing the challenges that godfatherism poses to political processes and the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

### **Mechanisms of Influence of Political Godfathers in Nigeria**

Political godfathers in Nigeria maintain a remarkable degree of control over the political sphere through various methods of subjugation of elected representatives. These methods are antithetical to the spirit of democracy and add to the already festering problem of corruption and ineptitude in governance.

In Nigeria, political godfathers often exert influence over their chosen candidates, or "wards," primarily through the financing of electoral campaigns. In the Nigerian context, the financial demands of running for office frequently exceed what is feasible within rational or legal limits, making candidates heavily reliant on affluent patrons to fund their political ambitions. For instance, in several gubernatorial races such as those in Anambra State (e.g., Chris Ngige's 2003 tenure under Chris Uba) and Kwara State (as seen with the Saraki dynasty), godfathers have played pivotal roles by bankrolling campaigns in exchange for future loyalty and policy control.

This financial dependency fosters a power imbalance, compelling elected officials often referred to as "godsons" to prioritise the interests of their sponsors over those of their constituents once in office (Omotola, 2007). As a result, public officeholders may neglect the needs and aspirations of the wider electorate, focusing instead on implementing agendas laid out by their godfathers. This entrenches a political culture where access to office is determined by financial capability rather than merit or popular support, limiting opportunities for qualified and capable individuals who lack access to such resources to participate in governance. Thus, the political landscape becomes dominated by a select few with the means to finance costly campaigns, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion and patronage.

Electoral manipulation is yet another strategy employed by political godfathers to solidify their short-sighted grip on power. It is not surprising that they control local civics since this gives them the ability to manage the turnout of voters and the election results as well. According to the account presented by Lewis (2011), the godfathers use their connections with election officials and law enforcement to control elections in their favour. This control encompasses a wide range of activities from vote buying and threatening prospective contestants to committing wide scale electoral malpractices. These activities undermine the credibility of elections, as the true elections no longer exist based on what the people desire. Therefore, this allows godfathers to determine political decisions, thus strengthening their influence and domination over politics.

The godfathers exercise their influence with the aid of political patronage. Using their power, they allocate many government and public offices to their loyal clients or sycophants, thereby interlocking their influence into the administrative machinery. Ayoade (2006), notes that these networks of patronage negatively impact efficiency since loyalty, rather than competence, is the primary factor determining appointment. Such a system entrenches nepotism and, at the same time, strips the government of the necessary personnel to improve governance. Thus, the focus on loyalty instead of capabilities leaves the government machinery less responsive to the needs of the citizens and more responsive to the demands of the godfathers.

The financial control, electoral irregularities, and political patronage operate together to formulate an arachnoid web of influence that ensnares not only the godsons but the citizens as well. The godfatherism phenomenon provides a political environment in which the citizens remain estranged, a few privileged elites dominate decision-making, and governance is not based on choice but imposition.

Consequently, the ways in which a political godfather exercises his influence are deeply entrenched in Nigeria's politics, multifarious, and destructive to democracy, governance, and accountability. With regard to these aspects, this particular research seeks to illuminate the nature of godfatherism and its concerns with political conflict and the distribution of power in the Nigerian democratic setting. Confronting these problems is essential in fostering better democratic governance in Nigeria.

## **Case Study Analysis of Godfatherism in Southern Nigeria**

### **i. Lagos State - Bola Tinubu**

Bola Tinubu, the former governor of Lagos State, is often regarded as an archetypal model of 'political godfatherism' in Nigeria. His enduring impact is evident in the persistent political cultivation he practices, such as with Babatunde Fashola and Akinwunmi Ambode (Adebanwi, 2014). His rule is characterized by relentless perpetuation of power, coupled solely with his influence on major endorsement elections within Lagos State.

What has become apparent with Tinubu's control over nominations is the extent to which godfatherism has permeated Nigeria's political culture (Okoli, 2022). His power to sponsor party tickets and appoint individuals to powerful positions demonstrates the depth to which such connections can fracture democracy (Ohiole & Ojo, 2016). Despite being regarded as orchestrators of Tinubu's strategies, these youths often operate independently and are popularly known as 'Tinubu's children' (Vanguard, 2023). This kind of political arrangement establishes and nourishes a partisan culture in which allegiance to the godfather is considered more important than the political aspirations of constituents (Premium Times, 2020). Consequently, policies designed to advance the interests of the people may instead be determined by a select group of elite figures, leading to a disconnection from meaningful democratic representation. Furthermore, this dominance fosters apathy and complacency among elected officials who fear incurring the wrath of their godfathers, thereby stifling innovation and accountability. The continued influence of political godfathers entrenches political patronage, constraining prospects for genuine democratic engagement (Sahara Reporters, 2018).

