GOOD GOVERNANCE WORLDWIDE-THE OPEN ACCESS/ONLINE JOURNAL OF ASPA SECTION FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICE
SYMPOSIA ISSUE #9 VOLUME 3: NOVEMBER 2025

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN SECURITY IN AFRICA: ADVANCES, PROSPECTS, AND CHALLENGES

Editor in Chief:
Howard R. Balanoff
hb02@txstate.edu

Editor, Africa Symposia Issue/Associate Editor-in-Chief, GGW:
Sheriff F. Folarin
Email: jrj191@txstate.edu, sheryfffolarin@gmail.com

Associate Editor, Africa Symposia Issue:
Mohamed Makkaoui
Email: makkaoui.mohamed@gmail.com

©GGW- Africa Symposia Issue #9, November 2025.

CONTENT

- Title Page
- Content Outline
- Articles
- About GGW- Africa Symposia Issue
- Editorial Team
- Contact Us
- Notes on Contributors

Articles

1. The Challenges of Regional Integration: The Case of ECOWAS
   Kester C. Onor

2. Climate Change and the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child in Nigeria
   Chinasa Agatha Ohiri

3. Intractable Conflict and Security Meltdown in Sudan: The Role of Omar al-Bashir
   Fadl Amru and Alex Elomien

4. State Government Policy on Rural Leadership and Community Leadership Crises in Anambra State
   Emeka Ezealisiji, C. Jaja Nwanegbo, and Anthony Ajana. Uzodigwe

About *Good Governance Worldwide (Africa Symposia Issue)*

Good Governance Worldwide (GGW) is an online, open-access, and peer-reviewed journal of the Section for Public Management Practice of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA). The Africa Symposia Issue is one of the three symposia issues of the journal. This issue features articles from academic experts and practitioners of African governance, politics, and public administration.

The Africa Symposia Issue focuses on politics, governance, and public policy in Africa. With articles from leading academics, experts, and governance practitioners in and outside Africa, the journal issue throws light on good governance advances, prospects, and challenges on the African continent. With the consent of the authors, the papers are formatted to suit desk style and subsequently undergo scholarly review and revisions. This volume 3 of the Africa Symposia Issue, which is also number 9 of the journal, focuses on good governance and human security progress and challenges in Africa.

The GGW journal, in general, is a multidisciplinary publication that is committed to expand the base of public management, policy, and administration in particular and good governance in general. The journal and symposia issue aim at advancing the cause of best practices and robust intellectual conversations through informed research, analyses, and commentaries.

GGW Africa Symposia Issue #9 Core Editorial Team

Editor-in-Chief:
Dr. Howard R. Balanoff- Professor of Public Administration & Director, William P. Hobby Center for Public Service, Texas State University.

Associate Editor-in-Chief & Editor, Africa Symposia Issue:
Dr. Sheriff Folarin- Professor of International Relations, Visiting Professor at the Department of Political Science, Texas State University.

Associate Editor, Africa Symposia Issue:
Dr. Mohamed Makkaoui- Professor of Management Finance, National School of Management of Tangier, Morocco.

Contact:
For all correspondence, contact the Editor, Sheriff F. Folarin (PhD), Rm 381, William P. Hobby Center for Public Service, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX 78666 *Email*: sheryfffolarin@gmail.com, *Mobile No*: +15129252006

Notes on Contributors

Alex A. Elomien, is a graduate student of the Institute of Peace, Security and Development, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria.

Amrul Fadl, is a student of the Department of Political Science, Texas State University, United States.

Anthony Ajana. Uzodigwe, is of the Department of Economics, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria.

C. Jaja Nwanegbo (PhD), is a Professor in the Department of Political Science and Director of the Institute of Peace, Security and Development Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria.

Chinasa Agatha Ohiri (PhD), is an Associate Professor at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, Nigeria.

Emeka Ezealisiji, is of the Institute of Peace, Security and Development Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria.

Kester C. Onor, is a Senior Research Fellow Professor at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, Nigeria.

The Challenges of Regional Integration: The Case of ECOWAS

Kester C. Onor

Abstract

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), established in 1975, was conceived as a regional organization to foster economic integration, promote stability, and enhance development across West Africa. Despite its ambitious goals, ECOWAS has faced significant challenges in achieving effective regional integration. This paper examines the multifaceted obstacles that hinder ECOWAS's integration agenda. Key challenges include divergent economic interests and developmental disparities among member states, political instability, governance issues, the complexities of implementing and enforcing regional policies, and the negative impact of external influences, such as global economic pressures and geopolitical dynamics, on ECOWAS's integration efforts. By analyzing historical contexts, institutional frameworks, and current developments, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impediments to regional integration within ECOWAS and propose potential strategies for overcoming these challenges. The findings underscore the need for enhanced cooperation, improved policy coherence, and a more inclusive approach to address the diverse needs and aspirations of member states, thereby advancing the integration process and promoting sustainable regional development.

Keywords: Africa, ECOWAS, Development, Integration.

Introduction

The globalized nature of the international community has increasingly transformed the world into a global village, where regional integration has emerged as a critical strategy for addressing economic challenges in an interconnected landscape. By fostering collaboration among neighboring countries, regional organizations can enhance economic growth, promote political stability, and more effectively, tackle shared issues. In West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) plays a pivotal role as the key institution driving economic integration and political stability among its member states. Established on May 28, 1975, with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos, ECOWAS comprises fifteen member countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The organization is dedicated to creating a single economic space within the region through the promotion of trade, investment, and the implementation of beneficial shared policies.

Given the current political and economic landscape of West Africa, understanding the role and impact of ECOWAS in regional integration is crucial. The organization has achieved notable successes in several areas, particularly in economic integration. Through the establishment of a Free Trade Area, ECOWAS has striven to create a single market by removing trade barriers and implementing a common external tariff, with efforts ongoing to harmonize customs policies and tariffs. While the long-term vision of a shared currency, the "Eco," has faced setbacks, it remains a goal for the region. ECOWAS has also made significant strides in peace and security, with its peacekeeping force, the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF), intervening in various regional conflicts to restore peace and stability. Additionally, the organization is actively involved in regional infrastructure and development projects, including the construction of transportation networks and energy initiatives aimed at improving regional connectivity.

Despite its notable achievements, ECOWAS has faced significant criticism for its shortcomings, which have hindered its core mission of establishing a robust platform for regional integration in West Africa. These failures underscore the challenges that impede the organization's ability to effectively integrate West African nations on economic, political, and security fronts. The recent withdrawal of Sahelian states—Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger—under the leadership of their

military juntas exemplifies one of the organization's most recent setbacks, reigniting debates about the persistent challenges to integration. Such issues undermine ECOWAS's aspirations to emulate successful models like the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The significance of regional integration is multifaceted. Economically, it leads to increased growth and stability through enhanced trade and investment, economies of scale, and economic diversification. Politically and socially, regional integration fosters cooperation that reduces the likelihood of conflict among member states by establishing closer political and economic ties.

In the context of development and poverty reduction, regional integration is particularly crucial for West Africa. The region has long grappled with underdevelopment and poverty, and regional integration offers a viable pathway to addressing these entrenched challenges. Therefore, this study seeks to critically analyze the integration challenges faced by this sub-regional body, shedding light on the obstacles that hinder ECOWAS from achieving its full potential.

Formation and Evolution

ECOWAS was established in 1975 with the primary objective of fostering cooperation and economic integration among its member states. The roots of ECOWAS can be traced back to the early 1970s when West African nations, emerging from colonial rule, sought to address the pressing need for regional development through economic collaboration. In the decades following their independence in the 1950s and 1960s, many of these nations struggled with political instability and economic challenges, which hindered their ability to achieve self-sufficiency. The vision of ECOWAS was to create a regional economic union that would reduce poverty, promote development, and enhance collective security—addressing the underlying causes of instability in the region.

The organization was formally established in 1975 following the signing of the Treaty of Lagos by twelve countries during the inaugural ECOWAS summit held in Lagos, Nigeria. However, the concept of a regional organization in West Africa was first championed by Kwame Nkrumah, the former president of Ghana, as early as 1960. The Treaty of Lagos aimed to promote economic integration, cooperation, and development among member states, while also fostering peace and stability across the region (ECOWAS, 2019). In its formative years, ECOWAS concentrated on

facilitating economic cooperation by creating institutions and frameworks to support these goals. This led to the establishment of key bodies such as the ECOWAS Secretariat, the ECOWAS Fund, and the West African Clearing House, all of which were instrumental in encouraging inter-state trade and financial transactions.

Since its inception, ECOWAS has undergone several reforms and amendments to its founding treaty. The central banks of the ECOWAS States established the West African Clearing House (WACH) in 1975, which was later renamed the West African Monetary Organization (WAMA), an autonomous specialized organization with a foreign base (Bala, 2017, p. 27). A significant reform occurred in 1993 with the adoption of the Revised Treaty of ECOWAS, also known as the Treaty of Abuja, which replaced the Treaty of Lagos. This revised treaty established the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and aimed to deepen economic integration within the region through the establishment and implementation of monetary policies. Similarly, a fund for collaboration, compensation, and development was established to ensure that the benefits and expenses of integration were distributed equally among the various community member states (Bala, 2017, p. 27).

The 1990s marked a transformative period for ECOWAS, as the organization faced both internal reforms and external pressures. During this time, ECOWAS made substantial strides in promoting regional integration and addressing conflicts, while also working to strengthen its institutional frameworks for economic coordination, conflict resolution, and member state cooperation.

In the twenty-first century, ECOWAS has continued to evolve, adapting to changing circumstances and addressing new challenges. The organization has been actively involved in resolving political crises, promoting democratic governance, and supporting human rights across the region. ECOWAS has also responded swiftly to various issues within its member states, including civil unrest and coups, through diplomatic measures, sanctions, and, in severe cases, military intervention. Throughout its evolution, ECOWAS has experienced both successes and setbacks. The organization has faced numerous challenges, including political instability, economic mismanagement, and conflicts among its member states. These challenges have often stemmed from both internal and external factors.

The formation and development of ECOWAS illustrate the complexities of regional integration and cooperation in a diverse and dynamic region like West Africa. From its beginnings as an economic union to its current role as a key player in regional stability and development, ECOWAS has navigated challenges while continually adapting to West Africa's evolving political and economic landscape.

Challenges of Regional Integration

Among the key explanations for why regional integration in West Africa has not been as successful or effective as in Europe and Asia is the apparent lack of genuine commitment to the integration ideal. If these countries had been truly committed, they would have taken concrete steps to align their internal structures with the principles of supranationalism necessary for a cohesive regional entity. This lack of commitment is evident in the numerous challenges that continue to hinder the region's progress toward meaningful integration.

Economic Dependence on External Markets

The optimal level of integration, or more accurately, the essence of integration, is attained when the economies of the integrating nations are sufficiently diverse in terms of trade commodities to first, support a reasonable level of interdependence within the region and secondly, maintain a collective trading bloc vis-à-vis states outside the bloc (Ogbonna, Aluko, & Awuah, 2013, p. 106). However, in the case of ECOWAS, this is not the reality. To attain the first feature mentioned above, the respective nations are expected to establish or intensify sub-regional trading relations, forcing them to reduce trading activities with non-West Africans. With the high level of importation that still goes on in these nations, no 'replacement' was done to encourage interdependence amongst these nations. This questions their commitment to integration, which would have been reflected through conscious efforts to intensify trading relations amongst themselves.

West African intra-regional trade is clouded by their import-driven economies and dependence on external markets for the following reasons. Low supply chain and logistics or infrastructural development to support the required intra-regional trading activities. These include seaports, railways, and roads, among others. Many West African nations possess little to no access to such routes. Such developments make transportation and logistics easier, encouraging trading activities

within these nations. This absence is largely attributed to funding challenges within these nations. Despite making up 17% of the world's land area, sub-Saharan Africa, which comprises the majority of West Africa, only accounts for 6% of road networks worldwide, according to the International Road Federation. Likewise, as stated by Africa's Trade Law Center, modern highways connecting Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire are lacking in large areas. Many African countries' rural areas are totally shut off from the existing supply chain (Agility, 2021).

Secondly, the absence of product diversity. The West African market produces a low range of product diversity for nations because these nations are only able to offer their primary product or raw materials, which, in most cases, many of them possess similar raw materials. The absence of manufacturing abilities within West African economies contributes to this weakness, as such ability will enable them to process their raw materials into a variety of finished goods, from which the region can benefit.

Country	**Agricultural Export**	**Mineral**
Benin Republic	Coffee, Cocoa, Yam	Petroleum
Burkina Faso	Groundnuts, cotton, sorghum	manganese, limestone
Cabo Verde	bananas, maize, fish	Salt
Cote d' Ivoire	coffee, cocoa, timber, maize, rice	Petroleum, diamonds, and manganese
The Gambia	groundnuts, millet, sorghum, rice	—
Ghana	cocoa, cassava, groundnuts, maize	gold, bauxite, manganese
Guinea	rice, coffee, pineapples, cassava	bauxite, iron ore, uranium
Guinea Bissau	rice, maize, cassava, fish	bauxite, phosphates

Liberia	rubber, timber, rice, cassava	Iron ore, diamonds
Mali	cotton, livestock, millet, rice	gold, phosphates
Niger	cotton, millet, sorghum, cassava	uranium, coal, iron ore
Nigeria	cocoa, groundnuts, palm oil, maize, sorghum	petroleum, tin, columbite, iron ore
Senegal	cotton, groundnuts, sorghum, rice	phosphates, iron ore
Sierra Leone	rice, coffee, palm kernels	diamonds, bauxite, iron ore
Togo	coffee, cocoa, yams, cassava, maize	phosphates, limestone

ECOWAS member states and their resources. Source: Exploring Africa.

Thirdly, the bureaucratic hurdles that exist within the West African economies discourage trading activities between the nations. The average time to clear exports and imports for commerce within Africa is 6.1 days and 9.9 days, respectively, compared to 3.8 days and 5.4 days in Asia. Each of them hinders trade within the region.

