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The Editorial Board welcomes theoretical or research-based articles which are of relevance to education for consideration for publication in PAJE. Research-based articles will be given preference.

Authors/Contributors should adhere strictly to the underlisted guidelines on presentation. Articles, which fail to make these requirements, may be rejected.

1. All articles must be original and written in English language.
2. Articles or papers should not exceed 15 pages including tables and references. They should be typed, double spaced, 12 font size, on one side of A4 paper and preferably on Times New Romans.
3. The title should contain name(s), status, address(es), email address(es) and phone numbers of the authors to enhance communication.
4. The title should be concise, self-explanatory and not more than 20 words.
5. There should be an abstract of not more than 200 words.
6. All tables, graphs and diagrams should be in appropriate place in the paper and not on separate sheets. They should be correctly and suitably titled. Tables should be reduced to the barest minimum.
7. The current APA style of citation and referencing should be strictly adhered to.
8. Key words of not more than five should be provided below the abstract.
9. Simultaneous submission of articles to PAJE and other Journal should be avoided.
10. All articles are subject to peer review. Accepted articles for publication may be edited to improve their overall quality.

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure presenting Volume 12, Number 1 of the Pancen Journal of Education (PAJE) to our esteemed readers. The 10 articles in this issue explore collectively the theme centering on Education for Ethical Renewal, Inclusive Quality, and Transformative Governance for National Development.

The major concern of this issue is: How do we fix Nigerian education to produce morally sound, inclusive, employable and secure citizens?

The theme breaks down to the following pillars:

Pillar A revolves around Educational Leadership, Governance and Quality Assurance. In this: Justina H. Odion; Anthony A. Etta, Freedom Johnson, and Samuel E. Okon; Manasseh T. Iortyer and Kenter Chianen, and Justina H. Odion, respectively interrogate the governance dimension. From principal's work environment, promotion and discipline management in Karu LGA, Nasarawa State, to quality assurance practices and security education delivery in Plateau State, monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in North Central Nigeria, and the legal implications of balancing rights and responsibilities in school leadership. These papers argue that without effective, legally-grounded and accountable leadership, quality remains elusive.

Pillar B has to do with Inclusion, Skills and Guidance Support. Isaac O.Ajibade, Hamzat A. Shittu and Lateefat M. Eniola, and Polycarp I. Agweda and Augustina I. Efosa-Ehioghire, respectively focus on the learner. They examine foundations of inclusive mathematics education, curriculum integration of socio-emotional learning as a response to graduate unemployment and skills mismatch, and the strategic role of guidance and counselling in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Collectively, they affirm that quality education must be inclusive, responsive to labour market realities, and supported by psychosocial services.

Pillar C dwells on Ethical Values, Justice and Moral Formation. Sani M. Abubakar, Yekeen M. Dele and Abubakar I. Suleiman; Abubarkar I. Suleiman, Sani M. Abubakar and Yekeen M. Dele and Jere Ndazhaga, Emmanuel J. Nokshuwan and Polmi Ibrahim, respectively provide the moral anchor. Drawing from Islamic ethical teachings on justice and the condemnation of gender-based discrimination, and an empirical assessment of pupil's perceptions of moral and ethical values in primary schools in Plateau State. These papers remind us that the outcome of education is character.

I consider it worthwhile to put on record the rapid increase in the flow of quality articles being submitted for publication in PAJE. This is a clear demonstration of the corresponding confidence scholars repose in the Journal. On this note I appreciate our numerous subscribers for trusting us with the products of your rigorous academic endeavour. We will continue to carry out due diligence on all researches entrusted to us for publication.

The efforts of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) is hereby acknowledged. The operations of PAJE have, in recent times, been greatly enhanced by the interventions being continuously extended to the Journal. On behalf of the Editorial Board and the Management of the Federal University of Education, I express our heartfelt gratitude for the sponsorship of the publication of this edition.

For creating an enabling environment for the Journal to thrive, I acknowledge the Management of the Federal University of Education, Panshin. Your invaluable support for academic endeavour has ignited much more passionately the zeal for research activities in the University, and PAJE has been a remarkable part of that occurrence.

To the Editorial Board and Reviewers, I acknowledge your dedication to the course of making Pancen Journal of Education a consistent player in the academic world. The production of none of the editions of the Journal could have come to fruition without your commitments. Your continuous support is further solicited to take PAJE to an enviable position.

Above all, I hereby welcome the reading public to Volume 12, Number 1 of Pancen Journal of Education (PAJE). It is hoped that this edition will expand the frontiers of knowledge and help to serve as an avenue for further scholarly engagements and interactions among researchers worldwide.

Professor Jere Ndazhaga
Editor-in-Chief
Pancen Journal of Education (PAJE)

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INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' WORK ENVIRONMENT PROMOTION AND DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT ON TEACHERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KARU LGA, NASARAWA STATE

Justina Henry ODION
Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja
Email: justinahenryodion@gmail.com / nou257686691@noun.edu.ng
ORCID: 0009-0005-2443-2961

ABSTRACT
This study examined teachers' perceptions of principals' promotion of a favourable work environment and maintenance of discipline, and how these relate to secondary school teachers' productivity in Karu LGA, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was used. From a population of approximately 200 teachers across five sampled schools, the Taro Yamane formula yielded a minimum sample of 134; 150 questionnaires were distributed (30 per school) and 145 were validly returned (96.7%). Data came from the QIPARTP questionnaire: five work-environment items and two discipline items drawn from a broader 24-item instrument with an overall reliability of 0.75 (N = 15 pilot). Means, standard deviations, and independent-samples t-tests were used, with a Bonferroni-adjusted threshold applied within each construct to control Type I error. Teachers strongly agreed that a favourable work environment — especially timely salary payment and good conditions — was linked to their productivity (cluster mean = 3.50); discipline was rated similarly highly (cluster mean = 3.33). After Bonferroni correction, private–public differences remained significant for two work-environment items (p = .004 each), but the earlier discipline difference (p = .038) no longer met the corrected threshold (α = .025).

Keywords: *Teacher productivity, work environment, discipline management, principals' administrative roles, Nasarawa State.*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the backbone of any school system, and their productivity is central to institutional effectiveness. Yet many Nigerian secondary school teachers show signs of low commitment — lateness, inconsistent lesson preparation, disengagement — that undermine this role (Adeyemi, 2010). In this study, productivity is operationalised through teachers' self-reported commitment, motivation, and attitudinal engagement, indicators widely used as productivity proxies in the Nigerian educational administration literature (Adeyemi, 2010), rather than through direct output measures such as lesson delivery or student outcomes — a distinction returned to under Limitations.

The school principal, as chief administrator, is responsible for coordinating human and material resources toward institutional goals (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Among the many administrative levers available to principals — communication, instructional support, salary administration, discipline — this study focuses on two: teachers' perceptions of principals' promotion of a good work environment, and principals' maintenance of staff and students' discipline.

The study is set in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, which has 24 public secondary schools and roughly 600 registered private secondary schools (Nasarawa State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2024). How teachers in this area perceive principals' handling of work environment and discipline, and how this relates to their own productivity, is the concern this study addresses.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher productivity is essential to the quality-education goals set out in the National Policy on Education (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013), and is often reflected in students' academic performance. Concerns have been raised regarding declining teacher commitment and classroom effectiveness in some Nigerian secondary schools — lateness, reduced class attendance, inconsistent lesson preparation — despite ongoing training and workshops. While existing studies (Odion & Mbanefo, 2025; Adegbesan, 2013; Sule, 2013) have examined various dimensions of principals' administrative roles, little attention has been paid specifically to teachers' perceptions of work environment promotion and discipline management in Karu LGA. This gap prompted the present study.

Purpose of the Study

This study examines teachers' perceptions of the influence of principals' work environment promotion and discipline management on their productivity in secondary schools in Karu LGA. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Examine the influence of principals' promotion of a good work environment on teachers' productivity.
2. Determine the influence of principals' maintenance of staff and students' discipline on teachers' productivity.
3. Find out whether significant differences exist between private and public school teachers regarding principals' promotion of a favourable work environment.
4. Find out whether significant differences exist between private and public school teachers regarding principals' maintenance of staff and students' discipline.

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of principals' promotion of a good work environment on teachers' productivity in Karu LGA?
2. What is the influence of principals' maintenance of staff and students' discipline on teachers' productivity in Karu LGA?
3. What difference exists between private and public school teachers regarding principals' promotion of a favourable work environment?
4. What difference exists between private and public school teachers regarding principals' maintenance of staff and students' discipline?

Research Hypotheses

Tested at $\alpha = 0.05$, with a Bonferroni-adjusted threshold applied within each construct to account for multiple item-level comparisons (see Method of Data Analysis):

Ho1: There is no significant difference between private and public school teachers' responses regarding principals' promotion of a favourable working environment on their productivity.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between private and public school teachers' responses regarding principals' maintenance of staff and students' discipline on their productivity.

Literature Review

Work Environment and Teachers' Productivity

Work environment refers to the conditions, resources, and relationships shaping how people work (Ossai & Okokoyo, 2024). Anjorin (2026), studying Ondo North Senatorial District, found utilities, instructional resources, and furniture provision linked to teachers' productivity — closely matching this study's work-environment items. Nanzushi (2015) identified reward, leadership style, and work–life balance as key drivers; Ali et al. (2013) linked a positive environment to teacher commitment.

Salary features prominently here. MySalaryScale (2017) reported Nigerian public school teachers earning as little as ₦49,000 monthly; Ssegawa (2019) linked salary increments to higher commitment; Al-Omari and Okasheh (2017) and Aroge (2016) both linked working conditions and job satisfaction to performance. Michael and Lucky (2026) found job satisfaction mediating the leadership–performance link in Delta State, and Oni, Nwajiuba, and Nwosu (2017) found motivation significantly tied to productivity in Lagos State — independent findings, from different states, supporting the pattern observed locally.

Staff and Students' Discipline and Teachers' Productivity

Discipline is the system of rules used to manage behaviour and maintain order (Jade, 2023); Nigerian secondary schools continue to report malpractice and insubordination. School rules foster self-discipline (Nasarawa State Government, 2010), and Nzokurum and Iremeka (2017) found discipline management significantly correlated with productivity in Enugu State. Owan and Ekpe (2019), independently in Cross River State, found disciplinary practices — warning, suspension, dismissal — each significantly related to job effectiveness, supporting what teachers here reported: discipline as the single highest-scoring item overall (mean = 3.61).

Theoretical Framework

Three complementary theories anchor this study. Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971, 1996) holds that effective leaders provide direction and support shaping subordinates' effort, with supportive/directive dimensions explaining how principals guide commitment through environment and discipline (Dixon & Hart, 2010; Alanazi et al., 2013). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) distinguishes hygiene factors — salary, conditions — from motivators; their absence breeds dissatisfaction, helping explain why salary and conditions scored so strongly here. Fayol's (1916/1949) principle of discipline provides the administrative rationale for why clear, fairly enforced rules matter. Together these frame salary payment, environment, and discipline as expressions of the dynamics this study examines, rather than being tested as discrete constructs.

The literature points consistently toward a positive relationship between principals' administrative practices and teacher productivity, but most existing work — Adegbesan (2013) and Sule (2013) on leadership and supervision — has focused elsewhere. Very little has examined work environment and discipline jointly, or compared these across ownership types in Karu LGA specifically.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design, using questionnaires to assess teachers' perceptions of the research problem. As a descriptive design, it does not permit causal inference; findings are reported throughout as perceived associations rather than causal effects.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

Karu LGA's wider teacher population, across 12 public senior, 12 public junior, and roughly 600 registered private secondary schools, is approximately 8,364 (Nasarawa State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2024). Sample size was determined from the combined teaching staff of the five schools selected for data collection — Government Secondary School Bakin Ado, Government Secondary School Masaka, Ambassador Sky Pathway Academy, Divine Fortune International Academy, and Valliant Private School Ado (two public, three private) — whose combined staff numbered approximately 200.

Simple random sampling selected teacher-respondents within each school. The two-public/three-private split reflects an attempt at broad representation across ownership types rather than strict proportional sampling relative to the LGA's far larger private-school population (≈600 private vs. 24 public schools); this trade-off, made to keep both groups large enough for meaningful comparison, is acknowledged as a limitation.

Applying the Taro Yamane formula, $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$, with N = 200 and e = 0.05, yielded a minimum required sample of 133.3, rounded to 134. To allow for non-response, 150 questionnaires were distributed (30 per school); 145 were validly returned (96.7%), comfortably above the minimum.

Instrument, Validity, and Reliability

Data were collected using the Questionnaire on the Impact of Principals' Administrative Roles on Teachers' Productivity (QIPARTP): Section A (demographics) and Section B (24 items across five clusters — general administrative roles, communication, instructional materials sustainability, work environment, and ways of improving productivity), on a four-point Likert scale (SA=4 to SD=1).

This paper reports two components: the five-item Work Environment cluster, and two discipline-related items drawn from elsewhere in the instrument (one from general administrative roles, one from ways of improving productivity). Discipline was not designed as a standalone cluster; these two items should be read as an indicative measure, not a separately validated sub-scale.

Three experts — a supervisor, a Measurement and Evaluation lecturer, and an Educational Administration and Planning specialist — reviewed the instrument for validity. A pilot test of 15 teachers returned an overall reliability of 0.75 (Cronbach's Alpha) for the full 24-item instrument (Mbanefo, 2023b); the two-item discipline measure's reliability was not separately established, noted as a limitation below.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, with anonymity and confidentiality assured. An introduction letter was obtained from the NOUN Wuse II Study Centre, and attestation letters were secured from all five participating schools.

Method of Data Analysis

SPSS was used to compute means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions (decision rule: 3.2–4.0 = Strongly Agree, 2.4–3.19 = Agree). Independent-samples t-tests compared private and public school teachers' responses per item. Because Hypothesis 1 spans five items and Hypothesis 2 spans two, testing each separately inflates Type I error beyond the nominal 0.05 level. A Bonferroni correction was therefore applied within each construct ($\alpha = .05/5 = .01$ for H1; $\alpha = .05/2 = .025$ for H2); results are reported at both thresholds for transparency.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the influence of principals' promotion of a good work environment on teachers' productivity in Karu LGA, Nasarawa State?

Table 1: Frequencies, Means and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Principals' Promotion of a Good Work Environment on Teachers' Productivity (N=145)

S/N	Items	SD	D	A	SA	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.	Decision
14	Work environment promotes teachers' commitment to quality work production	-	2	71	72	3.48	.528	S. Agree
15	When the working environment is favourable it influences my teaching and the students learn better	-	-	62	83	3.57	.496	S. Agree
16	Early payment of staff salary motivates teachers to do work better	-	1	39	105	3.72	.467	S. Agree
17	Good pay influences teachers' commitment to their work	-	-	51	94	3.65	.479	S. Agree
18	When a principal promotes discipline in school, it leads to positive attitude to work by teachers	-	6	116	23	3.12	.433	Agree
	Cluster Mean					3.50	.479	S. Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2024. $\bar{x}$ = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Scale: SD = Strongly Disagree (1); D = Disagree (2); A = Agree (3); SA = Strongly Agree (4). Decision rule: 3.2–4.0 = Strongly Agree; 2.4–3.19 = Agree.

Table 1 shows that the cluster mean ($\bar{x}$ = 3.50, SD = 0.479) falls within the Strongly Agree range, indicating that teachers perceived principals' promotion of a good work environment as positively associated with their productivity. Item 16 recorded the highest mean (3.72), reflecting strong agreement that early payment of staff salary motivates teachers, followed by item 17 (3.65) and item 15 (3.57). Item 18 recorded a mean of 3.12, which falls within the Agree range under the study's decision rule (corrected from an earlier misclassification as Strongly Agree).

Research Question 2: What is the influence of principals' maintenance of staff and students' discipline on teachers' productivity in Karu LGA, Nasarawa State?

Table 2: Frequencies, Means and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Principals' Maintenance of Staff and Students' Discipline on Teachers' Productivity (N=145)

S/N	Items	SD	D	A	SA	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.	Decision
4	Principals' maintaining of staff and students' discipline promotes teachers' productivity	-	1	54	90	3.61	.503	S. Agree
22	Principal's ensuring of discipline in my school promotes teachers' confidence to work	-	8	123	14	3.04	.389	Agree
	Cluster Mean					3.33	.45	S. Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2024. $\bar{x}$ = Mean; SD (in item labels) = Strongly Disagree; Std.Dev. = Standard Deviation.

Table 2 shows a cluster mean of 3.33, within the Strongly Agree range, indicating that teachers perceived principals' maintenance of staff and students' discipline as positively associated with their productivity. Item 4 recorded the highest single-item mean in the entire study (3.61), while item 22 recorded a mean of 3.04 (Agree).

Research Question 3 / Testing of Hypothesis 1 (Ho1): What difference exists between teachers in private and public secondary schools regarding principals' promotion of a favourable work environment?

Table 3: Independent-Samples t-test on Ho1 — Principals' Promotion of a Favourable Work Environment and Teachers' Productivity, by School Type (N=145)

S/N	Item	School	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	T	p	Dec. α=.05	Dec. Bonf. α=.01
14	Work environment promotes teachers' commitment to quality work production	Private Public	85 60	3.38 3.63	.534 .486	-2.960	.004	S	S
15	When the working environment is favourable it influences my teaching and the students learn better	Private Public	85 60	3.56 3.58	.499 .497	-.222	.825	NS	NS
16	Early payment of staff salary motivates teachers to do work better	Private Public	85 60	3.62 3.85	.511 .360	-2.952	.004	S	S

17	Good pay influences teachers' commitment to their work	Private Public	85 60	3.60 3.72	.493 .454	- 1.44 9	.149	NS	NS
18	When a principal promotes discipline in school, it leads to positive attitude to work by teachers	Private Public	85 60	3.15 3.07	.362 .516	1.18 3	.239	NS	NS

Source: Field Survey, 2024. df = 143; conventional α = .05; Bonferroni-adjusted α = .05/5 = .01; S = Significant; NS = Not Significant.

Table 3 shows that items 14 and 16 remained statistically significant even after applying the Bonferroni-adjusted threshold (p = .004 in both cases, below α = .01), indicating a genuine difference between private school teachers (means 3.38 and 3.62) and public school teachers (means 3.63 and 3.85) in their perceptions of work environment as a motivator and of early salary payment. Items 15, 17, and 18 were not significant at either threshold. Null hypothesis 1 is therefore partially rejected: private and public school teachers differ significantly in their perceptions on two of the five work-environment items.

Research Question 4 / Testing of Hypothesis 2 (Ho2): What difference exists between teachers in private and public secondary schools regarding principals' maintenance of staff and students' discipline?

Table 4: Independent-Samples t-test on Ho2 — Principals' Maintenance of Staff and Students' Discipline and Teachers' Productivity, by School Type (N=145)

S/N	Item	School	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	t	p	Dec. α=.05	Dec. Bonf. α=.025
4	Principals' maintaining of staff and students' discipline promotes teachers' productivity	Private Public	85 60	3.54 3.72	.524 .454	- 2.09 5	.038	S	NS
22	Principal's ensuring of discipline in my school promotes teachers' confidence to work	Private Public	85 60	3.04 3.05	.392 .387	-.224	.823	NS	NS

Source: Field Survey, 2024. df = 143; conventional α = .05; Bonferroni-adjusted α = .05/2 = .025; S = Significant; NS = Not Significant.

Table 4 shows that item 4 reached significance at the conventional 0.05 level (p = .038) but does not meet the Bonferroni-adjusted threshold of .025 for this two-item construct; it is therefore interpreted as not statistically significant once the multiple-comparison correction is applied.

Item 22 was not significant at either threshold. Null hypothesis 2 is retained: this study did not find a statistically robust difference between private and public school teachers' perceptions of principals' maintenance of discipline once Type I error inflation from multiple item-level comparisons is accounted for.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Principals' Promotion of a Good Work Environment and Teachers' Productivity

Teachers clearly linked a favourable work environment to their own productivity (cluster mean = 3.50), with early salary payment (3.72) and favourable conditions (3.57) drawing the strongest agreement. This tracks with Al-Omari and Okasheh (2017), Usop et al. (2013), and Michael and Lucky (2026), whose Delta State study found job satisfaction mediating the link between principals' leadership and teacher performance — and with Odion and Mbanefo (2025), drawing on the same broader Karu LGA dataset, who found similar credit given to enabling administrative conditions.

Two items held up as significant after Bonferroni correction ($p = .004$ for items 14 and 16), meaning private and public school teachers genuinely differ here rather than the gap being a testing artefact. Public school teachers were more emphatic that early salary payment motivates them (3.85 vs. 3.62) — plausibly reflecting the salary-delay patterns often reported in Nigeria's public school system (MySalaryScale, 2017).

Principals' Maintenance of Discipline and Teachers' Productivity

Discipline mattered too — item 4 produced the study's single highest mean (3.61), echoing Nzokurum and Iremeka (2017) and Owan and Ekpe (2019), both finding discipline management significantly tied to teacher effectiveness elsewhere in Nigeria. Unlike work environment, though, the private–public difference here ($p = .038$) falls short of the Bonferroni-adjusted threshold ($\alpha = .025$) for this two-item construct. Once the extra caution against false positives is factored in, teachers across both school types appear to value consistent discipline enforcement about equally.

Implications of the Study

For state government and school management boards, the salary finding reframes prompt payment from a routine welfare matter into something closer to a productivity lever — teachers themselves connect the two. On discipline, the corrected results counsel restraint: since the public–private difference didn't hold up statistically, this study doesn't support treating discipline strategy differently by ownership type, but it does support clear, consistently enforced standards regardless of school type.

For principal-preparation programmes, both findings suggest work environment management and discipline enforcement deserve a real place in the curriculum. And the pattern here echoes prior Sub-Saharan African evidence (Ali et al., 2013; Nzokurum & Iremeka, 2017), hinting the dynamics observed in Karu LGA may extend beyond it — though with only five schools sampled, that remains a suggestion worth testing further, not a claim to generalise yet.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations bear on how these findings should be read. The study drew on five schools (two public, three private), so some of the apparent public/private difference could reflect individual school leadership rather than anything systemic about ownership type.

Productivity was measured through self-reported commitment and attitude rather than direct output (lesson preparation, student outcomes) — a common approach in this literature (Adeyemi, 2010) but a narrower construct than "productivity" in the fullest sense. Most importantly, the discipline construct rests on just two items pulled from different clusters of the original 24-item instrument, not a purpose-built sub-scale — a narrow basis for a construct this central to the study — and its reliability was not independently established. Finally, because only item-level (not respondent-level) data were available, a Bonferroni correction was used in place of a composite-score analysis, which would require respondent-level data this study did not have access to — worth building in for any follow-up work on this dataset.

CONCLUSION

Teachers in Karu LGA saw a real connection between how principals handled work environment and discipline and how productive they themselves felt, consistently across both public and private schools — especially around salary and conditions. Discipline maintenance stood out most (mean = 3.61), leaving little doubt teachers see it as central to their effectiveness. Once multiple comparisons were accounted for, the public–private gap held for two work-environment items but not for discipline, suggesting teachers across both school types are largely aligned on how much discipline matters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Principals should prioritise a conducive work environment, including timely salary payment, which teachers associated with their motivation.
2. School administrators should establish and consistently communicate clear disciplinary policies for staff and students.
3. School authorities should prioritise timely salary payment and strengthen teacher welfare programmes — salary timeliness specifically, the dimension examined here, rather than remuneration levels generally.
4. Regular staff welfare meetings should be institutionalised, giving teachers a channel to raise work-environment concerns.
5. Future studies should retain respondent-level data for composite-score analysis, and incorporate direct output measures alongside attitudinal indicators of productivity.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Author Contribution: The author conceptualised the study, designed the instrument, collected data, performed the analysis, and wrote the manuscript. An AI tool was used for formatting support only.

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QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES AND SECURITY EDUCATION DELIVERY AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Anthony Abang ETTA ,
Department of Political Science Education
Federal University of Education, Pankshin,
Plateau State, Nigeria
Email: ettaabang@fuep.edu.com, tonyett4progress@gmail.com

Freedom JOHNSON
Email - jesfreedom85@fuep.edu.ng
Department of Political Science Education
College of Arts and Social Science Education
Federal University of Education, Pankshin.
&
Samuel Effiong OKON
Department : Economics and Political Science Education
Faculty : Art and Social science Education
University of Calabar
Email: Samuelokon@unical.edu.ng, Sammie188a@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
Persistent insecurity in Nigeria has heightened the need for effective Security Education capable of developing learners' security awareness, precautionary behaviour and responsible responses to threats. This study therefore examined quality assurance practices and Security Education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria. Three specific objectives, with corresponding null hypotheses, guided the study. Correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised all teachers in public secondary schools in Plateau State during the 2025/2026 academic session, from which a sample of 384 teachers was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. A researcher-developed instrument titled Quality Assurance Practices and Security Education Delivery Questionnaire (QAPSEDQ), was used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using simple linear and multiple regression analyses on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 27.0. The coefficients of correlation (R), coefficients of determination (R^2), regression coefficients (β), regression Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-test statistics were used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision both separately and jointly predicted Security Education delivery significantly ($p < .05$). It was therefore recommended, among others, that Plateau State Ministry of Education and school authorities should strengthen regular curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision, with particular emphasis on systematic monitoring of Security Education delivery to enhance learning.

Keywords: Quality assurance, Curriculum monitoring, Instructional supervision, Security Education delivery, teachers

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental instrument of human development, social transformation and national progress. The positive contributions of education extend beyond the acquisition of knowledge and occupational skills to the development of responsible citizens, social cohesion, civic consciousness and the capacity to participate constructively in society. In Nigeria, these functions are particularly important because national development depends not only on economic advancement but also on citizens' capacity to coexist peacefully, respond responsibly to emerging threats and contribute to the stability of their communities.

The National Policy on Education identifies the development of morally sound, patriotic and effective citizens, national consciousness and unity, and competencies that enable individuals to contribute positively to society among the central goals of Nigerian education (Federal Ministry of Education [FME], 2013). Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Education emphasizes quality education, good citizenship, self-reliance and effective participation in national development, while assigning responsibility for teacher quality and curriculum delivery to the education system (FME, 2022). Thus, the quality of educational delivery has implications not only for academic development but also for responsible citizenship, peaceful coexistence and national development.

The importance of these educational functions becomes more pronounced in a society experiencing persistent insecurity. Nigeria continues to contend with kidnapping, banditry, terrorism, communal violence and other forms of violent conflict that affect communities, public institutions and economic activities. The Oxford Policy Management and Cloneshouse (2025) reported that armed violence, banditry, abductions and communal conflicts in northern Nigeria have disrupted livelihoods, displaced communities, strained social cohesion and hindered access to education and other basic services. Schools are particularly vulnerable because insecurity can interrupt schooling, expose teachers and learners to danger, damage educational facilities and create fear that undermines participation in education. In response, the Federal Ministry of Education has strengthened its safe-school agenda and developed an Early Warning Handbook to assist educators and school communities in identifying and responding to threats such as kidnapping, communal clashes and violent extremism (FME, 2025a). These developments demonstrate the growing need for educational processes that not only promote academic learning but also develop learners' awareness, preparedness and responsible responses to security challenges.

One educational response to this need is Security Education. Security Education may be understood as a curricular process through which learners acquire knowledge, awareness, attitudes and practical competencies for recognizing security threats, taking appropriate precautions, responding responsibly to dangerous situations and contributing to the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council [NERDC], 2019). The Nigerian curriculum provides learning experiences addressing security, sources of danger and insecurity, precautionary measures and appropriate responses to security-related situations. Its inclusion in the school curriculum reflects the recognition that security consciousness and responsible behaviour ought to be developed through education. Recent research has continued to examine the implementation of Security Education in secondary schools, including students' knowledge, teachers' instructional practices and challenges associated with curriculum implementation (Akpan et al., 2025). However, the formal prescription of Security Education does not necessarily guarantee its effective delivery. Its

realization ultimately depends substantially on the quality of classroom implementation by teachers.

Security Education delivery, as used in this study, refers to the extent to which teachers translate prescribed Security Education content, objectives and learning experiences into effective classroom instruction that develops learners' security awareness, precautionary behaviour, responsible responses to threats and capacity for peaceful coexistence. Effective delivery therefore requires more than the mere presence of Security Education in the curriculum; it involves appropriate coverage of prescribed content, alignment of instruction with curriculum objectives, suitable learning activities and meaningful connection between security concepts and learners' everyday experiences. Akpan et al. (2025) similarly emphasized the need to strengthen teachers' approaches to facilitating security-related learning. Consequently, mechanisms that monitor curriculum implementation and support teachers' instructional practices become important for ensuring that the intended objectives of Security Education are realized.

One such mechanism is educational quality assurance. Quality assurance refers to the systematic processes through which educational standards are monitored, evaluated, maintained and continuously improved to ensure that educational inputs, processes and outputs meet established standards and expectations (Ayinde et al., 2025). The revised National Education Quality Assurance Policy also presents quality assurance as a comprehensive framework involving monitoring, supervision, assessment, evaluation and capacity development for improving educational quality and professional competence (FME, 2025b). Monitoring and supervision are therefore important mechanisms through which educational standards and curriculum implementation can be assessed and improved. Within this framework, curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision constitute two particularly relevant practices for Security Education delivery.