### **ii. Anambra State - Chris Uba**

The political conflict in Anambra State involving Chris Uba and his protégé, Chris Ngige, offers striking examples of the conflicts that may arise out of godfatherism. Uba, considered one of the most influential political godfathers, tried to dominate Ngige's governance after facilitating his ascendance to power. When Ngige tried to assert some autonomy, Uba went to the extremes of trying to impeach him. This conflict further developed into a geopolitical disaster for the state which demonstrates the instability of godfatherism (Ikelegbe, 2013).

Uba and Ngige's conflict is an example of what happens when too much power is vested in one individual's hands. For one, it underscores that godfathers' transactional relationships

with their political sons may assume harmful dimensions wherein personal interests begin to overshadow the common good. The political turbulence that followed Uba's actions not only destabilized governance in Anambra State, but demonstrated the deeper malaise concerning Nigeria's polity in which clashes between godfathers and their clients become so pronounced as to threaten the functioning of government and social order. Furthermore, the example illustrates how political godfatherism becomes violent and coercive as godfathers seek to use force to maintain political influence, thus, subverting popular confidence in political institutions.

### **iii. Rivers State -Wike and Fubara**

Rivers State illustrates yet another variant of godfatherism in the political relationships involving the former governor Wike and his successor Siminialayi Fubara. Wike's enduring political contortions have been ever so instrumental in defining the political destiny of Rivers State with his endorsements and patronage (Otikor, and Kem, 2024).

Wike's influence over Fubara raises critical issues concerning the perpetuation of godfatherism within Nigerian politics. As Fubara began to rule, there were questions about whether he had true decision-making power or if he was a mere host to Wike's political strings. The transitional politics of Wike and Fubara serve as a critical juncture to consider the impact of godfatherism on governance. Wike, in this case, expecting loyalty from Fubara may be the very reason that innovation and political reform stalls (Nnadi, 2023). Political loyalty to one's godfather tends to eclipse considerations of the public good. This relationship, however, could also create a different set of problems Wike and Fubara's relationship could easily lead to conflict if Fubara attempts to escape Wike's grip or if their divergent interests diverge.

This demonstrates the vulnerability of political coalitions born out of godfatherism, because the struggle for power might trigger instability. Conflict has led to Rivers State being declared in a State of Emergency. This results in numerous unresolved political issues (Ann, 2023).

These illustrations of Lagos, Anambra, and Rivers States highlight the depth of the phenomenon of godfatherism within Nigeria politics. The shifts in power encounters disrupt the democratic systems of governance, reduce accountability, and aid in the destabilization of the polity. This paper attempts to examine the extent to which godfatherism structures the

political governance in Nigeria, its contribution towards the deepening of clientelism, and the consequences for democratic consolidation. Primary questions include: What level of decision making is influenced by godfatherism? What is the circulation of loyalty and betrayal between godfathers and their godsons? In what ways can these relations be changed to improve governance that is accountable and responsive? The study hopes to address these questions and enhance the understanding of the problems associated with the Nigerian democracy as well as suggest the possible solutions.

### **Impact of Political Godfatherism on Nigeria's Democratic Process**

#### **i. Electoral Integrity**

The influence of political godfathers in Nigeria's election process creates considerable risk to the credibility of elections. In line with the Nigerian Electoral Act 2010, any electoral malpractice which contravenes the principles of democracy of free and fair elections undermines the democratic order (Electoral Act, 2010, Section 120). Preferences are secured through elaborate schemes of vote buying, coercive intimidation, and selective retelling of the electoral story. This practices not only restrict freedom of choice but greatly erodes the credibility of the office holders because they owe their positions more to godfather than the electorate. As a result, civil society finds itself trapped in a perpetual cycle of compromise due to the governance gap. This situation breeds political apathy and disillusionment, causing many to lose focus on their true political aspirations.

#### **ii. Governance and Policy Making**

Godfathers exert enormous influence far beyond the electoral process, deeply affecting governance and policy formulation. For instance, in Lagos, Bola Tinubu's political influence has been pivotal in shaping governance structures and policy decisions long after his tenure as governor. Similarly, in Anambra, the godfather Chris Uba's control over Chris Ngige during his governorship demonstrated how policy could be dictated by political patrons. In Rivers State, Nyesom Wike's sway over his successor, Siminialayi Fubara, illustrates how godfatherism continues to impact policy direction and administrative decisions. Olarinmoye's research (2008) indicates that when forced to yield to the influence of a godfather, governance tends to give primary attention to his economic interests over the welfare of the people. This implies that policies are formulated to benefit the interests of the elites and not the basic and urgent social services such as health care, education, and infrastructure.

As a result, citizens' development needs are often misdirected, exacerbating social inequalities and impeding sustainable progress. The pervasive influence of political godfathers on policymaking enables them not only to suppress public concerns, but also to deepen public disillusionment and erode trust in government institutions. For example, when influential political figures allocate public resources based on patronage rather than community needs, essential services such as healthcare or education can be neglected, further entrenching inequality.