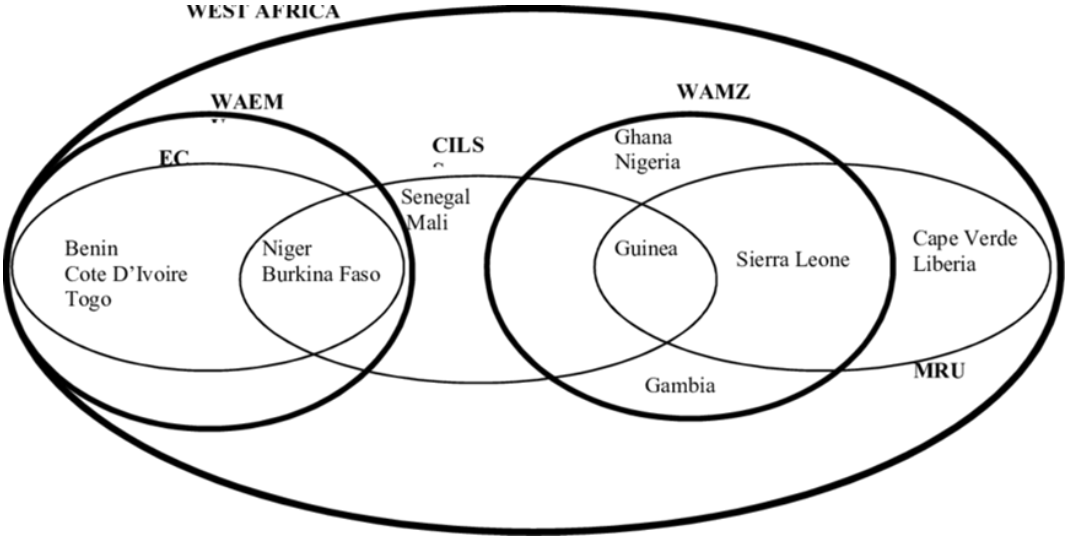
Poor Implementation of Trade Policies

To encourage trading activities among member states, ECOWAS created the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and the Common External Tariff (CET). As a Free Trade Area, the ETLS was established to remove customs duties or any form of trading barriers to products originating from ECOWAS nations (ETLS, n/d). A decade later, the CET was introduced, placing a common tariff on non-originating products. The ECOWAS CET is structured into five tariff bands 0%, 5%, 10%, 20%, and 35%. Higher tariffs safeguard sensitive products. Notably, 90% of the items in the 35% band are agricultural goods, and no agricultural products are placed in the 0% band. This reflects a relatively higher level of protection for the agricultural sector. A key exception is rice, which falls under the 10% tariff band, indicating that the interests of rice consumers (seeking lower prices) outweighed those of rice producers.

Despite being a carefully curated policy, implementation has been poor. We still find West African countries imposing import barriers on their goods to protect local producers and industries, whereas some others were on the grounds of health concerns. However, these actions were likely implemented as protectionist measures that threaten regional integration. Export barriers are also placed in times of food shortage or scarcity. As the region is continually plagued by violent extremist groups, the inability of farmers to attend to their farms could trigger an increase in such restrictions.

Overlapping Regional Integration Memberships

Within the West African region, cross-over REC memberships also affect how regional policies are implemented at the national level. Because RECs frequently promote agendas that overlap, governments are free to select which REC agenda items to prioritize and implement, with little repercussions for noncompliance (Torres & Jeske van Seters, 2016, p. 33).



Overlapping Membership of RECs in West Africa. Source: Afesorgbor & Bergeijk (2011)

Abbreviations in the figure:

WAEM(U): West African Economic Monetary Union
WAMZ: West African Monetary Zone
CE (EC): Conseil de I'Entante
CILSS: Comite Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte Contre ta Secheresse dans le Sahel

This challenge has been consolidated in a joint report from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Union (AU). Both organizations started a series of evaluations of Africa's regional integration in 2004. The report was titled "Assessing Regional Integration in Africa," (ARIA), with ARIA II addressing the problem of conflicting memberships and how it impedes integrations as they come with significant resource costs and constricting financial limitations (Nantchouang, 2014, p. 6). Hence, the proliferation of such regional groups within West Africa hinders the process of regional integration as a whole and severely limits the capacity and resources of the member states to meet a variety of demands and agendas (Mengistu, 2015).

Nationalism

While nationalism within a regional bloc has been strongly associated with far-right nationalist countries within the EU, the recent Sahel exit of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger has triggered discussions of nationalism. As the major reason behind their exit was their disapproval of ECOWAS' failure to address their violent extremist threats and the bloc's sanctions that threatened their citizens' cost of living, it is evident that these nations are resistant to ECOWAS' supranational power, which allows the organization the ability to influence certain aspects of their governance. Many have tagged this event 'West Africa's Brexit,' given that the United Kingdom shared a similar dissatisfaction with the EU's supranational authority over its migration policies (Akinwotu, 2024).

The event triggered a resurgence of the ECOWAS performance assessment, with many experts reflecting more failures than successes of the bloc in their analysis. The question we should ask ourselves is whether the memories of past underperformances could trigger another West African country to consider exiting the regional bloc. Will another policy misstep by ECOWAS spark a rise in 'ECOWAS-skepticism' by citizens of member states, urging their governments to withdraw from the bloc? While many might argue that such a scenario is unlikely given the absence of an alarming widespread dissatisfaction with ECOWAS policies among member nations (as seen in Europe), it is worthy of consideration.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic encouraged the case of pandemic nationalism, where African nations disregarded the migration policies of the regional bloc under the auspices of the urgency

of controlling the pandemic. Although the peculiarity of the situation allowed for such drastic actions, ECOWAS' supranationalism was thoroughly hampered (Aniche, Iwuoha & Isike, 2022). When faced with a transnational crisis, states are expected to develop regional or global approaches to address such issues, rather than prioritize their national strategies. By doing so, they ensure a collective response that leaves no one behind and prevents the crisis from resurfacing in member states that may have initially managed it on their own. By adopting a unified approach, countries can work together to mitigate the broader impacts of such challenges effectively.

While the Sahel-exit and the pandemic are the most recent reflections of nationalism in ECOWAS, the bloc is not new to the concept. At the earlier stages of its establishment, cases of nationalist sentiments hampered the effective implementation of free movement. Immigrants were restricted from certain economic activities in their host nations, as seen in Ghana after JJ Rawlings secured his second coup d'état. Likewise, some political disputes within the region motivated nationalist sentiments that hindered effective regional integration (Okolo, 1985). They include: the personal rivalry between Togo and the Benin Republic, disputes between Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, disputes between Nigeria and Benin Republic, Togo's suspicion of Ghana regarding the assassination of former Togolese president Sylvanus Olympio, rivalry between Guinea and Senegal regarding the alleged involvement of Senegal in the Portuguese invasion of Guinea in 1970 (Okolo, 1985)

Recommendations

To ensure that ECOWAS' goal of effective integration is successfully achieved, the organization should adopt the following recommendations to address its current challenges.

Strengthening Intra-regional Trade and Product Diversification

ECOWAS member states should prioritize the diversification of their economies by investing in industrialization and manufacturing sectors. Governments need to provide incentives for domestic industries to grow and process raw materials locally, enabling them to offer a wider range of finished products for regional markets. Additionally, member countries should collaborate to enhance supply chains within their countries. This would help to reduce their over-reliance on external markets and increase trade within West Africa.

Investment in Infrastructure

A solid network of infrastructure is essential for economic integration. ECOWAS should advocate for increased public and private investment in transportation networks, such as roads, railways, and seaports, which will facilitate smoother cross-border trade and logistics. Establishing regional funds or seeking international partnerships could help finance large-scale infrastructure projects that improve regional connectivity. Regarding seeking partnerships, ECOWAS can do this by taking advantage of the Belt and Road Initiative, which many West African nations are currently benefiting from. At least fourteen ECOWAS member states hold Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with China (Green Finance and Development Center, n/d). The organization itself can collaborate with China to establish infrastructural developments that would improve the region's intra-trading relations

Enhancing Policy Implementation and Harmonization

The ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and the Common External Tariff (CET) should be strictly enforced across all member states. ECOWAS should establish a monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance and penalize countries that impose protectionist barriers or export restrictions. Moreover, simplifying customs procedures and reducing bureaucratic red tape would improve the efficiency of trade across borders, making regional markets more accessible.

Capacity-building Initiatives for Trade Facilitation

ECOWAS should focus on capacity-building programs to equip member states with the necessary technical expertise and institutional frameworks to handle complex trade policies. This can include providing training to customs officials, policymakers, and businesses on how to navigate and benefit from the ECOWAS protocols, thus improving the overall implementation of regional agreements.

Resolving Overlapping Regional Memberships

ECOWAS must address the issue of overlapping memberships in multiple regional economic communities (RECs), which hampers policy implementation. ECOWAS should lead the efforts to coordinate with other RECs like the African Union and the West African Economic and Monetary

Union (WAEMU) to streamline policies and minimize conflicts. A unified regional strategy would improve coherence in implementing trade policies and other integration initiatives.

Commitment to Regional Integration Goals

Member states need to demonstrate greater political will to meet ECOWAS's integration goals. This can be achieved through clear policy frameworks and incentives for countries that comply with ECOWAS directives. Countries that are reluctant to cooperate should be encouraged through peer pressure from other members or through offering developmental and financial assistance linked to their commitment to integration efforts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while ECOWAS has made notable strides in promoting regional integration and economic development in West Africa, its progress has been hampered by the challenges already identified. From economic dependence on external markets to poor implementation of trade policies and the overlapping of regional memberships, these issues have created barriers to achieving true integration. However, by strengthening intra-regional trade, investing in infrastructure, enhancing policy harmonization, and resolving political conflicts, ECOWAS can overcome these challenges and realize its vision of a fully integrated and prosperous West Africa. Ultimately, sustained political commitment and collaborative efforts are key to addressing the region's long-standing economic and political challenges, ensuring that ECOWAS remains a relevant and impactful institution for its member states. The global integration experiment has been remarkably successful. It is the sole element that accounts for both the remarkable economic progress of continental Europe and the "great rebirth" of the states of South-East Asia. Africa, particularly West Africa, should not be an exception.

References

Agility. (2021). What are the Logistics Problems in West Africa? Considerations and Solutions for Small and Medium Enterprises. Agility. https://www.agility.com/en/blog/what-are-logistics-problems-in-west-africa-considerations-and-solutions-for-small-and-medium-enterprises/

Akinwotu, E. (2024). After the Coups, West Africa's Brexit Moment. NPR. https://www.npr.org/2024/01/31/1227863649/after-the-coups-west-africas-brexit-moment

Aniche, E.T., Iwuoha, V.C., Isike, C. (2022). Whither the ECOWAS free movement protocols? Pandemic nationalism, borders, and migration in West Africa. *Political Geography*. 99. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2022.102771

Bala, T.M. (2017). The Challenges and Prospects for Regional and Economic Integration in West Africa. *Asian Social Science.* 13(5). https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v13n5p24

Ereke, E., Okonkwo, W., & Okoli, R.C. (2016). Globalization versus Disintegration: Implications of Trade Liberalization for Intra-Regional Trade in West Africa. *International Affairs and Global Strategy.* 46. 20-30. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Chukwuma-Okoli/publication/315804729_Globalisation_versus_disarticulation_implication_of_trade_liberalisation_for_intraregional_trade_in_West_Africa/links/58e6a41da6fdcc1fda2b083e/Globalisation-versus-disarticulation-implication-of-trade-liberalisation-for-intra-regional-trade-in-West-Africa.pdf

Exploring Africa. (n/d). List of Agricultural and Mineral Resources: African Countries. https://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/list-of-agricultural-and-mineral-resources/

Green Finance and Development Center (n/d). Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Green Finance and Development Center. https://greenfdc.org/countries-of-the-belt-and-road-initiative-bri/

Masson, P., & Pattillo, C. (2001). Monetary Union in West Africa (ECOWAS): Is It Desirable and How Could It Be Achieved? International Monetary Fund. https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/nft/op/204/

Mengistu, M.M. (2015). Multiplicity of African Regional Economic Communities and Overlapping Memberships: A Challenge for African Integration. *African Integration. International Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Sciences*. 3(5), 417-425. https://www.10.11648/j.ijefm.20150305.12

Nantchouang, K. (2014). Are the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) overlapping membership an issue? A discussion on the "free rider" syndrome as applied to a small economy (Evidence from Burundi). The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) Brown Bag Series. https://elibrary.acbfpact.org/acbf/collect/acbf/index/assoc/HASH01d2/0ba63f08/678d5aa8/c387.dir/20140228.pdf

Ogbonna, C.E., Aluko, B., & Awuah, K. (2013). The ECOWAS Platform and the Persisting Challenges of Integrating the West African Region: A Discourse. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*. 4 (1), 104. www.iiste.org

Okolo, J.E. (1985). Integrative and Cooperative Regionalism: The Economic Community of West African States. *International Organization.* 39 (1), 121-153. The MIT Press

Torres, C., & van Seters, J. (2016). Overview of trade and barriers to trade in West Africa: Insights in political economy dynamics, with particular focus on agricultural and food trade. European Center for Development Policy Management (ECDPM). No 195. ww.ecdpm.org/dp195

Climate Change and the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child in Nigeria

Chinasa Agatha Ohiri

Abstract

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century, exerting far-reaching impacts on ecosystems, livelihoods, and human rights, particularly those of children. In Nigeria, the dual vulnerabilities of weak environmental governance and systemic socio-economic fragility have intensified the risks faced by children in the wake of climate-related hazards. This study explores the interlinkages between climate change and the realization of children's rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which Nigeria is a signatory. Drawing on both natural and anthropogenic factors driving climate change, this study situates the Nigerian child within a context of increased exposure to climate-induced stressors such as flooding, desertification, food insecurity, and health crises. Over 850 million children globally are exposed to climate-related shocks, and a billion live in high-risk zones. Nigeria's children are among the most affected, given the country's low adaptive capacity and limited access to child-centered climate resilience programs. The study examines Nigeria's legal and policy responses, highlighting instruments such as the Child Rights Act (CRA), the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). It critically assesses the extent to which these frameworks have been domesticated and implemented to protect children's rights to health, education, clean water, food security, and participation in environmental decision-making. The analysis reveals that while there are commendable legal commitments, practical enforcement and child-specific climate education remain grossly inadequate. The study calls for a more integrated approach that links climate adaptation strategies with child protection systems, emphasizes the inclusion of children's voices in climate policy discourse, and promotes robust investment in child-centered climate education and resilience. In doing so, it underscores the urgent need for Nigeria to align its climate actions with its human rights obligations to secure a sustainable and just future for its children.

Keywords: Climate Change, Nigeria, United Nations Convention, Right of the Child.

Introduction

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our contemporary society. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable periods. It can be deduced from this definition that climate change is caused by two basic factors. These factors include natural causes, such as the eccentricity of Earth's orbit, variations in the obliquity of the ecliptic plane, alterations in orbital precession, and fluctuations in the quantity and quality of solar radiation, as well as human actions, including greenhouse gas emissions and the depletion of carbon sinks. The released natural gases comprise carbon dioxide, chlorofluorocarbons, methane, and nitrous oxide, whereas anthropogenic activities that diminish carbon sinks include deforestation, land use changes, water pollution, and agricultural practices (Odjugo, 2010).

Climate change is not a recent phenomenon. Dirk Notz (2020) submits that since the existence of the earth some 5 billion years ago, the climate has been experiencing changes. He noted that the young sun shone about 30 percent weaker than it does in this decade, thereby limiting the amount of shortwave radiation reaching Earth, although the heat from the sun was sufficient to keep the existence of liquid water and allow stable human development. The notion of contemporary climate change is a reaction to the fact that human civilization, which has gradually developed and established some grounded patterns for over 10000 years in which it experienced a very stable climate would be required to alter its norms and protocols to survive in the face of the new trends prompted by the rapid shift in climate conditions since the past few decades. Some notable changes include a rise in temperature, unstable precipitation, and sea level increase.