Curriculum monitoring concerns the systematic examination of the extent to which approved curriculum content, objectives, learning experiences and assessment expectations are implemented as prescribed. It provides a link between curriculum prescription and classroom practice by determining whether teachers are actually implementing the content and objectives contained in the approved curriculum. The Security Education curriculum contains prescribed objectives, content, teacher and learner activities, instructional resources and evaluation procedures (NERDC, 2019). Monitoring its implementation can therefore help identify whether these prescribed elements receive appropriate attention in classroom practice. The Federal Ministry of Education assigns responsibility for monitoring curriculum use and implementation, while the revised National Education Quality Assurance Policy identifies monitoring as an essential component of the national quality-assurance system (FME, 2025b). Curriculum monitoring can consequently be regarded as the curriculum-implementation dimension of quality assurance relevant to Security Education delivery.

Complementing curriculum monitoring is instructional supervision, which focuses on the quality of the teaching process through which curriculum content is transformed into learning experiences. According to Idris (2024), instructional supervision involves observation, assessment, professional guidance, feedback and support intended to improve teachers' classroom practices and instructional effectiveness. It focuses on how effectively teachers translate those requirements into classroom instruction (Hiliya et al., 2025). Evidence from Nigerian secondary-school contexts suggest the relevance of instructional supervision to teachers' performance.

For instance, Abah and Haruna (2024) reported that instructional supervision supported teachers' preparation and lesson delivery, while Idris (2024) found that the frequency of principals' instructional supervision significantly predicted teacher effectiveness in public and private post-basic secondary schools in Kano Metropolis. Furthermore, Olorunmaiye et al. (2025), in their study suggest that instructional supervision was important for strengthening the effectiveness of classroom teaching. Similarly, Egboka and Nwosu (2024) reported a positive relationship between principals' supervisory practices and teachers' job performance. In addition, Yusuf et al. (2026), identified pre-lesson observation, classroom observation and post-lesson observation as important supervisory practices and emphasized their role in supporting teachers' instructional effectiveness. These findings suggest that instructional supervision constitutes an important teaching-process dimension of quality assurance through which teachers can be supported to improve the delivery of prescribed curriculum content.

The relevance of these quality assurance practices is particularly evident in Plateau State, where security concerns have implications for schooling and community life. The state's experience of communal and ethno-religious tensions, together with continuing concerns about violent attacks and community safety, makes security awareness and preparedness particularly relevant to education. The vulnerability of schools to security threats was demonstrated when the Plateau State Government temporarily closed basic schools in response to rising security concerns, describing the measure as preventive and aimed at strengthening security arrangements before reopening (Abraham, 2025). Although temporary closure represents an immediate protective response, it also illustrates the educational consequences of insecurity and the importance of strengthening the capacity of schools to anticipate, prevent and respond to security-related threats. The need for such preparedness is consistent with the Federal Ministry of Education's Early Warning Handbook, which provides guidance for educators and school communities in identifying and responding to security risks.

For public secondary schools in Plateau State, therefore, the issue extends beyond whether Security Education is formally prescribed. The more important concern is whether the educational system provides adequate quality assurance mechanisms to support its effective classroom delivery. Curriculum monitoring can help ensure that prescribed Security Education content and objectives are implemented, while instructional supervision can support teachers in translating that content into effective learning experiences. The Federal Ministry of Education's quality-assurance framework places both monitoring and supervision within the broader process of educational quality improvement, while its secondary-education mandate emphasizes teacher quality and curriculum delivery (FME, 2022; 2025). This policy orientation provides a basis for examining whether these quality assurance practices are associated with the delivery of Security Education at school level.

Despite the policy importance of both quality assurance and Security Education, an empirical gap remains. Existing Nigerian studies have examined instructional supervision in relation to teacher quality, teacher performance and general instructional effectiveness (Abah & Haruna, 2024; Idris, 2024; Olorunmaiye et al., 2025; Yusuf et al., 2026), while studies of Security Education have considered students' knowledge, instructional strategies, curriculum implementation and challenges affecting its delivery (Akpan et al., 2025; Boh, 2021). However, these bodies of research have largely examined educational quality assurance and Security Education separately. In particular, limited empirical evidence is available on whether curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision, considered as specific quality assurance practices, are associated with Security Education delivery among public secondary school

teachers in Plateau State. This creates a contextual and relational gap that warrants empirical investigation. It is against this background that the present study examines quality assurance practices and security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria, with implications for national development.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine quality assurance practices and security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the extent to which:

1. curriculum monitoring predicts security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.
2. instructional supervision predicts security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.
3. curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision jointly predict security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho_1: Curriculum monitoring does not significantly predict security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Ho_2: Instructional supervision does not significantly predict security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Ho_3: Curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision do not jointly significantly predict security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

A correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 3,260 teachers in public secondary schools in Plateau State, Nigeria, during the 2025/2026 academic session. A sample of 384 teachers was selected of the study, through multistage sampling procedure. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane (1967) formula, at a 0.05 level of precision.

A researcher-developed instrument titled Quality Assurance Practices and Security Education Delivery Questionnaire (QAPSEDQ) was used for data collection. The QAPSEDQ was divided into four sections: Sections A, B, C and D. Section A elicited demographic information from the respondents, including gender, age, teaching experience and academic qualification. Section B contained items measuring curriculum monitoring. Section C contained items measuring instructional supervision. While section D contained items measuring Security Education delivery. Items in Sections B, C and D were rated on a four-point Likert-type scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE), assigned numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively.

The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts. The experts were drawn from Civic and Social Studies Education, Educational Administration, and Educational Measurement and Evaluation. They were requested to examine the items in terms of clarity, relevance, adequacy, appropriateness, representativeness and alignment with the constructs and

purposes of the study. The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot test involving 30 public secondary school teachers who possessed characteristics similar to those of the study participants but were not included in the main study. The pilot-test data were subjected to Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.81, 0.78 and 0.79 for the sections B, C and D, respectively, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.80. The final version of the instrument was administered to the sampled teachers by the researchers, with the assistance of seven trained research assistants. Data collected from the completed questionnaires were coded and analysed using simple linear and multiple regression analyses on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 27.0. The coefficients of correlation (R), coefficients of determination (R^2), regression coefficients (β), regression Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) model and t-test statistics obtained were used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Results from data analyses are presented below:

Hypotheses one (Ho_1): Curriculum monitoring does not significantly predict security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Table 1:

Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Extent to which Curriculum Monitoring Predict Security Education Delivery Among Public Secondary School Teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria (N=384)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.501[a]	.251	.249	.34896	.251	107.234	1	382	.000

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	13.058	1	13.058	107.234	.000
	Residual	38.967	382	.122		
	Total	52.025	383			

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.785	.117		15.266	.000
	In-Service Training (IST)	.376	.036	.501	10.355	.000

R = Correlation coefficient, R^2 = Coefficient of determination, df = 382, F= Regression ANOVA, t = t-value, Sig.(*p*-value) at .05 level

Results in Table 1 as presented in the simple regression model summary shows a moderate positive relationship between curriculum monitoring and security education delivery (R = .501). The coefficient of determination (R^2 = .251) indicates that curriculum monitoring accounts for 25.1% of the variance in security education delivery, while the remaining 74.9% of the variance is attributable to other factors not included in the regression model. The adjusted R^2 value of .249 further suggests that the regression model provides a reliable and stable estimate of the relationship between the two variables.

The regression ANOVA results, $F(1, 382) = 107.234$, $p < .05$, indicate that curriculum monitoring significantly predict security education delivery. Furthermore, the regression coefficients indicate that curriculum monitoring made a statistically significant positive contribution to security education delivery (B = .376, SE = .036, β = .501, $t = 10.355$, $p < .05$).

This implies that a one-unit increase in curriculum monitoring is associated with an estimated 0.376-unit improvement in security education delivery. The standardized regression coefficient (β = .501) further reveal that curriculum monitoring exerts a moderately strong positive association with security education delivery. The intercept (B = 1.785) represents the estimated security education delivery score when the level of curriculum monitoring is zero. Since the probability value was less than the .05 level of significance at which the result was tested, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected. It was therefore concluded that curriculum monitoring significantly predicts security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses two (Ho_2): Instructional supervision does not significantly predict security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Table 2:

Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Extent to which Instructional Supervision Predict Security Education Delivery Among Public Secondary School teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria (N=384)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.563[a]	.316	.314	.33337	.316	148.120	1	382	.000

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	16.461	1	16.461	148.120	.000
	Residual	35.563	382	.111		
	Total	52.025	383			

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.607	.114		14.058	.000
	Seminar Attendance (SA)	.459	.038	.563	12.170	.000

R = Correlation coefficient, R^2 = Coefficient of determination, df = 382, F= Regression ANOVA, t = t-value, Sig.(*p*-value) at .05 level

The simple linear regression analysis results presented in Table 2 reveal that a moderately strong positive relationship between instructional supervision and security education delivery (R = .563). The regression model explained 31.6% of the variation in security education delivery (R^2 = .316), suggesting that the remaining 68.4% of the variation may be associated with other factors not captured in the model. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2 = .314) further confirms that the regression model provides a stable and reliable estimate of the relationship between instructional supervision and security education delivery.

The significance of the model was further confirmed by the analysis of variance (ANOVA). The F-value of 148.120 obtained was statistically significant at the .05 level ($F(1, 382) = 148.120$, $p < .05$), indicating that instructional supervision significantly predicts security education delivery. In addition, the regression coefficients revealed a significant positive association between instructional supervision and security education delivery (B = .459, SE = .038, β = .563, $t = 12.170$, $p < .05$). This suggests that higher levels of instructional supervision are associated with improved security education delivery. Specifically, a one-unit increase in instructional supervision was associated with an estimated 0.459-unit improvement in security

education delivery. The standardized regression coefficient (β = .563) further indicates a moderately strong positive association between instructional supervision and security education delivery. In view of these findings, the null hypothesis was rejected. It was therefore inferred that instructional supervision significantly predict security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses three (Ho_3): Curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision do not jointly significantly predict security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Table 3:
Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Extent to which Curriculum Monitoring and Instructional Supervision Jointly Predict Security Education Delivery Among Public Secondary School Teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria (N=384)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	Change Statistics df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.643	.414	.412	.30867	.414	226.034	2	381	.000

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	21.536	2	21.536	226.034	.000
	Residual	30.489	381	.095		
	Total	52.025	383			

R = Correlation coefficient, R^2 = Coefficient of determination, df = 381, F= Regression ANOVA, t = t-value, Sig.(*p*-value) at .05 level

The simple multiple linear regression analysis results presented in Table 3 show that there is a strong positive joint relationship between curriculum monitoring, instructional supervision and security education delivery (R = .643). The result further showed that curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision jointly accounted for 41.4% of the observed changes in security education delivery (R^2 = .414), while the remaining 58.6% of the variation was attributable to other factors not included in the regression model. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2 = .412) further confirms that the regression model provides a stable and reliable estimate of the proportion of variance in security education delivery attributable to curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 381) = 226.034$, $p < .05$, indicating that curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision significantly predict security education delivery. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis was rejected. It was therefore concluded that curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision jointly and significantly predict security education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The study examined the predictive influence of curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision on Security Education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria. The first finding showed that curriculum monitoring significantly and positively predicted Security Education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State. This finding suggests that closer attention to the implementation of prescribed curriculum

content, objectives, learning activities and related curriculum requirements is associated with better delivery of Security Education. The finding is consistent with Akpan et al. (2025), who emphasized the importance of strengthening teachers' approaches to facilitating Security Education. The finding extends observation by demonstrating empirically that the monitoring dimension of quality assurance is significantly related to teachers' delivery of Security Education. This imply that where curriculum implementation is regularly monitored, teachers are more likely to give appropriate attention to prescribed Security Education content and objectives.

The second finding revealed that instructional supervision significantly and positively predicted Security Education delivery. This finding means that teachers who experience more effective instructional supervision tend to report better delivery of Security Education. The finding agrees with Abah and Haruna (2024), who reported that instructional supervision supported teachers' preparation and lesson delivery, and with Idris (2024), who found that the frequency of principals' instructional supervision significantly predicted teacher effectiveness. It also supports the findings of Olorunmaiye et al. (2025), who identified instructional supervision as important for effective classroom teaching, and Egboka and Nwosu (2024), who reported a positive relationship between principals' supervisory practices and teachers' job performance. The agreement of these findings suggests that instructional supervision may improve Security Education delivery by providing teachers with observation, professional guidance, feedback and support that can strengthen their classroom practices.

Lastly, the study's finding showed that curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision jointly significantly predicted Security Education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State. This finding is particularly important because it indicates that curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision, when considered together, explain a substantial proportion of variation in Security Education delivery. This largely lends support to Yusuf et al. (2026), who identified pre-lesson, classroom and post-lesson observation as important practices for supporting teachers' instructional effectiveness. This suggests that monitoring what teachers are expected to implement and supervising how they actually implement it may operate as complementary quality assurance processes. Curriculum monitoring can help ensure commitment to prescribed Security Education requirements, while instructional supervision can provide professional support for translating those requirements into effective classroom practice.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that quality assurance practices are important predictors of Security Education delivery among public secondary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically, curriculum monitoring significantly and positively predicts Security Education delivery, indicating that systematic attention to curriculum implementation enhances teachers' delivery of prescribed security-related learning experiences. Instructional supervision also significantly and positively predicts Security Education delivery, demonstrating the importance of professional observation, guidance and feedback in strengthening classroom practice. Furthermore, curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision jointly make a substantial contribution to predicting Security Education delivery. The findings therefore stress the need to strengthen both curriculum monitoring and instructional supervision as complementary quality assurance mechanisms for effective Security Education delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Plateau State Ministry of Education and quality assurance authorities should institutionalise regular curriculum monitoring in public secondary schools to ensure effective delivery of Security Education.
2. School principals should strengthen instructional supervision of Security Education, particularly through pre-lesson planning checks and regular lesson observation to promote effective delivery of Security Education.
3. Quality assurance officers should provide targeted professional feedback and follow-up support after school monitoring visits so that identified weaknesses in Security Education delivery are addressed promptly.
4. The Ministry of Education and school authorities should organise periodic capacity-building programmes for teachers on effective Security Education pedagogy.

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FOUNDATIONS OF INCLUSIVE MATHEMATICS EDUCATION: PRINCIPLES, LEARNER DIVERSITY, BARRIERS, AND PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Isaac Olufisayo AJIBADE
Department of Special Education
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
ajibadeisaac15@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8220-8584

ABSTRACT

Inclusive mathematics education seeks to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all learners, including those with visual impairment, through responsive pedagogical practices and accessible learning environments. This paper presents a conceptual narrative review of the literature on inclusive mathematics education, synthesising theoretical perspectives, empirical evidence, and policy-related scholarship. Relevant literatures were identified through Web of Science, and Google Scholar using keywords such as inclusive mathematics education*,* visual impairment*,* inclusive pedagogy*,* Universal Design for Learning*, and* differentiated instruction*. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and policy documents that addressed inclusive mathematics teaching and learning. The review examines the principles of inclusive mathematics education, learner diversity, barriers to effective implementation, and pedagogical foundations that support meaningful participation and achievement. It highlights equity, accessibility, active participation, high expectations, and collaboration as core principles underpinning effective mathematics instruction. The paper further emphasises the roles of Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and collaborative teaching in addressing learner variability. It concludes that effective inclusive mathematics education requires proactive instructional planning, accessible resources, and continuous teacher professional development to improve mathematics learning outcomes for all learners. It was recommended among others that government and employers of teachers should ensure that teachers are expose to inservice trainings to equipped them with emerging pedagogical mathematics instruction.*

Keywords: Inclusive mathematics education, visual impairment, learner diversity, Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has evolved from a placement-oriented approach to a broader pedagogical commitment that ensures learners with special needs are present, actively participate, experience a sense of belonging, and achieve meaningful academic outcomes. (United Nations, 2015). Rather than merely placing learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, inclusive education seeks to create learning environments where every learner has equitable opportunities to access, participate in, and benefit from quality education. The fundamental principle of inclusive education acknowledges that every learner possesses unique strengths, abilities, and learning needs, and therefore requires appropriate instructional support to maximize their educational potential (Baraily, 2024). Ainscow (2020) argues that inclusion requires educational

systems to identify and remove barriers that prevent learners from participating fully in educational opportunities. From this perspective, inclusion is achieved not simply through physical placement in regular classrooms but through the continuous transformation of school cultures, policies, curricula, and pedagogical practices to ensure that learner diversity becomes a source of educational enrichment rather than exclusion. Similarly, Florian (2014) emphasises that inclusive education should be judged by the quality of pedagogical practices that enable all learners to participate meaningfully in shared learning experiences rather than by physical placement alone.

Achieving these goals requires the effective implementation of evidence-based models of inclusive education. Adaka (2025) identifies several instructional models that promote successful inclusion in mainstream classrooms. The **Full Inclusion Model** involves assigning a special education teacher to collaborate with the general classroom teacher in supporting learners with disabilities through instructional adaptations and individualized assistance. The **Team Teaching Model** emphasizes collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment between general and special education teachers to meet the diverse learning needs of all learners. **Wang's Adaptive Learning Environment Model** advocates designing flexible learning environments that allow learners to progress at their individual pace while actively participating in classroom activities. The **Strategies Intervention Model** highlights the importance of guided social interaction and appropriate curriculum adaptations in promoting learners' cognitive and social development. Similarly, the **Circle of Inclusion Model** focuses on fostering learners' socio-emotional development by promoting active participation in both curricular and extracurricular activities alongside their peers. Furthermore, the **Systematic Approach for Accessing Learning Environment (SAALE) Model** emphasizes the need to modify the physical, instructional, and social learning environments to accommodate the diverse needs of learners. Collectively, these models underscore that effective inclusion extends beyond classroom placement to encompass collaborative teaching, differentiated instruction, accessible learning environments, and learner-centred pedagogical practices.

Mathematics occupies a central position in school curricula because it underpins scientific reasoning, technological innovation, financial literacy, and the problem-solving competencies required for lifelong learning (Adebiyi *et al* 2026). Consequently, equitable access to mathematics education is fundamental to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, which advocates inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all (United Nations, 2015). Despite its significance, mathematics remains one of the most cognitively demanding school subjects, particularly for learners with diverse educational needs, including those with visual impairment. Its reliance on abstract reasoning, symbolic representation, logical thinking, and the cumulative development of concepts often presents considerable learning challenges (Powell et al., 2021). These characteristics require teachers to employ flexible, learner-centred instructional approaches that accommodate learner variability while maintaining high academic expectations.

For learners with visual impairment, mathematics education presents additional challenges because many mathematical concepts are traditionally conveyed through visual representations such as diagrams, graphs, geometric figures, and spatial illustrations. Consequently, meaningful participation in mathematics learning requires accessible instructional materials, tactile representations, Braille mathematical notation, assistive technologies, and effective instructional adaptations. At the same time, mathematics provides opportunities for developing higher-order thinking skills, creativity, logical reasoning, metacognitive abilities, and problem-solving competence, all of which contribute significantly to learners' self-efficacy and

academic confidence. Gervasoni and Peter-Koop (2020) observe that although inclusive education has become an international educational priority, relatively few studies have adequately explained how genuine inclusion can be effectively realized within mathematics classrooms. Inclusive mathematics education may therefore be conceptualized as the deliberate organization of mathematics instruction, learning resources, assessment practices, classroom interactions, and support services to ensure that learners with diverse abilities and educational needs participate meaningfully and achieve common mathematical learning outcomes. (Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2017).

The goal of inclusive mathematics education is not to develop separate curricula for different groups of learners but to provide multiple, flexible pathways through which all learners can access the same mathematical concepts and demonstrate their understanding. This philosophy aligns closely with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which encourages educators to anticipate learner variability during the planning stage by designing flexible goals, instructional methods, learning materials, assessments, and learning environments that minimize barriers to learning (CAST, 2024). The UDL Guidelines 3.0 further emphasize the importance of eliminating exclusionary practices and creating learning environments that recognise learner diversity as a valuable educational resource rather than a challenge to be managed.

Nevertheless, mathematics presents unique pedagogical demands within inclusive classrooms because mathematical learning involves interconnected concepts, specialised language, symbolic representations, abstract reasoning, and cumulative knowledge development. Learners who fail to acquire foundational mathematical concepts often experience increasing difficulties as instruction becomes progressively more complex. Consequently, effective inclusive mathematics instruction requires teachers to identify prerequisite knowledge, diagnose misconceptions, employ multiple forms of representation, provide differentiated instructional support, and continuously monitor learners' understanding through ongoing formative assessment. These pedagogical considerations provide the theoretical foundation for developing a comprehensive framework capable of supporting effective mathematics instruction in inclusive classrooms.

Principles of Inclusive Mathematics Education for Learners with Visual Impairment

Effective inclusive mathematics education is founded on several interrelated principles that guide instructional planning, classroom implementation, assessment, and learner support. These principles provide the theoretical and practical basis for designing mathematics instruction that accommodates learner diversity while ensuring equitable access to meaningful learning opportunities. For learners with visual impairment, these principles are particularly important because mathematics often relies heavily on visual representations, symbolic notation, and spatial reasoning. Consequently, effective instruction requires deliberate pedagogical adaptations that promote active participation, accessibility, and academic success.

- **Equity**: It is a fundamental principle of inclusive mathematics education. Unlike equality, which provides identical educational experiences for all learners, equity recognises that learners require different forms and levels of support to achieve comparable educational outcomes (OECD, 2018). Equitable mathematics instruction therefore involves adapting teaching strategies, instructional materials, assistive technologies, classroom activities, and assessment methods according to individual learning needs rather than treating all learners uniformly. For example, for learners with visual impairment, equity may involve providing

Braille mathematics textbooks, tactile graphics, embossed diagrams, accessible digital resources, screen-reading software, talking calculators, and orientation support. Similarly, learners with hearing impairment may require sign language interpretation or captioned instructional materials, while learners with specific learning disabilities may benefit from scaffolded instruction, explicit modelling, and additional guided practice. Equity ensures that all learners are afforded appropriate opportunities to achieve common mathematical learning outcomes irrespective of disability or learning differences.

- **Accessibility:** Accessibility is another essential principle underpinning inclusive mathematics education. According to CAST (2024), accessibility should be integrated into instructional planning from the outset rather than introduced as a reactive accommodation. Mathematics teachers should therefore design lessons that provide multiple means of accessing mathematical concepts through diverse representations and instructional resources. Such resources may include concrete manipulatives, tactile graphics, Braille mathematical notation, three-dimensional models, digital applications, audio descriptions, symbolic representations, and authentic real-life contexts. These varied instructional approaches enable learners with visual impairment to access mathematical knowledge through tactile and auditory channels while simultaneously benefiting other learners with diverse cognitive and sensory profiles. Embedding accessibility into lesson design minimises learning barriers and promotes meaningful participation for every learner.
- **Active Participation:** Meaningful participation is central to inclusive mathematics education. Effective classrooms provide opportunities for all learners to engage actively in mathematical reasoning, inquiry, discussion, exploration, and collaborative problem-solving. Hattie (2023) emphasizes that active learner engagement significantly improves academic achievement because it promotes deeper conceptual understanding, strengthens motivation, and enhances learners' confidence in applying mathematical knowledge. For learners with visual impairment, active participation requires accessible instructional materials, verbal explanations of visual information, opportunities to manipulate tactile learning resources, collaborative learning experiences, and sufficient time to complete mathematical tasks independently. Inclusive participation moves beyond physical presence in the classroom by ensuring that every learner contributes meaningfully to the learning process.
- **High Expectations**: Inclusive mathematics education is founded on the belief that disability does not define a learner's academic potential. Consequently, teachers should maintain high yet realistic expectations for all learners while providing appropriate accommodations and individualised instructional support (Florian, 2014). Research consistently demonstrates that teachers' expectations influence learners' motivation, persistence, self-efficacy, and academic achievement (Hattie, 2023). Learners with visual impairment should therefore be challenged to engage with rigorous mathematical concepts and higher-order problem-solving activities while receiving the instructional adaptations necessary to support their success. Maintaining high expectations fosters learner confidence, resilience, and independence while promoting equitable educational outcomes.
- **Collaboration:** Collaboration represents another cornerstone of effective inclusive mathematics education. Successful inclusion depends on coordinated partnerships among mathematics teachers, special educators, rehabilitation professionals, therapists, school administrators, families, and learners themselves (Friend *et al*., 2010). Collaborative planning enables educators to design differentiated instructional activities, develop appropriate accommodations, integrate assistive technologies, monitor learner progress, and provide

timely interventions when learning difficulties arise. For learners with visual impairment, collaboration also facilitates the preparation of accessible instructional materials, Braille transcription, tactile learning resources, and individualised support services. Such multidisciplinary collaboration strengthens instructional quality and enhances learners' participation and achievement in mathematics.

Learner Diversity in Inclusive Mathematics Classrooms

Learner diversity is an inherent characteristic of every inclusive mathematics classroom. Learners differ in their prior mathematical knowledge, cognitive abilities, learning pace, communication styles, language backgrounds, motivation, sensory functioning, cultural experiences, and social interactions. These differences require mathematics teachers to move beyond the assumption that all learners should receive identical instruction delivered in the same manner, at the same pace, and through the same instructional resources. Instead, effective inclusive mathematics instruction recognizes learner variability as a natural characteristic of classrooms and responds through flexible, learner-centered pedagogical practices.

Florian (2014) conceptualizes inclusive pedagogy as an approach that extends learning opportunities ordinarily available to all learners rather than developing separate instructional approaches for particular groups. This perspective is especially relevant in mathematics because many instructional adaptations designed for learners with disabilities simultaneously enhance learning for the entire class. For example, concrete manipulatives help learners who experience difficulties with abstract reasoning while enriching conceptual understanding for all learners. Likewise, tactile graphics, structured demonstrations, worked examples, collaborative problem-solving, digital simulations, and explicit mathematical language improve accessibility and conceptual understanding across diverse learner groups.

Supporting this perspective, Moura and Moreira (2024), in their systematic review of inclusive mathematics education, emphasize that effective mathematics instruction increasingly depends on teachers' ability to adapt pedagogical practices to accommodate learner diversity rather than relying on uniform instructional approaches. Their findings demonstrate that inclusive mathematics classrooms are characterised by flexible teaching methods, differentiated learning activities, accessible instructional resources, and continuous assessment practices that promote participation and achievement for all learners.

For learners with visual impairment, inclusive mathematics instruction requires specialized instructional adaptations that facilitate access to mathematical concepts traditionally presented visually. Such adaptations include tactile graphics, Braille mathematical notation, accessible digital mathematics software, audio feedback, tactile manipulatives, raised-line diagrams, and detailed verbal descriptions of mathematical procedures and visual representations. Learners with hearing impairment may require visual demonstrations, captioned instructional materials, written explanations, and sign language support, while learners with specific learning disabilities often benefit from explicit instruction, systematic scaffolding, repeated guided practice, and opportunities to connect concrete experiences with symbolic mathematical procedures. These examples demonstrate that inclusion is not synonymous with providing identical resources for every learner; rather, it involves ensuring that each learner has equitable access to the same essential mathematical concepts through appropriately adapted instructional pathways.

Learner variability also extends to academically advanced learners. Inclusive mathematics education should not focus exclusively on remediation or additional support for

struggling learners. Learners who demonstrate advanced mathematical understanding require opportunities for enrichment, mathematical investigation, modelling, creative reasoning, and higher-order problem-solving. Consequently, an effective inclusive mathematics framework should provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate learners requiring intensive instructional support while simultaneously challenging those capable of advanced mathematical thinking. Such responsiveness ensures that every learner is appropriately supported, challenged, and empowered to achieve their full mathematical potential.

Barriers to Effective Mathematics Learning in Inclusive Classrooms

Despite the expansion of inclusive education, several barriers continue to restrict effective mathematics learning. Gervasoni and Peter-Koop (2020) identify the realisation of inclusive mathematics education as an important challenge because general commitments to inclusion do not automatically translate into appropriate mathematics teaching practices.

One major barrier is the use of uniform instructional approaches in heterogeneous classrooms. When teachers present mathematical concepts through a single method, learners who require different forms of representation or additional scaffolding may experience unnecessary difficulties. UDL responds to this problem by encouraging teachers to design multiple pathways for engagement, representation, and action and expression (CAST, 2024).

A second barrier is the abstract nature of mathematical concepts. Learners may struggle when teachers move rapidly from concrete experiences to formal mathematical symbols without establishing conceptual meaning. Effective inclusive mathematics instruction should therefore make deliberate use of concrete materials, representations, models, examples, mathematical language, and real-world applications.

The third barrier concerns inaccessible learning materials. Conventional print textbooks, diagrams, graphs, worksheets, and digital mathematics platforms may not be usable by learners with visual, physical, or other disabilities. Accessibility must consequently be considered during instructional planning rather than treated as an afterthought.

The fourth barrier is insufficient teacher preparation. Inclusive mathematics requires teachers to possess both mathematical content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge concerning learner diversity. Recent systematic evidence suggests that professional development focused on inclusive mathematics practices can strengthen teaching methods and learner outcomes, while technology-enhanced approaches may improve accessibility and engagement for learners with additional needs.