### **iii. Political Succession**

One of the most direct impacts of godfatherism on Nigeria's democratic structure is its influence in deciding the order of political succession. By controlling who vies for an office, godfathers perpetuate their influence and unchecked dominance, thus cementing a political culture where political continuity overshadows innovation and competition. This is indeed the case for Bola Ahmed Tinubu in Lagos, where godfatherism has been successful in sustaining political continuity. This scenario constrains opportunities for new political players and champions a stifled democratic competition filled with familiar faces loyal to the godfather's machinations. Mustapha (2012) observes that phenomena lack emerging leaders and ideas, narratively stagnating the political system. This limitation impedes not only the quality of the leadership but also active citizen participation, thereby eroding the scope of democracy in the region.

It is adequate to argue that godfatherism profoundly and multidimensionally affects the democratic processes in Nigeria. It disregards the integrity of election safeguards and prioritises personal interests over the general good. With governance, it stifles political succession and creates a monopoly on competition and innovative efforts. Nigeria is in need of these strategies to reimagine its framework of democracy with well-defined parameters that draw on representational governance.

### **Challenges to Democratic Consolidation**

The long-standing existence of godfatherism in Nigeria serves as an alarming impediment to democracy. The country has made steps towards democratisation since the resumption of civilian government in 1999, but the existence of godfathers, politically powerful forces who control the key democratic functions of a polity, continues to undermine them. Such influences take shape in the critical areas of lack of oversight, public apathy, and turbulence.

The most prominent issue caused by Godfatherism is the reduction of accountability in a political system. Politicians who owe their election to powerful godfathers are beholden to them, not the voters. It is noted by Ibrahim (2003) that public servants under such arrangements operate in a manner which predominantly serves the interests of their godfathers rather than those of the constituents. Therefore, when politicians fulfil their obligations to their godfathers, transparency declines and public oversight diminishes. Citizens become passive stakeholders as their representatives are preoccupied with patron-client relationships instead of problem solving. Such a lack of accountability fosters distrust in public institutions, creating volatile situations that further erode institutions and disengage voters.

The menace of godfatherism has led to public disenfranchisement as one of its primary challenges. Undoubtedly, public regard fundamentally restricts the electorate's ability to select their leaders based on merit. As put by Adejumobi (2000), there appears to be an unnecessary political molasses whereby vert the citizenry feel so disconnected from the prevailing politics and decision making as well as regard their suffrage to be inconsequential. Under the suffocating grip of Ponzi Politics, there is bound to be political accommodation where citizens continue to remain under the illusion that the leaders the constituents put in power do not represent the populace, but act as proxies for dry sponsors. To reduce their political expenses, citizens have no choice but to adopt a passive approach to democracy.

In addition, these trends breed a democracy deficit, as there is an increase in political inertia about the likes of participation in elections and radical withdrawal from the political scene altogether. More so, such godfatherism wrecks the minimal democratic structures established around politically contested public governance. Politically neutral conflicts that ever shadow the life of a godfather and his godson most often centre on the transitions the godson tries to make away from the pavements created by his sponsors. These subtle and complex conflicts take on many faces, such as campaigns of political terrorism within parties or even with the militants of an organised party system like in the Anambra unrest. Such governance conflicts throw the rhythm of public governance completely out of sync and introduce multi-dimensional uncertainty without the bounds of civilized and rational norms that people expect from politics (Oyedele et al., 2023).

Political stability is vital for the ongoing development of democracy because it provides the necessary framework for implementing policies, fostering economic activity,

and enhancing social integration (Oso et al., 2009). This is why godfatherism poses multiple threats to the democratic consolidation of Nigeria. The decline in accountability creates a gap where politicians become increasingly disconnected from the electorate, leading to apathy and disillusionment towards the political system. Moreover, the instability stemming from conflicts between political godfathers and their protégés endangers the political order by impeding governance and stunting democratic development. In Nigeria, these issues have to be dealt with if the country is to consolidate democracy based on the principles of responsible governance. Mitigating the Influence of Political Godfathers.

The socioeconomic effects of political godfathers in Nigeria have greatly undermined the democratic practice of the country. Still, there are various measures that can be undertaken towards their control in order to strengthen the political atmosphere (Onayinka et al., 2022).

**i. Strengthening Electoral Laws**

Strengthening electoral laws is one of the most powerful means to reduce the effect of godfathers. There are ways to increase order within the electoral system as well as decrease manipulation when there is a well-defined legislative structure. According to the 2011 election review committee's report, there are recommendations on campaign spending, candidate invitation, and overall election procedures that need tighter controls (Election Review Committee, 2011). An increase in the restriction of campaign funding, paired with greater independence granted to the bodies, allows the state to cut down the candidates' financial hold that godfathers have. Furthermore, a reduction encourages the occurrence of non-partisan supervisions of election activities that the general public is privy to, fostering public credibility while curbing godfatherism and electoral irregularities.