As the world began to take note of recent climate changes and their impact on human society, attention has been drawn to the harm they pose to children and young adults, who are the most vulnerable to climate change (Sanson and Bellemo, 2021). Climate change unarguably poses a major threat to children's lives, growth, and future survival, and to a large extent, it undermines the rights of children around the world. Children's safety, access to a healthy environment and clean water, good health and health facilities, food, education, and good social well-being are

severely impeded. Records have it that globally, over 850 million children (approximately one-third of all children in the world) are exposed to at least four shocks or stresses caused by climate change and environmental degradation, with approximately 1 billion children living in countries extremely exposed to the risks of climate change (UNICEF, 2021). The risks of climate change are more prominent in developing and least developed countries, of which Nigeria is under. This is because of the low adaptive capacities of these countries. Another top concern is the peculiarity of the risks of climate change overlapping. These climate dangers, shocks, or stresses do not occur in isolation from one another. As the climate is heating up, precipitation is becoming abnormal. This has since 1987, when the report "Our Common Future" was published, drawing the eyes of international bodies, policymakers, and governments around the world to the need to secure the rights of children and future generations to a sustainable future and earth.

Nigeria, akin to numerous other nations globally, has prioritized climate change as a significant issue and has been pursuing strategies to safeguard the rights of children within the country. Nigeria is a signatory to significant international treaties governing climate change, notably the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. It is a significant signatory to international laws advocating for the protection of children's rights, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). Nigeria, in an effort to safeguard the rights of its children from climatic threats, enacted the Nigerian Child's Rights Act (CRA). In addition to the government, various organizations in the country have undertaken the responsibility of safeguarding children's rights against the threats posed by climate change; however, insufficient emphasis has been placed on adequately educating children about the issue and their role in mitigating it.

Nature of Climate Change in Nigeria

According to Goteng *et al.*, (2012), climate change is the greatest challenge facing the world today. However, the degrees of the impact of climate change vary on all ecosystems and human societies with Africa being one of the regions of the world most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. This is due to its high exposure to damaging climate risks (such as extreme droughts, flooding, storms, and erosion) and poor measures to reduce the impact on the continent (Niang *et al.*, 2014). In Nigeria, the impact of climate change varies from geographical zone to

geographical zone. Nigeria, being a tropical climate, has two precipitation regimes (Akande, 2017). The North is known for low precipitation, which results in aridity, drought, desertification, and rising temperatures; while the South is known for high precipitation, resulting in flooding and erosion. The causes of climate change in Nigeria have been identified as both natural risks and anthropogenic actions. Natural hazards encompass volcanic eruptions, floods, droughts, rising sea levels, rainfall variability, and elevated temperatures; whereas anthropogenic factors include greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, such as sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide from vehicles, combustion of hydrocarbon substances, deforestation, industrial emissions, gas flaring, and environmental degradation activities by oil companies in the Niger Delta.

The North is seen as more susceptible to climate change than the South. The Northeast and Northwest geopolitical zones in Northern Nigeria, characterized by dry and semi-arid conditions and significant livestock rearing, are the most susceptible to climate change.

The average temperatures of the North range from 12 °C to 45ºC with an average annual rainfall of 500mm. However, historical records provide that the Nigerian climate has since the 1960s been experiencing constant changes resulting from global warming ("Climate Change," 2025). The World Bank Group (2021) highlighted that the country between 1960 and 2006 experienced an increase of 0.8ºC temperatures. A resultant effect of this temperature rise is a decrease by 3.5mm per month in the precipitation of the country in each decade from 1960 to 2006. It is important to note that this increase affects the North more than the South. More sadly, the future climate projection of Nigeria provides that the North will experience further rise in temperatures of 1.1-2.5ºC by 2060 with anticipated extreme heat if the country continues to experience the dangers of climate change with poor adaptive skills and technical knowhow ("Climate Change," 2025). It is further projected that the number of extreme heat days will increase from 10 days as recorded in 1990 to 260 days by 2100 (The United States Agency for International Development, 2019) with a drastic adverse impact on the ecosystem of the region.

While the impact of climate change in Nigeria is more felt in the North than in the South, the South is not excused from its adverse effects. Southern Nigeria which is known for its diverse ecosystems including rainforest swamps and low-lying cities has in the past decades experienced climatic hazards ranging from heavy rainfall to coastal inundation (Uyigue & Agho, 2007). A

notable example was the hazardous flooding of the city of Ibadan in August 2011. Ibadan, one of Nigeria's populous cities in the South-West geopolitical zone in August 2011 witnessed historic and hazardous flooding which was caused by a heavy rainfall of 187.5mm and indiscriminate dumping of solid wastes on water channels. As a result of the flooding, over 100 lives were lost and properties worth over 30 billion naira were destroyed (Agbola, 2012). It is also important to note that the August 2011 flooding was not the first time the city had experienced such a degree of flooding. There were previous experiences in areas along the Ogunpa and Kudeti streams in the city in 1955, 1960, 1961, 1963, 1978, and 1980. (Ajayi, 2012).

In coastal communities like Lagos and the Delta areas, the incessant rise in sea levels contributes to flooding. It has become a norm that in almost every rainy season, areas like Epe, Ikoyi, Victoria Island, Lekki, and some parts of the mainland areas in Lagos state experience flooding. The 2022 report from the National Emergency Agency (NEMA) indicates that in Nigeria, over 2.4 million individuals have been relocated due to flooding, resulting in 660 fatalities, 174,000 homes made uninhabitable, and damage to more than 676,000 hectares of agricultural land. In addition to flooding, the coastal regions of the nation are also at risk of submergence. By 2100, it is anticipated that low-lying coastal regions of the country will be inundated (Oladipo, 2010). Ogba (2007) employed hydrological modeling to assert that, aside from the impending submergence of significant portions of Lagos, a sea-level rise of 1 meter or more might lead to the loss of 75 percent of the Niger Delta.

More to submergence, the Niger Delta is faced with climatic hazards resulting from the activities of oil fields and refineries in the area. Olukoya (2017) indicated that yearly, an estimated 12 million Metric Tons (MT) of flared Methane (CH_4) is being discharged into the air, resulting in the heat up of the area, acidic rain, loss of marine life, and means of livelihood of members of these communities among others.

Regrettably, children are the most susceptible to the effects of these climatic dangers in Nigeria. Children comprise 51 percent of Nigeria's 223 million population and are disproportionately impacted by climate change (UNICEF, 2023c). Children are typically the initial and most profoundly affected by climate shocks. This arises from children's reliance on others and their vulnerability to illness and starvation. In Nigeria, children's vulnerability to flooding, drought, and increasing temperatures jeopardizes their health, nutrition, protection, access to water,

education, sanitation, and hygiene services (UNICEF, 2023a). All these combined impede children's rights in Nigeria.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the principal international legislation safeguarding children from climate change, was adopted and made available for signature, ratification, and accession by General Assembly Resolution 44/25 on 20 November 1989 (United Nations, 1989). It became effective on September 2, 1990. Nigeria signed the Convention on January 26, 1990, and ratified it on March 21, 1991. The Convention was created based on the United Nations Charter, which explicitly affirmed the rights of all human beings. The Convention, in its preamble, emphasized particularly the need to maintain and protect the natural environment as it is fundamental for the growth and well-being of its members, particularly children. According to the Convention (Article 1), a child refers to every human being below the age of eighteen years.

The convention emphasizes the rights of the child, which include the right to life, survival, and development (Article 6), the right to parental care (Article 9), the right to freedom of expression (Article 13), the right to access information (Article 17), protection from abuse (Article 19), the right to a healthy environment (Article 20), the health rights (Article 24), the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27), the right to education (Article 28), and freedom from torture (Article 37). Despite the Convention's keen emphasis on the rights of the child and careful detailing of the measures through which these rights could be protected, climate change has posed as a factor preventing the full enjoyment of these rights, particularly for children in the sub-Saharan African region, and Nigeria noticeably. This implies that without a moderate biosphere, these rights cannot be fully materialized. The adverse effects of climate change on the rights of the child in Nigeria are examined below.

Several measures have been implemented by Nigeria to reform its laws regarding minors and ensure that they are consistent with the Convention's requirements since the Convention's ratification. After Nigeria submitted its initial report on the implementation of the Convention in 1996, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child observed that the Convention's provisions were not completely implemented in Nigerian law. The Child Rights Act was enacted

in the federation in July 2003. Nevertheless, it was not implemented effectively in all 36 states of the federation. However, this is due to the fact that Section 12(3) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 mandates that legislation, which is the domestication of international treaties, must be ratified by all states of the federation before they can be declared law. The Child Rights Act has been adopted and enacted in only 25 states of the federation as of 2023.

Impacts of Climate Change on Children's Rights in Nigeria

Child Protection

The right to life, sustenance, and development is guaranteed to children in Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, climate change has led to displacement, forced migration, and the separation of children from their parents and families. In Nigeria, child protection challenges are linked to heightened poverty, displacement, and migration as a result of drought, inundation, and desertification. The economic predicament in the country has been exacerbated by climate change. The World Bank estimated that climate change could cost the country up to 30 percent of its gross domestic product by 2050 (Ubah, 2022). Due to flooding resulting from climate change, farmlands and livelihoods have been lost, especially in areas prone to flooding. In September 2022, Nigeria experienced a devastating flooding that affected over 4.4 million people with children accounting for 59 percent- 2.6 million of the affected people (UNICEF, 2023b). The flooding destroyed several houses forcing affected persons to take refuge in internally displaced people (IDP) sites.

Education

Interruptions to learning in the country can be associated with the challenges of climate change. Climate change has been observed to impede children's right to education and access to information as stipulated by Articles 13 and 28 of the CRC. Amanchukwu *et al.*, (2015) noted that the educational system in Nigeria is experiencing the negative impact of climatic disturbances that pose challenges to academic activities and the smooth running of institutional programs. Many schools in the riverine areas in the South experience flooding during the rainy season, while in the North, several schools are faced with the challenges of whirlwinds and sand storms. This keeps children out of school for several days and sometimes runs into weeks and

months. It also results in inadequate delivery of instruction and rapid degradation of educational infrastructures and other amenities. In turn, children lose interest in attending school.

Health

The health status of adolescents in Nigeria is influenced by climate change in both direct and indirect ways. Floods, whirlwinds, and sandstorms, among others, have had a direct impact on the destruction of health facilities in the country. Additionally, the environment's increasing temperatures as a consequence of global warming lead to heat stress and a reduction in access to safe water, sanitation, and sanitary services. Subsequently, these conditions elevate children's susceptibility to waterborne illnesses, including malaria, diarrhea, and cholera. The respiratory health of children in Nigeria is also influenced by the emission of GHGs. According to records, the proportion of total air pollution-related pneumonia fatalities in Nigeria among children under five is the highest globally, at 78%. Additionally, indoor air pollution was responsible for nearly 50,000 under-five deaths in 2019 (UNICEF, 2023b).

Nutrition

Climatic hazards have been shown to deprive children in Nigeria of their right to health through food insecurity. Grace *et al.* (2015) articulated that rising temperatures and droughts negatively affect the welfare and nutrition of children in Nigeria. Desertification, flooding, irregular precipitation, and extreme heat contribute to food insecurity in the country. Nigeria's agricultural system majorly depends on rainfall; therefore, changes in the precipitation in the country would reduce food productivity as farmers may not be able to properly plan for cultivation. Also, it was reported by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – IPCC (2007) that an increase in UV-B radiation reduces yield in certain crops. Food quality is also affected by the increasing temperature. Nzeh *et al.*, (2016) noted that there has been an increase in diseases and pests in the country; which in turn causes crop contamination. On the other hand, livestock are equally affected by the dangers of climate change because they are at risk of heat stress. Generally, the reduction in food production and supply has resulted in a hike in food prices. As such, children suffer from malnutrition which adversely affects development in the children. Children who suffer from malnutrition are usually exposed to a weakened immune system, impaired growth, delayed cognitive development, poor intellectual capacity, and poor school performance. These

undermine children's right to health and adequate nutrition as against the provisions of Article 24 of CRC.

Responses to the Impact of Climate Change on the Rights of the Child in Nigeria

Several governmental and private entities have been responding to the adverse impact of climate change in Nigeria and around the globe. The impact of climate change in Nigeria has been addressed by the federal, state, and local governments, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGO) and multilateral bodies, in their respective capacities. The following is a discussion of their endeavors to mitigate and improve the adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change in the country.

Government Responses

In order to protect the rights of minors in the country from the negative consequences of climate change, the Nigerian government has implemented several measures to mitigate the spillover effects of climate change. The Climate Change Act (CCA) 2021 was implemented in 2021 during the presidency of President Muhammadu Buhari. The Act established the framework for the implementation of climate action necessary to attain Nigeria's short, medium, and long-term climate goals in terms of climate mitigation and adaptation. It also mandated the public and private sectors to promote a low-carbon economy and sustainable livelihoods. The National Council for Climate Change (NCCC) was established following the enactment of this Act, with Dr Salisu Mohammed Dahiru serving as the inaugural Director General (DG) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The Council was tasked with the responsibility of facilitating the implementation of Nigeria's National Climate Change Action Plan and Climate Change Agenda, which encompassed the establishment of a carbon market and a National Adaptation Plan. The Associated Gas Re-injection Act, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act, and the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) Act 2007 are allied acts that have been enacted to ensure a secure climate for the country. Nevertheless, it was noted that these acts did not explicitly address the protection of child rights. Nevertheless, the indirect effects of their implementation would contribute to the well-being and security of children. The Nigerian government has also established a legal framework (Child's Rights Act, 2003) that is responsible for safeguarding the rights of children in Nigeria.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Responses

NGOs' responses to the impact of climate change on the rights of children in Nigeria include policy advocacy, climate change education, public outreach, tree planting, and waste recycling, among others. In Nigeria, there is a substantial number of NGOs, but each has its unique focus. Some NGOs that have contributed to enhancing climate resilience in Nigeria include the Green Environmental and Climate Change Initiative (GECCI), the Society for Planet and Prosperity, the African CleanUp Initiative (ACI), and the Green Project Initiative, among others. In 2019, to commemorate World Environmental Day, the Society for Planet and Prosperity commenced a school Tree Planting competition engaging Community Government Middle School, Ota-Efun Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. Students were educated on climate change and were led to plant 20 seedlings of Melina and Teak trees around the school. They have also impacted several other schoolchildren across Osun State. The unique strategy of the Society for Planet and Prosperity is that it involves children in the building of a climate-safe environment, which is very germane. The African CleanUp Initiative started operations in 2010 with a sanitation and advocacy project, Clean-Up Nigeria. The program focused on environmental sanitation, environmental health, environmental education, and community development. GECCI has spearheaded initiatives for ecosystem restoration and climate resilience through strategic tree-planting activities in Anambra State, Nigeria. The activities of this initiative also ensure that the environment is safe for child development which in turn ensures that children's right to life, survival and development, and healthy environment is protected.