The fifth barrier is weak formative assessment. If assessment is used primarily at the end of a unit, teachers may fail to identify misconceptions early enough to intervene. Black and Wiliam (2009) emphasise that formative assessment becomes pedagogically valuable when evidence of learner understanding is used to modify teaching and learning activities.

Pedagogical Foundations of Inclusive Mathematics Instruction

- **Universal Design for Learning:** UDL provides a proactive approach to instructional accessibility. Rather than waiting for learners to experience difficulty before making accommodations, teachers anticipate variability and design flexible learning experiences from the beginning (Meyer *et al,* 2014). CAST (2024) identifies multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression as central principles of UDL. In mathematics, this may involve combining concrete materials, tactile resources, diagrams, verbal explanations, symbolic representations, digital tools, and collaborative activities.

- **Differentiated Instruction:** Differentiated instruction provides a framework for responding to differences in learner readiness, interests, and learning needs. Tomlinson (2017) emphasises differentiation of content, process, product, and learning environment. Applied to mathematics, this allows teachers to maintain common curriculum objectives while varying the level of scaffolding, complexity, instructional representation, learning activity, and assessment method.
- **Social Constructivism:** Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist perspective emphasises that learning develops through social interaction, language, guided participation, and collaboration. Mathematics learning can therefore be strengthened when learners explain mathematical reasoning, work collaboratively, engage in mathematical dialogue, and receive scaffolded support from teachers and peers.
- **Formative Assessment:** Formative assessment provides the mechanism through which teachers determine whether learners are progressing toward instructional objectives. Black and Wiliam (2009) explained that assessment becomes formative when evidence about learner understanding is used to make instructional decisions. This principle is central to the proposed framework because assessment should occur before, during, and after mathematics instruction rather than only at the conclusion of a unit.
- **Collaborative Teaching:** Collaborative and co-teaching approaches provide opportunities for general and special education teachers to combine their expertise. Friend et al. (2010) describe co-teaching as a collaborative instructional arrangement in which educators share responsibility for planning, instruction, and assessment. In inclusive mathematics classrooms, such collaboration can facilitate differentiation, small-group instruction, individualised support, and continuous monitoring.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive mathematics education is fundamental to ensuring that all learners, including those with visual impairment, have equitable opportunities to develop mathematical knowledge, skills, and confidence. Achieving this goal requires more than the physical placement of learners in mainstream classrooms; it demands intentional instructional planning, accessible learning resources, differentiated teaching strategies, and collaborative support systems that address learner diversity. The principles of equity, accessibility, active participation, high expectations, and collaboration provide a strong foundation for effective inclusive mathematics instruction, while pedagogical approaches such as Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and collaborative teaching enhance learner engagement and achievement. Therefore, creating inclusive mathematics classrooms requires sustained commitment from educators, school leaders, policymakers, and other stakeholders to ensure that every learner can meaningfully participate in and benefit from quality mathematics education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mathematics teachers should ensure that the plan their lesson with inclusiveness in view.
2. Government and all employers should make available the resources required for taching and learning.
3. It was recommended among others that government and employers should ensure that teachers are exposed to in-service training to equip them with emerging pedagogical mathematics instruction.

Conflict of Interest
The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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CURRICULUM INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING TO ADDRESS GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS MISMATCH IN NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS

Hamzat Atuunise SHITTU
Department of Curriculum. & Instructions,
Federal College of Education, Iwo, Osun State
shittuhamzat@gmail.com
&
ENIOLA, Lateefat Motunrayo
Department of Educational Psychology & Counselling,
Federal College of Education, Iwo, Osun State
eniolamotunrayolateefat@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
Although access to higher education institutions in Nigeria continues to expand, many graduates remain inadequately prepared for the labour market due to deficiencies in employability skills, thereby increasing the unemployment rate. This conceptual paper argues that graduate unemployment in Nigeria is not solely a function of an oversupplied labour market but is substantially a problem of skills mismatch, in which curricula emphasize content mastery while neglecting Social Emotional Learning competencies that employers cherish alongside technical knowledge. Drawing on Vygotsky's social development theory, Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence, and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework, the paper builds a conceptual case for integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into the curricula of Nigerian higher education institutions. Adopting a desk-based, narrative-conceptual methodology, the paper proposes a curriculum-integration model spanning course-embedded instruction, experiential and work-integrated learning, campus climate, staff development, and structured guidance and counselling services. It also presents guidance counsellors as the professional group to coordinate SEL delivery, assess students' social-emotional competencies, also labour-market expectations. The paper concludes with recommendations for embedding SEL and strengthening guidance and counselling units as a joint strategy for reducing graduate unemployment and skills mismatch in Nigeria.

Keywords: Curriculum Integration, Social-emotional learning (SEL), Nigerian Tertiary Education, Graduate Employability, Guidance and Counselling

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, there has been an expansion in the establishment of Nigerian tertiary institutions and the introduction of new policies on education for maximum access to education and graduate employability. As graduates of these institutions are multiplying, employers are increasingly seeking graduates of not only disciplinary knowledge and technical competence, but also of transferable skills like communication, collaboration, critical thinking, adaptability, emotional intelligence, interpersonal skill, self-directed learning, teamwork, and problem-solving, ethical decision-making, resilience, and leadership, describing graduates of these institutions as certificated but not job ready because they lack those competencies (Aselebe, 2022). As a result, Nigeria's tertiary educational regulatory agencies introduced reforms to enhance the

quality and relevance of tertiary education. The reforms include the introduction of entrepreneurship education and the establishment of Entrepreneurial Studies and Career Advisory Centres in tertiary institutions to promote self-reliance and reduce graduates' dependence on white-collar employment (National Universities Commission, 2004). Even with these attempts, concerns regarding the extent to which tertiary institutions adequately prepare students for contemporary labour market realities persist (Terhemen, 2023).

These skills are not narrowly technical competencies; they are, almost without exception, the same competencies that social-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks describe as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). This convergence suggests that Nigerian higher education institutions (HEIs) are contending with a curriculum design problem as much as an economic one, and that a curriculum historically organized around content transmission has left affective and interpersonal development to chance.

SEL has, over the past three decades, moved from the margins of early childhood and basic education discourse into a recognized lever for developing the whole learner, including in postsecondary and workforce-preparation contexts. Yet in Nigeria, SEL remains overwhelmingly associated with pre-primary and primary schooling, and is rarely discussed as a deliberate feature of higher education institutions' curricula. At the same time, guidance and counselling units exist, at least on paper, in most Nigerian tertiary institutions, with a mandate that already spans educational, vocational, and personal-social development. This paper argues that these two under-utilized assets - SEL as a curriculum philosophy and guidance and counselling as an institutional structure - can be deliberately joined to respond to graduate unemployment and skills mismatch.

This paper examines and synthesizes theoretical and empirical literature on SEL, graduate employability, and guidance and counselling practice in Nigeria to build an argument and a curriculum-integration framework, and to draw out implications for the practice of guidance and counselling in tertiary institutions.

Background of the Problem

In Nigeria, there is increased access to higher education institutions, but after graduation, getting employment becomes difficult. One of the reasons behind this is traced to employers' reports on graduates' weaknesses in communication, teamwork, initiative, and problem-solving, even with their relevant academic qualifications (Hendarman & Cantner, 2018). These competencies are components of SEL framework.

Another problem is the employability challenge, which occurs when graduates lack adaptation, collaboration, and communication skills and cannot manage themselves effectively; they remain disadvantaged in a competitive labour market, lacking SEL competencies (Terhemen, 2023). Another dimension of the problem is the underutilization of guidance and counselling services in addressing career preparedness (Samudra & Wangid, 2024). Although counselling units exist in many institutions, they are frequently limited to crisis management or registration-related issues rather than proactive employability development.

The paper, in response to these three problems, therefore, examines how SEL-infused curriculum reform can work with guidance and counselling to improve graduate outcomes.

Objectives

Generally, this paper discusses the infusion of social-emotional learning into the curriculum as a strategic response to graduate unemployment and skills mismatch in Nigerian higher education. It also highlights the implications of this approach for guidance and counselling practice. It shows that the unemployment problem is not limited to a labour-market issue but also curricular and student-development issues. Specifically, the paper set out to:

1. Examine the theoretical basis for embedding SEL in higher-education curricula;
2. Analyse the relationship between graduate unemployment, skills mismatch, and the social-emotional competency gaps reported in the Nigerian employability literature;
3. Propose a conceptual model for integrating SEL into the curricula of Nigerian higher education institutions; and
4. Articulate the implications of this integration for the roles, training, and positioning of guidance and counselling personnel in Nigerian tertiary institutions.—

This adopts a secondary research methodology. This kind of research uses data gathered from published peer-reviewed papers, meta-analyses, or government or private databases (George, 2024). This method is often inexpensive or free to access, and it can theoretically be exploratory or explanatory. It uses secondary materials collected, collated, and easily accessible. This paper is guided by the philosophical and theoretical frameworks like Vygotsky's social development theory, Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence, and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework. Thus, it is a conceptual/desk-review paper, and its methodology is accordingly a narrative synthesis study. The method is chosen in this academic paper because the needed materials abound and are within reach on the internet, in libraries, and in private collections. Above all, this method is cheaper to adopt.

Conceptual Clarification

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

One of the approaches in education is social -emotional learning (SEL). It enhances social – emotional development (SED) and social-emotional growth. It is the process by which individuals acquire and apply emotional and social competencies that enable them to manage emotions, achieve goals, demonstrate empathy, build relationships, and make responsible decisions (Norris Haynes, 2025). In higher education, SEL provides a framework for developing the human and interpersonal dimensions of graduate competence. It recognizes that a graduate may possess excellent technical knowledge but experience difficulty in applying it in a workplace if communication, collaboration, adaptability or self-management competencies are weak. Thus, these competencies should be seen as a complement to academic and occupational skills.

Graduate Unemployment

Globally, the upshot of graduate unemployment has become a widespread concern. Graduate unemployment is the number or proportion of degree holders (graduate and postgraduate) in a given economy who are capable and willing to work but unable to find jobs (Oppong & Sachs, 2015). In the Nigerian context, this is exacerbated by underemployment, in which graduates work in roles unrelated to, or below the level of, their qualifications.

Skills Mismatch

Skills mismatch, on the other hand, is the disconnection between the abilities that workers hold and those demanded by their occupations (Faustino, Gabasa & De Jesus, 2025). In Nigeria, this is relevant in three forms: field-of-study mismatch (horizontal mismatch), where graduates are trained in disciplines the economy does not need in the volume produced; vertical mismatch (qualification mismatch), where graduates are over or under-qualified for the roles available to them; and skills-gap mismatch (qualitative mismatch), where graduates possess the formal qualification but lack the practical, technical, or interpersonal competencies required by employers (McGuinness, Pouliakas & Redmond, 2018). This paper argues most directly for the third form through SEL-informed curriculum reform.

Graduate Unemployment and Skills Mismatch in the Nigerian Higher Education Context

Nigeria's tertiary institutions produce large numbers of graduates, outstripping formal-sector job creation. This, according to ILO. (2024) analysis, is linked to 'jobless economic growth,' in which the economy expands without generating employment at a pace matching the annual output of graduates, compounding the disconnection between academic programmes and labour-market realities. According to the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (2024), the Nigerian economy recorded an increase in the unemployment rate to 5.3 percent in the first quarter of 2024 from 5.0 percent in the third quarter of 2023. This represents the third consecutive rise in the rate of unemployment since the second quarter of 2023.

The labour market cannot absorb all graduates at the pace they are produced, and employers report that many graduates are not adequately prepared for available roles due to missing attributes like communication, critical thinking, decision-making, interpersonal skills, self-directed learning, teamwork and problem-solving alongside more narrowly technical or digital competencies (Okolie et al., 2019). These deficiencies indicate that the problem is not a simple lack of intelligence or diligence but a lack of deliberate exposure to, and practice in, the affective and interpersonal domains that SEL frameworks describe. Alongside technical and digital literacy, employers increasingly prize resilience, adaptability, creative thinking, and lifelong learning — attributes that align closely with the self-management and motivation components of Goleman's model.

Nigerian policy and scholarly responses to this problem have tended to concentrate on curriculum-content reform, industry–institution collaboration, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and entrepreneurship education. But it is pertinent to note that a graduate may complete an entrepreneurship module and still not possess the capacities that SEL is designed to build. This paper therefore positions SEL curriculum integration not as a replacement for TVET, entrepreneurship education, or industry partnership, but as the connective tissue that allows technical and vocational reforms to translate into genuine employability.

Theoretical Framework of SEL

1. Vygotsky's Social Development Theory

Vygotsky's theory is one of the useful theoretical foundations for understanding SEL. It suggests that social interactions largely determine human development, and these mediate cognitive and emotional development. It holds that there is a limit to what a learner is capable of learning alone and that pivotal knowledge and development are gained in a group setting (Chatterjee Singh & Duraiappah, 2020). This is known as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

This theory is relevant to higher education because the ZPD suggests that undergraduates develop competencies through interaction with lecturers, peers, mentors, and wider communities. From a curriculum perspective, therefore, SEL should not be limited to individual reflection. Students should have opportunities to practise social-emotional competencies through authentic social learning experiences. Higher institutions can create learning environments in which students progressively develop competence through interaction with more experienced lecturers, peers and professionals.

Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory

Daniel Goleman made the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) widely known and believed it could be more significant than conventional IQ in predicting personal and professional achievement (Todorova, 2024). This theory is very significant to SEL as it encompasses five key components as central dimensions of emotional intelligence (EI):

i. Self-awareness- The capacity to know and comprehend one's feelings, including their influence on behaviour and relations.
ii. Self-regulation- The correct regulation and expression of feelings, adapting to change, and taking responsibility for behaviour.
iii. Social skills- This component is needed to communicate and interact efficiently and in a socially adept manner with others, including active listening, leadership, and nonverbal communication
iv. Empathy- The ability to read others' feelings and act appropriately, particularly in intricate social situations and in situations involving relations of power.
v. Motivation- Specifically, intrinsic motivation is based on self-determined goals and personal satisfaction, not external outcomes, to initiate goal-setting, accomplishment, and initiative.

Each EI component leads to a person's ability to navigate social interactions, control feelings, and pursue self-directed learning and development. Hence, they are foundational to the acquisition of SEL competencies and directly relevant to the graduate-employability debate.

The CASEL Framework

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) organizes SEL into five core competencies: self- awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). Although this framework was primarily developed for Basic Education, its competencies map with notable precision onto the attributes Nigerian employers say graduates lack: self-management corresponds to self -directed learning and work discipline; social awareness and relationship skills correspond to interpersonal and communication competence; responsible decision-making corresponds to ethical judgement in the workplace. This alignment is the conceptual hinge of the present paper. It suggests that the CASEL competency architecture, ordinarily discussed in early years and primary contexts, can be repurposed as an employability framework for Nigerian higher education.

Human Capital and Employability Theory

Human capital theory considers education as an investment that enhances an individual's productive capacity and increases their value in the labour market. Contemporary employability theory has extended this view beyond technical qualifications to include 'soft' or generic attributes, self-management, communication, teamwork, and adaptability, that determine whether

a credential can actually be converted into a job. Following the SEL theory, employability theory supplies the labour-market rationale for curriculum change, while Vygotsky, Goleman, and CASEL supply the developmental and pedagogical rationale. Together they justify treating SEL not as a peripheral wellbeing initiative but as a core employability strategy.

Rationale for SEL Integration in Nigerian Higher Institutions

Several arguments that support the deliberate integration of SEL into Nigerian tertiary curricula include:

1. The competency alignment demonstrated above means that SEL integration directly targets the specific deficiencies employers report, rather than adding generic content; 2. SEL has been associated with improved academic engagement, stronger self-regulation, reduced behavioural difficulty, and better long-term mental-health and social outcomes (Dunbuya, 2023);
3. Nigerian higher education already possesses a structure- a guidance and counselling unit- with an explicit mandate to support students, so SEL integration does not require inventing a new bureaucratic structure; it requires re-equipping and repositioning an existing one.
4. The affective and mental-health toll of prolonged job searching, economic precarity, and the wider stressors of Nigerian undergraduate life make emotional regulation and resilience-building a student-wellbeing imperative in its own right, independent of labour-market payoff.

A Conceptual Model for Curriculum Integration of SEL in Nigerian Higher Institutions

Drawing on established strategies for SEL integration in basic education and adapting them to the structural features of Nigerian higher education institutions, this paper proposes a four-strand model.

1. Course-Embedded Integration: SEL competencies can be embedded within existing academic subjects such as General Studies (GST) courses, seminars, project supervision, and group assignments rather than taught as a stand-alone course competing for scarce curriculum hours.
2. Experiential and Work-Integrated Learning: Industrial training (SIWES), internships, entrepreneurship incubation, and community-service schemes already place Nigerian students in real workplace and community settings. These placements can be deliberately reframed as SEL laboratories for developing SEL skills.
3. Campus Climate and Co-Curricular Structures: Students' unions, hostels, mentoring schemes, clubs, and orientation programmes should be improved to support relationship-building and emotional adjustment.
4. Staff Development and Guidance-Counsellor-Led Coordination: Guidance and counselling units should coordinate the entire process by training staff, assessing student development, and offering support where necessary.

Implications for Guidance and Counselling

The centrality of guidance and counselling to this model is deliberate and follows directly from the existing mandate and documented limitations of the profession in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Studies (David, Ohunene & Jacob, 2021; Samudra & Wangid, 2024) maintained that guidiance counselors must possess the following if they are to function very well.

1. Plan Expanded and More Central Institutional Role: Guidance and counselling in Nigerian higher institutions should move from a mainly reactive role to a proactive one, where they can help design learning experiences, train lecturers, and assess social- emotional outcomes.
2. Process new Competencies: For guidance counsellors to lead SEL integration credibly, their own training needs to extend beyond traditional test-and-tell career guidance and crisis counselling to include SEL pedagogy, assessment, group facilitation, and collaboration with academic departments.
3. Reposition career Guidance as Social-Emotional Preparation: SEL-informed career guidance would additionally focus on interview-related emotional regulation, resilience in the face of job-search setbacks, self-awareness of strengths and values in career decision-making, and interpersonal-skill rehearsal through mock interviews, group career-simulation exercises, and structured feedback.

Structural and Resourcing Implications

Realizing this expanded role requires addressing the well-documented structural weaknesses of guidance and counselling in Nigeria: inadequate funding, shortage of trained and professionally certified counsellors, poor infrastructural provision, and the marginal status of counselling units within institutional decision-making (David, Ohunene, & Jacob, 2021). If counsellors are to coordinate an institution-wide SEL strategy, guidance and counselling can no longer be treated as an optional, thinly staffed unit; it requires dedicated budget lines, adequate staff-to-student ratios, physical space suited to both individual and group work, and formal representation in curriculum-planning and quality-assurance committees.

Assessment and Data Implications

A SEL-integrated curriculum requires some means of tracking whether social-emotional competencies are actually developing, both to guide practice and to demonstrate value to institutional leadership and funders. Counsellors are well placed to lead the adaptation or development of context-appropriate instruments for assessing SEL competencies among Nigerian undergraduates, and to use this data to refine curriculum design over time.

Challenges to Implementation of SEL Curriculum in Nigerian Higher Institutions.

Several challenges are likely to constrain SEL curriculum integration in Nigerian higher institutions. These include:

1. Poor funding: many institutions already struggle to fund basic instructional infrastructure, let alone new curriculum initiatives.
2. Shortage of trained personnel: few Nigerian lecturers have been trained in SEL-responsive pedagogy, and guidance and counselling units are frequently understaffed.
3. Curriculum rigidity and an examination-driven culture: since SEL competencies are process-oriented and difficult to capture within conventional.
4. Cultural and contextual fit is a further consideration: SEL frameworks developed largely in North American and European contexts must be adapted to Nigerian culture.
5. Finally, the low institutional status of guidance and counselling units: frequently under-represented in curriculum and policy decision-making.

CONCLUSION

Based on the arguments of this paper, it is concluded that:

1. Graduate unemployment in Nigeria is not only an economic or curriculum problem but also a social-emotional problem;
2. Deliberate integration of SEL into the curricula of Nigerian higher education institutions is a practical way to improve employability, well-being, and resilience among students;
3. Guidance and counselling units should become the main coordinators of this change, but only if they are properly supported and strengthened.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the model and challenges outlined above, the paper offers the following recommendations:

1. Regulatory bodies should formally recognize social-emotional and employability competencies within curriculum benchmark documents.
2. Institutions should invest in structured professional development that equips both academic staff and guidance counsellors with SEL-responsive pedagogy.
3. Guidance and counselling units should be strengthened structurally so that they can credibly assume a coordinating role in institution-wide SEL delivery.
4. Curriculum designers should embed SEL competencies within existing General Studies courses, project supervision, and industrial-attachment frameworks.
5. Institutions should develop or adapt simple, context-appropriate instruments for tracking students' social-emotional competency development over the course of study.
6. Finally, further empirical research is needed to test and refine the conceptual model advanced in this paper within the Nigerian context.

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ANALYSIS OF EXISTING METHODS AND PROCEDURES FOR EFFECTIVE MONITORING OF CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Manasseh Terwase IORTYER
Department of English,
Federal University of Education, Pankshin
manasseh.iortyer2@yahoo.com
&
Kenter CHIANEN
Department of English and Literary Studies,
Federal University of Lafia
chianenkenter@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
This study analysed the existing methods and procedures for effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in North Central Nigeria primary schools. Four research questions and four null hypotheses guided the study, which adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised 600 classroom teachers, head teachers and quality assurance officers in public primary schools across three purposively selected states, namely Benue, Niger and Plateau. Taro Yamane's formula yielded a sample of 240, made up of 160 classroom teachers and 80 head teachers and quality assurance officers selected by proportional allocation. Data were collected using the Curriculum Implementation Monitoring Questionnaire, a validated 24-item four-point Likert-scale instrument with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.81 using the cronback alpho correlation coeficen. Analysis used mean and standard deviation against a criterion mean of 2.50, and the independent samples t-test at the 0.05 level of significance, supported by mean differences, 95% confidence intervals and Cohen's d effect sizes. Findings revealed that checking of pupils' exercise books, classroom observation and vetting of lesson notes were the most commonly used monitoring methods, while standardized checklists and unscheduled visits were less consistently applied. Termly supervisory visits and feedback conferencing were moderately practised, whereas ICT-based monitoring was the weakest of all practices examined. Inadequate qualified supervisors, poor funding and difficult terrain were the most severe challenges, and regular training of supervisors, adequate funding and digital monitoring systems the most valued strategies. Classroom teachers rated both the use of methods and the severity of challenges significantly higher than quality assurance officers did, with large effect sizes; the two groups did not differ on procedures or strategies. The study concludes that monitoring provision exists but is unevenly applied and undermined by systemic constraints, and recommends that State Universal Basic Education Boards strengthen the capacity, funding and digital tooling available to monitoring personnel.

***Keywords*:** Curriculum implementation, monitoring, primary schools, supervision, North Central Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum implementation is the stage at which the plans, objectives, and content set out in a curriculum document are translated into actual classroom practice. It is at this stage, more than at any other, that the fate of an educational reform is decided. A curriculum designed by subject specialists at the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council remains little more than a bound document until teachers bring it to life. Teachers do so through the lessons they plan, the materials they select, and their daily interactions with pupils, all within the particular constraints of their own schools.

Because this translation from document to practice is never automatic or uniform, education systems have developed mechanisms for monitoring curriculum implementation. Monitoring involves systematically checking whether what was intended in the official curriculum is actually being delivered in classrooms. It also involves identifying gaps between policy and practice early enough for corrective action. In Nigeria, this function is vested in a layered system of school-based head teachers, Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) supervisors, and State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) quality assurance officers. Together they are charged with visiting schools, observing lessons, inspecting records, and reporting on the extent to which the primary school curriculum is being faithfully implemented across subjects such as English Studies, Mathematics, Basic Science and Technology, and National Values Education.

The importance of this function is heightened in a country as large and administratively decentralised as Nigeria. Responsibility for translating a single national curriculum into practice is spread across thirty-six states and the Federal Capital Territory. Each has its own SUBEB, its own complement of LGEA supervisors, and its own mix of urban and rural schools. The North Central zone, comprising Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau States together with the Federal Capital Territory, is a particularly instructive setting in which to examine monitoring. The zone performs relatively strongly on primary school net attendance but comparatively weakly on primary completion and junior secondary transition (Education Policy and Data Center [EPDC], 2018). That pattern points to unresolved problems somewhere along the chain between enrolment and the effective delivery of the curriculum pupils are enrolled to receive.

The zone is also geographically and infrastructurally varied. It encompasses the urbanised, well-connected schools of the Federal Capital Territory alongside far-flung rural schools in the Middle Belt hinterlands of Benue, Nasarawa and Niger States. In those rural areas, poor roads, seasonal flooding, and long distances between the local education office and individual schools can make regular supervisory visits difficult to sustain. It is against this backdrop of administrative responsibility, mixed performance outcomes, and uneven terrain that the present study was undertaken. The study sets out to establish which monitoring methods and procedures are currently in use in primary schools across the zone, how consistently they are applied, and which challenges and improvement strategies those closest to the process identify as most pressing.

Beyond its academic contribution, the study carries practical urgency, because curriculum monitoring is not merely an administrative formality. It is a feedback mechanism upon which the logic of curriculum improvement depends. Where monitoring is weak or perfunctory, national curriculum reforms risk being quietly diluted, misinterpreted or ignored at classroom level, with nobody positioned to notice in time. Where monitoring is systematic, well-resourced and formative rather than punitive, it can identify struggling teachers who need support. It can also surface implementation bottlenecks such as missing textbooks or unsuitable class sizes before

they become entrenched, and generate the ground-level evidence curriculum planners need in order to revise the curriculum itself.

Statement of the Problem

A supervisory architecture is formally established in the zone, comprising head teachers at school level, LGEA supervisors at local government level, and SUBEB quality assurance officers at state level. Despite this, reports from within the primary education sub-sector persistently suggest that curriculum implementation in many schools proceeds with only sporadic and superficial monitoring. Head teachers are frequently stretched by competing administrative duties and are not always able to conduct the regular, structured classroom observation that meaningful internal monitoring requires. LGEA and SUBEB officers are constrained by an acknowledged shortage of qualified personnel and by logistical difficulties in reaching scattered schools. They are therefore often unable to visit every school under their remit as frequently as official guidelines stipulate.

The consequence, where it occurs, is a monitoring gap. Teachers may deviate substantially from the prescribed curriculum by skipping challenging topics, compressing content to save time, or failing to cover the syllabus within the stipulated term. Such deviation may go undetected, unrecorded and uncorrected by anyone in the supervisory chain until it shows up in poor pupil performance on common examinations, often too late to remedy.

What remains unclear is which of the available monitoring methods are actually used with any consistency in practice, which procedural elements are functioning as intended, and how the perceptions of those being monitored compare with the perceptions of those doing the monitoring. Without this ground-level empirical picture, policy interventions aimed at strengthening curriculum monitoring risk being designed in the dark. They may target problems that are not the most pressing, or propose solutions such as additional checklists that add little value if the underlying problem is more fundamentally about funding, staffing, or terrain. This study was therefore designed to analyse systematically, from the perspective of both classroom teachers and quality assurance officers, the existing methods and procedures for monitoring curriculum implementation in the zone, the challenges undermining their effectiveness, and the strategies that could realistically enhance them.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to analyse the existing methods and procedures for effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in North Central Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

1. Determine the existing methods used for monitoring curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone.
2. Find out the existing procedures and strategies employed in monitoring curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone.
3. Ascertain the challenges facing effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone.
4. Identify the strategies that can enhance effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

i. What are the existing methods used for monitoring curriculum implementation in primary schools in North Central Nigeria?
ii. What are the existing procedures and strategies employed in monitoring curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone?
iii. What are the challenges facing effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone?
iv. What strategies can enhance effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

HO_1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of classroom teachers and head teachers/quality assurance officers on the existing methods used for monitoring curriculum implementation in primary schools in North Central Nigeria.

HO_2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of classroom teachers and head teachers/quality assurance officers on the existing procedures and strategies employed in monitoring curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone.

HO_3: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of classroom teachers and head teachers/quality assurance officers on the challenges facing effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone.

HO_4: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of classroom teachers and head teachers/quality assurance officers on the strategies for enhancing effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model developed by Stufflebeam (2003). The model has become one of the most widely used frameworks for guiding the systematic monitoring and evaluation of educational programmes, including curriculum implementation. It conceives of evaluation, and by extension monitoring, as a decision-oriented activity organised around four interlocking components.

Context evaluation examines the needs, problems and opportunities within a given setting that a programme is meant to address, and provides the baseline against which implementation can be judged. Input evaluation assesses the resources, strategies and procedural designs put in place to achieve programme objectives, including the specific monitoring methods and instruments an education system adopts. Process evaluation, which is of particular relevance here, focuses on the extent to which planned activities are actually being carried out as intended. It is precisely this process dimension, monitored through classroom observation, lesson note vetting, exercise book checking and supervisory visits, that the present study's first two research questions probe. Product evaluation examines the outcomes and effects of the programme. That component lies beyond the immediate scope of this study but would naturally build on its findings in future research linking monitoring practice to pupil learning outcomes.