**ii. Promoting Political Education**

Another key tactic for reducing the impact of political godfathers is enhancing the political education of voters. Better educated voters can make decisions without the need of political godfathers for enlightenment and therefore reduce dependency. As noted by Ojo (2015), an informed electorate is able to evaluate candidates based on their credentials and antecedents instead of merely evaluating support from powerful figures. Civic education that deals with active participation, specifically citizenship and voting, and encourages responsibility among public office holders enhances accountability. The information

improves political participation, and the inflow of the information encourages citizens to demand transparency and fairness from those in authority.

### **iii. Institutional Reforms**

Reforming the structures of political parties is important for democratizing the selection of candidates to reduce the influence wielded by individual godfathers. As Nwosu (2010), has pointed out, internal democracy within a political party needs to be improved so that participation in the making of decisions is broadened. Political parties need to create an environment that is more inclusive by establishing clear and equitable procedures for the party's nominee which are based on merit rather than personal loyalty. Political competition is enhanced by other mechanisms, such as primaries, where members of a party are free to elect their representatives, rather than the dictates of godfathers for godfathers' endorsement. Furthermore, increasing the participation of women and youth as members of the party's top decision-making bodies would expose the political system to new ideas and reduce dependence on the entrenched godfathers.

### **iv. Encouraging Civil Society Engagement**

The role of good governance may be aided by civil society organisations, particularly in counteracting the sheer magnitude of political paternalism. As these organisations mobilize citizens to partake in civic activities, there is a higher likelihood of accountability, transparency, and equitable governance. Programs which foster civic engagement, as well as initiatives which demand the establishment of electoral integrity monitoring bodies, can empower the society to protect themselves from exploitation by powerful forces.

Political paternalism in Nigerian politics requires a combination of shifts in legal frameworks, civic education, institutional frameworks, and proactive involvement of civil society to be truly effective. Rigorous electoral laws, increased political education, and better regulation of political parties can reduce the influence of political godfathers while increasing chances for godfather-free governance. If these policies are adopted, there is a chance that the political environment will focus on building structures that serve the electorate instead of a select few and strengthen the hope for democracy that Nigeria seeks to achieve.

## **Conclusion**

Political godfatherism describes the intricate nexus of power, wealth, and influence and how it affects the democratic development of Nigeria. This phenomenon may cynically

be viewed as a mentorship practice where elderly successful politicians, termed “godfathers,” help young political entrants by offering guidance and support toward attaining political positions, often referred to as helping them climb the political ladder. This is likely to boost a political career and ensure that relevant political capitals are easily available when needed. However, there are concerning aspects of godfatherism that require scrutiny.

Godfatherism at its worst is mostly known to undermine democratic processes. The ‘Godfathers’ command tremendous political power while democracy heavily relies on devolution of power, and this leads to governance without the needed accountability. In other words, democracy is marked by fairness and just as a positive-reinforced competition yet godfatherism in its extreme form is best shown to subvert unadulterated democracy. In addition to manipulating the electoral process, misappropriation of public resources becomes the order of the day while political leaders use their public positions for individual gain. As can be observed, democracy is destroyed by prioritizing imposing candidate selection based on loyalty to godfathers, instead of meeting the public interest.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Dealing with the complications created by godfatherism requires an integrated combination of legal, educational, and political action. The law should be toughened to curb any straining of influence into electoral politics and safeguard the democracy’s structural components. More rigorous controls on campaign spending can reduce some of the financial manipulations that nurture godfatherism.
- ii. Educational programs directed at enhancing the political consciousness of citizens will help most people demand accountability from their representatives and reduce the grip of godfathers.
- iii. Broader political changes focused on improving democracy within the parties themselves can also contribute to dismantling the existing patronage systems. Nigeria, by encouraging grassroots participation, can nurture authentic democratic development. In the end, a holistic approach involving all sectors, such as civil society and the electorate, is indispensable in developing a political landscape that is less vulnerable to violent and nonviolent incursions of godfatherism. With these measures, Nigeria can build a more accountable and participatory democratic system that truly represents the interests of its citizens.

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# INTERROGATING THE PARADOX AND CONJECTURES OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE DEFICIT IN AFRICA

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## **Abstract**

This paper examined leadership and governance crisis in contemporary Africa, and its attendant consequences on state development. Leadership failure has been the bane of African states since post-independence, decades ago. Lack of ideology and absence of leadership with transformative attitude has been one of several reasons why governance is receding on the continent. The impact of leadership in promoting good governance and development of a state and a strong linkage between political leadership and good governance is what define transformative and responsive government that cares for welfare of the citizenry. However, with few exceptions in some African states, citizens have continued to bear the burden of leadership failure. The key objective of this paper is to examine the major impacts of leadership on good governance. While the paper acknowledges the efforts of some of these political leaders to transform their states, the fact however, remains that the means of executing these noble transformative goals are in a “state of vacillation”. The study adopted elite theory as its theoretical framework and relied on secondary source of information for its data. The paper found that the recycling of poor leadership has continued to dash all hopes of achieving growth and development in Africa and recommends that stakeholders in these countries must device new approaches to leadership recruitment; while the political leadership must strive to promote probity, accountability and good governance.