Multilateral/Foreign Organisation Responses

The mitigation and adaptation of climate change in Nigeria have been equally influenced by multilateral bodies and foreign organizations. The United Nations Development Program, World Bank, Global Center for Adaptation (GCA), Protect Our Planet (POP), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), Climate Action Network (CAN) International, UNEP's Climate Neutral Network (CNNet), World Bioenergy Association (WBA), UN-Habitat, World Urban Campaign (WUC), the International Network for Urban Agriculture (INUAG), and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) are among the notable multilateral bodies and foreign organizations that are instrumental in ensuring a climate-safe Nigeria. These organizations collaborate with

numerous Nigerian organizations to enhance and mitigate the adaptation to climate change in Nigeria, thereby indirectly safeguarding the rights of children. Nevertheless, UNICEF's status as a children's-centered organization directly contributes to the safeguarding of children's rights. Yet, it is imperative to integrate climate change initiatives with child rights, prioritizing the welfare of children in the development of climate change policies.

Conclusion

The issue of climate change is not new, as demonstrated in the preceding discussion. However, the challenges it presents have become increasingly prevalent and severe in recent years, particularly among children who are most susceptible to its effects. The work also emphasizes the connection between children's rights in Nigeria and climate change. It demonstrated that the rights of children in Nigeria are adversely affected by the impact of climate change on Nigerian society, and the rights of the future generation are at risk, despite the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The government, private sectors, and international organizations' responses to climate change were also emphasized. Nigeria's government has been dedicated to mitigating the negative consequences of climate change, particularly since the turn of the century. Nevertheless, it was noted that the responses to climate change have been in parallel with the implementation of the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, despite the nexus between climate change and children's rights.

Recommendations

The issue of climate change in Nigeria requires the joint efforts of both the private and public sectors in the country, as well as individuals, government, civil societies, and international bodies. It is also important that the child's rights approach is used to address the issue of climate change in Nigeria to effectively secure the rights of children who are the most vulnerable to climate change. A few recommendations are put forth below.

Climate Education and Sensitization: Climate Change Education in Nigeria should be strengthened, introduced to the school curriculum, and made compulsory. Adults (individuals above the age of 18 years) should also be sensitized to climate change.

Child-Sensitive Climate and Environmental Policies: The government should ensure that environmental policies and policies in general are child-sensitive. They should ensure that the policies do not infringe on children's rights.

Implementation of Policies and Projects: The government should be more intentional about policy and project implementation. Monitoring groups or committees should be set up to ensure all policies and projects are duly implemented.

Allocation and Sourcing of Funds: The government should include a climate resilience fund in its budget and ensure such funds are used justifiably. The government should also forge alliances with civil societies and international governmental and non-governmental organizations to generate funds to see to the smooth implementation of climate resilience projects.

References

Agbola, B. S., Ajayi, O. Taiwo, O. J. & Wahab, B. W., (2012). The August 2011 flood in Ibadan, Nigeria: Anthropogenic causes and consequences. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, 3 (4). 207-217. doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/s13753-012-0021-3

Ajayi, O., Agbola, S. B., Olokesusi, B. F., Wahab, B., *et al*. (2012). Flood management in an urban setting: A case study of Ibadan metropolis. *Nigerian Association of Hydrological Sciences.* 65-81. http://www.unaab.edu.ng

Akande, A., Costa, A. C., Mateu, J. & Henriques, R. (August, 2017). Geospatial analysis of extreme weather events in Nigeria (1985–2015) using self-organizing maps. *Advances in Meteorology* (2):1-11. https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/8576150

Alkassim, B. (2022). 2022 flood worst in Nigeria's history, NEMA tells reps. https://dailytrust.com/2022-flood-worst-in-nigerias-history-nema-tells-reps/

Amanchukwu, R. N., Amadi-Ali, T. G., & Ololube, N. P. (2015). Climate change education in Nigeria: The role of curriculum review. *Education* 5(3): 71-79. doi:10.5923/j.edu.20150503.01

Climate Change. (2025). *Interactive country fiches*. https://dicf.unepgrid.ch/nigeria/climate-change (Accessed April 12, 2025)

Dansoho, B. T., Isuwa, S., & Babale, A. M. (August 2023). Disaster risk reduction and reportage of the 2022 flood by online Nigerian Newspapers. *Nasarawa Journal of Multimedia and Communication Studies*, 5(1): 193 – 203.

Goteng K. A., Census, H. E., & Alikeju, E. H. (December 2012). The impact of climate change in Nigeria: Implication for schooling. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences 3*(16): 137-141

Government of Nigeria. (2003). *Child Rights Act*. Abuja: Nigeria.

Grace, K., Davenport, F., Hanson, H., *et al.,* (November, 2015). Linking climate change and health outcomes: Examining the relationship between temperature, precipitation and birth weight in Africa. *Global Environmental Change 35,* 125-137. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2015.06.010

Niang, I., Ruppel, O. C., Abdrabo, M. A., Ama, E., *et al*. (2014). Africa. In: Barros, V. R., Field, D. J., Dokken, M. D., Mastrandrea, K. J. et al., (eds)., *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part B: Regional Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, USA, 1199-1265. https://doi.org/10.2134/agronj2010.0303

Liaqat, W., Altaf, M. T., Barutcular, C., Nawaz, H., *et al*. (April 2023). Ultraviolet-B radiation in relation to agriculture in the context of climate change: a review. *Cereal Research Communications53*:1-24. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42976-023-00375-5

Notz, D. (December 2020). A short history of climate change. EPJ Web of Conference 246 (00002): 1-11. *Joint EPS-SIF International School on Energy* 2019. https://doi.org/10.1051/epjconf/202024600002

Nzeh, E. C., Uke, P. C., Attamah, N., *et al*. (January 2016). Climate change and agricultural production in Nigeria: A review of status, causes and consequences. *Nigerian Agricultural Policy Research Journal, Agricultural Policy Research Network, 1* (01). doi: 10.22004/ag.econ.292062.

Odjugo, P.A.O. (January, 2010). General overview of climate change in Nigeria. *Journal of Human Ecology 29* (1): 47-55.

Ogba, C. O. & Utang, P. B. (2007). Vulnerability and adaptations of Nigeria's Niger Delta coastal settlements to sea level rise. A proceeding of the Strategic Institution of Surveying Services, FIG Working Week. Hong Kong SAR, China. 13-17 May, 2007.

Oladipo, E. (2010). Towards enhancing the adaptive capacity of Nigeria: A review of the country's state of preparedness for climate change adaptation. Heinrich Boll Foundation Nigeria. http://ng.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2013/10/nigeria_prof_oladipo_final_cga_study.pdf

Olukoya, O. A. P. (2016). Gas flaring, climate change, and the Nigerian case. 6th International Disaster and Risk Conference IDRC 2016 themed "Integrative Risk Management - Towards Resilient Cities". 28 August – 1 September 2016. Davos, Switzerland.

Sanson, A. & Bellemo, M. (2021). Children and youth in the climate crisis. *British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin* 45 (4): 205-209. doi:10.1192/bjb.2021.16

Ubah, J. I. (September, 2022). *Climate change to cost Nigeria 30% of its GDP by 2050 - World Bank*. Nairametrics. https://nairametrics.com/2022/09/08/climate-change-to-cost-nigeria-30-of-its-gdp-by-2050-world-bank/ (Accessed April 3, 2025)

United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Right of the Child.* Treaty Series, 1577 (November), 3. Chicago: United Nations.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992). United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. United Nations, FCCC/INFORMAL/84 GE. 05-62220 (E) 200705, Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Bonn, Germany. unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2021). *The Climate Crisis is a Child's Right Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index* 1-24.

UNICEF. (2023a). *The climate-changed child: A children's climate risk index supplement*. New York. https://digitallibrary.un.org (Accessed April 3, 2025)

UNICEF. (2023b). *Nigeria flood response report*. UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/media/150391/file/Nigeria-2022-Flood-Response-Brief-Aug%202022-to-June-2023.pdf (Accessed April 3, 2025)

UNICEF. (2023c). *Climate landscape analysis for children in Nigeria: climate action 2023-2027*. Abuja: UNICEF Nigeria.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2019). Climate Risk Profile: Nigeria. Washington, USA.

Uyigue, E. & Agho, M. (2007). *Coping with climate change and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta of Southern Nigeria*. Community Research and Development Center (CREDC). *Available at: http://www.globalgreenhousewarning/ Coping with Climate Change and Environmental Degradation in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.*

World Bank Group. (2021). *Climate change knowledge portal for development practitioners and policy makers*. http://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/nigeria/climate-data-historical (Accessed December 3, 2024)

Intractable Conflict and Security Meltdown in Sudan: The Role of Omar al-Bashir

Amru Fadl and Elomien A. Alex

Abstract

This study examines conflict dynamics in Sudan, focusing on the role of leadership in fueling, sustaining, and perpetuating conflicts for political ends. Sudan's intractable conflict and security collapse are deeply rooted in the governance style, policies, and ruthlessness of its longest-serving leader, Omar al-Bashir. The study employed a qualitative method, using secondary and primary data collected from library research and oral interviews, while also doing a textual analysis of the secondary data. The study found that al-Bashir's regime, which was in power from 1989 to 2019, entrenched authoritarianism, ethnic violence, and economic exploitation. Often called the "Hitler of Africa" for his role in the Darfur genocide, al-Bashir weaponized ethnic divisions, arming Arab militias (Janjaweed) to suppress rebellions, resulting in mass atrocities and ICC indictments for war crimes. His rule institutionalized corruption, diverted oil wealth to sustain military dominance, and neglected development, fueling long-term instability. Following his 2019 ouster, the power vacuum exposed Sudan's fractured security apparatus, leading to a violent rivalry between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a Janjaweed successor. This conflict underscores how al-Bashir's militarized governance persists, driving Sudan toward state failure. His legacy of impunity, ethnic polarization, and economic plunder continues to hinder peace efforts, with regional spillovers including refugee crises and foreign interference. To end or mitigate the current protracted conflict, there is the need for a sustainable resolution, which requires dismantling al-Bashir's militarized patronage networks, implementing transitional justice, and establishing inclusive governance. Without addressing these systemic issues, Sudan risks prolonged fragmentation, with dire humanitarian consequences.

Keywords: Conflict, Omar Al-Bashir, Security meltdown, Sudan.

General Introduction and Background to Sudanese Conflict

Sudan's protracted conflict and security breakdown stem from the oppressive rule of Omar Al-Bashir (1989-2019), whose regime systematically employed ethnic violence, militarization, and economic mismanagement to maintain power. His government orchestrated the Darfur genocide through state-backed Janjaweed militias, leading to international condemnation and ICC war crimes charges (ICC, 2009). By diverting oil revenues to fund repression while neglecting development, al-Bashir entrenched corruption and inequality, creating conditions for persistent instability (de Waal, 2015).

The 2019 revolution that ousted him failed to dismantle his security apparatus, resulting in a violent power struggle between the military (SAF) and the paramilitary RSF- a direct legacy of al-Bashir's militia networks (International Crisis Group, 2023). This crisis highlights how his policies continue to fuel state collapse, with regional repercussions including mass displacement and foreign intervention (Patey, 2022). Understanding al-Bashir's role is critical to addressing Sudan's cyclical violence and governance failures.

Some key issues are identified. These include:

- Ethnic weaponization: State-sponsored violence against non-Arab groups (Darfur genocide).
- Militarized governance: Security forces prioritized over institutions, perpetuating conflict.
- Economic exploitation: Resource theft and corruption undercutting stability.
- Post-regime collapse: Unresolved power structures leading to renewed warfare.

This background frames the study's focus on al-Bashir's enduring impact and the systemic reforms needed for sustainable peace.

Finding the Role of al-Bashir- His Leadership and Influences in the Conflict

For many of us, when we think of a “dictator,” a specific visual comes to mind. According to the annual report on levels of democracy by the Varieties of Democracy Institute, “the level of democracy enjoyed by the average global person in 2024 is at levels last registered in 1985... we are still back to the level last seen before the end of the Cold War” (Danescu, 2025). This means more are experiencing autocratic or dictator rule. But the question still stands, how clear is the definition of a dictator? Infamously, Omar Al-Bashir, former president of Sudan, has puzzled scholars with his case.

He is a significant character in the history of Sudan as well as the MENA region. He dominated rule for 30 years, his time in power wasn't just as a long-serving president; it's described in the sources as an iron-fisted rule and a dictatorship. Even as a Sudanese citizen myself, there were many aspects I needed to review to grasp Al-Bashir's character and rule. This included, how he first got into power, the major things he did while he was leading the country, the effect his rule

had on the people and society of Sudan, and ultimately, how and why he was finally removed from power.

In conducting interviews, it was interesting to hear some opinions that opposed popular Western scholars' works on al-Bashir as well as varying insight on the period of his rule. It seems to me that Omar Al-Bashir's rule, marked by consolidation of personal power, violent conflict management, and a complex foreign policy, fundamentally reshaped Sudanese society, leading to deep internal divisions, economic hardship, and ultimately, his overthrow, leaving a legacy of challenges for the post-Bashir era.

Looking at how al-Bashir came to rule, his rise began in 1989, when he was a Brigadier General in the military. He was in no way a high-ranking officer, which is significant as he led a military group that carried out a well-planned, relatively bloodless coup on June 30, 1989. This coup overthrew the existing coalition government led by Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi. On July 1, 1989, he announced the Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation and introduced himself as the new head of state, minister of defense, and commander of the armed forces. Right away, he took big steps to consolidate power, like declaring the constitution suspended and ordering all political parties dissolved. Although it seems he quickly became the main figure after the coup, clearly intending to be more than just a spokesperson.

Born on January 1st of 1944, Al-Bashir had humble beginnings as he grew up in rural northeastern Sudan in Hosh Bannaga. He came from a family of farmers, not Muslim scholars or military officers as some may believe. His path led him to a military career where he served as a paratroop commander. It seems he was a relatively little-known officer before the significant events of 1989. "Later, after he joined the army, he refused a silver tooth implant because he wanted to remember his hardships." (Walsh, 2019) Humility was how Al-Bashir presented himself to his supporters and those who opposed him as well. Even going as far as pointing at his missing tooth and laughing along with others as one of my interviewees recalled. By 1988, he had been promoted to Brigadier, placing him in a position where he could lead the takeover that would change Sudan's course.