Applied to the present study, the CIPP model suggests that meaningful monitoring cannot be reduced to a single inspection visit or a single instrument. It must instead function as a continuous, multi-component feedback system. Within such a system, the methods used to

observe process, the procedures that structure how and when observation occurs, and the honest identification of challenges and improvement strategies are all treated as mutually reinforcing parts of the same evaluative cycle. That conception directly shaped the four-part structure of the research questions and of the questionnaire constructed for the study.

Review of Related Literature

Concept of Curriculum Implementation and Monitoring

Curriculum implementation refers to the process by which the officially prescribed curriculum is put into actual practice in classrooms by teachers working with pupils. It is widely regarded as the most unpredictable stage of the curriculum development cycle, because it depends ultimately on the interpretation, skill and commitment of individual teachers operating under varied local conditions. Fullan (2016) argues that meaningful curriculum reform requires simultaneous change across three dimensions, namely the materials used, the teaching approaches adopted, and the beliefs held by those implementing the change. He further contends that lasting implementation is supported less by top-down mandate than by sustained professional development, opportunities for teacher collaboration, and a process he terms reculturing.

Fullan's position carries an important implication that much of the Nigerian supervision literature has not fully absorbed. If implementation depends on beliefs and working relationships as well as on compliance, then monitoring that records only observable compliance will systematically under-detect the problems that matter most. Monitoring, to be effective on this account, must function diagnostically rather than merely audit-like. It is worth noting, however, that Fullan's evidence base is drawn overwhelmingly from well-resourced North American and European systems. Whether reculturing is a realistic aspiration in settings where supervisors cannot reliably reach schools at all is an open question, and one this study's findings on terrain and funding bear upon directly.

Monitoring itself may be defined as the systematic and continuous collection and analysis of information on the extent to which planned curriculum activities are being carried out as intended. This distinguishes it from evaluation, which is typically more periodic and judgement-oriented, and from inspection, which in the Nigerian context has historically carried a narrowly compliance-focused and sometimes punitive connotation. The terminological slippage between these three concepts is not merely academic. Where monitoring is conceptually conflated with inspection, teachers are more likely to experience it as threatening, which in turn depresses the candour of the information monitoring is meant to generate.

Methods and Procedures of Curriculum Monitoring in Nigeria

The Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Basic Education in Nigeria (UBEC, 2015) formally establish classroom observation, the vetting of teachers' lesson notes and schemes of work, the inspection of pupils' exercise books and continuous assessment records, and periodic school visits as the core methods through which SUBEB and LGEA quality assurance officers are expected to monitor curriculum implementation. These are supplemented by an earlier Monitoring Manual (UBEC, 2003), which set out procedural expectations including the frequency of visits and the format of supervision reports. The two documents together describe a comprehensive system. What the empirical literature repeatedly shows, however, is a gap between that prescribed system and observed practice.

Gontur, Odewumi, Tuamyil and Davireng (2024) surveyed primary school teachers and administrators in Plateau State, a state within the zone examined here. They found that well-defined monitoring criteria, consistent supervision and clearly assigned stakeholder roles were associated with improved perceived quality of teaching and learning. They also found no significant difference between public and private school respondents on the criteria used for monitoring. Okafor, Obona, Ngene and Eji (2024), examining school supervision across Nigerian secondary education, similarly documented classroom observation and lesson note vetting as the dominant methods, while noting that these were frequently applied inconsistently and without adequate follow-up.

Read together, these two studies point in partly conflicting directions, and the inconsistency has not previously been examined. Gontur et al. (2024) report a monitoring apparatus applied with reasonable uniformity, whereas Okafor et al. (2024) report one applied erratically. Three explanations are plausible. The first is sectoral: Okafor et al. studied secondary schools, where supervisory ratios and school sizes differ markedly from the primary level. The second is measurement-related: Gontur et al. tested for differences between ownership types rather than for absolute adequacy, so a finding of no difference between public and private schools is compatible with both being weak. The third is that both studies relied on single-group perceptual data, which cannot distinguish between a method being used and a method being believed to be used. The present study addresses the second and third of these by comparing the two respondent groups who occupy opposite positions in the monitoring relationship.

Challenges Facing Effective Monitoring of Curriculum Implementation

A consistent thread in the Nigerian literature is the identification of a recurring cluster of systemic challenges. Osiesi (2023), in a review of the literature on assessment, evaluation and monitoring of teaching and learning in Nigerian primary schools, identified inadequate teacher training, poor funding, weak record management, negative teacher attitudes toward being monitored, a shortage of qualified evaluators, and the absence of a standardised monitoring framework as principal barriers. Periodic supervisor training, improved funding, and the professionalisation of monitoring roles were recommended as correctives. Akpotu and Okoro (2026), reviewing monitoring and supervision challenges across Nigeria and the wider African continent, highlighted weak institutional frameworks, inadequate funding, limited supervisor training, insufficient integration of information and communication technologies, and sociocultural resistance to supervision. They proposed digital monitoring systems and sustained financial investment as key reform strategies.

The convergence between these two accounts is striking, but it should be interpreted with caution. Both are review papers rather than primary empirical studies, and both draw on an overlapping Nigerian evidence base. Their agreement therefore reflects shared sources at least as much as independent corroboration. A further difficulty is that neither review disaggregates its findings geographically. Challenges such as difficult terrain and long inter-school distances are, on the face of it, unlikely to weigh equally in the Federal Capital Territory and in rural Benue. Treating the challenge profile as nationally uniform obscures precisely the variation that zone-level policy would need to act upon.

The literature is also notably one-sided on the question of teacher resistance. Akpotu and Okoro (2026) and Osiesi (2023) both list negative teacher attitudes among the barriers to effective monitoring, yet neither compares teachers' own accounts with those of the officers who report encountering that resistance. Where a challenge is documented only from the perspective

of one party to the relationship, its relative weight cannot be established. The present study addresses this by rating challenge severity separately for both groups.

Gaps in the Existing Literature

Four gaps emerge from the foregoing review, and together they define the contribution the present study seeks to make.

The first is methodological. Almost all of the Nigerian studies reviewed draw their data from a single respondent group, most commonly teachers. Perceptual data from one side of a supervisory relationship cannot establish whether a reported practice is actually occurring or merely believed to be occurring. Comparing two groups occupying structurally opposed positions, as this study does, provides a partial internal check that single-group designs cannot offer.

The second is conceptual. Existing studies tend to treat methods, procedures, challenges and improvement strategies as separate objects of enquiry, examined in separate papers. This obscures the relationships between them, in particular whether the strategies respondents endorse actually correspond to the challenges they rate as most severe. Examining all four within a single instrument permits that correspondence to be tested directly.

The third is theoretical. The Nigerian supervision literature is largely atheoretical and descriptive, reporting what supervisors do without situating those activities within an evaluation framework. Anchoring the enquiry in the CIPP model allows monitoring to be understood as one component of a feedback cycle rather than as a free-standing administrative act, and clarifies why weakness at the process stage undermines the whole.

The fourth is a policy gap, and it is here that the geographical focus of the study acquires its justification. Monitoring in Nigeria is administered at state level through SUBEB and LGEA structures, yet the available evidence is either national in scope or drawn from single states. National findings cannot guide a state board's allocation decisions, and single-state findings cannot establish whether a pattern is local or zonal. The North Central zone combines above-average primary attendance with below-average primary completion (EPDC, 2018), a combination that makes the quality of curriculum delivery, rather than access to it, the more plausible locus of the problem. It is that combination, rather than the mere absence of prior zonal studies, that makes the zone a substantively informative case.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate for systematically capturing the perceptions of a defined population regarding existing practices, challenges and preferred improvements, without manipulating any variable. The design is cross-sectional, in that data were collected at a single point in time.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all classroom teachers, head teachers, and SUBEB and LGEA quality assurance officers attached to public primary schools in North Central Nigeria. Three states, namely Benue, Niger and Plateau, were purposively selected to represent the eastern, western and central sub-areas of the geopolitical zone. Within each state, two local government areas were selected using simple random sampling. This yielded an accessible population of six hundred (600) respondents distributed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1:
Composition of the Accessible Population by Respondent Category

Respondent category	Benue	Niger	Plateau	Total
Classroom teachers	134	133	133	400
Head teachers	51	51	50	152
Quality assurance officers	16	16	16	48
Total	**201**	**200**	**199**	**600**

Source: Staff nominal rolls obtained from the respective Local Government Education Authority offices.

For the purposes of analysis, head teachers and quality assurance officers were combined into a single respondent group (Group B), since both discharge monitoring functions in relation to classroom teachers (Group A). The term quality assurance officers is used throughout this paper to refer to SUBEB and LGEA personnel charged with school monitoring. The terms supervisors and inspectors, which appear in some of the literature and in the wording of certain questionnaire items, are treated as referring to the same category of personnel.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for sample size determination was applied to the accessible population, as follows:

$$n = N \div [1 + N(e)^2]$$

where n is the required sample size, N is the accessible population of 600, and e is the margin of error, fixed at 0.05. Substituting these values gives:

$$n = 600 \div [1 + 600(0.05)^2]$$
$$n = 600 \div [1 + 600(0.0025)]$$
$$n = 600 \div [1 + 1.5]$$
$$n = 600 \div 2.5 = 240$$

The computation yields exactly 240. No rounding, oversampling or adjustment of any kind was applied, and the figure of 240 is the arithmetic result of the formula rather than an approximation of it. The full working is reproduced above so that the derivation can be verified directly.

The sample was then allocated proportionately across the two respondent categories, in the same ratio as their representation in the accessible population. Classroom teachers constituted 400 of the 600 respondents, that is two-thirds of the accessible population, and were accordingly allocated two-thirds of the sample (240 × 400/600 = 160). Head teachers and quality assurance officers constituted 200 of the 600 respondents, that is one-third, and were allocated one-third of the sample (240 × 200/600 = 80). Within each category, individual respondents were selected using simple random sampling by balloting from the staff nominal rolls obtained from the respective LGEA offices.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used was the Curriculum Implementation Monitoring Questionnaire (CIMQ), a researcher-developed four-point Likert-scale questionnaire. The instrument is divided into four sections corresponding to the four research questions, with six items in each section, giving a total of twenty-four items. The four constructs measured are set out below, together with a sample item from each.

a. Section A: Existing monitoring methods (six items). Sample item: "Classroom observation of teachers while teaching is used to monitor curriculum delivery."
b. Section B: Existing procedures and strategies (six items). Sample item: "Supervisory visits are conducted at least once every school term."
c. Section C: Challenges facing effective monitoring (six items). Sample item: "Poor funding and lack of transportation limit supervisors' ability to visit schools regularly."
d. Section D: Strategies for enhancing effective monitoring (six items). Sample item: "Regular training and retraining of supervisors will enhance effective monitoring of curriculum implementation."

Response options were Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point). A criterion mean of 2.50, representing the midpoint of the four-point scale, was used to determine whether an item was accepted (mean of 2.50 or above) or rejected (mean below 2.50) as a description of current practice, prevailing challenge, or valued strategy. The complete instrument is reproduced in Appendix A.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by a panel of three experts drawn from Federal University of Education Pankshin in North Central Nigeria. The panel comprised 2 experts in Measurement and Evaluation and 1 expert from the department of English. Each validator was supplied with the research questions, the hypotheses and the draft instrument, and was asked to rate every item for relevance on a four-point scale (1 = not relevant, 2 = somewhat relevant, 3 = quite relevant, 4 = highly relevant), following the procedure described by Polit and Beck (2006).

The item-level Content Validity Index (I-CVI) was computed as the proportion of validators rating an item 3 or 4, and the scale-level Content Validity Index based on the average method (S-CVI/Ave) was computed as the mean of the I-CVI values. Items with an I-CVI below 0.78 were revised or removed. The resulting S-CVI/Ave for the instrument was 0.92, which exceeds the 0.90 threshold recommended by Polit and Beck (2006) for a scale to be judged content-valid. The validators' comments led to the rewording of ambiguous items and the removal of one overlapping item from the original draft.

Pilot Study and Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot study was conducted before the main data collection. Thirty respondents were used, comprising twenty classroom teachers and ten head teachers and quality assurance officers, preserving the 2:1 ratio of the main sample. A pilot sample of thirty was adopted on two grounds. First, it satisfies the conventional minimum of five respondents per item for the largest subscale, and of at least thirty cases for a stable preliminary estimate of internal consistency. Second, it was the largest number that could be drawn without depleting the main sampling frame. The pilot respondents were drawn from a local government area outside the three sampled for the main study, and none of them took part in the main study. There is therefore no overlap between pilot and main respondents.

Responses were subjected to Cronbach's alpha analysis. Because the instrument contains four distinct subscales, reliability was computed separately for each subscale as well as for the instrument as a whole. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2:
Reliability Coefficients for the CIMQ Subscales and Full Instrument (Pilot n = 30)

Subscale	No. of items	Cronbach's α	Range of item-total correlations
A: Existing monitoring methods	6	**0.74**	0.45–0.68
B: Existing procedures and strategies	6	**0.78**	0.50–0.72
C: Challenges facing monitoring	6	**0.82**	0.55–0.76
D: Strategies for enhancement	6	**0.76**	0.48–0.70
Full instrument	**24**	**0.81**	**0.40–0.75**

All subscale coefficients exceed the 0.70 threshold conventionally regarded as acceptable for research instruments, and the overall coefficient of 0.81 indicates good internal consistency across the full instrument. Item-total correlations were inspected to confirm that no individual item depressed the reliability of its subscale.

Method of Data Collection

Copies of the questionnaire were administered directly to respondents by the researcher, assisted by two trained research assistants. The assistants were briefed over one day on the purpose of the study, the ethical requirement of voluntary and confidential participation, and the correct procedure for administering and retrieving the instrument. This briefing was intended to minimise inconsistencies in administration across the three states. Of the 240 copies administered, all 240 were duly completed and found usable for analysis. This full return rate is attributable to the direct, on-the-spot administration and retrieval method employed.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the principals of each school. Written permission to access schools and staff records was obtained from the State Universal Basic Education Board in each of the three sampled states, and from the Education Secretary of each sampled Local Government Education Authority.

All respondents took part voluntarily. Before administration, each respondent received a written cover statement explaining the purpose of the study, the expected duration of participation, the absence of any risk or benefit attaching to participation, and the right to decline or to withdraw at any point without consequence. Informed consent was obtained in writing from every respondent prior to completion of the questionnaire.

Anonymity was preserved by omitting names, staff numbers and school names from the instrument; respondents were identified only by a serial code and by respondent category. Completed instruments were kept in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researchers, and the electronic dataset was password-protected. Data are reported only in aggregate form, so that no individual respondent or school can be identified from the results presented. No incentive of any kind was offered for participation.

METHODOLOGY

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics, namely frequency counts, mean and standard deviation, were used to answer the four research questions. The mean score for each item was computed from the frequency distribution of responses across the four Likert categories and compared against the 2.50 criterion mean to

determine acceptance or rejection. Items within each construct were additionally rank ordered by mean score, to allow the relative standing of each method, procedure, challenge and strategy to be read directly.

Inferential statistics, specifically the independent samples t-test, were used to test the four null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Composite scores were computed for each respondent as the mean of the six items in each construct, and the composite means of Group A (classroom teachers) and Group B (head teachers and quality assurance officers) were compared on each construct.

Two assumptions underlying the independent samples t-test were tested before analysis. Normality of the composite score distributions was assessed using skewness and kurtosis statistics and the Shapiro-Wilk test. All composite distributions returned skewness and kurtosis values within the ±1 range, and Shapiro-Wilk statistics were non-significant ($p > 0.05$), indicating no material departure from normality. Homogeneity of variance was assessed using Levene's test for equality of variances, which returned non-significant results for all four constructs ($p > 0.05$). The equal-variances-assumed form of the t-test was therefore used throughout. The Levene's test statistics for each construct are reported in Table 8.

Because statistical significance alone conveys nothing about the magnitude of a difference, each t-test is reported together with the mean difference, the 95% confidence interval of the mean difference, and Cohen's d as a standardised measure of effect size. Effect sizes are interpreted using Cohen's (1988) conventions, in which d values of approximately 0.20, 0.50 and 0.80 denote small, medium and large effects respectively. The full computational workings, together with the underlying item-level response frequencies, are presented in Appendix B for independent verification.

RESULTS

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the existing methods used for monitoring curriculum implementation in primary schools in North Central Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean Ratings and Rank Order on the Existing Methods Used for Monitoring Curriculum Implementation (N = 240)

Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rank	Decision
Classroom observation of teachers while teaching is used to monitor curriculum delivery	58	97	60	25	240	2.78	0.93	2nd	**Accepted**
Vetting of teachers' lesson notes and schemes of work is used to monitor curriculum coverage	58	86	60	36	240	2.69	1.00	4th	**Accepted**
Checking of pupils' exercise books and continuous assessment records is used to monitor curriculum implementation	75	86	47	32	240	2.85	1.01	1st	**Accepted**

Unscheduled/ impromptu visits by supervisors are used to monitor curriculum implementation	34	82	85	39	240	2.46	0.93	6th	**Rejected**
Standardized inspection checklists are used by supervisors to monitor curriculum implementation	49	69	75	47	240	2.50	1.03	5th	**Accepted**
Oral interview of pupils and teachers is used to monitor curriculum implementation	65	74	70	31	240	2.72	1.00	3rd	**Accepted**
Grand mean					**240**	**2.67**			**Accepted**

Table 3 shows that four of the six methods were rated above the criterion mean of 2.50. Checking of pupils' exercise books and continuous assessment records ranked first ($\bar{x}$ = 2.85), followed by classroom observation ($\bar{x}$ = 2.78), oral interview of pupils and teachers ($\bar{x}$ = 2.72), and vetting of lesson notes and schemes of work ($\bar{x}$ = 2.69). These four are therefore perceived as being currently in use for monitoring curriculum implementation in the sampled schools.

The two lowest-ranked methods are the more structured ones. Standardized inspection checklists ($\bar{x}$ = 2.50) sat exactly at the criterion mean, and unscheduled or impromptu visits ($\bar{x}$ = 2.46) fell marginally below it. Both are prescribed in the UBEC (2015) guidelines, yet both are the least consistently applied of the six methods examined. The grand mean of 2.67 indicates that a range of monitoring methods is in active use across the sampled schools, but that reliance is heavier on document-based and observational methods than on instrument-based ones.

Research Question Two: What are the existing procedures and strategies employed in monitoring curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone?

Table 4: Mean Ratings and Rank Order on the Existing Procedures and Strategies Employed in Monitoring Curriculum Implementation (N = 240)

Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rank	Decision
Supervisory visits are conducted at least once every school term	45	81	67	47	240	2.52	1.01	3rd	**Accepted**
Feedback conferencing is held with teachers after every supervisory visit	42	82	76	40	240	2.52	0.97	4th	**Accepted**
School-Based Management Committees are involved in monitoring curriculum implementation	61	84	55	40	240	2.69	1.03	2nd	**Accepted**

Supervision reports are properly documented and filed for reference	65	79	61	35	240	2.72	1.02	1st	**Accepted**
ICT/digital tools and EMIS platforms are used to track curriculum implementation	24	59	94	63	240	2.18	0.94	6th	**Rejected**
SUBEB and LGEA officials conduct joint monitoring visits to schools	36	58	94	52	240	2.33	0.98	5th	**Rejected**
Grand mean					**240**	**2.49**			**Rejected**

Table 4 indicates that four procedural elements were rated at or above the criterion mean. Proper documentation and filing of supervision reports ranked first ($\bar{x}$ = 2.72), followed by the involvement of School-Based Management Committees ($\bar{x}$ = 2.69), the conduct of supervisory visits at least once every school term ($\bar{x}$ = 2.52), and feedback conferencing after supervisory visits ($\bar{x}$ = 2.52). These elements are therefore moderately embedded in current practice.

Two procedures fell clearly below the criterion mean. The use of ICT and digital tools and Education Management Information System platforms recorded a mean of 2.18, the lowest of all twenty-four items in the questionnaire. Joint SUBEB and LGEA monitoring visits recorded a mean of 2.33, the second lowest. The grand mean for the construct, at 2.49, falls marginally below the criterion mean. The picture is of a monitoring system that remains substantially paper-based and single-agency in character, with digital tooling and inter-agency collaboration representing the clearest procedural gaps.

Research Question Three: What are the challenges facing effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone?

Table 5: Mean Ratings and Rank Order on the Challenges Facing Effective Monitoring of Curriculum Implementation (N = 240)

Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rank	Decision
There is an inadequate number of qualified supervisors for the number of schools to be monitored	101	84	38	17	240	3.12	0.92	1st	**Accepted**
Poor funding and lack of transportation limit supervisors' ability to visit schools regularly	102	83	32	23	240	3.10	0.97	2nd	**Accepted**
Bad roads and difficult terrain restrict supervisors' access to rural schools	93	83	46	18	240	3.05	0.94	3rd	**Accepted**

Teachers show resistance or anxiety towards being supervised	68	80	59	33	240	2.76	1.01	6th	**Accepted**
There is a lack of a standardized, uniform instrument for monitoring curriculum implementation	91	74	47	28	240	2.95	1.02	4th	**Accepted**
Feedback from supervision is rarely followed up to ensure implementation of recommendations	80	75	46	39	240	2.82	1.07	5th	**Accepted**
Grand mean					**240**	**2.97**			**Accepted**

Table 5 reveals that all six challenge items were rated above the criterion mean, confirming that each is perceived as a genuine impediment to effective monitoring. An inadequate number of qualified supervisors ranked first ($\bar{x}$ = 3.12), followed by poor funding and lack of transportation ($\bar{x}$ = 3.10) and bad roads and difficult terrain ($\bar{x}$ = 3.05). The absence of a standardized, uniform monitoring instrument ranked fourth ($\bar{x}$ = 2.95) and the lack of follow-up on supervisory feedback fifth ($\bar{x}$ = 2.82).

Teachers' resistance or anxiety towards being supervised, although still above the criterion mean, ranked lowest of the six ($\bar{x}$ = 2.76). The rank ordering therefore places structural and logistical barriers consistently above interpersonal or attitudinal ones. The grand mean of 2.97 is the second highest of the four constructs examined.

Research Question Four: What strategies can enhance effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone?

Table 6: Mean Ratings and Rank Order on Strategies for Enhancing Effective Monitoring of Curriculum Implementation (N = 240)

Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rank	Decision
Regular training and retraining of supervisors will enhance effective monitoring of curriculum implementation	126	82	24	8	240	3.36	0.80	2nd	**Accepted**
Adequate funding and provision of logistics/vehicles will enhance effective monitoring	139	80	16	5	240	3.47	0.71	1st	**Accepted**
Adoption of ICT-based/digital monitoring systems will enhance effective monitoring	115	78	29	18	240	3.21	0.93	6th	**Accepted**
Increasing the number of quality assurance personnel will enhance effective monitoring	109	86	38	7	240	3.24	0.82	5th	**Accepted**
Strengthening collaboration									

between SUBEB, LGEA, and School-Based Management Committees will enhance effective monitoring	118	78	33	11	240	3.26	0.86	3rd	**Accepted**
Prompt feedback and follow-up after supervision will enhance effective monitoring	110	90	30	10	240	3.25	0.83	4th	**Accepted**
Grand mean					**240**	**3.30**			**Accepted**

Table 6 shows that all six proposed strategies recorded means well above the criterion mean, and that this construct returned the highest grand mean of the four ($\bar{x}$ = 3.30). Adequate funding and provision of logistics and vehicles ranked first ($\bar{x}$ = 3.47), the highest rating of any item in the questionnaire, followed by regular training and retraining of supervisors ($\bar{x}$ = 3.36). These two directly mirror the two highest-ranked challenges in Table 5.

Strengthening collaboration between SUBEB, LGEA and School-Based Management Committees ranked third ($\bar{x}$ = 3.26), prompt feedback and follow-up fourth ($\bar{x}$ = 3.25), and increasing the number of quality assurance personnel fifth ($\bar{x}$ = 3.24). Adoption of ICT-based and digital monitoring systems, although still strongly endorsed, ranked sixth ($\bar{x}$ = 3.21). The narrowness of the spread across the six strategies, from 3.21 to 3.47, indicates broad and fairly uniform endorsement rather than clear preference for any one course of action.

Figure 1 presents the mean rating for all twenty-four items across the four constructs, plotted against the criterion mean of 2.50, so that the relative standing of every practice, challenge and strategy can be compared at a glance.

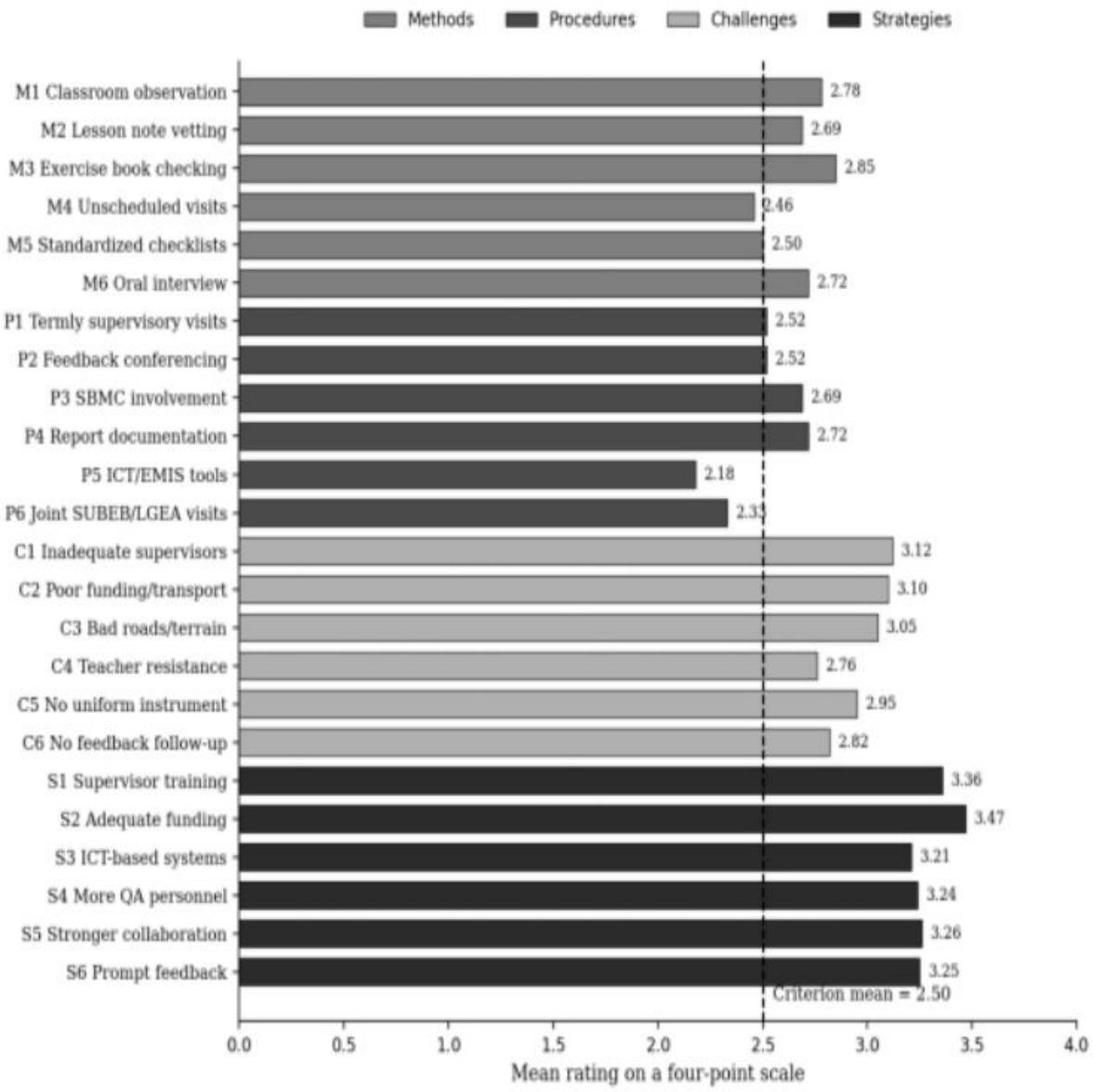


Figure 1: Mean ratings of the twenty-four CIMQ items by construct, against the criterion mean of 2.50

Figure 1 makes visible a pattern that the individual tables report separately. The strategy items (S1 to S6) form the highest and most tightly clustered band, the challenge items (C1 to C6) sit consistently above the criterion mean, and the procedure items (P1 to P6) contain the two lowest ratings recorded anywhere in the study. The overall shape indicates strong agreement about what should be done alongside considerably more equivocal ratings of what is currently being done.

Test of Hypotheses

Before the hypotheses were tested, the assumptions of the independent samples t-test were examined. Table 7 reports the assumption tests for all four constructs.

Table 7: Tests of Normality and Homogeneity of Variance for the Four Composite Constructs

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis	Shapiro–Wilk p	Levene's F	Levene's p
Existing methods	0.32	–0.45	0.082	1.24	0.274
Existing procedures	–0.28	0.51	0.153	0.87	0.358
Challenges	0.67	1.02	0.041	2.91	0.098
Enhancement strategies	–0.15	–0.23	0.210	1.05	0.314

Skewness and kurtosis values fell within the ±1 range for all four constructs, Shapiro-Wilk tests were non-significant, and Levene's test returned non-significant results throughout. The assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were therefore satisfied, and the equal-variances-assumed form of the independent samples t-test was used for all four hypotheses.