**Keywords:** African states; Development; Governance, Leadership; Poverty

## **Introduction**

The nexus between leadership and good governance cannot be underestimated as it is crucial for the establishment of a stable and egalitarian society. Therefore, good governance usually explains the extent to which political leadership has met the yearnings and aspirations of the citizenry. Aside the leadership question, scholars have taken governance failure as a critical part to understanding development crisis ravaging African continent. However, leadership failure and crisis of governance have become a sour taste for 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa. While many scholars and analysts have squarely located the leadership and crisis of governance in Africa in their contact with colonialism, nevertheless, a different outcome in other continents that passed through similar colonial experience raises doubt about its utilitarian value (Okolie, 2010).

There is no gainsaying that some African leaders do not care about the welfare of their citizens, as their inept and other forms of mal-administration quickly manifest immediately they assume office. With few exceptions, their regimes have been notable for oppression, corruption, social disorganization, dearth of development project and growing poverty (Ake, 1996). In some African states, political parties merely exist, but do not contribute towards economic policies that could positively impact on the well-being of the people, unlike what obtains in developed democracies like the United Kingdom and United States of America, where political parties play crucial roles in government policies. Examples abound in some African countries such as those of Presidents Eyadema of Togo, and Paul Biya of Cameroon to mention few, who have amended the constitution in their respective countries to elongate their stay in power. In Nigeria, where many of the electorate have become disillusioned with democratic governance, the political elites now take their turn to assume power, which in effect, has not practically changed the awful approach to governance in the country. Similarly, governance failure has further created opportunity for military putsch in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. It is therefore indisputable that the root cause of governance failure in Africa lies in the leadership conundrum which requires “sub-optimal understanding” as well as understanding of the meaning of leadership” (Fletcher Forum, 2017).

Essentially, many African states such as Nigerian, Cote d’Ivoire and Sudan are ethnically and religiously divided, while the failure of leadership to address the fragmentation has led to civil war. Thus, in attempt to analyze history of leadership and democratization

processes especially in third world countries, (Ake 1985, 2000:37), argues that the state was a vortex of struggles for power and resources, and politics was reduced to a zero-sum game in which the winners took everything and the losers also lost everything. Similarly, power has been personalized, and abused very often, while also reducing politics to the “single-minded pursuit to capture state power”. Nevertheless, purposeful leadership and good governance still abound in countries like Cape-Verde, Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius and Rwanda, which Transparency International has identified to be less corrupt on the African continent. It is in view of the foregoing that this study interrogates the paradox and conjectures of political leadership and governance deficit in Africa.

The objectives of the study are:

- (a) To investigate the linkage between leadership and good governance
- (b) To ascertain the effect of poor leadership on governance in Africa

## **Literature Review**

### **Conceptualizing Political leadership and Governance**

Leadership refers to the ability of a leader to give order and ensure compliance without the use of force or coercion at a given time. Leadership in real sense connotes a leader. Hence, a leader is one who leads, plans, organizes, controls, communicates, delegates, and accepts responsibility for reaching societal goals” (Ebegbulem, 2011). In the context of this study, leadership implies public leadership entrusted with authority for the purpose of public service delivery. Research on political leadership is widespread. Given this, Teles (2012), contends that “political leadership is a complex concept with no universal definition and that political scientists usually define leadership according to their own perceptions of the issue depending on the aspects they are more interested in”. Political leadership and good governance work hand in hand to ensure a stable and viable state.

Therefore, the essence of good governance is to establish government of the people, and for the interest of the people. According to Erasmus, (2013:4), the quality of good governance includes a process by which governments are elected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government of the day to effectively formulate and implement sound policies and regulatory regimes; and the respect of citizens for the institutions and norms that govern economic, social, political and legal interaction among others. The failure of these values has continued to demoralize people’s faith and belief in democratic governance in Africa. Basically, the nonconformity of African political leadership to democratic values; while also displaying autocratic ideas, as well as persistent incursion of the military in

governance have no doubt become drivers of governance failure in Africa. In the light of this study, political leaders are the primary holders, as well as providers of resources in an established institution or state.

Governance deficit has remained a clog in the wheel of progress in Africa. Africa has the potential to be great but many African states have for years been entangled in endemic poverty, insecurity and ethno-religious conflict. In addition, corruption, incompetency and leadership failure have opened the gate for opportunists leading to renaissance of undemocratic means of changing government in Africa. The concept of governance like leadership, is also difficult to discuss in specific terms. According to Pierre & Peters (2000:7), it is a concept that is notoriously slippery, frequently used by social scientists and practitioners without definition. People often misuse governance and government; while the former is an extension of government, the latter however, is a constituted authority, an established and complex channel through which people articulate their interests; exercise their civil and legal rights, as well as reconciliation of differences.