The most significant turning point in al-Bashir's life, and for Sudan, was the military takeover on June 30, 1989. Leading a military group as Brigadier General Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir, he overthrew the existing coalition government led by Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi. The overthrow

was described as a “well-planned, bloodless coup and (al-Bashir) seemed to be in full control of the army and the government of Sudan.” (Childress, 2010) This event marked Sudan's “fourth military takeover since independence in 1956” (Walsh, 2019). Another interviewee notes that “this was a time where government takeovers were easy, I mean it (Sudanese government) had been unstable. It is not to say that al-Bashir did execute this coup masterfully, but it was very common for governments to be overthrown by this time.” (Interviewee, 2025)

But al-Bashir did not just stop at a swift takeover, immediately after seizing power, al-Bashir took quick actions to establish control. He declared the constitution suspended and ordered all political parties immediately dissolved. On July 1, 1989, he announced the formation of the Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation and introduced himself as the new head of state, minister of defense, and commander of the armed forces. He also became Prime Minister and later promoted himself to lieutenant general. al-Bashir's rise to power came in hand-in-hand with the rise of “the cleric Hassan al-Turabi, a smooth-talking, Sorbonne-educated ideologue with sweeping ideas about embedding Sharia law deep in Sudan's diverse society and invested in agriculture and construction.” (Walsh, 2019) Another growing factor “was the rise of Islamism in 1980s.” (Leung, 2021) For the first decade of al-Bashir's rule, many saw him as a frontman for al – Turabi. Their cooperation in the coup is characterized as a "mutual speculation" where al-Bashir saw a way to accelerate his path to the presidency and Turabi aimed to transform Sudan into his vision of a moderate Islamic state. Effectively, they came to power after the coup in 1989 together. “They were the power duo when they had first debuted, as a citizen I had a hard time deciding who was actually ruling and who was the puppet...maybe they both ruled.” (Interviewee, 2025)

However, it quickly became clear that al-Bashir was not content with being in the background. He started taking steps to "personalize the regime by tying the fates of the powerful actors who had organized the coup to his own and dismantling their independent sources of power" (Chen, 2021) One major way he did this was through a policy called "Tamkeen". This policy involved using government resources and positions to "support him in the event of a challenge" (Chen, 2021), essentially buying off the elites who had supported the coup. “The policy was actually pretty normalized, if you were loyal to al-Bashir and his government, you could easily live comfortably in a government job.” (Interviewee, 2025) The idea was to "establish an Islamic order" (Chen,

2021) and also "to purge institutions that did not support such an order." (Chen, 2021) While this helped him consolidate control, many note that Tamkeen also made the general public upset. “I did not live in Sudan during the peak of ‘Tamkeen’, but I do remember when I would come home for vacation how wide the gap between government employees and others was in quality of life.” (Interviewee, 2025) He became skilled at controlling the state apparatus and ensuring important government positions were held by loyal individuals.

The partnership between Al-Bashir and Al-Turabi, while initially strong, eventually broke down. Turabi and Bashir began drifting apart around 1998 through 1999. Al-Bashir started to clean al-Turabi and his loyalists from the party and government. This falling out happened because Al-Turabi tried to limit Bashir's power and even attempted to oust him. Many citizens and critics suggest that their relationship ended due to Al-Bashir's significant "political ambition." Their "ideological differentiations” (Leung, 2021) also played a role, as Al-Turabi's seemingly more "progressive and mild idea"(Leung, 2021) were viewed as "unfavorable to Omar Al-Bashir the ambition of becoming a lifetime president without any limitation." (Leung, 2021) By 2000, Al-Bashir had successfully removed the political influence of Turabi in Sudan. Al-Turabi was arrested, and this period is described as the beginning of the National Congress Party changing from an “ideologically driven, institutionalized party into a patronage-based party that placed few checks on al-Bashir.” (Chen, 2021) “There was a point when al-Bashir would just be face to face with his opponents and it seemed like no one can limit his power anymore.” (Interviewee, 2025)

Beyond political maneuvering, al-Bashir also relied heavily on the military and security forces to maintain his authority. He worked to weaken the independence of the security apparatus and tie their interests directly to the survival of his regime. He developed a vast network that spanned the military, the security forces, and even tribal leadership across the country. This intricate system of control and loyalty was like a spider web with al-Bashir in the center. By making sure the security forces were well-funded and placing loyalists in key positions, he ensured that they would support him, as they did when suppressing protests. This deeply entrenched network, built on military backing and personal loyalties, became crucial to the longevity of his rule.

Al-Bashir maintained rule through a very controlling and restrictive approach. Some describe his governance style as intensely authoritarian, characterized by a clear "intolerance to these

unwelcome opinions" and a desire to "eliminate all of the opposing voices." (Leung, 2021) What was very interesting was that some citizens claim that there was a sharp contrast between each decade of his rule, “I think within the last 15 years of his rule, he definitely loosened up a lot, but even before it was not as restrictive as some western scholars seem to think.” (Interviewee, 2025) It wasn't just about silencing dissent; his methods of control over the Sudanese people were from every perspective. He employed "psychological threats to reach the creation of natural self-censorship among the people."(Leung, 2021) “I cannot lie and say that what was being reported was all exaggerated, like the ‘Ghost Houses’ for example, I know were 100% real.” (Interviewee, 2025) The ghost houses were locations that al-Bashir's government would use to torture and abuse his opponents and those who protest against them.

Beyond psychological pressure, direct oppression was a key tool; he ordered "arrests and imprisonment to oppress political opponents." (Childress, 2010) Control of information was immediate after the coup, with army troops taking over media stations and replacing programming with military music. His supporters were later put in charge. Independent journalists worked in fear, facing arrest or questioning for criticism. A Sudanese citizen even stated that during the 90s and early 2000s satellite dishes that would be used to watch TV were a criminal offense and would be confiscated if found. Security forces played an important part in enforcing al-Bashir's government and helping him stay in office. They were described as essential to suppressing protests, even fatally. He also solidified his formal power by merging the executive and legislative branches and giving himself the authority to declare a state of emergency, allowing for centralized control and even military courts for civilians. This oppressive system of control, backed by security forces, helped him survive earlier protests, although protests eventually led to his downfall. “I do remember the 2013-2015 protests that were part of the Arab Spring were suppressed so effectively but none of us knew it would lead to the explosion of opposition in 2018” (Interviewee, 2025).

A really striking aspect of his control was his manipulation of the political process, especially elections. Some highlight this as one of the most famous political controversies in al-Bashir’s Sudan. It was clear that he did not care for the concepts of democracy or fair elections, he had destroyed them, seeing presidential positions and parliament seats merely as political tools to grow more powerful. “I actually voted for al-Bashir in the elections, not because I supported his

government, but because he was all we had known, we grew to fear what the ‘other’ option would be or if there was even one.” (Interviewee, 2025) Some say that al-Bashir held these elections to create a democratic appearance for foreigners. Because he did not even want external factors to be an accidental element that would defeat him. Alongside this control, he pushed a specific ideology, referred to as the Khartoum-Islamic-Bashir ideology (Bashirism), emphasizing it throughout the country. This came with a strict demand for "full loyalty from the top to the bottom including the government officials and the Sudanese" (Leung, 2021). He aimed for a landslide victory eternally for his party. Looking at his speeches, it's clear he "utilized political discourse to maintain his power and bolster dominance by manipulating his audiences' attitudes, and beliefs"(Eldin, 2023) using strategies to create an in-group and out-group. He even used rallies where organizers employed "passion, monetary incentives, and punitive measures to entice members" (Eldin, 2023) to attend.

Al-Bashir was known for his fiery speeches; he would always portray his supporters positively and his opponents negatively. These strategies included using "negative comparison (like calling rebels "mice") (Shaaban, 2019), negative lexicalization (using terms like "traitors, intelligence agents, and mercenaries"), warnings, threat and choice, repetition, and hyperboles, such as claiming opponents were defeated and destroyed. (Eldin, 2023) Bashir would also speak of himself highly, highlighting his connection to the people through stories about his humble origins, using proverbs to seem wise, employing religious language (even opening with a Quran verse), and appealing to national pride by claiming Sudan helped free all of Africa.

Religion was very crucial to Bashir’s longevity. One of the major things Omar al-Bashir did was implement Sharia law, which really stirred things up. This wasn't entirely new in Sudan, as a previous dictator, Gaafar al-Nimeiri, had established it in 1983, imposing it on all Sudanese, including those in the south. When Bashir took over after the coup in 1989, he continued this, making Sudan an Islamist state. For people in the south, most of whom were Christians or followed traditional African religions, being subjected to laws based on a religion they didn't practice was a big issue. Al-Bashir imposing and enforcing the Sharia law would escalate the war in the south promptly and increase the opposition from people across Sudan who favored secularism and recognizing Sudan's African identity. Beyond the south, the government also took over private and

foreign schools, including those run by Christian missionaries, requiring students to study Islam regardless of their religion. Some even stated that education was completely changed by the Bashir regime. This focus on an Islamist state and Sharia law was a central part of his agenda.

But it was not only religious affairs that Bashir failed to handle, but he also failed ethnic minorities in Sudan through his policies, pointing specifically to South Sudan and Darfur as examples. While conflicts might have appeared to be about religion or race, the real fault lines were based more on political and economic interests. Bashir was so blinded by his hunger for political power, not understanding the seriousness of provoking minorities, leading to disastrous tragedies. From the beginning of his regime, Al-Bashir had a great dislike for minorities and seemed to favor Arab ethnic groups over those with African origins. This is a significant issue because ethnic diversity is normal, and trying to force consistency usually has political or economic motivations. The result of these policies and frequent, endless wars was deepened socio-economic burdens and widespread suffering. Even after Southern Sudan gained independence in 2010, conflicts continued in the north, showing the regionalism problem was laid bare and had less to do with religion or race than political and economic factors. A Sudanese citizen claims “the west was exaggerating the role of race and religion in conflicts of Darfur and the south, when it was a series of tribal conflicts over lands or goods. This is a part of the conflict which I believe is usually not reported accurately.” (Interviewee, 2025)

The conflict in Drafur was a horrific and decades-long war that exposed deep fault lines. Al-Bashir was worsening the humanitarian crisis there through his government’s support for the Janjaweed militia. They are responsible for the worst violations against Darfur’s local communities and South Sudanese citizens. These actions included bombing, raiding, and looting civilian villages, killing livestock or driving them away, stuffing wells with bodies to pollute the water supply, and burning storehouses and fields in a "scorched earth" policy, primarily targeting ethnic groups like the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa. Over a hundred thousand people fled their homes to refugee camps and estimates for the total deaths in the conflict range incredibly high, although Bashir maintained a much lower number around 10,000. This conflict led to international discussions about ethnic cleansing and genocide. While Bashir initially claimed he had no control over the Janjaweed's violence and later denied rapes, Sudanese officials also dismissed reports of widespread rape as

"propaganda." Even in the post-Bashir era, figures like Mohamed Hamdan ‘Hemeti’ Dagolo, head of the notorious Janjaweed and Rapid Support Forces, who led the counterinsurgency in Darfur, are still in government and considered by many as a "major perpetrator" of ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Omar Al-Bashir's time in power was heavily defined by how he navigated Sudan's relationships with other countries, especially those in the Persian and Arab Gulf. Bashir made maintaining Sudan's traditionally strong relationships with Persian Gulf countries, particularly Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, a focus for foreign policy for decades. Sudan adopted a sort of "two-faced approach" to foreign relations. This meant that Bashir tried to maintain friendly ties with different countries and regional blocs, even when they were in conflict with each other. A leaked transcript even suggested needing "a foothold in both camps." (Ismail, 2015) We saw shifts in these relationships; for instance, after initially working with Iran to support the Houthis in Yemen, Sudan later reversed its policy and joined the Saudi coalition fighting against them. This balancing act was crucial because, as my sources explain, Sudan became increasingly economically dependent on these Gulf countries for vital support like funds, foreign exchange, and investment. Years of internal hardship and external isolation created a severe financial crisis, making Sudan vulnerable and reliant on these states for things like remittances from Sudanese workers living there, trade in agricultural products and livestock, and even support for its military industry from Iran. Ultimately, Bashir's long rule was marked by this complex juggling of foreign ties driven by political and economic interests.

On the other hand, Sudan's relationship with Western countries, particularly the United States, was often strained, partly due to concerns over terrorism and human rights. The American government blacklisted Sudan as a terror-sponsoring state in 1993. This move was partly due to Bashir allowing individuals like Osama bin Laden and other dissident groups to stay in the country, with rumors of terrorist training camps. This led to Sudan being seen as a "pariah state" and facing sanctions from the UN and increased pressure from the US. The situation escalated in 1998 when the United States retaliated for al-Qaeda's bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania by bombing Sudan. Bashir's reaction was often defiant; he sometimes portrayed himself as the victim of an "international witch hunt" led by the West, complaining the US hadn't lifted sanctions despite

agreements. Although Sudan later deported some controversial figures like Carlos the Jackal and Osama bin Laden and even cooperated with the US on counterterrorism after 9/11, the US kept Sudan on the terrorism list for many years, which stymied foreign investment and contributed to the economic crisis that fueled protests. It wasn't until 2020, after Bashir's fall, that Sudan was removed from the blacklist, though this happened alongside moves towards diplomatic normalization with Israel. Many believe that the US sanctions were a way of economically hurdling Sudan more than the US concerns with “terrorism” or “human rights.”

Perhaps the most significant international challenge Bashir faced was from the International Criminal Court (ICC). A major moment occurred in 2009 when the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Bashir. This was the first time that an international body has gone after a current head of state. Bashir was charged with war crimes, crimes against humanity, and later, genocide, specifically related to the horrific conflict in Darfur, where the government was accused of supporting the Janjaweed militia responsible for the worst crimes in Darfur. It was difficult a process to attempt to bring Bashir to the ICC. Between proving Bashir's direct control over the militia and raising questions about the ICC process itself, such as whether it risks intensifying conflict or if it's the right way to address Sudan's complex, deeply rooted problems that involve political and economic fault lines more than just religion or race.

But that was just the beginning of the downfall of Bashir’s regime. Several factors contributed to the growing discontent under Omar al-Bashir, particularly concerning the economy and his relationships with powerful groups. Sudan faced a severe financial crisis due to factors like internal hardship, international sanctions, and especially the loss of oil revenue after South Sudan's independence in 2011. This secession meant Sudan lost a significant portion of its income, which made it harder for Bashir to maintain his patronage system and worsened the economic situation, characterized a rising inflation, a shortage of foreign exchange, and high debt. This economic hardship made the country increasingly dependent on Gulf countries for funds, foreign exchange, and investment. This economic decline created widespread discontent among ordinary Sudanese people, particularly the urban middle classes, who saw their living standards drop. The worsening economic situation and the government's perceived incompetence in dealing with it were significant drivers of public anger, leading to the protests. The economic crisis and other pressures

led to a changing relationship between Bashir and the elites, including those in the military and within his own ruling party.