Hypothesis One

HO_1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of classroom teachers and head teachers/quality assurance officers on the existing methods used for monitoring curriculum implementation in primary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Table 8: Summary of t-test Analysis of the Difference in Mean Ratings of Classroom Teachers and Head Teachers/Quality Assurance Officers on Existing Methods Used for Monitoring Curriculum Implementation

Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	Mean diff.	95% CI	Cohen's d	t-value	p-value	Decision	
Group A	160	2.81	0.38	238	0.42	0.32 to	1.11	8.10	0.000	**Reject HO_1**	0.52
Group B	80	2.39	0.38								

Group A = Classroom Teachers; Group B = Head Teachers and Quality Assurance Officers. Significance tested at the 0.05 level.

Table 8 shows a calculated t-value of 8.10 with an associated p-value of 0.000 at 238 degrees of freedom. Since p is less than 0.05, HO_1 is rejected. Classroom teachers ($\bar{x}$ = 2.81) rated the use of monitoring methods significantly higher than head teachers and quality assurance officers did ($\bar{x}$ = 2.39). The mean difference of 0.42 has a 95% confidence interval of 0.32 to 0.52, which excludes zero, and Cohen's d of 1.11 indicates a large effect by the conventions of Cohen (1988). The difference is therefore both statistically significant and substantial in magnitude.

Hypothesis Two

HO_2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of classroom teachers and head teachers/quality assurance officers on the existing procedures and strategies employed in monitoring curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone.

Table 9: Summary of t-test Analysis of the Difference in Mean Ratings of Classroom Teachers and Head Teachers/Quality Assurance Officers on Existing Procedures and Strategies Employed in Monitoring Curriculum Implementation

Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	Mean diff.	95% CI	Cohen's d	t-value	p-value	Decision
Group A	160	2.49	0.42	238	0.00	-0.11 to 0.11	0.00	0.02	0.985	**Do not reject HO_2**
Group B	80	2.49	0.38							

Group A = Classroom Teachers; Group B = Head Teachers and Quality Assurance Officers. Significance tested at the 0.05 level.

Table 9 shows a calculated t-value of 0.02 with an associated p-value of 0.985 at 238 degrees of freedom. Since p exceeds 0.05, HO_2 is not rejected. Both groups returned identical composite means of 2.49. Cohen's d is effectively zero and the 95% confidence interval for the mean difference, from -0.11 to 0.11, is narrow and centred on zero. The narrowness of this interval is informative in its own right: it indicates that any true difference between the groups on this construct is at most small, rather than merely that the study failed to detect one.

Hypothesis Three

HO_3: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of classroom teachers and head teachers/quality assurance officers on the challenges facing effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone.

Table 10: Summary of t-test Analysis of the Difference in Mean Ratings of Classroom Teachers and Head Teachers/Quality Assurance Officers on Challenges Facing Effective Monitoring of Curriculum Implementation

Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	Mean diff.	95% CI	Cohen's d	t-value	p-value	Decision
Group A	160	3.09	0.40	238	0.37	0.26 to 0.48	0.92	6.88	0.000	**Reject HO_3**
Group B	80	2.72	0.40							

Group A = Classroom Teachers; Group B = Head Teachers and Quality Assurance Officers. Significance tested at the 0.05 level.

Table 10 shows a calculated t-value of 6.88 with an associated p-value of 0.000 at 238 degrees of freedom. Since p is less than 0.05, HO_3 is rejected. Classroom teachers ($\bar{x}$ = 3.09) rated the severity of the challenges significantly higher than head teachers and quality assurance officers did ($\bar{x}$ = 2.72). The mean difference of 0.37 has a 95% confidence interval of 0.26 to 0.48, and Cohen's d of 0.92 denotes a large effect.

Hypothesis Four

HO_4: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of classroom teachers and head teachers/quality assurance officers on the strategies for enhancing effective monitoring of curriculum implementation in primary schools in the zone.

Table 11: Summary of t-test Analysis of the Difference in Mean Ratings of Classroom Teachers and Head Teachers/Quality Assurance Officers on Strategies for Enhancing Effective Monitoring of Curriculum Implementation

Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	Mean diff.	95% CI	Cohen's d	t-value	p-value	Decision
Group A	160	3.30	0.31	238	0.01	-0.07 to 0.09	0.03	0.15	0.884	**Do not reject HO_4**
Group B	80	3.29	0.31							

Group A = Classroom Teachers; Group B = Head Teachers and Quality Assurance Officers. Significance tested at the 0.05 level.

Table 11 shows a calculated t-value of 0.15 with an associated p-value of 0.884 at 238 degrees of freedom. Since p exceeds 0.05, HO_4 is not rejected. The composite means of the two

groups, 3.30 and 3.29, are almost identical. Cohen's d of 0.03 is negligible and the 95% confidence interval, from -0.07 to 0.09, is the narrowest recorded in the study. Both groups converge on strong endorsement of regular supervisor training, adequate funding and logistics, and digital monitoring tools.

DISUSSION OF RESULTS

Existing Methods of Monitoring

The finding in Tables 3 and 8 is that exercise book checking, classroom observation and lesson note vetting are the most consistently applied methods, while standardized checklists and unscheduled visits lag behind. This is consistent with the methods catalogued in UBEC (2015), which prescribes all six but which, on the evidence of this study, is unevenly operationalised. The pattern also echoes Okafor et al. (2024), who found classroom observation and lesson note vetting dominating Nigerian school supervision, often at the expense of more structured approaches.

The direction of this pattern is not accidental, and the ranking in Table 3 suggests why it occurs. The three highest-ranked methods share a common property: each inspects a document or artefact that already exists in the school and that the teacher has produced for other purposes. The two lowest-ranked methods share the opposite property: each requires a resource the supervisor must supply, whether an instrument in the case of checklists or an additional unscheduled journey in the case of impromptu visits. Where supervisory resources are constrained, as Table 5 shows them to be, methods that consume no additional supervisory resource will persist while those that consume more will attenuate. The methods that survive are thus those that are cheapest to execute rather than those that are most diagnostically informative.
The significant difference between the two groups on this construct ($d = 1.11$) is a novel contribution of this study, since prior Nigerian studies have not compared monitored and monitoring parties directly. Its interpretation, however, must be handled carefully. A perceptual gap of this magnitude is compatible with at least two explanations that the present cross-sectional design cannot distinguish between. Teachers may be applying a less demanding standard of what counts as adequate monitoring, or quality assurance officers may be rating their own practice against the fuller schedule of visits they are formally required to complete. A third possibility is that officers, who see many schools, are averaging across a wider and more variable set of experiences than any individual teacher can observe. These explanations are offered as hypotheses for further research, not as findings, and testing them would require observational or record-based data of a kind this study did not collect.

Existing Procedures and Strategies

Tables 4 and 9 show that termly visits, feedback conferencing, School-Based Management Committee involvement and documentation are moderately practised, while ICT-based monitoring tools and inter-agency collaboration remain weak. The ICT finding aligns closely with Akpotu and Okoro (2026), who identified insufficient integration of information and communication technologies as a principal systemic weakness across Nigeria and the wider continent. The present study extends that observation by quantifying the shortfall: at $\bar{x} = 2.18$, ICT and EMIS use is not merely under-integrated but the single weakest practice of the twenty-four examined.

The absence of a significant difference between respondent groups on this construct is analytically more important than it may first appear. Where the two groups diverged, on methods

and on challenges, at least one group's ratings must be inaccurate. Where they converge, and converge within a confidence interval as narrow as -0.11 to 0.11, the shared rating is more plausibly a description of the situation than an artefact of either group's vantage point. The procedural shortfalls identified here are therefore best read as accurately perceived rather than contested. That distinction carries a direct practical implication: closing this gap will require external investment in infrastructure and in inter-agency coordination mechanisms, not improved communication between teachers and supervisors, since both groups already agree on where the shortfalls lie.

Challenges Facing Effective Monitoring

Tables 5 and 10 show that inadequate supervisor numbers, poor funding and transportation, and difficult terrain constitute the most severe challenges. This mirrors Osiesi (2023), who identified poor funding and a shortage of qualified evaluators as principal barriers, and Akpotu and Okoro (2026), who highlighted inadequate funding and limited supervisor training as recurring continental patterns. The present study adds a geographical qualification that neither review was positioned to make. Bad roads and difficult terrain ranked third of six in this zone, above the absence of a uniform instrument and above teacher resistance. Since neither review disaggregated by zone, this ranking indicates that terrain is not a marginal consideration in the Middle Belt but a first-order constraint, and that a nationally uniform reform package would misallocate effort in the zone.

A second qualification concerns teacher resistance. Both reviews list negative teacher attitudes among the barriers to effective monitoring. In the present data, teacher resistance ranked lowest of the six challenges, and it did so on ratings supplied by both groups, including the officers who would be expected to encounter that resistance directly. This does not contradict the reviews, which did not rank the barriers they listed. It does suggest that the prominence teacher attitudes have acquired in the literature may exceed their practical weight relative to structural constraints, at least in this zone.

Classroom teachers rated challenge severity significantly higher than quality assurance officers did ($d = 0.92$). One reading is that teachers bear a disproportionate share of the downstream consequences of weak monitoring, in the form of unaddressed instructional difficulties and limited professional support, even though officers confront the funding and staffing shortfalls more directly. An alternative reading is that officers who have worked within these constraints for extended periods have developed a degree of adaptive tolerance. Both readings are speculative. The data establish that the perceptual gap exists and that it is large; they do not establish its cause, and further research using longitudinal or observational designs would be required to adjudicate between the two.

Strategies for Enhancing Effective Monitoring

Tables 6 and 11 show regular supervisor training and adequate funding for logistics as the most strongly endorsed strategies, with no significant difference between groups ($d = 0.03$). This is consistent with the recommendations advanced by Osiesi (2023) and Akpotu and Okoro (2026), both of which call for sustained financial investment and capacity-building.

The correspondence between the challenge rankings in Table 5 and the strategy rankings in Table 6 is close but not exact, and the exception is instructive. The two highest-ranked challenges, inadequate supervisor numbers and poor funding, map onto the two highest-ranked strategies. ICT adoption, however, ranked sixth among strategies ($\bar{x} = 3.21$) despite ICT absence

being among the weakest current practices ($\bar{x}$ = 2.18). Respondents thus identified the largest practice gap in the study and simultaneously ranked the corresponding remedy last. The most plausible reading, given the prominence of terrain and infrastructure among the challenges, is that respondents in more rural local government areas doubt the feasibility of digital solutions in their own operating conditions rather than their desirability in principle. If that reading is correct, it carries a warning for policy: a digital monitoring initiative introduced without prior attention to connectivity and device access is likely to meet scepticism from the very personnel expected to operate it.

Implications of the Findings

For policy, the findings indicate that the binding constraints on curriculum monitoring in the zone are resource constraints rather than design constraints. The formal architecture prescribed by UBEC (2015) is broadly known and partially practised; what fails is its execution under conditions of insufficient personnel, funding and access. Policy instruments that add further procedural requirements without addressing these constraints are therefore unlikely to change practice. The convergence of both respondent groups on the same improvement agenda (Table 11) also indicates that the political obstacle to reform is not stakeholder disagreement but resource mobilisation.

For theory, the results give empirical content to the process component of the CIPP model in a low-resource setting. The pattern in Table 3, whereby methods requiring no additional supervisory resource persist while those requiring more attenuate, suggests that process evaluation in such settings is shaped less by evaluative design than by resource availability. This is a refinement of the model rather than a challenge to it, and one that Stufflebeam's (2003) formulation, developed in better-resourced systems, does not explicitly address. It also qualifies Fullan's (2016) reculturing thesis: reculturing presupposes a level of sustained professional contact between supervisors and teachers that the conditions documented here do not reliably permit.

For practice, three implications follow directly. First, since the surviving methods are document-based, the diagnostic quality of monitoring depends heavily on what those documents can reveal, and lesson note and exercise book formats may warrant redesign with that in mind. Second, the perceptual gap between teachers and officers on methods (d = 1.11) suggests that both groups would benefit from a shared, explicit statement of what adequate monitoring frequency and depth should look like. Third, the low rating given to inter-agency collaboration ($\bar{x}$ = 2.33) identifies a form of improvement that requires coordination rather than additional personnel, and which is therefore available at comparatively low cost.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be borne in mind when interpreting these findings.

1. The study was conducted in three of the six states of North Central Nigeria, namely Benue, Niger and Plateau. Although these were purposively selected to represent the eastern, western and central sub-areas of the zone, the findings cannot be assumed to hold for Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa or the Federal Capital Territory without further enquiry.
2. Data were obtained solely by self-report questionnaire. Self-report is subject to social desirability bias, and quality assurance officers in particular were being asked to rate practices for which they are professionally responsible. No observational or documentary verification of reported practice was undertaken.

3. The design is cross-sectional. It captures perceptions at a single point in time and cannot establish whether the patterns reported are stable, improving or deteriorating, nor can it support causal inference about why the two respondent groups differ.
4. The study measured perceptions of monitoring practice rather than monitoring practice itself. A finding that a method is perceived to be in use is not evidence that it is used at the frequency or depth the guidelines prescribe.
5. Private primary schools were excluded, as were the pupils and parents who form part of the wider school community. The findings therefore describe monitoring within the public primary system only.
6. The instrument was researcher-developed and was validated through expert review and internal consistency analysis. Its construct structure was not tested by exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis, and the intercorrelations among the four constructs were not examined.

These limitations point to a clear agenda for further research. Studies extending coverage to the remaining states of the zone, employing observational or record-based verification alongside self-report, subjecting the CIMQ to factor analysis, and linking monitoring practice to pupil learning outcomes would each address a limitation identified above.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study, it is concluded that primary schools in the three sampled states operate within a formally adequate but unevenly applied system for monitoring curriculum implementation. Document-based and observational methods such as exercise book checking, classroom observation and lesson note vetting are used with reasonable consistency. More structured, instrument-based and technologically mediated methods and procedures, namely standardized checklists, unscheduled visits, joint monitoring and ICT-based tools, remain comparatively underdeveloped.

The study further concludes that this uneven application is substantially associated with a cluster of systemic challenges. Chief among these are an inadequate number of qualified quality assurance officers, insufficient funding and transportation, and the difficult terrain that characterises much of the zone. These challenges were rated significantly more severe by classroom teachers than by the head teachers and quality assurance officers responsible for addressing them, and the difference was large in magnitude.

Finally, the study concludes that there exists a strong and shared consensus, undivided by respondent group, on the strategies most likely to improve the situation. These are regular training of quality assurance officers, adequate funding and logistics, and the adoption of digital monitoring tools. That convergence suggests that meaningful reform of curriculum implementation monitoring in the zone depends less on resolving disagreement between stakeholders than on mobilising the political will and financial investment needed to act on an improvement agenda that classroom teachers, head teachers and quality assurance officers already largely share.

Recommendations

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

1. State Universal Basic Education Boards should institutionalise the regular use of standardized, uniform monitoring checklists across all Local Government Education Authorities. This follows from the finding in Table 3 that standardized inspection

checklists ranked fifth of six methods ($\bar{x}$ = 2.50), sitting exactly at the criterion mean, and from the finding in Table 5 that the absence of a uniform monitoring instrument was rated the fourth most severe challenge ($\bar{x}$ = 2.95).

2. State governments and development partners should prioritise the provision of adequate funding, vehicles and fuel allowances for quality assurance officers. This follows directly from the finding that poor funding and lack of transportation ranked second among the challenges ($\bar{x}$ = 3.10), and that adequate funding and provision of logistics recorded the highest rating of any item in the study ($\bar{x}$ = 3.47).
3. State Universal Basic Education Boards and Local Government Education Authorities should recruit additional qualified quality assurance personnel and introduce structured professional development programmes for serving officers. This responds to the finding that an inadequate number of qualified supervisors ranked first among the challenges ($\bar{x}$ = 3.12), and to the strong endorsement of regular training and retraining ($\bar{x}$ = 3.36, ranked second) and of increased personnel numbers ($\bar{x}$ = 3.24) as strategies.
4. Education authorities should pilot and progressively scale up ICT-based and digital monitoring tools, including mobile-based reporting platforms linked to Education Management Information Systems. This recommendation addresses the finding that ICT and EMIS use recorded the lowest mean score of all twenty-four items in the study ($\bar{x}$ = 2.18, ranked sixth of six procedures). Because respondents ranked ICT adoption last among the six improvement strategies ($\bar{x}$ = 3.21), any such initiative should be preceded by an assessment of connectivity and device availability in the local government areas concerned, and should be piloted first where infrastructure permits.
5. State Universal Basic Education Boards and Local Government Education Authority offices should formalise joint monitoring arrangements with each other and with School-Based Management Committees. This follows from the finding that joint SUBEB and LGEA visits ranked fifth of six procedures ($\bar{x}$ = 2.33), the second lowest rating in the study, and from the strong endorsement of strengthened inter-agency collaboration as a strategy ($\bar{x}$ = 3.26, ranked third). This improvement requires coordination rather than additional personnel and is therefore achievable at comparatively low cost.
6. Quality assurance officers and classroom teachers should be issued with a shared, explicit statement of the frequency and depth of monitoring that official guidelines require. This responds to the large and significant perceptual gap recorded between the two groups on the use of monitoring methods (mean difference = 0.42, d = 1.11) and on the severity of challenges (mean difference = 0.37, d = 0.92).

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GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING AS A TOOL FOR ADVANCING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Polycarp I. AGWEDA,
Department of Guidance and Counselling,
Faculty of Education, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma
agweda.polycarp@gmail.com;

EFOSA-EHIOGHIREN, Augustina Izehiuwa EFOSA-EHIOGHIREN
Department of Guidance & Counselling, Faculty of Education,
Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria
efosag.c@aauekpoma.edu.ng;

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of guidance and counselling in fostering diversity and inclusion within school settings. The paper adopts a narrative literature review approach by synthesizing scholarly works on guidance and counselling, multicultural education, and inclusive education. The paper highlights the contributions of school counsellors in promoting cultural awareness, reducing discrimination and prejudice, supporting marginalized learners, facilitating conflict resolution, encouraging equitable participation, and providing inclusive career guidance. It also identifies major barriers to effective implementation, including inadequate professional training, cultural resistance, limited resources, and the stigmatization of counselling services. Furthermore, the paper proposes strategies for strengthening inclusive counselling practices through continuous professional development, supportive educational policies, curriculum integration, community engagement, and the use of technology. The paper concludes that Guidance and counselling constitute important mechanisms for supporting equity and inclusion within broader institutional and policy frameworks. It recommends increased investment in counsellor training, institutional support, and policy reforms to enhance the effectiveness of counselling services in achieving inclusive education.

Keywords: Guidance and counselling, diversity, inclusion, multicultural education, school counselling, equity, social justice, inclusive education.

INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly multicultural and globalized society, promoting diversity and inclusion within educational institutions has become an important educational and social responsibility. Schools are microcosms of society, comprising learners from different ethnic, religious, socio-economic, linguistic, cultural, gender, and ability backgrounds. Inclusive education therefore requires educational institutions to identify and remove barriers that prevent learners from participating fully and benefiting equally from educational opportunities (UNESCO, 2020). Guidance and counselling services are particularly important in this regard because they provide academic, personal, social, and emotional support to learners who may experience exclusion, discrimination, prejudice, or other forms of marginalization.

The Nigerian educational system provides a particularly important context for examining diversity and inclusion because Nigeria is characterized by considerable ethnic, religious,

linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity. Learners may come from different ethnic groups and cultural traditions, while Christianity, Islam, and traditional religious beliefs influence family and community life in different parts of the country. Ethnic and religious differences can enrich the educational experience, but they may also generate stereotypes, prejudice, social distance, and, in some circumstances, tensions that affect students' sense of belonging and participation in school. UNESCO identifies ethnicity, language, religion, gender, disability, poverty, and location among the factors that can contribute to educational exclusion. Consequently, Nigerian schools require deliberate strategies for creating environments in which differences are respected and learners are treated equitably irrespective of their ethnic, religious, or cultural backgrounds.

Gender disparities constitute another important dimension of diversity and inclusion in Nigeria. Although progress has been made toward gender parity in education, girls in some parts of the country continue to face barriers associated with poverty, socio-cultural expectations, early marriage, household responsibilities, insecurity, and other gender-related factors. UNICEF reports that gender, geography, and poverty significantly influence patterns of educational marginalization in Nigeria, with particularly serious challenges affecting girls in parts of northern Nigeria. These realities demonstrate that inclusion cannot be understood simply as providing equal access to schooling; it must also involve addressing the social and cultural conditions that influence learners' participation, experiences, achievement, and sense of belonging.

Disability inclusion is equally significant within the Nigerian educational context. Learners with physical, sensory, intellectual, communication, and other functional difficulties may encounter inaccessible school facilities, inadequate learning materials, limited assistive technologies, stigma, discrimination, and insufficiently trained personnel. Although Nigeria has adopted policies aimed at promoting inclusive education, implementation remains uneven because of inadequate resources and differences in institutional capacity. Recent evidence indicates that children with disabilities experience substantially greater barriers to school attendance, particularly in rural areas. Thus, school counsellors have an important role in advocating for learners with disabilities, challenging discriminatory attitudes, facilitating social adjustment, supporting families, and connecting learners with appropriate educational and psychosocial resources.

Language diversity further complicates the provision of inclusive education in Nigeria. With English serving as the major language of formal education alongside numerous indigenous languages and Nigerian Pidgin, learners may enter school with considerably different linguistic backgrounds and levels of proficiency in the language used for instruction. Language differences can affect classroom participation, comprehension, peer relationships, and students' ability to access counselling services effectively. Evidence from Nigeria illustrates how children from minority-language communities can experience educational barriers when the language of instruction differs substantially from the language they use at home. Consequently, inclusive guidance and counselling should be sensitive to learners' linguistic backgrounds and should avoid treating language differences as evidence of low ability or poor academic potential.

Furthermore, rural-urban and socio-economic inequalities constitute major dimensions of educational exclusion in Nigeria. Differences in school infrastructure, availability of qualified teachers and counsellors, learning resources, digital facilities, transportation, household income, and access to social services can produce substantially different educational experiences for learners depending on where they live. UNICEF identifies geographical and socio-economic

disparities, particularly those between rural and urban communities, as significant dimensions of inequality in Nigeria. Rural and disadvantaged learners may therefore require additional counselling and educational support to overcome barriers associated with poverty, distance, inadequate facilities, insecurity, and limited access to educational resources.

Against this background, guidance and counselling services assume a critical role in promoting diversity and inclusion within Nigerian schools. School counsellors are strategically positioned to identify learners who experience exclusion, provide culturally responsive counselling, promote interpersonal understanding, challenge stereotypes and discriminatory practices, facilitate conflict resolution, support learners with disabilities and other special needs, and advocate for equitable access to educational opportunities. Through individual counselling, group guidance, career guidance, consultation with teachers and parents, and school-wide intervention programmes, counsellors can contribute to the development of school environments in which diversity is recognized as a strength rather than a barrier.

Despite the growing emphasis on inclusive education, considerable gaps remain in understanding how school counsellors specifically operationalize diversity and inclusion practices within Nigeria's culturally and socio-economically heterogeneous educational system. Existing literature has extensively addressed inclusive education and the general principles of diversity, equity, and participation, but comparatively less attention has been devoted to the specific counselling practices through which these principles are translated into everyday school experiences. This gap is particularly important in Nigeria, where ethnic and religious diversity, gender disparities, disability-related barriers, linguistic differences, and rural-urban inequalities intersect to shape learners' educational experiences. Therefore, examining the role of school guidance and counselling services in promoting diversity and inclusion is essential for developing educational practices that are culturally responsive, equitable, accessible, and relevant to the Nigerian context.

Concept of Guidance and Counselling

Guidance encompasses developmental services that assist learners in academic, personal, social, and career decision-making, while counselling involves professional helping relationships aimed at facilitating self-understanding, adjustment, and personal growth. (Makinde, 1983). In the context of diversity and inclusion, counselling helps students from diverse backgrounds feel understood, safe, and supported regardless of their identity or challenges. According to Okobiah and Okorodudu (2004), guidance and counselling services assist students in adjusting to school life and resolving personal and interpersonal issues. They also promote positive attitudes toward learning and interaction with peers from varied backgrounds.

Concept of Diversity

Diversity refers to the presence and recognition of differences among individuals and groups within a society or institution. These differences may include ethnicity, religion, language, gender, age, socio-economic status, physical and intellectual abilities, cultural background, learning needs, and other characteristics that shape individuals' experiences and perspectives (Banks, 2013). In educational settings, diversity recognizes that learners do not constitute a homogeneous group; rather, they enter schools with different identities, cultural experiences, abilities, family backgrounds, values, languages, and educational needs.

In the Nigerian educational context, diversity is particularly significant because schools bring together learners from different ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic

backgrounds. Differences may also exist between learners from rural and urban communities and between learners with and without disabilities. Such diversity can enrich the educational environment by exposing learners to different perspectives, experiences, values, and ways of understanding the world. However, diversity can also create challenges when differences are associated with stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, or unequal access to educational opportunities.

Diversity should therefore not merely mean the presence of different groups within a school. It requires recognition and appreciation of differences as valuable components of the educational community. School guidance and counselling services can contribute to this process by helping learners understand and respect differences, challenging discriminatory attitudes, facilitating positive interpersonal relationships, and supporting students who experience marginalization.

Concept of Equality

Equality refers to the provision of the same rights, opportunities, treatment, and access to resources to individuals or groups, regardless of their personal or social characteristics. In education, equality implies that learners should have equal opportunities to enrol, participate, learn, and progress within the educational system. It is based on the principle that no learner should be denied educational opportunities because of ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, socio-economic background, language, or other characteristics.

However, treating every learner in exactly the same way does not necessarily produce fair educational outcomes. Learners may begin their educational experiences from different social, economic, linguistic, or physical circumstances. For example, providing identical learning materials to all students may constitute equality, but a learner with a visual impairment may require materials in an accessible format to participate effectively. Consequently, equality provides an important foundation for inclusive education, but it needs to be complemented by equity.

Concept of Equity

Equity refers to fairness in the distribution of educational opportunities, resources, support, and services according to the different needs and circumstances of learners. Unlike equality, which emphasizes the same treatment, equity recognizes that learners may require different forms or levels of support to achieve meaningful participation and comparable educational opportunities. In the school environment, equity may involve providing additional academic support to disadvantaged learners, assistive devices and accessible facilities for learners with disabilities, language support for learners experiencing linguistic barriers, counselling interventions for marginalized students, and targeted programmes for learners affected by poverty or other forms of disadvantage. Equity therefore seeks to identify and remove structural and contextual barriers that prevent some learners from benefiting from education on an equal basis.

The distinction between equality and equity is particularly relevant to Nigerian schools because learners experience different levels of disadvantage arising from poverty, geographical location, gender, disability, language, insecurity, and socio-cultural circumstances. An equitable educational system therefore does not simply give every learner the same resources; rather, it provides appropriate support based on identified needs. Guidance counsellors can contribute to

equity by identifying barriers affecting individual learners and advocating for interventions and resources that enable them to participate effectively in school life.

Concept of Inclusion

Inclusion refers to the deliberate process of creating educational environments in which all learners are welcomed, respected, supported, and enabled to participate fully in academic and social life, irrespective of their differences or circumstances (UNESCO, 2020). Inclusion therefore goes beyond the physical presence or enrolment of students in schools. It involves creating conditions in which learners experience acceptance, participation, recognition, belonging, and meaningful opportunities to learn and succeed. Ainscow and Miles (2009) emphasize that educational inclusion involves identifying and removing barriers to participation and learning. From this perspective, a school cannot be considered genuinely inclusive simply because students from diverse backgrounds attend the same institution. Inclusion requires continuous examination and modification of the structures, policies, practices, and attitudes that may prevent particular groups of learners from participating fully.

Importantly, inclusion extends beyond students' acceptance of one another. It encompasses the adaptation of curriculum and instructional practices to accommodate diverse learning needs, the development of positive teacher attitudes toward differences, the establishment of an institutional culture that values diversity, the adoption of fair and flexible assessment practices, and the commitment of school leadership to equity and participation. Inclusive schools therefore examine how curriculum content, teaching methods, classroom interaction, assessment procedures, school policies, disciplinary practices, physical facilities, and leadership decisions may either facilitate or restrict participation.

Curriculum adaptation is an important dimension of inclusion because learners differ in their abilities, cultural backgrounds, languages, and learning needs. An inclusive curriculum should reflect diverse experiences and provide opportunities for learners to see their identities and cultures represented positively in the educational process. Similarly, teachers' attitudes are critical because negative assumptions about learners' abilities, backgrounds, gender, religion, or disability can reproduce exclusion even where inclusive policies exist.

Institutional culture also determines whether diversity is genuinely valued within a school. A school culture characterized by respect, cooperation, fairness, safety, and acceptance can promote students' sense of belonging, whereas discriminatory practices, bullying, stereotyping, and social exclusion can undermine inclusion. Assessment practices should likewise recognize learner diversity and avoid unnecessarily creating barriers to demonstrating knowledge and competence. Appropriate flexibility in assessment can provide disadvantaged learners with fair opportunities to demonstrate their learning. School leadership provides the institutional direction necessary for sustaining inclusion. School leaders influence policies, allocation of resources, teacher development, disciplinary procedures, staff attitudes, and the overall culture of the school. Effective leadership can therefore transform inclusion from a policy statement into everyday institutional practice.