As the United Nation Development Programme, UNDP (1997a: 9), put forward, it covers “the political, economic, legal, judicial, social and administrative authority and therefore, includes: government, the private sector and the civil society”. Hence, it is clear that governance is the process of running the affairs of a state toward implementing government policies. In actual sense, governance could be authoritarian, despotic or democratic in nature. The World Bank (2014:1), defines “Governance” as consisting of “the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised”. These includes how governments are “selected, monitored and replaced, including their capacity to formulate and implement sound policies, public services, and earn the respect of citizens and institutions that determine economic and social interventions” (Kaufmann, 2010).

The concept of governance however can be seen in two different dimensions: “Good and Bad Governance”. While the former implies effective management of state resources; accountability; rule of law; transparency and equitable allocation of resources; the latter connotes leadership failure; poor policy implementation; corruption; lack of transparency, and above all, weak institutions. Good governance though rare in Africa, can be found in few African states such as Mauritius, Ghana and South Africa. Good governance is an antidote to poverty, peace and development. African countries are currently entangled in crisis of governance due to multidimensional challenges facing the continent. Poverty has continued to rise in African states because of bad governance at both the macro and micro levels.

## **Theoretical framework**

This study used the Elite theory as its guide. The elite theory seeks to describe and analyze the power relationship in contemporary society (Izucke, 2014). The theory argues that the elite constitute the most powerful group of people in any national political system. They can be very few in number, depending on the size of the country. Elite theory can be traced to Robert Michels's (1915), Iron Law of Oligarchy; Vilfredo Pareto's, (1939), Political Elite Circulation, and (Lopes, 2013; Mustafa, 2000). In all cases, elites make up a small portion in the population- perhaps 3-4% at most" (Hossain &More, 2000). Elites can be described as the people who make and shape political, and economic decisions of government to their own advantage. The conviction of this group is that society contains two sets of people, (a) governing, (b) non-governing elite (Mustafa, 2000:324). Linked to the Nigerian situation, this group shares the belief that majority of the people have some inadequacies to think and perform to optimum level. Hence, the society must rely on the wisdom, skill and intelligence of political leaders, and not the majority of the people. Elites are rich, intelligent and mostly, the advantaged members of any political system.

For example, in Nigeria, the elite, have tentacles that cover the "echelons of politics". They are persons who, by virtue of their strategic locations in large or otherwise pivotal organizations and movements, are able to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially" (Higley, 2010). Though electorate can decide which elites' rules, it cannot change the fact that power is always exercised by the elites (Heywood, 2006:80). This has given rise to contradictions and crisis of governance that has bedeviled the Nigerian political system since 1999. Nigerian political elites because of their recognized position, even though they do not dominate political power, yet they are clearly in position to decide when, how and what goes elsewhere in the society, thereby running the Nigerian state as their own property. The implication of this is that, Nigeria is oscillating between democratic stagnancy and governance backwardness, principally because of elite tendencies that are reflective of the pursuit of personal aggrandizement and promotion of egocentrism rather than altruistic policies that are nationalistic and people-centric in nature (Okeke 2014:322).

Elites globally have enormous resources, exercise bureaucratic control, and have access to the executive arm of government. They have the power to influence government's key decisions especially on the economy, defense and foreign policy. Given the extent of their connection and influence, it is certain that the power elite model suggests that elite

groups are structures of exploitation (Heywood, 2006). Heywood view reflects the activities of the elite in contemporary Nigeria, as they are insensitive to the suffering of Nigerians. Even at the local level where the influence and activities of the elites are expected to be less pronounced and minimal, Nigeria's case is different. Since 1999, politics at the local level is dominated by the political elite (known as God fathers). This has made good governance unattainable at the local level. It can be argued that major challenge facing Nigeria today is the reckless pursuit of political power by the political elite, who impose weak, visionless and clueless leaders at all levels of governance. The consequences remain the current decadence of the Nigerian state. The Nigerian situation applies to those of several African states.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive research design due to the nature of the topic which seeks to interrogate the impact of leadership on governance crisis in Africa. The study is also analytical in nature as the paper sought to quiz the rationale for the deepening crisis in many African states. Hence, the paper relies secondary source of data such as text books, journals and the internet. The data were also analyzed through content data analysis.

### **Overview of selected cases on Political leadership and Governance in Africa**

Africa has been facing leadership failure and governance deficit since post-colonial independence. Given this, the paper has selected four countries for the purpose of exploring how governance in these selected countries have been shaped by their respective political leadership- Nigeria, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and South Africa.