As the economy worsened, it became harder for him to maintain this patronage. Divisions emerged within the ruling party, and it was reported that the violent crackdown on protests in 2013 caused disputes within the ruling party. While the military elites initially supported Bashir's policy against protesters, things began to change. Disagreement between Bashir and the elites, including military elites, accelerated his fall. This division was evident when different organs of the security forces clashed with each other during the 2018-2019 protests, with some remaining loyal to Bashir and others supporting the protesters. External factors such as the UAE and KSA had an influence on the elite divisions leading to Al-Bashir's downfall. It was reported that Salah Gosh, the head of the National Intelligence and Security Services, held talks with opposition groups and even gave intelligence officials in the UAE advance warning of what was about to happen before the coup. Bashir's decision not to cut ties with Qatar reportedly angered the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and the UAE stopped fuel supplies to Sudan in December 2018 when the economy was in deep crisis. The UAE abandoning Bashir made it easier for him to fall. As protests broke out, none of his foreign sponsors came to help him, and a delegation even went to Egypt to seek support from Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia for a coup.

The protests that started in 2018, triggered by austerity measures like the cancellation of subsidies for basic goods, were different from previous waves. These demonstrations rapidly spread, with demands shifting from purely economic issues to calls for the fall of the regime. As the protests continued through early 2019, Bashir's grip on Sudan began to loosen. On April 11, 2019, Omar Hassan al-Bashir was forced to step down by his own internal-security apparatus. After months of sustained mass rallies. The protesters' most urgent demand, the end of Bashir's regime, was achieved. However, immediately after Bashir was deposed, a group of military officers formed a Transitional Military Council (TMC). Protest groups viewed this as a "coup" and continued demonstrating, demanding a civilian transitional government. This started a struggle for power between the military and representatives of the people, specifically the Force of Freedom and Change (FFC).

Nature of al-Bashir's Rule- The "Hitleric" Elements, and Consequences

Al-Bashir first came to power in 1989 through a military coup and remained president for about three decades, outlasting many challenges that brought down other leaders. His rule was characterized by an intolerance of opposition, often involving violent crackdowns on protests. His approach to the conflicts in regions like Darfur and South Sudan was particularly brutal, leading to war crimes charges against him by the International Criminal Court. Some citizens even believe that had Bashir taken a different approach to the conflicts of the south and Darfur, he might have remained in power for longer. But as his violence took charge in how he handled these conflicts, alongside other issues such as a complex foreign policy that created a dependency on the Arab Gulf states, his fall from the throne was unavoidable.

His characteristics and actions had profound and long-term consequences for Sudan. One major impact was the deepening of internal divisions, whether regional, ethnic, or political. The ongoing conflicts are mere proof that Bashir's trace can hardly be erased from Sudan. The loss of three-quarters of the country's oil production and half of its revenues after South Sudan seceded in 2011 was a huge blow, leading to severe financial crises, rising inflation, high debt, and dependence on external funding are what Bashir's time as a ruler will be known for. This combination of political repression, violent conflict, and economic hardship left Sudan with significant challenges in building a stable and inclusive government after his fall. Sudan has a history of popular uprisings that toppled dictatorships in the past, but these transitions ultimately failed, with the military often returning to power.

Reflecting on his fall after 30 years, it's clear it was a moment of immense significance for Sudan. "I remember that day vividly, I was so happy, now looking back at it almost six years later, I am still weirdly hopeful" (Interviewee, 2025). The post-Bashir era is characterized by the hopes of the Sudanese people for a different future, one that ends decades of fragmentation, uneven development, and corruption. They are demanding more from their leaders. However, this transition is full of challenges, including continued protests and a struggle for power between civilian groups and the military. Economic struggles persist, with high inflation and unemployment, and external factors like the Coronavirus pandemic have added unexpected difficulties.

Many citizens to this day, even opponents, refuse to call Al-Bashir a dictator. “If I were to label Al-Bashir a dictator, I would expect the West to label their imperial rulers as dictators and war criminals too.” (Interviewee, 2025) Many also disagree on how the ICC came to the findings that indicted Al-Bashir, stating that “if the same procedures were used to judge many allies of the West, they would be found guilty.” (Interviewee, 2025) The relationship between many Sudanese citizens, political science scholars, and Al-Bashir is very strange.

Conclusion

Sudan’s protracted conflict and state fragility are direct consequences of Omar al-Bashir’s brutal regime, which institutionalized ethnic violence, militarized governance, and systemic corruption. His overthrow in 2019 failed to dismantle the oppressive structures he built, leading to renewed warfare between rival factions—the SAF and RSF—both products of his divisive rule. Without addressing this legacy, Sudan risks further fragmentation, humanitarian catastrophe, and regional destabilization.

To break this cycle, Sudan must pursue comprehensive security sector reform to dismantle militia networks and establish accountable governance. Transitional justice mechanisms, including full cooperation with the ICC, are critical to address past atrocities and prevent impunity. Additionally, inclusive political dialogues and equitable resource management must replace the extractive systems of al-Bashir’s era. International actors should support these efforts while avoiding opportunistic interference. Only through systemic change can Sudan achieve lasting peace.

References

Bassil, N., & Zhang, J. (2021). The post-Bashir era in Sudan: tragedy or remedy?. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, *75*(3), 252-259.

Berridge, W., de Waal, A., & Lynch, J. (2022). *Sudan's Unfinished Democracy: the promise and betrayal of a people's revolution*. Oxford University Press.

Chen, M. (2021). What caused Bashir's fall in 2019? ---A comparative analysis between Sudan's protests during the Arab Spring and those starting from 2018.

Childress, D. (2009). *Omar Al-Bashir's Sudan*. Twenty-First Century Books.

Chun Leung, J. L., & Mohd Nor, M. R. (2021). Omar Al-Bashir: his Governance Crisis and the Outbreak of Revolution in Sudan. *Geopolitics Quarterly*, *17*(Special Issue), 51-70.

De Waal, A. (2015). *The real politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, war and the business of power*. John Wiley & Sons.

El Mundo. (1989, July 1). Page 23. https://gpa.eastview.com/crl/elmundo/newspapers/mndo19890701

Eldin, Khalid Tag. (2023) "A critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Self and the Other in the Speeches of the Ousted Sudanese President, Omar Al-Bashir." *Arab Journal for the Humanities*, vol. 55, no. 162, pp. 1-15. *ResearchGate*, doi: 10.34120/0117-041-162-008.

Giamanco, T. (2011). The perpetrator behind the perpetrator: A critical analysis of the theory of prosecution against Omar Al-Bashir. *Temp. Int'l & Comp. LJ*, *25*, 217.

International Crisis Group. (2023). *Stopping Sudan's descent into full-blown Civil War*. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/stopping-sudans-descent-full-blown-civil-war

Ismail, O. (2015). The Many Faces of al-Bashir. https://enoughproject.org/reports/many-faces-al-bashir

Saad Abdel-Mo'ti, et al. (2022). The Islamic movement in Sudan from 1969 to 2019. *Journal of African and Nile Basin Countries Research and Studies*, *4*(1), 78–113.

Walsh, D. (2019). The Fall of Omar Hassan al-Bashir, the'Spider'at the Heart of Sudan's Web. *International New York Times*, NA-NA.

State Government Policy on Rural Leadership and Community Leadership Crises in Anambra State

Emeka Ezealisiji, C. Jaja Nwanegbo, and Anthony Ajana. Uzodigwe

Abstract

This study critically examines the role of state government policy in shaping rural leadership dynamics and fueling community leadership crises in Anambra State, Nigeria. Historically, Town Union Presidents and Traditional Rulers operated in complementary roles, fostering civic development and cultural governance. However, recent state interventions, particularly through laws such as the Anambra State Traditional Rulers Law No. 14 of 1981 and the Rural Development Fund Law of 1986, have politicized leadership structures, imposed overlapping mandates, and eroded community autonomy; hence, the study aims to determine whether the state government policy on rural leadership is implicated in community leadership crises in Anambra State. Drawing on structural-functionalism, conflict theory, and governance theory, the research explores how these policies disrupt institutional harmony and provoke elite power struggles. Using a mixed-method approach, the study surveyed 400 respondents across 12 communities and conducted 44 key informant interviews. Findings reveal that state-imposed leaders often lack grassroots legitimacy, leading to factionalism, legal disputes, and governance paralysis. The paper concludes with policy recommendations aimed at restoring participatory governance, respecting community constitutions, and curbing political interference in rural leadership processes.

Keywords: State Government Policy; Rural leadership; Community leadership; Leadership crises: Anambra State

Introduction

Community leadership in Anambra State has evolved into a contested domain, largely due to the friction between Town Union Presidents and Traditional Rulers. Historically, these two institutions operated in a complementary fashion; Town Unions managed developmental initiatives and civic mobilization, while Traditional Rulers served as custodians of culture and arbiters of customary law. However, recent decades have witnessed a shift in this balance. The politicization of rural leadership structures, driven by state government interventions, has introduced overlapping mandates that distort institutional boundaries and provoke rivalry. This has transformed what was once a cooperative governance model into a battleground for legitimacy and control (Moses, 2024; Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2015).

The root of the crisis lies in the state's policy framework, which has increasingly impinged upon community autonomy. Laws such as the Anambra State Traditional Rulers Law No. 14 of 1981 and the Rural Development Fund Law of 1986 have empowered the government to recognize, suspend, or impose leadership figures without adequate consultation with local stakeholders. These policies, while apparently aimed at streamlining governance, have often been wielded as instruments of political patronage. As a result, communities find themselves grappling with imposed leaders who lack grassroots legitimacy, thereby undermining traditional governance structures and fueling internal dissent (Abulu, 2020; Anazodo, Igbokwe-Ibeto & Nkah, 2015).

Evidence from various communities in Anambra State reveals that state interference has exacerbated leadership disputes. In towns such as Ekwulobia and Ebenebe, the imposition of caretaker committees and the recognition of unpopular traditional rulers have led to factionalism and prolonged legal battles. These interventions not only disregard community constitutions but also disrupt the organic processes of leadership selection. The politicization of these roles has turned community leadership into a zero-sum game, where loyalty to political actors often trumps competence and cultural legitimacy. This has eroded trust in both the Town Union and the traditional institution, leaving communities fragmented and governance ineffective.

The objective of this inquiry, to determine whether state government policy on rural leadership is implicated in community leadership crises, finds substantial support in both theoretical and empirical literature. Structural-functionalism posits that systemic dysfunctions arise when

institutional roles are disrupted, while conflict theory interprets these crises as elite struggles for dominance. Governance theory further highlights the dangers of excluding community voices in leadership decisions. Together, these frameworks underscore the role of state policy as a catalyst for leadership instability, especially when such policies are implemented without regard for local norms and participatory governance principles.

The remainder of this paper is organized into five sections. Following the introduction, Section Two presents a comprehensive literature review encompassing conceptual frameworks, foundational theories, and relevant empirical studies. Section Three outlines the research methodology, detailing the design, data collection techniques, and analytical tools employed. Section Four discusses the findings and provides a critical analysis of the results in relation to the study's objective. Finally, Section Five offers concluding insights and policy recommendations aimed at addressing the identified leadership challenges in Anambra State.

Literature Review

Conceptual Literature

State policies encompass the formal instruments such as laws, regulations, and administrative directives, through which governments shape governance structures and influence institutional behavior (Anderson, 2003). These policies serve not only as frameworks for public administration but also as mechanisms for asserting authority and managing socio-political dynamics. In the context of Anambra State, notable examples include the Anambra State Traditional Rulers Law No. 14 of 1981 and the Rural Development Fund Law of 1986. While originally designed to enhance rural governance and streamline leadership recognition, these statutes have increasingly been linked to community leadership crises.

Scholars such as Obiajulu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2016) argue that the implementation of these laws, often without adequate community consultation, has led to overlapping mandates, politicization of leadership roles, and the erosion of traditional governance norms. Consequently, these policies have become central to understanding the structural roots of leadership disputes in Anambra's rural communities.

Theoretical Framework

This study builds on three basic theories, namely: Structural-functionalism theory, Conflict theory, and Governance theory

Structural-functionalism theory provided a framework for understanding leadership disputes in Anambra State by framing them as systemic dysfunctions within the community governance structure. According to Parsons (1961), institutions function optimally when their roles are clearly defined and mutually reinforcing. However, when state policies disrupt the traditional balance between Town Union Presidents and Traditional Rulers, by imposing overlapping mandates or politicizing leadership appointments, these disruptions create institutional instability. This theory is particularly relevant to the study as it helps explain how policy-induced misalignments have eroded the functional harmony that once existed between these dual leadership structures.

Conflict theory provides a more critical perspective, interpreting community leadership crises as manifestations of power struggles among elites. Rooted in the works of Marx and Engels (1848) and later expanded by Dahrendorf (1959), this theory posits that societal conflict arises when dominant groups seek to maintain control over resources and decision-making processes. In the context of Anambra State, state interventions, such as the imposition of caretaker committees or the recognition of unpopular traditional rulers, are often driven by political patronage and elite interests. This framework is highly relevant to the study as it underscores the role of state actors in exacerbating leadership tensions by privileging loyalty over legitimacy, thereby deepening divisions within communities.

Finally, the governance theory complements these perspectives by emphasizing the importance of inclusive and participatory decision-making in maintaining institutional legitimacy. Scholars like Rhodes (1996) and Kooiman (2003) argue that governance is most effective when it incorporates diverse stakeholder voices, particularly at the grassroots level. The exclusion of community input in leadership selection, especially in frameworks like the Public Private Community Partnership, undermines trust and accountability. This theory is central to the study's objective, as it highlights the risks associated with top-down policy implementation and reinforces the need for reforms that prioritise community engagement in rural leadership processes.

Empirical Literature

Empirical studies consistently highlight the role of state government actions in exacerbating community leadership crises across Anambra State. Onwuegusi (2011), Obiajulu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2016), and Ozor and Nwankwo (2008) provide compelling evidence that state officials frequently engage in practices that undermine local governance structures. These include the manipulation of leadership elections, the imposition of caretaker committees, and the formal recognition of traditional rulers who lack popular support. Such interventions often bypass established community constitutions and customary procedures, thereby eroding the legitimacy of local leadership and fueling internal discord.

In communities like Ekwulobia and Ebenebe, the consequences of state interference have been particularly pronounced. Obiajulu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2016) document how the appointment of unpopular traditional rulers and the dissolution of elected Town Union executives led to deep-seated factionalism. These actions not only violated community norms but also created parallel leadership structures, each claiming authority and allegiance. The resulting power struggles have disrupted communal harmony, stalled development initiatives, and triggered prolonged legal battles over leadership legitimacy.

Further empirical evidence suggests that these crises are not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of politicization in rural governance. Ozor and Nwankwo (2008) argue that state actors often use leadership appointments as tools for political patronage, rewarding loyalists and sidelining dissenting voices. This trend has transformed community leadership into a contested arena where political affiliations outweigh competence and cultural legitimacy. The loss of trust in both Town Union Presidents and Traditional Rulers has left many communities in a state of administrative paralysis and social fragmentation.