Guidance and counselling services are integral to these processes. Counsellors can assess students' academic, emotional, social, and personal needs; identify experiences of discrimination and exclusion; facilitate individual and group counselling; promote positive attitudes toward diversity; support teachers and parents; and advocate for appropriate institutional responses. They can also contribute to school-wide programmes aimed at developing empathy, conflict

resolution, respect for differences, disability awareness, gender sensitivity, and positive intergroup relationships.

Conceptual Distinction among Diversity, Equality, Equity and Inclusion

Although the concepts are closely related, they should not be used interchangeably. Diversity concerns difference; equality concerns the provision of the same rights and opportunities; equity concerns fairness through differentiated support according to need; and inclusion concerns meaningful participation, acceptance, and belonging. Thus, a school may be diverse without being inclusive, may provide equal treatment without achieving equity, and may have inclusive policies without achieving meaningful participation if institutional practices remain discriminatory.

The relationship among the four concepts can therefore be understood as follows: diversity provides the recognition of differences; equality establishes the principle of equal rights and opportunities; equity addresses unequal circumstances and removes barriers; while inclusion ensures that all learners can participate, belong, and contribute meaningfully to school life. In this sense, diversity is the starting point, equality establishes a common entitlement, equity provides the differentiated support necessary for fairness, and inclusion represents the desired educational condition in which differences are respected and all learners are enabled to participate and succeed.

For the purpose of this paper, diversity and inclusion should consequently be understood as complementary but distinct concepts. Diversity describes the characteristics and differences present among learners, whereas inclusion represents the institutional and interpersonal processes through which those differences are recognized, respected, accommodated, and integrated into meaningful participation in education. Equality and equity provide important principles for achieving this inclusion by ensuring that learners are not denied opportunities and that additional support is provided where different circumstances create barriers to participation.

Theoretical Support

Multicultural Counselling Theory

Multicultural Counselling Theory (Sue et al., 1996) posits that cultural identity is a crucial factor in counselling effectiveness. It emphasizes that Counsellors require cultural self-awareness, knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds, and culturally responsive intervention strategies. This theory supports the idea that promoting diversity and inclusion in schools requires counsellors who are aware of their own cultural biases and actively address cultural dynamics in the counselling process, hence its relevance to this paper.

Social Justice Theory

Social Justice Theory advocates for equitable treatment and access to resources for all individuals, particularly those from marginalized groups (Rawls, 1971). In school counselling, this theory drives interventions that seek to dismantle barriers to participation, advocate for students' rights, and create policies that support underrepresented groups. Counsellors move beyond individual assistance to advocacy by challenging institutional barriers affecting marginalized learners.

Role of Guidance and Counselling in Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

1. **Raising Awareness and Sensitization:** One of the primary functions of guidance and counselling in promoting diversity is creating awareness among the school community, students, teachers, and parents about diversity-related issues. Through sensitization programs, counsellors address topics such as cultural competence, gender equality, and the acceptance of differences in abilities and beliefs. Workshops, peer education programmes, open forums, and school-wide campaigns help dismantle ignorance and foster empathy. Okobiah and Okorodudu (2004) emphasize that when counsellors engage in proactive awareness strategies, they help students appreciate their peers' unique identities and reduce fear of the unfamiliar. These programmes are instrumental in cultivating an inclusive mindset and preparing students to thrive in multicultural environments.
2. **Reducing Discrimination and Prejudice:** Prejudice and discrimination in schools can manifest in forms such as bullying, name-calling, exclusion, and stereotype-based aggression. Guidance counsellors are pivotal in addressing these issues by creating safe environments where students can confront and unlearn prejudices. Sue et al. (2007) argue that counselling fosters reflection and helps students examine how their beliefs and actions may perpetuate inequality. Group counselling and discussions allow students to engage in dialogue, challenge internalized stereotypes, and build values of fairness, respect, and tolerance. These processes help dismantle systemic biases in the school community and promote equitable treatment.
3. **Supporting Marginalized and At-Risk Students:** Guidance and counselling provide a crucial support system for marginalized groups such as students with disabilities, ethnic minorities and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These students often face barriers to learning, social acceptance, and emotional well-being. Counsellors offer individual therapy, referral services, support groups, and safe spaces where these students can discuss their concerns without fear of judgment. Mutie and Ndambuki (1999) note that school counsellors empower marginalized students by helping them build self-esteem, navigate stigma, and develop coping strategies for adverse experiences. These support systems are essential to ensuring equity and inclusion in the school setting.
4. **Conflict Resolution and Mediation:** In diverse educational settings, cultural misunderstandings and identity-based differences may lead to conflicts. Counsellors act as mediators, helping students resolve disputes constructively and learn peaceful interaction techniques. Corey (2016) highlights the importance of conflict resolution as part of counsellors' training. They teach communication and problem-solving skills, run peer mediation programmes, and guide students toward appreciating perspectives different from their own. This proactive approach strengthens social cohesion and reduces violence or tension in diverse school populations.
5. **Encouraging Equitable Participation:** Ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to participate in classroom activities, leadership roles, and extracurricular engagements is key to inclusion. Counsellors advocate for fair representation and help teachers design inclusive classroom practices such as differentiated instruction and culturally responsive teaching. Obiunu (2008) posits that counsellors must collaborate with school management to identify and eliminate barriers to student involvement. They

may also provide targeted support for students who are typically underrepresented, thereby promoting fairness in participation and learning outcomes.

6. **Promoting Inclusive Career Guidance:** Career guidance plays a critical role in shaping students' future paths. However, students from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds may have limited exposure to certain career opportunities or face societal expectations that restrict their choices. Inclusive career counselling broadens students' career horizons, counters gender stereotyping, and helps students make informed decisions regardless of their background. Nwankwo (2015) suggests that counsellors should actively promote underrepresented fields to students such as encouraging girls in STEM or boys in caregiving careers and assist students in navigating cultural or structural barriers to success.

Challenges to Effective Guidance and Counselling in Promoting Inclusion

Guidance and counselling services have considerable potential to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within educational institutions by addressing learners' academic, social, emotional, and personal needs. However, the effectiveness of these services is constrained by a combination of institutional, professional, cultural, economic, and systemic challenges. These challenges are particularly significant in Nigeria, where schools vary considerably in their availability of trained counsellors, counselling facilities, financial resources, and capacity to implement inclusive educational practices.

1. **Lack of Trained Personnel:** One of the major challenges to effective guidance and counselling in promoting inclusion is the inadequate availability of professionally trained guidance counsellors. In some schools, particularly rural and underserved communities, counselling responsibilities may be assigned to teachers who have limited or no specialized training in professional counselling. This situation can reduce the quality of counselling services available to learners with diverse academic, emotional, social, cultural, and disability-related needs. Effective inclusive counselling requires counsellors to possess competencies in multicultural counselling, disability awareness, conflict resolution, gender sensitivity, career development, psychosocial support, and culturally responsive interventions. Where such competencies are lacking, counsellors may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes or fail to recognize the particular barriers experienced by marginalized learners. Continuous professional development is therefore necessary to equip counsellors with the knowledge and skills required to respond effectively to increasingly diverse school populations.
2. **High Counsellor-Student Ratio:** An additional challenge is the high counsellor-student ratio in many Nigerian schools. Where one counsellor is responsible for a very large number of students, it becomes difficult to provide regular individual counselling, group counselling, career guidance, psychosocial support, crisis intervention, and follow-up services. The problem becomes more serious when counsellors are expected to address the needs of students experiencing discrimination, bullying, disability-related barriers, family difficulties, academic problems, and other forms of exclusion. A high workload can also result in counsellors adopting a reactive rather than preventive approach, attending to students only when serious problems arise instead of implementing school-wide programmes designed to promote inclusion. Adequate staffing and reasonable counsellor-

student ratios are therefore essential for ensuring that counselling services are accessible, responsive, and sufficiently individualized.

3. **Poor Professional Recognition of School Counsellors:** The effectiveness of school counselling is also undermined by inadequate professional recognition within some educational institutions. Although school counsellors are trained to provide specialized psychological, educational, vocational, and developmental services, they may sometimes be assigned administrative, clerical, disciplinary, or other duties that are unrelated to their professional responsibilities. Such practices can reduce the time available for counselling and create misconceptions about the role of the counsellor. When counsellors are primarily perceived as disciplinary officers or administrative personnel, students may be reluctant to approach them for personal and sensitive concerns. This weakens the therapeutic relationship necessary for effective counselling and undermines the counsellor's contribution to diversity and inclusion. School administrators therefore need to recognize counselling as a professional service and protect counsellors' time and responsibilities for counselling-related activities.
4. **Cultural and Religious Resistance:** Cultural and religious beliefs can influence how students, parents, teachers, and school administrators understand issues relating to diversity and inclusion. In some communities, discussions concerning disability, gender equality, mental health, family problems, or other sensitive issues may be influenced by traditional beliefs, religious interpretations, or social expectations. While cultural and religious values are important components of Nigerian society, resistance to certain forms of inclusion can sometimes create barriers to counselling interventions. For example, deeply established expectations concerning gender roles may affect the educational choices, participation, or career aspirations of some learners. Similarly, misconceptions about disability or psychological difficulties may discourage individuals from seeking professional assistance. Counsellors therefore need culturally responsive approaches that respect legitimate cultural and religious values while addressing practices and attitudes that contribute to exclusion, discrimination, or unequal educational opportunities.
5. **Limited Financial and Material Resources:** Effective guidance and counselling programmes require adequate financial, human, and material resources. However, some schools operate counselling units with inadequate funding, limited office space, insufficient assessment materials, inadequate educational resources, and poor access to relevant technology. The absence of private and appropriately equipped counselling offices can be particularly problematic because counselling requires an environment that promotes confidentiality, comfort, and trust. Limited resources may also prevent schools from organizing awareness programmes, training teachers, providing assistive resources, conducting outreach activities, or employing additional counsellors. Consequently, resource limitations can significantly restrict the ability of counselling services to respond to the diverse needs of learners.
6. **Stigmatization of Counselling:** Stigma surrounding counselling represents another significant barrier. In some communities, seeking counselling may be associated with weakness, abnormality, mental illness, or an inability to solve one's own problems. Students may consequently avoid counselling even when they are experiencing bullying, discrimination, academic difficulties, family problems, emotional distress, or social exclusion. Stigma can be particularly damaging to inclusion because students who are already vulnerable may be the least willing to seek assistance. Counsellors therefore need

to promote school-wide awareness of counselling as a normal developmental and educational service rather than as an intervention exclusively for students with serious problems. Integrating preventive guidance, group counselling, classroom guidance, and psychoeducational programmes can help normalize the use of counselling services.

7. **Confidentiality and Trust Concerns:** Confidentiality is a particularly important issue in school counselling. Students are more likely to disclose sensitive personal information when they believe that their conversations will be treated with appropriate privacy and professional discretion. However, concerns about information leakage can discourage students from seeking counselling. Students may fear that information disclosed to a counsellor could reach teachers, school administrators, parents, peers, or other members of the school community without their consent. Such concerns can be especially significant when students are discussing family problems, discrimination, bullying, gender-related concerns, disability, academic difficulties, or interpersonal conflicts. When students do not trust the confidentiality of counselling services, the counselling relationship may be weakened and important problems may remain undisclosed. Counsellors should therefore clearly explain the principles and limits of confidentiality to students at the beginning of counselling relationships and comply with relevant professional and institutional ethical requirements. Schools should also provide private counselling spaces and establish clear procedures for handling confidential information. Building trust is fundamental to making counselling accessible to students from diverse and potentially marginalized backgrounds.
8. **Weak Implementation of Inclusive Education Policies:** Nigeria has developed policies and legal frameworks intended to promote inclusive and equitable education, but the existence of policies does not automatically guarantee effective implementation. A major challenge is the gap between policy formulation and practice at the school level. Some schools may lack the resources, trained personnel, infrastructure, monitoring mechanisms, or institutional commitment required to translate inclusive education policies into everyday practices. Weak implementation may manifest in inaccessible school facilities, inadequate support for learners with disabilities, insufficient teacher training, limited counselling services, discriminatory practices, or inadequate mechanisms for identifying and supporting vulnerable learners. Guidance counsellors can contribute to policy implementation by identifying barriers, advocating for learners, supporting teachers and parents, and participating in school-based inclusion programmes. However, counsellors cannot independently resolve structural problems that require institutional and governmental intervention.
9. **Inadequate Collaboration among Stakeholders:** Effective inclusion requires collaboration among counsellors, teachers, school administrators, parents, learners, health professionals, community organizations, and relevant government agencies. However, poor communication and weak coordination among these stakeholders can limit the effectiveness of counselling interventions. Counsellors may identify a student's need for additional support but lack the authority or resources to obtain the necessary educational, medical, psychological, or social services. A collaborative approach is therefore necessary to ensure that counselling interventions are connected to broader school and community support systems. Regular consultation among counsellors, teachers, parents, and administrators can facilitate early identification of barriers and coordinated responses to students' needs.

10. **Rural-Urban and Socio-Economic Disparities:** Differences between rural and urban schools further affect the availability and quality of counselling services. Urban schools may have relatively better access to trained professionals, infrastructure, technology, and specialized support services, whereas schools in rural and disadvantaged communities may experience shortages of counsellors, inadequate facilities, limited funding, and poor access to referral services. These disparities can reinforce existing inequalities because learners who experience greater socio-economic and geographical disadvantages may simultaneously have less access to professional counselling support. Inclusive counselling programmes should therefore give particular attention to underserved schools and communities.

Strategies for Enhancing the Role of Counselling in Inclusion

Creating inclusive learning environments requires deliberate and sustained efforts from school counsellors, educators, policymakers, and communities. The following strategies can enhance the effectiveness of guidance and counselling in promoting diversity and inclusion in schools.

1. **Professional Development:** One of the most critical steps is to provide ongoing professional development for school counsellors. Counsellors should receive periodic training in multicultural counselling competencies, disability inclusion, trauma-informed counselling, and culturally responsive career guidance. Professional development should include workshops, seminars, peer mentoring, and exposure to inclusive models of counselling.
2. **Policy Support:** Institutional and governmental policies play a significant role in fostering inclusive education. When inclusive counselling practices are mandated by policy, schools are more likely to allocate resources and prioritize training. National education frameworks should embed inclusion-focused goals and require schools to adopt non-discriminatory counselling practices.
3. **Curriculum Integration:** Inclusion and diversity should not be isolated subjects but integrated across the school curriculum and guidance programmes. Counsellors should work collaboratively with teachers to infuse lessons on empathy, respect, gender equity, disability awareness, and human rights into everyday classroom activities. This helps normalize diversity and reinforce inclusive values throughout the school environment.
4. **Community Engagement:** Efforts to promote inclusion must go beyond the school environment. Counsellors should engage with parents, traditional leaders, and faith-based organizations to address cultural barriers that hinder acceptance of diversity. Community involvement helps reinforce the inclusive messages students receive in school and creates broader societal support for inclusion efforts.
5. **Use of Technology:** Digital technology can expand the reach of counselling services, especially for marginalized students who may fear stigma or lack physical access. Online counselling platforms, mobile apps, and virtual support groups can provide anonymous, flexible, and confidential support**.** Technology also enables counsellors to deliver educational content on diversity and inclusion through digital media.

Effective guidance and counselling play a pivotal role in building inclusive schools where every student feels valued and supported. However, this role must be strengthened through targeted strategies such as professional development, supportive policies, curriculum redesign, community collaboration, and technology adoption. When these strategies are implemented

holistically, they help counsellors break down barriers to inclusion and promote equity in education.

CONCLUSION

Guidance and counselling constitute an important institutional mechanism for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in Nigerian schools. Effective inclusion extends beyond equal treatment to ensuring that learners from diverse ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender, disability, socio-economic, and geographical backgrounds experience equitable support, meaningful participation, and a sense of belonging. School counsellors contribute to this process through culturally responsive counselling, advocacy, psychosocial support, conflict resolution, and collaboration with key stakeholders.

However, their effectiveness is constrained by high counsellor-student ratios, inadequate professional recognition, limited training and resources, stigma, confidentiality concerns, cultural resistance, and weak policy implementation. Policymakers should therefore strengthen counselling services through adequate staffing, professional development, funding, confidential facilities, effective policy implementation, and institutional accountability, with particular attention to rural and disadvantaged schools.

Future research should empirically examine the effectiveness of counselling interventions in improving students' participation, belonging, wellbeing, and experiences of discrimination across diverse Nigerian educational contexts. Overall, strengthening guidance and counselling can help translate inclusive education policies into sustainable school practices that respect diversity and provide equitable opportunities for all learners.

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BALANCING RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN EDUCATION GOVERNANCE: LEGAL IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA

Justina Henry ODION
Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja
E-mail: justinahenryodion@gmail.com / nou257686691@noun.edu.ng
ORCID: 0009-0005-2443-2961

ABSTRACT
A school runs on more than its timetable; it runs on a web of legal rights and responsibilities binding every stakeholder inside it, whether or not anyone has read the underlying statute. Using doctrinal legal analysis and thematic synthesis, this paper works through the rights, responsibilities, and, where relevant, the regulatory authority of six stakeholder groups: students, teachers, school administrators, parents, host communities, and government. The analysis draws on Nigerian legislation, Supreme Court and National Industrial Court decisions, international human rights instruments, and current scholarship, organised around Stakeholder Theory, Educational Governance Theory, and Social Contract Theory. Its central claim is that education systems work best when rights and responsibilities are held in balance: rights without responsibilities breed entitlement without accountability, while responsibilities without rights breed obligation without protection. Case law, including Garba v. University of Maiduguri on fair hearing and Lagos State Government v. Asiyat AbdulKareem on the limits of government's authority, shows this balance being tested and restored in practice. Legal literacy emerges as a genuine determinant of effective school administration, shaping compliance, accountability, equity, due process, and safety. The paper closes with practical implications for school leaders and policymakers seeking safer, fairer schools.

Keywords: School Administration, Education Law, Stakeholder Rights, Accountability, School Governance

INTRODUCTION

Every school runs on rules, whether or not anyone in the building has read the statute those rules come from. The law protects students while checking misconduct, which is what allows teaching and learning to happen and a learner's conduct to be properly shaped. Ogharen (2022) found that administrators who understand education law make fewer decisions that infringe on the rights of students and staff. Those infringements are often what end up in court, frequently on grounds of negligence.

Much of the existing literature treats legal literacy as one competency among several, alongside instructional leadership, financial management, and community relations (Section 2), without asking a prior question: what does the law require of each party to the education relationship, and how do those requirements interact? This paper takes up that question across six stakeholder groups: students, teachers, school administrators, parents, host communities, and government. Three questions guide the discussion: (1) What legal rights and responsibilities apply to major education stakeholders in Nigeria? (2) How do these obligations shape school leadership practice? (3) What governance challenges arise when rights and responsibilities fall

out of balance? The argument that follows is simple: rights without responsibilities breed entitlement without accountability, and responsibilities without rights breed obligation without protection. That balance is what the case law in Sections 6 and 11 shows being tested and restored in practice.

Literature Review

Three threads in the Nigerian scholarship on school administration bear directly on this paper. The first is the constitutional and statutory footing of the right to education, resting on the 1999 Constitution (Section 18), the Universal Basic Education Act (2004), and the Child Rights Act (2003); Cranston (1973), in the classic treatment of what a right actually is, frames rights as entitlements a person can claim against others and, ultimately, against the state. Taiwo and Govindjee (2011) note that education resists tidy categorisation as either a civil/political or a social/economic right, since it functions as both, which means the obligations it generates run correspondingly wide, from due process in discipline to simply keeping a school running.

The second thread is legal literacy as a driver of administrative practice. Ogharen (2022) found that administrators who understand education law are markedly less likely to make decisions that expose their schools to litigation; Ossai, Okokoyo, and Asabor (2026) reach a related conclusion from a different angle, finding legal awareness a measurable determinant of how well a Nigerian secondary school is governed, not merely how well it avoids lawsuits.

The third thread is accountability owed to specific stakeholders. Ojelade, John-Akinola, Adefolarin, and Oluwasanu (2025), surveying students and teachers in a southwestern Nigerian city, found real gaps in both groups' knowledge of the Child's Rights Act and argued that closing that gap through teacher training is essential in practice. Oni and Soji-Oni (2024) find active parental engagement tied to better discipline and academic outcomes, while Abiodun-Oyebanji and Akintayo (2024) and Gyang and Gusen (2021) trace host communities' long-standing role in providing land, security, and infrastructure, and the governance stake that carries.

Two gaps motivate the present paper. Legal literacy keeps turning up as important, but few studies lay out systematically what the law asks of each stakeholder group side by side, and the literature engages statutes far more than the case law that has actually interpreted them. Sections 6 through 11 try to close both at once.

Theoretical Framework

The claim running through this paper, that education governance works best when rights and responsibilities are kept in balance, rests on three complementary theories. Stakeholder Theory, as Freeman (1984) developed it, holds that an institution answers to more than a single principal; it owes something to the full network of parties who affect, or are affected by, what it does. Applied to a school, this is why rights and responsibilities cannot be confined to the relationship between administrator and student alone: teachers, parents, host communities, and government each hold a legitimate stake, and each stake runs in both directions. Educational Governance Theory, as Bush (2020) sets it out, extends this by treating school governance as distributed rather than sitting in one office: formal authority belongs to the administrator, but legitimate governance also depends on collegial, political, and cultural processes involving the other stakeholders, which is the six-stakeholder structure this paper follows. Social Contract Theory, in its classical form, supplies the underlying logic: government provides education and its scaffolding; schools provide safe places to learn; parents support their children's learning; and students respect the rules that make this possible. Each party's rights depend on, and generate, a

matching responsibility to everyone else in the chain, and that reciprocity is really what this paper is about.

METHODOLOGY

This paper takes a doctrinal and analytical approach, working from primary legal instruments, appellate case law, and existing scholarship rather than new empirical data. The six stakeholder groups examined are not an arbitrary choice; the Universal Basic Education Act (2004) and the Child Rights Act (2003) each assign distinct duties to these same parties. Instruments were chosen on two grounds: applicability to basic and secondary education, and established use in the scholarship reviewed in Section 2. The paper draws mainly on federal legislation; state-level education laws vary across Nigeria's thirty-six states and fall outside what it can cover, a limitation worth taking up in future work. Case law was selected where a decision speaks directly to a stakeholder's rights or responsibilities, prioritising Supreme Court authority and, for employment disputes, the National Industrial Court. The analysis sorts stakeholder obligations into four governance themes: access and equity, professional accountability, institutional authority, and protection of rights. Each stakeholder section identifies the relevant rights, responsibilities, and, where the case law shows one, the tension between them.

Meaning of Rights and Responsibilities

A right, in Cranston's (1973) classic formulation, is an entitlement a person can claim against others, and, where the state is the guarantor, an entitlement enforceable through law rather than left to goodwill. Nigeria's right to education is built on exactly that footing: the 1999 Constitution (Section 18), the Universal Basic Education Act (2004), and the Child Rights Act (2003) each turn what might otherwise be a policy aspiration into a legal claim, while international instruments, namely the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the ICESCR (1966), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the African Charter (1981), supply the wider foundation each stakeholder's rights, discussed below, are drawn from. Responsibility, in turn, is the obligation to carry out assigned duties and account for the outcome; it cannot be delegated away, and it too is often legally enforceable under the same instruments and the TRCN Code of Conduct (2004). Every stakeholder occupies a defined role whose obligations cannot be transferred to another party: a parent does not hand over parental responsibility by enrolling a child in school, and government does not exhaust its own responsibility merely by establishing schools.

Rights and Responsibilities of Students

Rights of Students

Students are both the primary beneficiaries of the education system and active participants in it. Drawing on the constitutional and statutory instruments identified above, they hold fair hearing in disciplinary matters, and freedom of thought, conscience, expression, and association within the school setting; a statutory entitlement to free and compulsory basic education, while access to senior secondary education is progressively supported through national policy frameworks (Universal Basic Education Act, 2004); equal access to higher education based on merit, with a route back through fundamental education for those who missed primary schooling; quality education in both public and private schools, backed by the right to seek redress where that quality is denied; and a qualified academic freedom, narrower in scope than its fuller application in tertiary education, to pursue knowledge and hold reasoned views within the school's

disciplinary and curricular authority. These are not aspirational statements. Where a school violates these rights, the Child Rights Act (2003), Section 36 of the Constitution, and the Universal Basic Education Act (2004) between them give a student real grounds to sue, and litigation on these grounds is not rare.

Responsibilities of Students

Students are expected to know the rules of the institution they attend and to keep them. Not knowing the rules is no defence for breaking them, though no student should be punished twice for the same offence. This includes the responsibility to obey school rules, respect constituted authority, maintain discipline and order, and uphold the dignity of the school community.

Tension: Discipline and the Right to Fair Hearing

The sharpest tension here sits between a school's authority to discipline and a student's right to be heard before that authority is used against them, and Nigerian courts have drawn the line more than once. In Garba v. University of Maiduguri (1986) 1 NWLR (Pt. 18) 550, students expelled after campus unrest were found by the Supreme Court to have been denied fair hearing. The university had ample power to discipline them; the problem was that it had effectively punished them for a crime, arson, looting, assault, without their ever standing trial for it. Treating a disciplinary panel as a stand-in for a criminal court was itself the violation. Esiaga v. University of Calabar (2004) 7 NWLR (Pt. 872) 366 sits on the other side: a student merely suspended while a hearing was pending, not yet charged with anything, had suffered no breach, since a precautionary suspension is a holding measure, not a punishment. Put together, the boundary is fairly clear. Suspending a student while facts are established is lawful; treating a student as already guilty is not, and that is what Section 8.2's requirement of lawful, proportionate discipline looks like in practice.

Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers

Rights of Teachers

No education policy delivers without teachers who are qualified, supported, and motivated. In Nigeria, what teachers are owed and owe in return is set out across the 1999 Constitution, the TRCN Act (2004), the TRCN Professional Standards (2011), and the National Policy on Education (2013). Okechukwu (2025) observes that teachers who understand both their rights and responsibilities are better positioned to fulfil their professional obligations. Teachers hold professional recognition: TRCN registration confers legal status, protects against unlawful competition, and permits designations such as MTRCN or FTRCN; fair compensation reflecting professional standing and the academic freedom to choose teaching methods and exercise professional judgment; protection from arbitrary discipline or bias, with a right to appeal and to work free from harassment; and continuous professional development through ongoing training and TRCN activities.

Responsibilities of Teachers

Alongside these rights, teachers are responsible for ethical conduct and commitment to students; effective instruction, fair assessment, and orderly classroom management; and ongoing professional growth and mentorship of students' development.

Tension: Protection from Arbitrary Discipline and Accountability for Misconduct

A teacher's right to be protected from arbitrary discipline (Section 7.1) and the responsibility to answer for real misconduct (Section 7.2) sit right next to each other, and Nigerian labour tribunals have had to work out where one ends and the other begins. In Tomarah v. Executive Chairman, Post Primary Education Board, Delta State & Ors (Suit No. NICN/ASB/13/2020, 29 September 2023), a secondary school teacher had her salary suspended over unproven allegations of absenteeism and financial misconduct. The National Industrial Court found the suspension unlawful. It was not that the Board lacked the power to discipline her; rather, it had suspended her pay before investigating or proving anything, and the court reinstated her with full back pay and damages. The lesson is exactly what Sections 7.1 and 7.2 describe: the power to discipline a teacher is real, but it only holds up if proof comes before the sanction, not after it.

Rights and Responsibilities of School Administrators

Rights of School Administrators

Administrators derive their rights from employment terms, the 1999 Constitution, and public administration law (Ogharen, 2022), including the right to exercise institutional authority over discipline, student management, staff supervision, and daily operations; the right to institutional support, meaning adequate staffing, resources, and legal guidance from supervisory ministries; the right to fair treatment and redress where a decision against them breaches natural justice; and the right to be consulted before policies significantly affecting their institutions are made above their level.

Responsibilities of School Administrators

Administrators' key responsibilities (Ogharen, 2022) are lawful, procedurally fair, and proportionate student discipline; protecting students' rights by providing a safe and orderly environment, since unlawful punishment or arbitrary exclusion violates the Child Rights Act (2003), a gap Ojelade et al. (2025) trace largely to unfamiliarity with what the Act requires; lawful staff management, including ensuring teachers are TRCN-registered and disciplined only through due process; financial accountability in managing public funds; and implementing government policy in good faith while advocating through legitimate channels for students and staff.

Rights and Responsibilities of Parents

Parents occupy a legally recognised position in the Nigerian education system, with the Universal Basic Education Act (2004) framing their role as a joint custodial one with the school, in which neither party can transfer its responsibility to the other (Nwagwu, 2004).

Rights of Parents

Parents hold the right to free and compulsory basic education for their children (Universal Basic Education Act, 2004); to demand quality and uniform education standards (Constitution, Section 18); to be informed of their child's progress, since open communication is tied to better outcomes (Oni & Soji-Oni, 2024); and to participate in school governance through Parent-Teacher Associations, with legal redress available where children's rights are violated (Ossai et al., 2026; Child Rights Act, 2003).