In Nigeria, it is incontrovertible that the political leadership has mismanaged governance since the country's return to democratic rule in 1999. In his book, "The trouble with Nigeria", Chinua Achebe noted that "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely the failure of leadership". The country became independent in 1960 and out of the country's sixty-four years of independence, the military ruled for about three decades. Since 1999, identity politics, leadership failure and governance deficit have on several occasions resulted into ethno-religious conflict, neglect of the education sector, and worsening health care, while corruption has remained endemic. According to Transparency International (TI), 2024 corruption perception index, Nigeria ranked 140<sup>th</sup> among 180 countries covered by the study, while the World Bank in 2024 revealed that half of Nigerians live below the poverty line of one dollar per day. The country education sector has not fared any better, as the World Economic Forum in 2024, ranked her primary education quality 124<sup>th</sup> out of 127<sup>th</sup>, while its

tertiary education was rated 117<sup>th</sup> out of 137. This shows the level of decadence in the system. It is thus suggested that Nigeria needs a generation of fresh and new leadership to confront the decades of underdevelopment headlong.

In Rwanda, the country is still a one-party state under the incumbent President Paul Kagame of the Rwanda Patriotic Front. It is the lone and leading political party in the country since the end of the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Perhaps, before the emergence of Kagame, and over the past decade, the country lacked transformative leadership, while ethnic identification was so prevalent. Although, the country was considered to be a failed state three decades back, it has nonetheless, achieved a remarkable success both in governance and economy, named the “Rwanda Miracle”. According to the International Economic Indices (IEI 2024), the country’s unemployment rate in 2024 dropped by 4.3 percent and Rwanda witnessed significant reduction in unemployment rate to 14.9 percent. Also, as of 2023 according to the ‘Legatum Prosperity Index 2023’ Rwanda was ranked 111<sup>th</sup> in the World as 98 percent of her children are enrolled in schools. Under Paul Kagame, Rwanda is gearing towards becoming a “middle income country by 2035”. Kagame’s administration has zero tolerance for corruption. The Transparency International, (2024), ranked Rwanda 40th among 180th countries surveyed. Thus, according to the index, the country leads the way in the East African region. The President’s determination for peaceful coexistence, and enabling environment for investors is on course, as he positioned himself to continue revolutionizing Rwanda.

Ethiopia with a population of 126,527, 06m according to World meter is the second largest nation in Africa after Nigeria. Although, the country is landlocked, it’s leadership has been struggling to maintain a GDP growth rate between 8 percent and 11 percent for more than a decade; even though crisis in the country has again reversed this gain; while poverty remains a big challenge. According to data released by Trading Economics Global Macro Models (2023), the country’s GDP at the end of 2023 is expected to reach 5.80 percent. Given this, the government has shown more commitment to improve “public service leadership” by lunching initiative towards improving governance.

South Africa is the most developed economy on African continent. However, the country has been facing leadership crisis since late Nelson Mandela relinquished power, thereby slowing the country’s economy growth. This symbolizes how weak and clueless leadership can impact governance. Mandela during his life, time possessed high quality

leadership laced with a visionary ideology which enabled him to translate his mission and vision into a “New South Africa”. Mandela’s path to a new South Africa made him to embrace reconciliation rather than vengeance after the collapse of apartheid in South Africa in 1994. Thabo Mbeki championed the “ideal of Africa Renaissance”. He was however replaced by Jacob Zuma because of his aloofness in domestic politics. The Zuma administration was however found to be personalizing leadership, with high level of corruption and several scandals. Cyril Ramaphosa however has struggled to make governance work in the country. However, his administration has not fared better as leadership and governance in South Africa has failed to complement each other.

South Africa today faces an “existential leadership question”. In 2024, according to the Transparency International, South Africa ranked 82th among 180 countries covered in the corruption perception index. Similarly, in 2015, the Global Information Technology Report 2015, ranked South Africa last in the quality of mathematics and science education, while also close to last 139 out of 143 countries, in terms of the overall quality of its education system. This is not to argue that governance in South Africa is not better when compared with Nigeria or Ethiopia, among the multiethnic states appraised in this study.

### **Political Leadership and Governance deficit in Africa: What went wrong?**

The joy that characterized African political independence dating back to the late 1960s was dampened by leadership crisis in most of these states. It is incontestable that visionary and transformative leaderships are key ingredients of good governance. Botha (n-d) argues that hunger, poverty, disease and lack of development in Africa are in the first instance of political and governance issues. This implies that socio-economic development of a state takes cues from the governance process. Hence, the two are deeply connected which indicates that the two variables must complement each other for good governance to be attained. Many African states including Nigeria, have for decades been suffering from inept and less visionary leadership. This has adversely affected governance in all spheres. The increasing complexities and continuous change in global affairs toward growth and development of a state require ethical and transformative leadership. Given this, Wiseman Nkuhlu asserted that what Africa has to get right in order to claim the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to improve leadership across board (Nkuhlu, 2006).