Onwuegusi (2011) reinforces this narrative by illustrating how the imposition of caretaker committees destabilizes existing governance structures. These committees, often lacking community endorsement, are perceived as instruments of state control rather than facilitators of local development. Their presence undermines participatory governance and alienates community members from decision-making processes. This top-down approach contradicts the principles of grassroots democracy and further entrenches leadership disputes.

Collectively, these empirical findings underscore the centrality of state policy in the genesis and perpetuation of leadership crises in Anambra State. The consistent pattern of government interference, whether through electoral manipulation, imposition of leaders, or disregard for community constitutions, reveals a systemic challenge that demands urgent policy reform. Addressing these issues requires a recalibration of state-community relations, with emphasis on transparency, respect for local autonomy, and the institutionalization of participatory governance mechanisms.

Research Design

The study utilizes a mixed-method research design to investigate the impact of state policies on community leadership crises in Anambra State. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires featuring Likert-scale items, targeting community leaders, government officials, and residents to assess perceptions of leadership disputes and policy effectiveness. Complementing this, qualitative insights were drawn from in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including traditional rulers and town union leaders, analyzed thematically to uncover patterns in governance challenges.

Area of Study

The research is situated in Anambra State, a southeastern Nigerian state with a rich cultural and administrative landscape. Home to 181 autonomous communities and organized into 21 Local Government Areas across three Senatorial Districts, the state operates under a dual leadership structure comprising traditional rulers and town union presidents. This complex governance framework provides a fertile ground for examining how state interventions intersect with local leadership dynamics.

Study Population

The study's population comprises 1,453,800 individuals, representing the combined population of six purposively selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Anambra State, based on the 2016 projection by the National Population Commission. These LGAs, Anambra East, Oyi, Dunukofia, Idemili South, Orumba North, and Ihiala, were chosen to reflect the three senatorial zones and varying degrees of leadership and community crises. From each LGA, two communities were selected, forming the basis for the study’s sample.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sampling strategy follows a purposive and stratified sampling method to ensure a diverse representation of perspectives across various communities in Anambra State. Data triangulation is employed to enhance reliability by comparing findings from questionnaires, interviews, and secondary sources such as policy documents and media reports.

Sample size determination

The study employed the method suggested by Kothari (2004) to determine the sample size for the study. The formula for the sample size determination is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq(N)}{e^2\,(N-1) + Z^2 pq}$$

Where:

n = required sample size

N = size of the population = 1,453,800

Z = desired confidence level of 95% = 1.96

P = sample proportion (fixed at 50%) = 0.5

q = 1- p = 0.5

e = sampling error = 0.05

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq(N)}{e^2\,(N-1) + Z^2 pq}$$

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2(0.5*0.5)(1{,}453{,}800)}{(0.05)^2\,(1{,}453{,}800-1) + (1.96)^2(0.5*0.5)}$$

n = 384, which is equal to 400 to the nearest 100.

Therefore, a sample size of 400 was used. The sample size of 400 respondents, representing 5.9% of the total population was selected from twelve selected communities drawn from six LGAs under study. Questionnaires will be distributed proportionately according to the population size of the communities under study. Table 3.3 shows how the questionnaires will be distributed to the twelve communities across the six LGAs in Anambra State. The questionnaire will be distributed according to the population size of the communities studied.

Table 1: Sample Frame and Allocation of Questionnaires per Community

Senatorial Zones	Local Gov't. Areas	Communities	No. of Questionnaires
Anambra North	Anambra East	Umueri	28
		Mkpunando Otu	27
	Oyi	Nteje	31
		Nkwele-Ezunaka	31
Anambra Central	Dunukofia	Ifitedunu	17
		Umunnachi	18
	Idemili South	Alor	37
		Ojoto	38
Anambra South	Orumba North	Nanka	31
		Ajalli	32
	Ihiala	Ihiala	55
		Okija	55
Total			**400**

Source: National Population Commission, 2016.

The sampling techniques used for the selection of respondents to be administered with the questionnaire were purposive (used to target the critical stakeholders in the communities like the officials of local government councils, Town Union Executives, Traditional Rulers, Clergies, security agencies and traditional rulers) and random (the population will be randomly chosen for the administration of questionnaire to represent the general views of the people household by household) sampling. The random criteria will be centred on communities that experienced real leadership (Town Union or Traditional Rulership) crises in Anambra state. Furthermore, a simple random sampling method was used to capture the opinions of members of the selected communities, not necessarily those directly involved in the crisis but existing in the conflicting environment. Four hundred (400) questionnaires will be administered.

In addition to the 400 respondents that are the target respondents to the questionnaire, forty-four (44) respondents were engaged as key informants for in-depth interviews using a purposive technique as contained in Table 3.4 below.

Table 2: Sample Frame and Allocation of Interviews from the Concerned Groups

S/N	Group to be covered in the interview	Category of Person	No
1	Traditional Leadership from the selected communities	Traditional Ruler	12
2	Town Union Leadership from the selected communities	President General	12
3	Contrary opinion over leadership in selected communities	1 Aggrieved person	12
4	LG official from the selected Local Governments	1 official of the LG.	6
5	State Ministry for L.G, Town Union & Chieftaincy Matters	2 desk officers	2
	Total		**44**

The non-probability sampling technique, specifically Purposive and Convenience was used to select respondents, who were willing and had a wealth of experiences or knowledge on the leadership (Town Union and Chieftaincy) matters in their communities so as to get the required information needed for the study.

The Convenience sampling was used because it gave room to the researcher to select those who would be available, and willing to talk on the subject matter because of its sensitivity while the Purposive sampling was used to select only those who were knowledgeable about the subject matter. The combination of these two techniques made it possible to administer the questionnaire to only those who were knowledgeable about the subject matter and were available and willing to respond to questions (Questionnaire or Interview) on the matter irrespective of the sensitivity.

Methods and Instruments of Data Collection

The study employed a dual-instrument approach for data collection: a structured questionnaire and a Key Informant Interview (KII) guide. The questionnaire was divided into five sections, covering demographic information, core research questions, and respondents' perspectives on potential solutions to leadership crises. It utilized a five-point Likert scale to measure levels of agreement or disagreement with statements concerning the influence of state policies on community leadership in Anambra State. Designed by the researcher, the instrument underwent preliminary validation and was administered using the Open Data Kit (ODK) platform to enhance reliability and streamline data compilation.

Validity and Reliability of Data

To ensure the instrument's validity, face validation was conducted by two experts specializing in conflict studies and statistical research. These professionals assessed the content for clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the rating scale, offering recommendations that were incorporated into the final version. Additionally, the researcher considered feedback from a supervisory expert in conflict and development studies. For reliability testing, the instrument was pre-tested on a balanced sample of 50 respondents (25 male and 25 female) in Awka, Anambra State. Cronbach's Alpha was employed to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire, confirming its suitability for broader application.

Methods of Data Analysis

The study utilized both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, were applied to summarize demographic variables and responses to research questions. Inferential statistics were used to test the study's hypotheses, employing a significance threshold of 0.05 to determine the strength and validity of observed relationships between state policies and leadership crises. This analytical framework ensured a robust interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Result and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed across 12 communities in Anambra State, with 360 successfully completed and returned, yielding a strong 90% response rate. This high level of participation enhances the credibility and representativeness of the data, particularly in communities such as Umueri, Umunnachi, Ajalli, Ihiala, and Okija, which recorded response rates above 90%. Other communities, including Mkpunando, Nteje, Nkwele-Ezunaka, Ifitedunu, Alor, and Ojoto, also demonstrated substantial engagement, with response rates between 80% and 89%. These variations offer valuable insight into community accessibility and interest levels, reinforcing the robustness of the dataset and its relevance to understanding leadership dynamics across Anambra State.

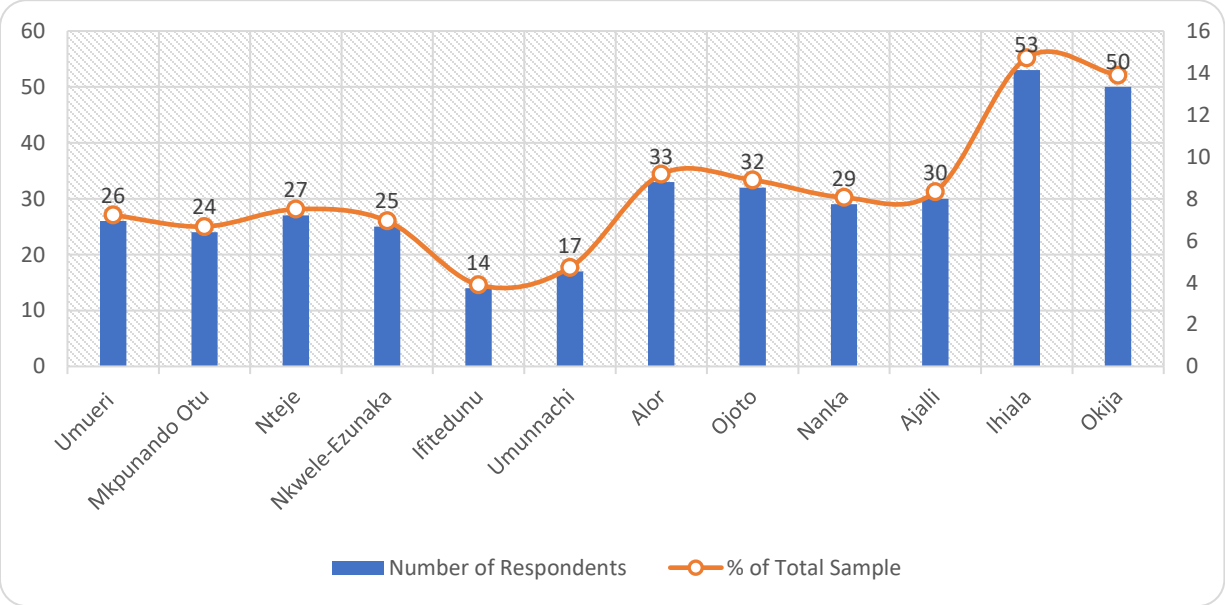
Table 3: Summary of Questionnaire Distributed and Returned across the selected communities in Anambra State

Senatorial Zones	Local Gov't. Areas	Communities	Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Response Rate (%)
Anambra North	Anambra East	Umueri	28	26	93
		Mkpunando Out	27	24	89
	Oyi	Nteje	31	27	87
		Nkwele-Ezunaka	31	25	81
Anambra Central	Dunukofia	Ifitedunu	17	14	82
		Umunnachi	18	17	94
	Idemili South	Alor	37	33	89
		Ojoto	38	32	84
Anambra South	Orumba North	Nanka	31	29	94
		Ajalli	32	30	94
	Ihiala	Ihiala	55	53	96
		Okija	55	50	90
Total			**400**	**360**	**90**

Source: The Researcher, based on Field Survey, (2025)

Community/Town of the Respondents

Figure 1: The Community/Town of the Respondents in Anambra State



Source: The Researcher, based on Field Survey, (2025)

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of survey respondents across Anambra State communities, with Ihiala and Okija showing the highest levels of participation at 14.72% and 13.89% respectively, suggesting strong engagement or larger population bases. In contrast, Ifitedunu recorded the lowest response rate at 3.89%, highlighting disparities in community involvement that are essential for interpreting the representativeness and depth of the survey data.

The Gender of the Respondents across Communities

Table 4: The Gender of the sampled population

Community	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Umueri	Male	18	69.2
	Female	8	30.8
Mkpunando	Male	17	70.8
	Female	7	29.2
Nteje	Male	21	77.8
	Female	6	22.2
Nkwele-Ezunaka	Male	19	76
	Female	6	24
Ifitedunu	Male	11	78.6
	Female	3	21.4
Umunnachi	Male	12	70.6
	Female	5	29.4
Alor	Male	24	77.7
	Female	9	27.3
Ojoto	Male	22	68.8
	Female	10	31.2
Nanka	Male	19	65.5
	Female	10	34.5
Ajalli	Male	19	63.3
	Female	11	36.7
Ihiala	Male	39	73.6
	Female	14	26.4

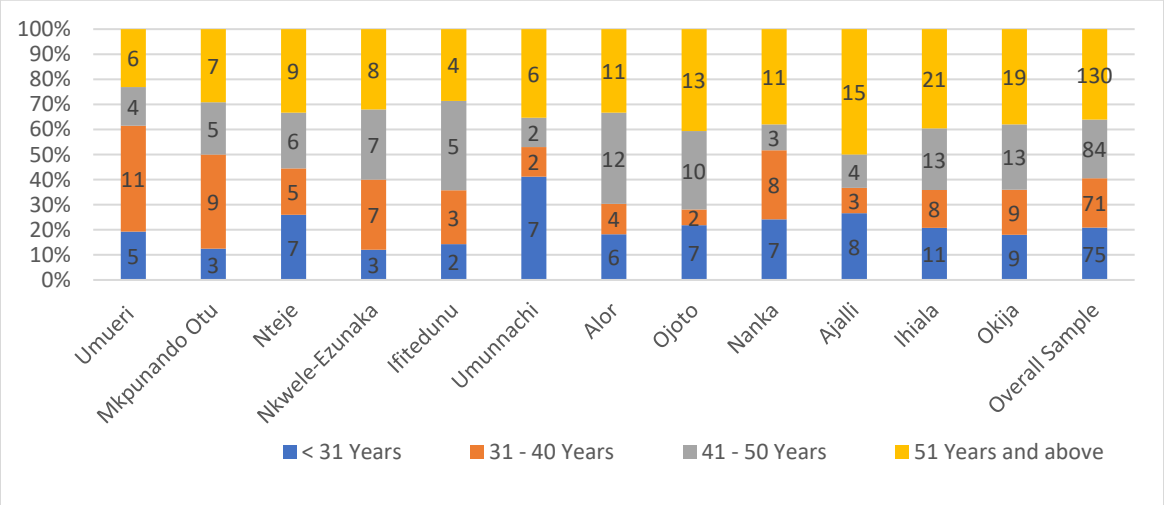
Okija	Male	37	74
	Female	13	26
Over Sample	**Male**	**258**	**71.7**
	Female	**102**	**28.3**

Source: The Researcher, based on Field Survey, (2025)

The data indicates a significant gender disparity across various communities, with males consistently outnumbering females. The male population ranges from 63.3% in Ajalli to 78.6% in Ifitedunu, while the female population is highest in Ajalli at 36.7% and lowest in Ifitedunu at 21.4%. Overall, the sample shows a male majority of 71.7% compared to 28.3% females.