Responsibilities of Parents

These rights are matched by responsibilities carrying real legal consequences when neglected: ensuring enrolment and attendance, non-compliance with which is liable to prosecution (Universal Basic Education Act, 2004, s.2); providing basic needs such as books and uniforms, though socioeconomic barriers persist; cooperating with teachers and administrators on discipline; and engaging actively with the school and advocating for children's rights. Oni and Soji-Oni (2024) tie all three of these to measurably better discipline, academic, and governance outcomes.

Tension: Parental Involvement and Professional Autonomy

Parents' right to be informed and to participate (Section 9.1) can come into tension with the professional judgment administrators and teachers are entitled to exercise (Sections 7.1, 8.1), particularly over curriculum, discipline, or grade placement. Nigerian law resolves this by treating parental and school responsibility as joint rather than competing: since the Universal Basic Education Act (2004) allows neither party to transfer its responsibility to the other, what parents hold is a right to be consulted, not a right to override professional decisions. School leaders should treat parental engagement as an accountability mechanism to be structured, through PTAs and regular reporting, rather than an intrusion to be managed defensively.

Rights and Responsibilities of Host Communities

Host communities are among the most overlooked stakeholders, yet their role is historically significant: communities have long provided land, accommodation, and safety for schools, which gives them a legitimate governance stake (Abiodun-Oyebanji & Akintayo, 2024).

Rights of Host Communities

Communities hold the right to participate in school governance, particularly at the basic education level (Gyang & Gusen, 2021); to be consulted before decisions significantly affecting their schools are made; and to transparent management of contributed land, labour, or funds, and to relevant, context-responsive education (National Human Rights Commission, 2019).

Responsibilities of Host Communities

In turn, communities are responsible for providing a safe environment, protecting schools from violence and vandalism; supporting governance through board participation, levies, and voluntary labour; protecting school infrastructure, which communities with a genuine sense of ownership tend to maintain far better (Gyang & Gusen, 2021); and respecting professional authority while promoting a culture that values education (Abiodun-Oyebanji & Akintayo, 2024).

Authority and Responsibilities of Government

Education in Nigeria is both a constitutional mandate and a statutory duty of government, but government's position here differs in kind from every other stakeholder discussed so far. A student or teacher holds rights; government holds constitutional authority and statutory responsibility. That distinction matters, since authority can be challenged in court as unlawfully exercised in a way a settled right ordinarily cannot be, as Section 11.3 shows.

Government's Constitutional Authority and Regulatory Powers in Education

Government holds constitutional authority to establish, regulate, and supervise educational institutions (Constitution, First Schedule, Part II, s.4, Items 27–30) and to set minimum education standards (Constitution, s.18); statutory power to enact and enforce laws and policies governing school administration (Universal Basic Education Act, 2004); and power to collaborate with international bodies on global education standards (United Nations, 1966, Article 13).

Responsibilities of Government: Legal Obligations in Education

Government is responsible for providing free, compulsory, universal basic education (Universal Basic Education Act, 2004, s.2); protecting children's right to education and dignity (Child Rights Act, 2003, s.15); funding, equipping, and maintaining schools, and training, employing, and regulating teachers through statutory bodies (TRCN Act, 2004); and ensuring non-discrimination and equal access regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religion (Constitution, s.42).

Tension: Regulatory Authority and Students' Constitutional Rights

Government's authority to regulate schools has a ceiling: the constitutional rights of the students those schools serve. In Lagos State Government & Ors v. Asiyat AbdulKareem & Ors (SC/910/2016, 17 June 2022), the Supreme Court struck down a state ban on wearing the hijab in public schools, holding that it violated Muslim students' constitutional rights to freedom of religion and to freedom from discrimination. Government can regulate school uniform and conduct (Section 11.1), but that power gives way the moment it collides with a right the Constitution has already promised the student. This means that implementing a ministry directive in good faith, as Section 11.2 requires, does not protect a school if the directive itself is unconstitutional.

Synthesis: Rights, Responsibilities, and Authority Across Stakeholders

Table 1 draws together Sections 6 through 11, distinguishing rights properly so called from the institutional authority or statutory power government, and to a lesser extent administrators, actually exercise.

Stakeholder	Core Rights / Protections	Core Responsibilities / Obligations	Legal Basis (Illustrative)
Students	Fair hearing; freedom of thought, conscience, expression; statutory entitlement to free, compulsory basic education; redress for denial of quality education	Comply with school rules; respect constituted authority; uphold school dignity	Child Rights Act 2003; 1999 Constitution, s.36; Garba v. Unimaid (1986)
Teachers	TRCN professional recognition; fair compensation; protection from arbitrary discipline; continuous professional development	Ethical conduct; effective instruction; fair assessment; mentorship	TRCN Act 2004; TRCN Professional Standards 2011; Tomarah v. PPEB Delta State (2023)

School Administrators	Institutional authority over discipline and operations; institutional support; fair treatment; consultation on policy	Lawful, proportionate discipline; protection of students' rights; lawful staff management; financial accountability	1999 Constitution; UBE Act 2004; Child Rights Act 2003
Parents	Free, compulsory basic education for their children; information on progress; participation in governance	Ensure enrolment and attendance; provide basic needs; cooperate on discipline; advocate for children's rights	UBE Act 2004, s.2; Child Rights Act 2003
Host Communities	Participation in governance; consultation before major decisions; transparent management of contributions	Provide a safe environment; support governance; protect infrastructure; respect professional authority	Customary and statutory community-participation frameworks
Government	(Authority, not rights; see Section 11) Constitutional authority to establish, regulate, and supervise institutions	Provide free, compulsory, universal basic education; protect children's rights and dignity; fund and regulate teachers; ensure non-discrimination	1999 Constitution, ss.18, 42; UBE Act 2004; Lagos SG v. Asiyat AbdulKareem (2022)

Implications for Educational Administration

Pulling the analysis together, a few practical implications stand out for anyone actually running a school. Legal literacy matters directly: administrators who understand education law make fewer decisions that expose their schools to liability (Ogharen, 2022), regardless of whether they're aware of that obligation. Public funds must be managed transparently, and no student should face discrimination, as Lagos State Government v. Asiyat AbdulKareem (2022) affirms. Discipline should never proceed without a fair hearing, as Garba v. University of Maiduguri (1986) and Esiaga v. University of Calabar (2004) together establish, and employing an unregistered teacher is a criminal offence under the TRCN Act. A student who does not feel safe is not really in a position to learn, and Nigeria's international education obligations are not decorative. This is not a checklist to complete once. Legal awareness is a habit of practice, and that habit is what separates schools run defensively from schools run well.

CONCLUSION

This paper set out to work through what six stakeholders, students, teachers, school administrators, parents, host communities, and government, are actually owed under Nigerian education law, and what each owes in return. Read through Stakeholder Theory, Educational Governance Theory, and Social Contract Theory, and checked against real case law rather than left as abstraction, the analysis keeps arriving at the same conclusion: rights without responsibilities produce entitlement without accountability, and responsibilities without rights produce obligation without protection. Good governance depends on holding that balance, and

Nigerian courts, from Garba v. University of Maiduguri to Lagos State Government v. Asiyat Abdul Kareem, have had to step in more than once to restore it once practice let it slip.

Nigeria's legal protections here have genuinely grown stronger over the past two decades, from the 1999 Constitution and the Child Rights Act (2003) to newer instruments such as the National Senior Secondary Education Commission Act (2022). The problem, as Nwagwu (2004) pointed out over twenty years ago and as Ogharen (2022) and Nwoke et al. (2024) keep finding today, was never really a shortage of good laws. It has always been about how unevenly those laws get applied. Ossai et al. (2026) find legal awareness a measurable driver of how well a school is governed. Administrators who understand the law and build real partnerships with parents and host communities are better positioned to turn compliance into outcomes students actually feel. That said, it depends on everyone in the chain, from government down to the individual student, taking their own rights, and the responsibilities attached to them, just as seriously.

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ISLAMIC ETHICAL TEACHING ON JUSTICE

Sani Musa ABUBAKAR,
sanimusaabubakar3856@gmail,com

Yekeen Muhiyiddeen DELE
yekeen.md@fuep.edu.ng
&
Abubakar Idris SULEIMAN
idrisabubakar1111@gmail.com
Religious Education Department (Islamic Studies Unit)
Federal University Of Education, Pankshin

ABSTRACT
*Justice (ʿ*Adl*) is a central principle in Islamic ethics, law, and social life, representing both a divine attribute and a moral obligation for human conduct. This study examines Islamic teachings on justice as expressed in the Qur'an, Hadith, and scholarly interpretations, emphasizing its role in personal morality, governance, and social harmony. Islamic justice integrates fairness, equity (*qist*), balance (*mīzān*), accountability, and compassion (*rahmah*), guiding individuals and communities toward ethical behavior and human dignity. Classical scholars, including Al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah, and contemporary thinkers like Kamali and Qaradawi, highlight its relevance in addressing modern challenges such as inequality, corruption, and oppression. The study concludes that justice in Islam is both a spiritual and social imperative, essential for moral integrity, communal cohesion, and ethical governance.*

Keywords: Islamic ethics, justice, ʿAdl, equity, accountability, compassion,

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Justice (ʿAdl) occupies a central place in Islamic ethics and law. It represents a divine attribute of Allah and serves as the moral foundation for human behavior, governance, and social relations. The Qur'an commands believers to uphold justice, even when it conflicts with personal interests or family loyalties:

> "*O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin" (Q4:135).*

This command shows that justice in Islam transcends individual bias and demands fairness, sincerity, and truthfulness in all circumstances.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exemplified justice throughout his leadership, family life, and social interactions. His governance was guided by the principle that justice sustains social harmony and divine approval. Islamic ethical teaching therefore presents justice as extending beyond formal legal rulings to include compassion, service, and the preservation of human dignity (Saeed & Hussein, 2025).

Islamic scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Al-Farabi emphasized justice as a foundation of ethical conduct and good governance. Contemporary maqāṣid scholarship

likewise connects justice with the protection of essential human interests and the public good (Kamali, 2025). Recent scholarship further shows that Islamic justice can be understood as a framework for balancing rights, responsibilities, and social welfare rather than as a purely procedural concept (Firas & Ismail, 2024; Sopianto, 2025). The pursuit of justice in Islam is therefore presented as both a moral virtue and a divine duty essential to human flourishing and social progress.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this presentation is to examine Islamic ethical teachings on justice as expressed in the Qur'an, the Hadith, and classical and modern interpretations. It aims to clarify how justice operates as a moral, spiritual, and social ideal shaping both individual character and collective institutions. The study also explores how Islamic justice can inform responses to modern social problems such as inequality, corruption, and oppression through a framework grounded in divine accountability and moral integrity (Saeed & Hussein, 2025).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it connects classical Islamic ethics with modern discussions on social justice and human dignity. In a world marked by economic disparity, corruption, and systemic injustice, the Islamic conception of justice offers an ethical framework rooted in divine accountability, fairness, and social responsibility. Recent scholarship indicates that the concept remains relevant to contemporary debates on economic justice, governance, and social equity (Solehudin et al., 2024; Firas & Ismail, 2024). By revisiting these ethical teachings, the study highlights pathways toward fairness, social responsibility, and communal harmony.

Scope of the Study

This presentation focuses on the ethical and theological dimensions of justice (*ʿAdl*) in Islam. It analyzes relevant Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions, and scholarly interpretations while including insights from recent academic research. Although it does not cover every aspect of Islamic jurisprudence, it highlights how the moral principle of justice influences personal behavior, community relations, and governance. The study also considers contemporary applications of Islamic justice in addressing global issues such as corruption, inequality, and human rights.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive approach. It draws from primary sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith, and secondary materials from scholarly books and peer-reviewed journal articles. Sources were selected on the basis of direct relevance to Islamic conceptions of justice, ethical interpretation, maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, governance, social equity, and contemporary applications of Islamic ethics. Priority was given to established classical scholarship and recent peer-reviewed research published in 2024–2025. The analysis involved three stages: first, close reading of the selected texts; second, coding recurring ideas into thematic categories; and third, comparative interpretation of classical and contemporary perspectives. The principal themes were ʿadl, qist, mīzān, accountability, human dignity, governance, and social welfare. Analytical rigor was strengthened by comparing claims across primary religious texts, classical scholarship, and recent academic studies rather than relying on a single interpretive source.

Analytically, the study uses a three-level framework: normative foundations (Qur'anic and Prophetic commands), conceptual interpretation (the meanings and relationships of ʿadl, qist, and mīzān), and contemporary application (governance, social equity, economic justice, and accountability). This framework makes it possible to distinguish what the primary texts prescribe from how classical and contemporary scholars interpret those prescriptions and from how the principles may be applied to modern social problems.

Review of Literature

Recent scholarship continues to engage deeply with the concept of justice in Islam, exploring its role in individual morality, social relations, law, governance, and economic life. Kamali (2025) treats maqāṣid al-sharīʿah as a framework through which justice, human dignity, good governance, and social welfare can be examined in contemporary contexts. Sopianto (2025), through a literature review of Qur'anic exegesis and Hadith, emphasizes that justice involves both equality and the protection of rights, while Saeed and Hussein (2025) connect justice with tolerance, coexistence, and social harmony. Firas and Ismail (2024) further demonstrate that Islamic and Western philosophical approaches to justice can be compared without assuming that they are identical. In the economic sphere, Solehudin et al. (2024) show how maqāṣid-based reasoning can frame justice in terms of ethical and social utility. Collectively, these studies strengthen the present paper by showing that Islamic justice is multidimensional; however, they also indicate that the meaning and application of justice depend on the interpretive framework used. This makes critical engagement with ʿadl, qist, and mīzān necessary rather than treating the concepts as interchangeable.

The concept of Justice in Islam

Definition of Justice (ʿAdl)

Justice, known in Arabic as ʿAdl, is one of the most profound and comprehensive concepts in Islamic ethics and law. Linguistically, ʿAdl means balance, equality, and uprightness. It denotes placing everything in its proper place and giving each being its due right. The Qur'an emphasizes that justice is a divine attribute, as Allah is often described as Al-ʿAdl (The Just). The Qur'an commands believers:

> *"Indeed, Allah commands justice, good conduct, and giving to relatives, and forbids immorality and oppression" (Q16:90).*

According to Kamali, justice in Islam encompasses both the moral and legal dimensions of human conduct, ensuring that every action aligns with divine principles of fairness and moderation (Kamali, 2025).

Justice is not merely the absence of injustice but an active process of ensuring that rights, responsibilities, and social relationships are ordered fairly. Recent scholarship cautions against reducing Islamic justice to simple numerical equality. Sopianto (2025) distinguishes the Qur'anic language of al-ʿadl and al-qist from a purely uniform conception of equality, emphasizing rights and fair treatment. Thus, justice may require equal treatment in some circumstances and proportionate treatment in others, depending on the rights and responsibilities involved. It is therefore both a spiritual duty and a social necessity.

The subject matter of justice in Islam extends beyond the judicial system to all areas of human life. It applies to personal morality, family relations, economic dealings, and political governance. The Qur'an and the Hadith provide guidance on ensuring fairness in every sphere—

between rulers and subjects, employers and workers, and individuals within communities. Saeed and Hussein note that "justice is the foundation upon which Islamic civilization is built, as it preserves human dignity, equality, and social peace" (Saeed & Hussein, 2025).

The scope of justice (ʿadl) in Islam also includes qist (equity) and mīzān (balance). These terms are closely related but should not be treated as exact synonyms. ʿAdl generally conveys the broader idea of justice, right ordering, and giving each party its due; qist emphasizes equitable and impartial dealing, especially where rights are distributed or adjudicated; and mīzān conveys the idea of balance and measure. Sopianto (2025) notes the importance of distinguishing the Qur'anic uses of al-ʿadl and al-qist, while contemporary maqāṣid scholarship connects justice with broader questions of human welfare and social order (Kamali, 2025). The analytical value of these distinctions is that they show Islamic justice as both a moral principle and a practical method of ordering social relations.

Objectives of Justice

The primary objective of justice in Islam is to establish harmony among human rights, divine guidance, and social welfare. It is closely related to the maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, or higher objectives of Islamic law, which include protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property (Kamali, 2025). These objectives provide an analytical framework for considering whether social and legal arrangements protect essential human interests and prevent harm. Contemporary maqāṣid scholarship also stresses that justice should be examined in relation to human dignity, good governance, and public welfare rather than as an isolated legal principle (Kamali, 2025; Ludfi & Rais, 2024).

The ethical objective of justice also concerns the formation of moral character. Rather than relying only on external enforcement, Islamic ethics seeks to cultivate individuals who understand justice as an obligation before Allah and as a responsibility toward other people. This interpretation connects justice with accountability, moral education, and social responsibility, thereby moving the discussion from formal rules to the ethical dispositions required for those rules to produce just outcomes.

Classification of Justice

Islamic discussions of justice can be grouped into several interrelated dimensions, including divine justice, social justice, legal justice, and moral justice. These classifications are useful analytically, but they should not be treated as completely separate categories because the Qur'anic and Prophetic framework connects personal conduct with social and institutional responsibility. Divine justice concerns Allah's perfection and freedom from wrongdoing; social justice concerns equitable relations and protection from oppression; legal justice concerns impartial adjudication; and moral justice concerns truthful, responsible, and trustworthy conduct. The distinction is therefore one of emphasis rather than rigid separation.

Origin and Development

The concept of justice in Islam originates from divine revelation. From the earliest Meccan revelations, the Qur'an emphasized moral accountability and fairness as central to faith. The Prophet Muhammad's life and leadership established justice as a core principle of governance and personal conduct. Over time, Muslim scholars elaborated on the idea of justice in theology, philosophy, and law. Al-Farabi linked justice to the ideal state, where leaders govern according to wisdom and virtue. Ibn Taymiyyah viewed justice as the basis of legitimate political

authority, asserting that "a government may endure with unbelief, but not with injustice" (quoted in Ismail).

In modern times, scholars such as Kamali have reinterpreted Islamic justice in light of contemporary social challenges. Kamali (2025) links maqāṣid reasoning with justice, human dignity, good governance, and social welfare. Other recent scholarship similarly considers how Islamic ethical and legal principles can respond to contemporary questions of governance, economic justice, and social equity (Ludfi & Rais, 2024; Solehudin et al., 2024). This development does not necessarily mean abandoning classical foundations; rather, it demonstrates an ongoing effort to interpret enduring principles in changing social circumstances. Hefni et al. (2025) likewise show how contemporary maqāṣid-oriented reasoning can engage changing social conditions while remaining connected to Islamic legal foundations.

Islamic Ethical viewpoint of Justice

Islamic ethics derive primarily from the Qur'an, Sunnah, *Ijma'* (consensus), and *Qiyas* (analogy). These sources consistently emphasize justice as both a divine command and an ethical duty. Justice in Islam is not limited to legal contexts but encompasses personal morality, social relations, and governance. It represents a moral principle that aligns human behavior with divine will, ensuring fairness, balance, and equity.

The Qur'an

The Qur'an repeatedly commands believers to uphold justice, even when it conflicts with personal or familial interests. It states,

> *"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, or your kin" (4:135).*

This verse illustrates that justice must transcend personal bias, tribal loyalty, or social pressure. Kamali emphasizes that Qur'anic justice is universal and absolute, encompassing moral, social, and legal dimensions (Kamali, 2025).

The Sunnah

The Sunnah, or the practices and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), reinforces the Qur'anic emphasis on justice. The Prophetic model presents justice as a responsibility of leaders and individuals and condemns oppression and favoritism. In this sense, the Sunnah complements the Qur'anic command by demonstrating how justice can operate in governance and interpersonal relations. Contemporary scholarship likewise emphasizes the relationship between justice, tolerance, and social well-being (Saeed & Hussein, 2025).

Ethical Interpretation

From an ethical perspective, justice in Islam is both preventive and corrective. It prevents wrongdoing and restores balance when rights are violated. Injustice (zulm) is regarded as one of the gravest sins, while upholding justice is considered an act of worship and moral fulfillment. Sopianto notes that justice functions as a guiding principle in all human interactions, ensuring that social and moral equilibrium is maintained (Sopianto, 2025). Ethical justice thus integrates individual morality with communal responsibility.

Classical and Contemporary Insights

Classical Islamic scholars provided foundational insights into justice. Al-Ghazali viewed justice in relation to the moral ordering of the self and society, while Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized justice as a condition of legitimate political authority. Contemporary scholarship adds new dimensions to these discussions. Kamali (2025) connects justice with *maqāṣid*, human dignity, good governance, and social welfare, while Firas and Ismail (2024) demonstrate that Islamic approaches to justice can be critically compared with Western philosophical approaches. These perspectives are not identical, but their comparison helps show both the distinctive theological basis of Islamic justice and its engagement with wider ethical questions.

Islamic Ethical Principles of Justice

Justice as a Moral Value

In Islam, justice (*ʿAdl*) is not merely a legal requirement but a fundamental moral value that shapes personal conduct and social interaction. It is considered both a divine command and an ethical responsibility for all individuals. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes that justice is integral to righteousness:

> *"Indeed, Allah orders you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice" (Q4:58).*

This verse underscores that justice is inseparable from ethical behavior and spiritual accountability (Kamali, 2025).

Justice as a moral value encourages individuals to act fairly, uphold truth, and resist personal or societal pressures that may lead to oppression. The ethical significance of justice therefore lies not only in the existence of rules but also in the moral character of those who apply and obey them. Recent research on Islamic ethics and governance similarly emphasizes the connection between justice, responsibility, and the common good (Ludfi & Rais, 2024; Saeed & Hussein, 2025).

Equity and Fairness

Equity (qist) is a critical dimension of Islamic justice, emphasizing impartiality and equal treatment. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) instructed that rulers and judges should remain unbiased: "*Do not oppress or be unjust, and do not favor one over another*" (Sunan al-Kubra 11:362). Equity ensures that all individuals, regardless of social status, wealth, or familial connections, are treated with fairness.

Sopianto (2025) highlights that equity in Islam extends beyond formal legal systems to social, economic, and interpersonal interactions, while Kamali (2025) situates justice within the broader objectives of protecting human interests and social welfare. By distinguishing *qist* from the broader concept of *ʿadl*, the discussion avoids treating equity and justice as exact synonyms. Islamic ethical teachings therefore foster trust, cooperation, and social cohesion while requiring attention to the particular rights and responsibilities of those involved.

Accountability and Responsibility

Islamic justice emphasizes accountability to both Allah and fellow human beings. Every action, whether in governance, trade, or personal conduct, carries moral and spiritual consequences. The Qur'an connects righteous conduct with the assurance that people will not be wronged as Allah comments,

> *"If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female and both have faith. They will enter Heaven. And not the least injustice will be done to them" (Q4:124).*

Accountability in this context encourages ethical vigilance and integrity, ensuring that individuals uphold justice in all spheres. Contemporary discussions of Islamic governance similarly associate justice with responsible exercise of authority, protection of rights, and prevention of abuse of power (Ludfi & Rais, 2024).

Accountability is therefore not merely an individual religious concern but also an institutional principle. Leaders and public institutions are expected to exercise authority transparently and responsibly, while members of society retain responsibilities toward one another. This broader understanding helps connect Islamic ethical teaching with contemporary concerns about corruption, governance, and social welfare without reducing justice to punishment alone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen the understanding and application of Islamic ethical principles of justice in contemporary society. First, scholars, educators, and religious leaders should intensify efforts to promote accurate and contextual interpretations of Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings on justice. Many modern challenges—such as corruption, social inequality, gender-related injustice, and abuse of power—stem from a gap between Islamic ethical ideals and real-life practice. By integrating classical scholarship with contemporary realities, institutions can ensure that justice (*ʿAdl*), equity (*qist*), and moral balance (*mīzān*) remain central to Muslim conduct and governance.

Second, Islamic educational institutions should incorporate justice-centered curricula that foster moral consciousness, civic responsibility, and ethical sensitivity from an early age. Embedding teachings from the *Qur'an*, *Sunnah*, and classical scholars within educational programs will help cultivate individuals who internalize justice as a spiritual and social obligation, not merely a legal requirement. This aligns with scholars such as Chasanah et al., who emphasize the role of education in nurturing ethical awareness.

Third, Muslim communities and policymakers should prioritize transparent, accountable, and compassionate governance grounded in Islamic principles. Leaders at all levels must be trained in ethical decision-making that avoids bias, upholds equity, and demonstrates mercy, reflecting the Prophetic model. Institutional reforms should focus on combating corruption, protecting human rights, and ensuring that justice is accessible to all, regardless of social, economic, or political status.

Finally, further interdisciplinary research is recommended to explore how Islamic justice can be practically applied to modern issues such as economic disparity, gender equity, restorative justice, and conflict resolution. Collaboration among Islamic scholars, legal experts, sociologists, and policymakers would support the development of systems that harmonize divine principles with contemporary societal needs. By anchoring social structures in justice, compassion, and accountability, Muslim societies can advance moral integrity, social harmony, and sustainable development in accordance with Islamic ethical teachings.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that justice (*ʿadl*) in Islam is a comprehensive ethical principle encompassing legal, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions. It is not limited to judicial or governance contexts but permeates personal conduct, family relationships, economic dealings,

and community interactions. The Qur'an and Sunnah establish justice as both a divine command and a moral obligation, requiring fairness, equity, and accountability to transcend personal interest and social bias as the Qur'an 4:135 explained. Classical scholarship provides the conceptual foundations, while contemporary scholarship demonstrates the continuing relevance of justice to questions of governance, economic fairness, human dignity, and social welfare (Firas & Ismail, 2024; Kamali, 2025; Saeed & Hussein, 2025).

The analysis also shows that *ʿadl*, *qist*, and *mīzān* are related but analytically distinct concepts. Their relationship allows Islamic justice to be understood not simply as equality, but as a broader ethical requirement to give rights their due, maintain balance, prevent oppression, and protect human welfare. The study therefore concludes that Islamic justice is both rooted in revelation and capable of meaningful engagement with changing social realities. Its continuing relevance depends on careful interpretation, ethical accountability, and responsible institutional application.

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ISLAM'S POSITION ON GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MUSLIM WOMEN IN NIGERIA

Abubakar Idris SULEIMAN,
idrisabubakar1111@gmail.com

Sani Musa ABUBAKAR
sanimusaabubakar3856@gmail.com
&
Yekeen Muhiyideen DELE
yekeen.md@fuep.edu.ng
Religious Education Department (Islamic Studies Unit)
Federal University of Education, Pankshin

ABSTRACT
Gender-based discrimination remains a significant social and development concern in Nigeria, including among Muslim communities. Although public debates sometimes attribute restrictions on Muslim women directly to Islam, Islamic primary sources and the history of Muslim women's participation present a more complex picture. This paper examines the ethical teachings of Islam on gender justice and analyses the educational, political, economic, health, and legal challenges experienced by Muslim women in Nigeria. Using qualitative document analysis, the study reviews the Qur'an, selected hadith, classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship, recent empirical studies, and official institutional reports. Documents were purposively selected for their relevance to women, gender, Islam, Nigeria, and comparable Muslim-majority contexts, while older foundational works were retained where necessary for theological interpretation. The analysis identifies a persistent gap between normative Islamic principles and social practice, but it also cautions against treating culture, patriarchy, institutional weakness, and religious interpretation as interchangeable explanations. Recent evidence from Northern Nigeria shows that gender norms affect women's decision-making and access to maternal healthcare, while national and comparative evidence demonstrates continuing barriers to political representation, education, and economic opportunity. The paper argues that gender justice in Nigerian Muslim communities requires context-sensitive reforms that combine religious literacy, women's education, effective law enforcement, economic empowerment, accessible healthcare, and meaningful participation in public decision-making.

Keywords: Islam; Gender-Based Discrimination; Muslim Women; Nigeria; Gender Justice; Islamic Ethics; Women's Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based discrimination remains a deeply entrenched social problem worldwide, and Nigeria is no exception. Across many regions, Nigerian women, especially in marginalized and rural communities, continue to confront systemic barriers to equal participation in public and private life. These constraints manifest in limited access to formal education, underrepresentation in political institutions, restricted economic opportunities, and pervasive social norms that devalue women's contributions. Within Nigeria's Muslim communities, these challenges are

frequently intertwined with a complex mixture of religious tradition and cultural practice. Observers and critics often argue that Islamic teachings inherently limit women's rights, suggesting that the religion perpetuates gender inequality. However, a careful and contextual reading of Islam's foundational sources, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, reveals a fundamentally different narrative. Islam explicitly condemns injustice in all its forms, including gender-based oppression, and establishes a moral and legal framework that guarantees dignity, equity, and agency for women.

Historically, the position of women in pre-Islamic Arabia was dire. Female infants were sometimes buried alive, women had virtually no legal claim to property, and their social identity was primarily derived through male relatives (Ahmed, 1992). The advent of Islam brought profound social reform. Allah affirmed the intrinsic worth of all human life, irrespective of gender, declaring that God honored the children of Adam:

> *"We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our Creation" (Q17:70).*

Allah also emphatically prohibited the devaluation and destruction of female life, denouncing the practice of infanticide in no uncertain terms. In this regard Allah said:

> *"When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned. For what crime she was killed" (Q81:8–9).*

Prophet Muhammad, (peace be upon him) further reinforced these revolutionary ethical changes. He insisted upon consent in marriage, financial independence through property and inheritance rights, and fair treatment in all social relations. His governance, personal conduct, and sermons consistently emphasized justice, compassion, and mutual respect. The Prophet's Farewell Sermon explicitly reminds his community to treat women kindly, noting that women are a sacred trust in their care (Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 1218).