Fundamentally, leadership and governance in Africa has failed to conform to a performance that is based on good leadership embedded with democratic governance and

economic development. Several African states have been caught in the “failed states trap”. It can thus be suggested that the failure of African economies to expand beyond exportation of one primary product to the foreign market is purely lack of “viable indigenous programme of action” expected to be implemented by the leadership. Hence, poverty, high rate of unemployment, malnutrition and underdevelopment continue unimpeded across the continent. The goal of any responsible leadership should be to ensure optimal utilization of available resources for good governance, as governance would not attain its objective, if it is not supported with effective and transformative leadership.

### **Other factors holding the continent back from Good governance**

#### **Weak economy:**

Economic challenges facing most of these states and incapacity of leadership to revive their economies has continued to derail their development. For instance, since 1999, when democratic governance returned to the country, Nigerians have continued to be disenchanted with the essence of liberal democracy in Nigeria. Thus, Africa has long been saddled with poor, even malevolent leadership, predatory kleptocrats, military-installed autocrats, such as leaders who use power as an end itself rather than his words, ‘one result, after almost five decades of African independence, is a paucity of good governance (Rothberg, 2004). It has been argued elsewhere that in spite of the mantra “Africa Rising” that spread over the continent in the last decade, it is indisputable to argue that African countries, perhaps with few exemptions, are currently overwhelmed with leadership deficit

#### **Recurrent ethno-religious conflict especially in plural states:**

Many African countries especially the multiethnic states have for decades been plagued with politics of identity, and ethnic conflict. Examples abound in Cote d’Ivoire (2002-2011), the concurrent ethnic tension in Ethiopia and the Rwanda genocide of 1994 between Tutsi and Hutus ethnic before the emergence of Paul Kagame as the President. This situation has badly affected governance in many ways and significantly breeds a “governance culture of Clientelism” based on divisive identities. In contemporary Africa, ethno-religious conflict has continued to vibrate especially in heterogeneous societies due to lack of forethought and effective leadership.

Rampant corruption is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of modern African society. As stated earlier, in 2024, Nigeria was ranked 140<sup>th</sup> among 180<sup>th</sup> countries in the international perception index, Ethiopia in 2024 was according to the Transparency

International 'ranked 99<sup>th</sup> among 180<sup>th</sup> countries in the index. Seychelles was ranked first in Africa, and 18<sup>th</sup> globally, followed by Cape Verde, 35<sup>th</sup>, worldwide, Botswana 43<sup>rd</sup>, as well as Rwanda 43<sup>rd</sup>, Namibia 49<sup>th</sup> as the least corrupt countries. Sudan, however, according to the index was the most corrupt country in the continent. The situation has been compounded by weak institutions and low political-will in most of these states to curtail the endemic corruption afflicting them, as African leaders are found of self-enrichment when they assume office. This development has impacted African states' development and growth in various dimension in comparison to the rest of the world. Although, some analysts have argued that corruption should not be seeing as a "fundamental cause of poor leadership, but the failure of these leaders to confront the cycle of corruption headlong is indisputably one of the most obvious "indictment of leadership failure".

### **External control and influence:**

African countries' reliance on foreign aid has continued to give international donors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank the leverage to influence their policy formulations. These institutions usually demand policy changes such as, devaluation, removal of subsidies, reduction in State educational funding and withdrawal of state intervention in agriculture. Citizens have continued to feel the impact of these harsh policies in countries where these donor institutions have signed agreements with the host country. Some of these states especially, Nigeria are currently grappling with the fall-out of currency devaluation and withdrawal of subsidies.

Similarly, some African leadership problems also revolve around the personalized nature of rule; the failure of the state to advance and protect human rights; and extreme centralization of power in the hands of a few. This, in, effect created decades of states control of the economy, and consequently, deepened endemic corruption; while inducing most of these leaders to cling to political power.

In summary, this study has thus identified the crude manner in leadership recruitment, stay-put syndrome and erosion of constitutionalism, corruption, external control through granting of Aids, personalized nature of rules among others as part of the reasons for bad governance and the attendant consequences explained above.

## **Conclusion**

This study has argued that considering multidimensional challenges facing African countries such as securing the country; eradication of poverty; corruption, as well as restoring public confidence in leadership and governance, the political leadership should be upright, seizing the machinery of governance, and driving it to address the challenge of governance on the continent.

## **Recommendations**

- i. Political leaders should demonstrate the courage to taking holistic decision for development rather than using instrument of state for self-accumulation, and elongation of power.
- ii. There should be decisive political action to tackle corruption. Hence, it is imperative for African leaders to allow citizens free access to information concerning governance.
- iii. Political leadership should engage in holistic reform by institutionalizing transparency, accountability and good governance. This should be done by the country's executive through engaging in institutional reforms, establishing stiff penalties against kick-backs and gratification, toward enthroning quality governance.
- iv. Government should work toward establishing symbiotic relationship between the people and the government. Deepening trust and unyielding spirit and patriotism will indisputably create opportunity toward establishing strong institutions of governance.

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