The Age Distribution of the Respondents

Figure 2: The age Distribution of the Respondents



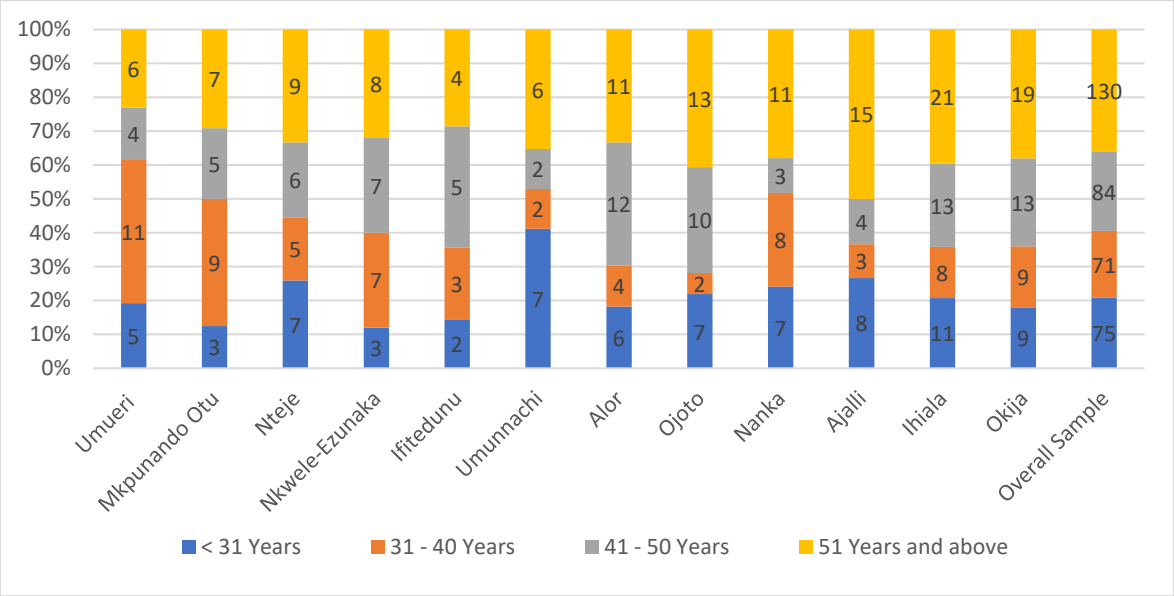
Source: The Researcher, based on Field Survey, (2025)

Figure .2 represents the distribution of individuals across various age groups in different communities. The overall sample size is 360 individuals, with the highest representation in the 51 years and above category (130 individuals), followed by the 41-50 years category (84 individuals). Communities like Ihiala and Okija have the highest number of individuals, particularly in the older age groups. Conversely, communities like Ifitedunu and Umunnachi have fewer individuals across all age groups. Analyzing the age distribution, it is evident that the younger age group (<31 years) has a significant presence in most communities, with Ihiala and Okija again showing the highest numbers. This could imply a relatively balanced age structure in these communities, with a mix of

younger and older individuals. However, the middle age groups (31-40 years and 41-50 years) show more variability across communities.

Highest Education Qualification

Figure 3: Educational Qualification of the Respondents across the Communities in Anambra State



Source: The Researcher, based on Field Survey, (2025)

Figure 3 illustrates the educational attainment levels across various communities, with a total sample size of 360 individuals. The majority of individuals have completed secondary education (167), followed by primary education (114), and tertiary education (79). Communities like Ihiala and Okija show a higher number of individuals with tertiary education (17 and 18 respectively), indicating potentially higher access to or emphasis on higher education in these areas. Conversely, communities such as Ifitedunu and Umunnachi have fewer individuals with tertiary education, which might reflect limited access to higher education facilities or other socio-economic barriers.

Analyzing the distribution, it is evident that secondary education is the most common level of attainment across all communities, suggesting a widespread basic educational foundation. However, the transition from secondary to tertiary education shows significant drop-offs in most communities, highlighting potential areas for educational development and support. The higher

numbers in primary and secondary education in communities like Alor and Ojoto suggest a strong foundational education system, but the relatively lower tertiary education numbers indicate a need for improved pathways to higher education. Overall, the data suggests a need for targeted educational interventions to bridge the gap between secondary and tertiary education, particularly in communities with lower tertiary education attainment.

Occupation of the Respondents

Table 5: Occupation of the Respondents across Communities in Anambra State

Community	**Civil Servant**	**Private Sector Employee**	**Self-employed**	**Unemployed**
Umueri	1	4	19	2
Mkpunando	5	4	13	2
Nteje	2	5	19	1
Nkwele-Ezunaka	2	2	21	0
Ifitedunu	2	1	9	2
Umunnachi	3	1	11	2
Alor	4	5	21	3
Ojoto	4	5	23	0
Nanka	3	4	19	3
Ajali	3	5	21	1
Ihiala	8	5	40	0
Okija	7	5	37	1
Overall Sample	**44**	**46**	**253**	**17**

Source: The Researcher, based on Field Survey, (2024)

Table 5 shows the employment status across various communities, with a total sample size of 360 individuals. The majority of individuals are self-employed (253), indicating a strong entrepreneurial presence in these communities. This is particularly evident in communities like Ihiala and Okija, where self-employment numbers are significantly higher (40 and 37 respectively). The number of civil servants (44) and private sector employees (46) is relatively low in comparison, suggesting that formal employment opportunities might be limited or that there is a cultural preference for self-employment.

Unemployment figures are relatively low (17), with some communities like Nkwele-Ezunaka and Ojoto reporting no unemployment. This could indicate effective local economic activities or community support systems that mitigate unemployment. However, the low numbers of civil servants and private sector employees might also reflect a need for more structured employment opportunities. Overall, the data suggests a robust self-employment sector but also highlights potential areas for development in formal employment to provide more diverse job opportunities.

Length of Stay in Community

Figure 4: Occupation of the Respondents across Communities in Anambra State

Community	Less than 5 Years	5 - 10 Years	11 - 20 Years	More than 20 Years	Total
Umueri	1	2	2	21	26
Mkpunando	1	2	2	19	24
Nteje	0	1	2	24	27
Nkwele-Ezunaka	0	0	4	21	25
Ifitedunu	0	1	2	11	14
Umunnachi	3	0	1	13	17
Alor	2	2	3	26	33
Ojoto	2	2	5	23	32
Nanka	1	1	4	23	29
Ajali	0	1	3	26	30
Ihiala	0	2	3	48	53
Okija	1	2	13	34	50
Overall Sample	**11**	**16**	**44**	**289**	360

Source: The Researcher, based on Field Survey, (2024)

Figure 4 indicates the length of time individuals have been residing in their respective communities. The majority of individuals have lived in their communities for more than 20 years (289), suggesting a high level of stability and long-term residency. This is particularly evident in communities like Ihiala and Okija, where the numbers are significantly higher (48 and 34 respectively). The lower numbers in the less than 5 years and 5-10 years categories (11 and 16 respectively) across most communities indicate that there is relatively low recent migration or turnover.

Analyzing the distribution further, it is clear that communities such as Alor, Ajali, and Nteje also have a substantial number of long-term residents (26, 26, and 24 respectively), which could imply strong community ties and established social networks. The relatively higher numbers in the 11-

20 years category in communities like Okija suggest some degree of mid-term stability as well. Overall, the data reflects a predominantly stable population with deep-rooted connections to their communities, which can be beneficial for community cohesion and local development initiatives.

State Government Policy on Rural Leadership and Community Leadership Crises in Anambra State

This section critically examines the impact of the Anambra state government's policies on rural and community leadership crises. It initiates the discussion by meticulously presenting and analyzing demographic data collected from respondents across various communities in Anambra State. This analysis provides a foundational understanding of the population's characteristics, essential for contextualising the subsequent evaluation of policy implications. By delving into the demographic profiles, the chapter sets the stage for a nuanced exploration of how these policies influence leadership dynamics and address crises within rural communities, ultimately aiming to offer insights into the effectiveness and areas for improvement in the state's governance strategies.

Quantitative Data

Determine whether the state government policy on rural leadership is implicated in community leadership crises in Anambra State.

Table 6: The impact of government policies on the community's leadership crises

Community	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
Umueri	4	5	7	6	4
Mkpunando	1	6	9	5	3
Nteje	4	3	12	4	4
Nkwele-Ezunaka	7	3	11	2	2
Ifitedunu	1	2	6	3	2
Umunnachi	3	0	13	1	0
Alor	2	6	16	8	1
Ojoto	2	6	14	7	3
Nanka	1	5	17	5	1
Ajali	3	5	11	9	2
Ihiala	5	10	23	12	3
Okija	8	9	19	8	6
Overall Sample	**41**	**60**	**158**	**70**	**31**

Source: The Researcher, based on Field Survey, (2024)

In Table 6, we show the perceived impact of government policies on leadership crises across various communities. The overall sample shows that the majority of respondents rated the impact as "Moderate" (158 responses), followed by "Low" (70 responses) and "High" (60 responses). The "Very High" and "Very Low" categories received the least responses, with 41 and 31 respectively. This distribution suggests that while there is a recognition of the impact of government policies, it is generally seen as moderate rather than extreme. For instance, in communities like Ihiala and Okija, there is a notable number of respondents who perceive the impact as "High" or "Very High," indicating significant concerns in these areas.

The variation in responses among different communities highlights the diverse experiences and perceptions regarding government policies. Nkwele-Ezunaka and Okija, for example, have higher "Very High" responses, suggesting stronger perceived impacts in these areas. Conversely, communities like Umunnachi and Ifitedunu have lower "Very High" responses, indicating less

perceived impact. This variation underscores the importance of localized policy assessments and interventions. Policymakers should consider these differences to address specific community needs and mitigate leadership crises effectively. Understanding the nuanced perceptions can help tailor policies that are more responsive and effective in fostering stable leadership across different communities.

Qualitative Data

Interviews conducted during the study revealed that the enforcement of the Anambra State Traditional Rulers Law No. 14 of 1981 has significantly contributed to leadership tensions within communities. Specifically, the recognition of unpopular traditional rulers, often without broad-based community endorsement, has intensified rivalries between Town Union Presidents and traditional stools. This statutory framework, originally intended to formalize chieftaincy recognition, has instead become a tool for political maneuvering, disrupting the delicate balance between cultural authority and civic leadership (Onwuegbusi, 2011; Point Blank News, 2021). The resulting friction has not only fragmented community governance but also weakened the legitimacy of both institutions.

Further evidence from stakeholder interviews and documented cases suggests that political patronage frequently overrides community constitutions in the selection and endorsement of local leaders. State actors, driven by partisan interests, often bypass established norms and procedures, appointing individuals who serve political agendas rather than communal interests. This practice undermines grassroots legitimacy and erodes trust in leadership structures, as communities perceive these appointments as externally imposed rather than organically derived. The findings align with Obiajulu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2016), who argue that such state-led interventions distort traditional governance and fuel persistent leadership crises across Anambra State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary

The findings of this study affirm that state government policies on rural leadership are a central factor in the proliferation of community leadership crises across Anambra State. Specifically, political interference, manifested through the arbitrary recognition of traditional rulers, the imposition of caretaker committees, and the manipulation of leadership selection processes, has eroded the legitimacy of indigenous governance structures. These actions not only undermine

community autonomy but also exacerbate factional rivalries, destabilize local institutions, and fuel persistent leadership disputes (Nwanegbo & Alumona, 2009; Oluwatoyin, 2020). The evidence suggests that the state's involvement often prioritizes political expediency over cultural integrity, thereby weakening the social fabric that sustains traditional leadership.

Recommendations

To address these challenges, the study recommends a multi-pronged policy reform agenda. First, legal frameworks governing rural leadership should be strengthened to curtail arbitrary state interference and ensure procedural transparency (Anazodo et al., 2015). Second, leadership succession must be guided by community constitutions and cultural norms, thereby restoring local ownership and legitimacy (Obiajulu & Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2016). Third, independent and culturally sensitive mechanisms should be established to mediate leadership disputes without political bias (Okoli & Nwagu, 2022). Finally, the politicisation of town union and chieftaincy affairs must be systematically reduced to prevent external manipulation and foster sustainable community governance (Nwosu, 2009). These recommendations, if implemented, could pave the way for more resilient and harmonious leadership structures in Anambra State.

References

Abulu, E. (2020). *Politics and Traditional Institutions in Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.

Anderson, J. E. (2003). *Public Policymaking: An Introduction* (5th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Anazodo, R., Igbokwe-Ibeto, C., & Nkah, B. (2015). *Leadership and Governance in Nigeria: The Role of Traditional Rulers*. Journal of Political Studies, 22(1), 45–62.

Dahrendorf, R. (1959). *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Ezealisiji, K. M. (2025). *Community Leadership and State Interference in Anambra*. (Being a Master's Thesis submitted to IPSDS, NAU, Awka).

Kooiman, J. (2003). *Governing as Governance*. London: Sage Publications.

Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (2nd ed.). New Delhi: New Age International.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1848). *The Communist Manifesto*. London: Penguin Classics.

Moses, I. (2024). *Town Unions and Traditional Rulers: A Study of Leadership Dualism in Anambra State*. Journal of African Governance, 18(2), 112–130.

Nwanegbo, C. J. Odigbo, J. (2015), "Governance, Corruption and Crisis of Development in Post-Independence Nigeria", in *African Journal of Politics and Society*, Vol. 1. No. 1. October. Pages 24 – 44.

Nwanegbo, C. J., & Alumona, I. M. (2009). "Communal Conflict and Crisis of Development in the South-Eastern of Nigeria" in G. Onu, C. Umezuruike, M. B. Nnabugwu and O.B.C. Nwankwo (eds.) *Issues in Politics and Governance in Nigeria*, Proceedings of the South East Zonal Conference of Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) South East, held at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Quintagon Publishers, Enugu. Pages 322-345.

Nwosu, H. (2009). *Politics of Chieftaincy Affairs in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press.

Obiajulu, S. O., & Biereenu-Nnabugwu, M. (2016). *State Policy and Community Leadership in Nigeria*. Enugu: Academic Press.

Okoli, F. C., & Nwagu, C. (2022). *Resolving Leadership Disputes in Rural Nigeria: The Role of Independent Institutions*. Journal of Peace and Development Studies, 14(4), 203–220.

Oluwatoyin, A. (2020). *Governance and Traditional Institutions in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.

Onwuegbusi, C. (2011). *Caretaker Committees and Leadership Crisis in Anambra Communities*. Awka: Government Policy Review Series.

Ozor, N., & Nwankwo, N. (2008). *State Interference in Community Governance: Evidence from Southeast Nigeria*. Journal of Rural Sociology, 10(2), 55–70.

Parsons, T. (1961). *Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory*. New York: Free Press.

Point Blank News. (2021). *Anambra Leadership Crisis Deepens as State Recognizes Disputed Ruler*. Retrieved from Point Blank News.

Rhodes, R. A. W. (1996). *The New Governance: Governing without Government*. Political Studies, 44(4), 652–667.