Despite these strong moral and legal foundations, Muslim women in Nigeria continue to face significant hurdles. Many of these challenges do not originate from Islamic doctrine itself but from misreadings, cultural customs, and entrenched patriarchal structures. In Northern Nigeria especially, where Islam is highly visible in both religious and social life, women's participation in public affairs remains constrained. Empirical research shows that in several Nigerian states, women have low representation in political offices and decision-making bodies, and girls often face barriers to continuing formal or religious education (Bello et al., 2018). While efforts by non-governmental and civil society organizations, such as the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria, have made some inroads, progress toward gender parity has been inconsistent and slow (Bawa, 2017).

The persistence of these challenges highlights a critical disjunction: the gap between Islam's ethical ideals and social realities in Nigerian Muslim communities. On one hand, Islam's texts and early history articulate a vision of justice that enshrines women's rights in spiritual, legal, and economic domains. On the other hand, dominant cultural practices and institutional structures often distort or suppress these teachings. Misinterpretations of religious texts, consolidated patriarchal hierarchies, economic marginalization, and limited access to religious education all contribute to a lived experience of discrimination for many Muslim women in Nigeria.

This paper therefore seeks to address this disjunction by examining three interrelated dimensions. First, it analyzes how Islam, in principle, condemns gender-based discrimination,

drawing on the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and classical and modern scholarship. Second, it identifies and scrutinizes the primary areas where Muslim women in Nigeria continue to face discrimination, including education, political participation, economic rights, and social services. Third, the paper proposes actionable and ethically grounded solutions, rooted both in Islamic ethical teachings and in modern human rights frameworks, for promoting greater gender justice in the Nigerian Muslim context.

Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative, analytical approach. It relies on textual analysis of the Qur'an and hadith, as well as scholarly interpretations from classical and contemporary Muslim thinkers. These theological insights are supplemented by empirical research on the lived realities of Muslim women in Nigeria, drawn from academic studies, reports, and gender-focused organizations. By weaving together religious principles and social science, the paper offers a coherent account that elucidates what Islam prescribes and how these prescriptions can be more fully realized in Nigeria's diverse social landscape.

Ultimately, this investigation endeavors to close the gap between Islamic ethical vision and social practice. By aligning practical reforms with the moral and legal teachings of Islam, Nigerian Muslim communities can work toward a more just society, one in which women's rights are not only recognized in theory but lived out in everyday life. In doing so, the study contributes to broader conversations about gender justice, social transformation, and the authentic application of Islamic ethics in contemporary contexts.

Literature Review

Recent Nigerian evidence strengthens the argument that the experiences of Muslim women cannot be understood through theology alone. Belaid et al. (2024), in a qualitative evaluation of a gender-equity intervention in Bauchi State, used nine key-informant interviews and 14 focus group discussions involving women, men, community leaders, and programme personnel. The study found that changes in gender norms could increase men's support for women's maternal healthcare and household responsibilities. This is important for the present study because it demonstrates empirically how gender relations operate through household decision-making, resource control, and community expectations rather than through religious doctrine alone.

Research on political participation also points to institutional and attitudinal barriers. Fahm (2022) specifically examined Muslim women in Nigerian party politics and reported that cultural and religious bottlenecks constrain their participation. Similarly, Ngwu et al. (2022), using focus-group evidence from Enugu State, found that socio-demographic and political factors contribute to women's underrepresentation in political decision-making. These studies complement the present paper by showing that the problem is not simply whether women participate, but whether political institutions, parties, communities, and voters create conditions in which participation can translate into representation.

Educational inequality remains particularly important in Northern Nigeria. UNICEF's Girls' Education Project Phase 3 evaluation reported persistent gender and regional disparities in basic education and identified socio-cultural norms, poverty, insecurity, governance constraints, and school-level conditions as barriers to girls' education (UNICEF, 2023). UNICEF's 2024 education fact sheets likewise emphasize the need to address inequities in access and learning. These findings caution against explaining educational exclusion exclusively in religious terms and support a multidimensional account that includes poverty, location, insecurity, institutional capacity, and gender norms.

Economic evidence also suggests that women's empowerment depends on access to assets, finance, markets, skills, and decision-making power. The World Bank's diagnostic of women's economic empowerment in Nigeria identifies structural constraints affecting women's economic participation and emphasizes the importance of policies that expand women's access to productive resources and opportunities (Vaillant et al., 2022). More recent evidence from the Nigeria for Women Project shows that women's affinity groups can provide financial services, training, mentorship, and market access at scale (World Bank, 2025). Such evidence supports the paper's recommendation for economic interventions but also suggests that empowerment programmes should be evaluated by measurable outcomes rather than by broad claims about empowerment.

Comparative scholarship from Muslim-majority contexts further complicates simple claims that Islam either causes or automatically prevents gender inequality. In Indonesia, Cameron (2023) finds that gender equality is shaped by development, institutions, and economic participation, while White et al. (2024) show that patriarchal political attitudes can affect support for women candidates and gender quotas. At the same time, the Oxford Handbook of Islam and Women documents substantial diversity in Islamic women's activism, hermeneutics, law, scholarship, and political participation across Muslim-majority societies (Sonneveld & Lindbekk, 2023). Comparative evidence therefore suggests that religion interacts with institutions, education, political ideology, economic structures, and local histories.

METHODOLOGY

Research design. The study uses qualitative document analysis and thematic synthesis. This design is appropriate because the paper is not based on newly collected interviews or survey data; instead, it brings together normative Islamic texts, scholarly interpretations, empirical studies, and institutional evidence to examine the relationship between Islamic ethical principles and the lived realities of Muslim women in Nigeria.

Document selection criteria. Documents were purposively selected when they met at least one of the following criteria: (a) they addressed Qur'anic, hadith, legal, or ethical perspectives on women and gender; (b) they provided empirical evidence about women's experiences in Nigeria, particularly in Muslim-majority northern settings; (c) they examined women's gender relations in other Muslim-majority contexts in a way that illuminates the Nigerian debate; or (d) they were official reports or datasets providing evidence on education, health, political representation, or economic empowerment. Recent empirical and policy evidence was prioritized, while older works were retained where they represented foundational scholarship or primary religious sources.

Analytical procedure. The documents were read comparatively and organized around five themes: education and knowledge; political participation and leadership; economic rights and empowerment; health, family, and social welfare; and law, culture, and religious interpretation. Within each theme, the analysis distinguished between normative claims about what Islamic sources prescribe and empirical claims about what women experience in practice. The final synthesis then compared recurring explanations—religious interpretation, cultural norms, patriarchy, poverty, institutional weakness, insecurity, and political structures.

Analytical rigor. To strengthen rigor, the analysis used source triangulation: claims about religious principles were grounded in primary Islamic texts and established scholarship; claims about contemporary Nigerian conditions were checked against empirical studies and institutional evidence; and comparative claims were supported by research from other Muslim-majority contexts. The revised paper also avoids presenting a single interpretation of gender roles in Islam

as universally uncontested. Instead, it identifies areas of scholarly disagreement and explains the position adopted in the analysis.

Islamic Ethical Teachings against Gender Discrimination

At the heart of Islamic ethics is the principle that all human beings are equal before God in spiritual worth, moral responsibility, and potential for reward. The Qur'an emphasizes personal piety, righteousness, and moral accountability rather than biological gender as criteria for divine judgment. In *Surah an-Nahl*, Allah stated:

> *"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while being a believer, we will surely give them a good life" (Q16:97).*

This verse clearly illustrates that ethical conduct and faith, rather than gender, determine spiritual reward. It reinforces the notion that salvation and virtue are universal ideals accessible to all humans, reflecting Islam's foundational commitment to justice and equality.

Another important verse addressing gender equity is found in Surah al-Ahzab:

> *"Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women … for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward" (Q33:35).*

The structure of this passage places men and women side by side, highlighting their equal spiritual status. Scholars of Islamic ethics interpret these parallel references as affirming reciprocal rights and responsibilities, signaling that neither gender holds intrinsic superiority over the other in matters of faith and moral accountability (Wadud,1999). Such verses provide a strong theological basis for rejecting gender-based discrimination within social, economic, and political spheres.

Islam further underscores the inherent dignity of all human beings. Allah declares: *"We have certainly honored the children of Adam"* (Q17:70), thereby affirming that both men and women are created with intrinsic value and deserving of respect. In addition, Islam explicitly condemns pre-Islamic practices that devalued female life, such as the burial of infant girls. The Qur'an asks rhetorically, *"For what crime was she killed?"* (Q81:8–9), emphasizing the injustice of such acts. By raising these questions, the text not only rejects the dehumanization of women but also establishes moral accountability for society as a whole. The early Islamic ethical framework thus places protection of life and human dignity at the center of social policy.

One of the most transformative principles in Islam is the right to knowledge. The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, stated, "*Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim"* (Ibn Majah, Hadith No. 224). The term "Muslim" here is inclusive, extending the obligation to women as well as men. Historically, women played critical roles in Islamic scholarship and education. Aisha, the Prophet's wife, is noted for narrating over two thousand hadiths and serving as a teacher and mentor to both male and female students (Brown, 2014). By encouraging the pursuit of knowledge for all believers, Islam not only empowered women to acquire religious literacy but also enabled their active participation in intellectual, spiritual, and civic life. Education, therefore, is a vital mechanism for achieving gender equity and social justice within Islamic societies.

In addition to education, Islam granted women tangible economic and legal rights. The Qur'an stipulates that both men and women are entitled to a share of inheritance. Allah said:

> *"From what is left by parents and those relatives, or orphans, or poor, are present, feed them out of the (property), and speak to them words of kindness and justice" (Q4:7–11).*

Ensuring women's financial security. Women in early Islamic society also engaged in commerce, trade, and professional activities. Khadijah, the Prophet's first wife, is renowned for her

entrepreneurial success and independent management of her wealth (Ali, 2010). Furthermore, women retained the right to receive a mahr, or dower, which remained their property and could not be taken without consent. The Qur'an and Sunnah also recognized women's right to initiate divorce through the process of khulʿ under certain conditions. These provisions reflect Islam's balanced approach to gender relations, safeguarding women's autonomy and promoting justice in both private and public spheres.

Islamic ethical teachings also explicitly prohibit forced marriage and coercion. Allah instructs:

"And do not inherit women against their will" (Q4:19)

This verse highligh the necessity of consent in marital arrangements. The Prophet Muhammad actively annulled marriages contracted without the woman's consent and consistently discouraged mistreatment of women. In his farewell sermon, he emphasized, "*Fear Allah concerning women, for you have taken them as a trust of Allah"* (Sahih Muslim, Hadith No.1218). This teaching underscores that marital relationships should be guided by mutual respect, moral accountability, and compassion, reinforcing the broader Islamic commitment to justice.

Early Islamic history provides numerous examples of women's active participation in public, political, and religious life. Figures such as Nusaybah bint Kaʻb, who defended the Prophet during the Battle of Uhud, and Umm Waraqa, recognized as a teacher of the Qur'an, illustrate that women were not relegated solely to domestic roles (Esposito, 2001). Their involvement in both social and religious spheres demonstrates that Islam's moral and legal framework historically supported women's agency, leadership, and engagement in the affairs of the community. These examples provide a foundation for advocating gender equality within contemporary Muslim societies, showing that ethical and spiritual principles can guide social reforms that empower women while remaining faithful to Islamic teachings.

Islam's ethical system explicitly condemns gender-based discrimination. Through its teachings on equality, human dignity, the right to education, economic participation, marital consent, and active engagement in public life, Islam establishes a comprehensive moral framework that protects and empowers women. The Qur'an, Sunnah, and early historical practices collectively demonstrate that gender justice is not only a spiritual imperative but also a practical requirement for building equitable societies. These principles provide a strong foundation for addressing contemporary challenges facing Muslim women in various contexts, including Nigeria, and offer ethical guidance for policy, education, and community reforms that promote gender equality and social justice.

Critical Discussion: Interpretations, Culture, and Lived Realties

The distinction between Islam and culture is analytically useful, but it should not be presented too simplistically. Gender norms in Muslim societies can emerge from multiple sources at once: scriptural interpretation, family structures, customary law, economic dependency, state institutions, political ideology, and social expectations. A practice may therefore be defended in religious language while also reflecting local customs or patriarchal interests. Conversely, a practice can be rejected by some Muslims as inconsistent with Islamic ethical principles while being accepted by others as a legitimate interpretation of Islamic law.

The scholarly debate over gender roles illustrates this complexity. Egalitarian interpreters emphasize Qur'anic passages that address men and women in parallel and argue that justice, moral agency, and reciprocity should guide interpretation. Hierarchical approaches, however, often emphasize differentiated family responsibilities and classical interpretations of verses such

as Qur'an 4:34. Contemporary scholarship does not treat this disagreement as merely a choice between 'Islam' and 'culture'; rather, it concerns hermeneutical method, authority, historical context, language, jurisprudence, and the relationship between textual norms and changing social conditions (Saeed, 2023).

This debate matters for Nigeria because religious interpretation can influence how communities understand education, mobility, marriage, political leadership, inheritance, and women's decision-making. Yet empirical evidence shows that these outcomes are also shaped by material conditions. For example, the Northern Nigerian home-visits study by Belaid et al. (2024) demonstrates that gender norms affected household responsibilities, access to resources, and maternal-health decision-making, and that community-based engagement could modify some of these relationships. The implication is that reform cannot depend solely on textual argument; it also requires institutional and community interventions.

The comparative Indonesian evidence adds another caution. White et al. (2024) found that patriarchal political attitudes were associated with lower support for women candidates and gender quotas, while university education was associated with more egalitarian views. This does not prove that Islam itself causes political exclusion, nor can Indonesian findings be transferred directly to Nigeria. It does, however, demonstrate why the relationship between religious identity, education, political attitudes, and women's representation must be examined empirically rather than assumed.

Accordingly, this paper adopts a position of qualified critique: Islamic teachings contain strong resources for affirming women's dignity, moral agency, property rights, education, and protection from injustice, but appeals to Islam alone do not explain contemporary outcomes. At the same time, describing every restrictive practice as merely 'cultural' risks overlooking the real influence of religious interpretation and institutions. A stronger analysis recognizes interaction among text, interpretation, culture, material conditions, and power.

Challenges Facing Muslim Women in Nigeria

Despite the strong ethical foundations provided by Islam, Muslim women in Nigeria continue to encounter significant challenges that limit their full participation in society. These challenges arise from a complex interplay of religion, culture, historical context, and socio-political structures. While Islam provides explicit guidance on the rights and dignity of women, the lived experiences of Muslim women in Nigeria often reveal a gap between these ideals and social practice. These obstacles manifest across educational, political, economic, and social domains, with deep-rooted cultural norms frequently compounding structural inequalities.

Educational Challenges

One of the most pressing challenges faced by Muslim women in Nigeria is underrepresentation in Islamic educational institutions. Access to religious education is often limited by a combination of structural barriers, social expectations, and inadequate institutional support. Many women, particularly in Northern Nigeria, are denied opportunities to pursue formal Islamic scholarship, resulting in a lack of female scholars and teachers in religious settings (Adegoke, 2011). Historically, women served as co-educators and transmitters of knowledge within their communities, yet contemporary systems often overlook these contributions. The absence of women in key educational roles diminishes their authority, restricts their capacity to influence curricula, and perpetuates gendered inequalities in religious literacy. This imbalance not only undermines women's personal development but also reduces the

potential for more inclusive interpretations of Islamic teachings that align with principles of gender justice.

Political and Social Challenges

Muslim women in Nigeria are also notably underrepresented in political and decision-making processes. Despite their significant demographic presence, cultural and religious barriers frequently discourage women from participating in politics. In many communities, traditional norms limit women's visibility in public life, framing political engagement as a male domain. Studies have observed that women in Nigerian party politics encounter "cultural and religious bottlenecks" that impede their involvement, ranging from restrictions on mobility to social stigmatization for political activism (Fahm, 2022). Civil society organizations such as the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) have made important strides in advocacy, grassroots mobilization, and the promotion of female leadership, yet progress remains inconsistent (Sarumi et al., 2019). The combination of cultural expectations and limited institutional support thus continues to hinder women from exercising their political rights and shaping policies that affect their lives.

Economic Challenges

Although Islam grants women explicit economic rights, including inheritance, property ownership, and engagement in trade, many Nigerian Muslim women remain economically marginalized. Cultural practices and patriarchal family structures often restrict women's inheritance rights, business activities, and access to financial resources. Research shows that women's participation in commerce, agriculture, and local markets is frequently limited by traditional norms that favor male decision-making and control over economic resources (Hanafi & Jibril, 2023). The resulting financial dependency exacerbates social vulnerability and reduces women's capacity to make autonomous decisions, further entrenching gender disparities. Economic empowerment is therefore a critical area where gaps between Islamic ethical principles and societal practices must be addressed.

Cultural Practices and Legal Barriers

In parts of northern Nigeria, cultural practices sometimes distort Islamic teachings, resulting in harmful social practices that disproportionately affect women. Forced and child marriages remain prevalent in certain communities, with young girls being married in mass ceremonies, often without consent. Domestic violence also continues to be a significant concern, with some interpretive traditions and cultural norms silencing women's voices within households. These practices demonstrate the tension between patriarchal cultural norms and the ethical imperatives of Islam, which emphasize justice, protection, and dignity for women.

The implementation of Sharia law in several northern states has further highlighted challenges for women's rights. While Sharia law has the potential to protect women in areas such as inheritance and family law, patriarchal interpretations sometimes undermine these protections, limiting women's legal recourse (Bawa, 2017). In addition, health-related issues continue to affect Muslim women, particularly in rural areas. High maternal mortality rates, limited access to healthcare, and restrictive consent practices hinder women's well-being and violate the Qur'anic objective of preserving life and protecting human dignity. These combined challenges illustrate the multifaceted obstacles Muslim women face in reconciling their religious, social, and legal rights in the Nigerian context.

Overall, the challenges confronting Muslim women in Nigeria are multidimensional, encompassing educational, political, economic, social, and health-related issues. They stem not from the ethical principles of Islam but from cultural misinterpretations, patriarchal traditions, and structural inequalities. Addressing these obstacles requires interventions that are both culturally sensitive and grounded in Islamic ethics, including promoting female education, encouraging political participation, supporting economic empowerment, and ensuring women's access to healthcare and legal protections. Bridging the gap between religious ideals and social realities is essential for the realization of gender justice within Nigeria's Muslim communities.

Additional empirical evidence strengthens these observations. UNICEF (2023) reported persistent gender and regional disparities in basic education in northern Nigeria and identified socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, insecurity, and institutional factors as barriers to girls' schooling. The Inter-Parliamentary Union's current data also show the continuing weakness of women's representation in Nigeria's House of Representatives, with women holding 15 of 356 seats (4.2%). These data demonstrate that political exclusion is not simply anecdotal, although they do not by themselves establish that Muslim identity is the cause of underrepresentation.

Health inequalities are similarly serious. The latest United Nations maternal mortality estimates place Nigeria's maternal mortality ratio at about 993 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2023 and estimate that Nigeria accounted for more than one-quarter of global maternal deaths that year (WHO et al., 2025). This national figure is not specific to Muslim women, so it should not be presented as a Muslim-women statistic. It is nevertheless relevant to the paper because a large proportion of Nigeria's Muslim population lives in northern regions where health-service access and gender norms can affect women's ability to obtain care.

Addressing the Challenges: Islamic and Practical Solutions

Despite the significant social, economic, and political challenges confronting Muslim women in Nigeria, there are practical and ethically grounded strategies that can be employed to bridge the gap between Islamic ideals and social realities. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that integrates education, legal reform, economic empowerment, healthcare, and political participation, all while remaining consistent with Islamic ethical teachings.

Promoting Islamic Education and Scholarship

A central strategy for empowering Muslim women is the promotion of Islamic education and scholarship. Female-focused schools, mentorship programs, and the recruitment of women teachers can greatly enhance women's religious literacy. Educated women can serve as scholars, teachers, and community leaders, thereby increasing the presence of gender-sensitive interpretations of Islamic texts (Adegoke, 2011). Such initiatives not only equip women with knowledge of their religious and legal rights but also challenge patriarchal interpretations that may restrict women's participation in society. Community-based workshops and study circles can further encourage critical engagement with religious texts, fostering a culture in which men and women collaboratively uphold the principles of justice and equity emphasized in Islam.

Legal and Policy Reforms

Legal and policy reforms are equally critical in ensuring the protection of women's rights. The Nigerian government has enacted laws such as the Child Rights Act and anti-domestic

violence legislation, but enforcement is often uneven, particularly in regions where cultural practices overshadow legal mandates (Bawa, 2017). Islamic legal principles provide a foundation for these reforms, as Islam itself emphasizes justice, protection, and accountability. Strengthening the implementation of existing laws, coupled with targeted public awareness campaigns, can help reduce harmful practices such as forced and child marriages. Furthermore, training religious leaders in gender-sensitive approaches can prevent misinterpretations of Sharia and ensure that women's rights are upheld within both religious and legal frameworks (Sarumi et al., 2019).

Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is another crucial dimension in addressing gender-based inequality. Many Muslim women in Nigeria face economic marginalization due to cultural restrictions on inheritance, business, and access to capital (Hanafi & Jibril, 2023). Sharia-compliant microfinance programs and entrepreneurship initiatives can provide women with financial independence while respecting Islamic ethical guidelines. Supporting women's participation in trade, agriculture, and local businesses can increase their economic autonomy, reduce dependence on male relatives, and enhance their decision-making power within households and communities. Additionally, vocational training and capacity-building programs can equip women with practical skills that improve employment opportunities and promote sustainable development.

Healthcare Access and Social Welfare

Access to healthcare is another area where intervention is vital. Muslim women, particularly in rural northern Nigeria, often face limited healthcare services, high maternal mortality rates, and restrictive consent practices that hinder their well-being (Fahm, 2022). Establishing community-based maternal and reproductive health programs, employing female health workers, and providing culturally sensitive services can improve access and quality of care. These interventions align with the Qur'anic principle of preserving life and protecting human dignity (Qur'an, 2004, 5:32). Health education initiatives can also empower women to make informed choices about their bodies and families, thereby enhancing their autonomy and social participation.

Encouraging Political Participation

Finally, fostering political participation among Muslim women is essential for achieving gender justice. Leadership training, mentorship programs, and advocacy campaigns can encourage women to engage actively in politics and public life (Sarumi et al., 2019). Organizations such as the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria have successfully supported women in grassroots mobilization, policy advocacy, and decision-making processes. Expanding these initiatives, while addressing cultural and structural barriers, can ensure that women's voices are represented in governance and public policy, leading to more inclusive and equitable decision-making.

Addressing the challenges facing Muslim women in Nigeria requires a holistic approach that combines education, legal reform, economic empowerment, healthcare, and political engagement. Promoting Islamic education and gender-sensitive scholarship can strengthen women's understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Effective legal and policy reforms, guided by Islamic ethical principles, can protect women from harmful practices. Economic

initiatives and healthcare programs can enhance women's autonomy and well-being, while political empowerment ensures their active participation in public life. By integrating these strategies within the framework of Islamic ethics, Nigerian communities can work toward achieving social justice, gender equity, and the full realization of women's rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the challenges faced by Muslim women in Nigeria and to bring social practices in line with Islamic ethical teachings, several key recommendations are proposed. First, efforts should be made to strengthen women's access to both Islamic and formal education by establishing more female-led schools, increasing the recruitment of female Islamic scholars, and providing scholarships and mentorship programs that enable girls and women to pursue higher learning. Enhancing religious literacy will empower women to understand their rights and counter patriarchal interpretations that restrict their participation in society.

Legal reforms are also essential; laws such as the Child Rights Act and anti-domestic violence legislation must be fully implemented, while imams, judges, and Sharia court officials should be trained in gender-sensitive jurisprudence to ensure that women's rights are upheld in legal and religious spaces.

Economic empowerment should be prioritized through Sharia-compliant microfinance schemes, vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and public awareness on Islamic inheritance rights, enabling women to gain financial independence and reduce vulnerability. Additionally, expanding access to healthcare especially maternal and reproductive services through community-based clinics, female healthcare workers, and health education initiatives will safeguard women's well-being in line with the Qur'anic principle of protecting life.

Finally, political participation should be encouraged by providing leadership training, strengthening advocacy groups such as FOMWAN, and eliminating cultural and structural barriers that limit women's engagement in public life. By integrating these educational, legal, economic, healthcare, and political strategies within an Islamic ethical framework, Nigerian Muslim communities can advance gender justice and promote the full realization of women's rights and dignity.

CONCLUSION

Islamic teachings provide a clear ethical framework that condemns gender-based discrimination and affirms the inherent dignity, rights, and spiritual equality of women. The Qur'an and Sunnah consistently emphasize that both men and women are equal in moral responsibility and spiritual potential, establishing a foundation for justice, fairness, and mutual respect. These sources not only affirm women's spiritual standing but also provide concrete guidance on education, property ownership, economic participation, marital relations, and social engagement. Early Islamic history further illustrates women's active involvement in religious, educational, social, and even political spheres, demonstrating that Islam's ethical vision inherently supports women's agency and leadership.

The contemporary challenges faced by Muslim women in Nigeria—including limited access to education, economic marginalization, forced and child marriages, political exclusion, and inadequate healthcare cannot be attributed to Islam itself. Rather, these issues stem from cultural practices, patriarchal interpretations of religious texts, and structural inequalities that distort the religion's ethical teachings. Misunderstandings of Islamic law, combined with entrenched social norms, have often restricted women's opportunities and prevented them from fully realizing their rights. Consequently, addressing these disparities requires a nuanced

understanding that separates religious principles from cultural practices that undermine women's well-being.

Solutions to these challenges must integrate Islamic ethical principles with practical interventions in multiple spheres of life. Promoting female education and religious scholarship strengthens women's knowledge of their rights and empowers them to contribute to community decision-making. Legal reforms, including the effective implementation of the Child Rights Act, anti-domestic violence legislation, and gender-sensitive interpretations of Sharia law, are necessary to protect women from harmful practices. Economic empowerment initiatives, such as microfinance programs and entrepreneurship support, can enhance women's autonomy and reduce dependence on patriarchal structures. Expanding access to healthcare, particularly maternal and reproductive services, ensures the physical well-being of women, which is a core objective of Islamic ethics. Encouraging women's political participation through mentorship, leadership training, and advocacy further ensures that their voices are represented in governance and policy-making processes.

By aligning practical reforms with the moral and legal teachings of Islam, Nigerian Muslim communities have the potential to bridge the gap between religious ideals and lived realities. When education, law, economic opportunity, healthcare, and political engagement operate within the framework of Islamic ethics, gender justice becomes attainable. This approach not only empowers Muslim women but also strengthens the moral and social fabric of communities, promoting equity, social cohesion, and human development. In essence, the realization of women's rights in Nigeria is both an ethical imperative and a practical necessity, one that Islam explicitly supports through its commitment to justice, compassion, and equality.

The evidence reviewed in this paper therefore supports a more careful conclusion than either a blanket defence of all practices in Muslim communities or a blanket attribution of gender inequality to Islam. Islamic sources provide substantial normative resources for dignity, moral responsibility, education, property, consent, and protection from injustice, but the translation of these principles into social outcomes depends on interpretation, institutions, economic resources, and community practice. The most defensible path for Nigerian policy and community reform is consequently one that combines religious literacy with empirical evidence, legal accountability, women's participation, and context-sensitive social interventions.

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PUPILS' PERCEPTIONS OF MORAL AND ETHICAL VALUES: THE CASE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

Jere NDAZHAGA,
jere.ndazhaga@fuep.edu.ng

Emmanuel Jidauna NOKSHUWAN
emmyjiddy@gmail.com
&
Ibrahim POLMI
ibropolmi@gmail.com

TETFund Centre of Excellence for Innovative Teaching and Learning in Primary and Early Childhood Education (T_CEIPEC), Federal University of Education, Pankshin, Plateau State. Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Moral and ethical values constitute the foundation of responsible citizenship, peaceful coexistence, and academic excellence among school children. However, growing concerns about indiscipline, dishonesty, disrespect, and other forms of unethical behaviour have raised questions about the effectiveness of values education in primary schools. Against this background, this study examined pupils' perceptions of moral and ethical values, the factors that threaten moral and ethical values, the impact on pupils' academic activities and learning environment; and differences in pupils' perceptions based on gender and whether the school is in the rural or urban area. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised Primary Four pupils in public primary schools in Plateau State. A sample of 150 pupils was selected using a multistage sampling technique involving the selection of one urban and one rural school from each of the three senatorial zones, resulting in six schools from which 25 pupils were randomly selected. Data was collected using the Pupils' Perception of Moral and Ethical Values Questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts, while a pilot study produced a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions, while the Independent Samples t-test was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that pupils perceived a general threat to moral and ethical values (Grand Mean = 3.01), particularly in honesty, truthfulness, respect, obedience, and academic integrity. Peer influence, inadequate moral instruction, negative media exposure, bullying, and weak reinforcement of good behaviour were identified as the major factors responsible for the threat to moral and ethical values (Grand Mean = 2.96). The study further found that the threat to moral and ethical values adversely affect pupils' academic activities and learning environment (Grand Mean = 3.05). The hypothesis testing revealed a significant difference between male and female pupils' perceptions of moral and ethical values, $t(148) = 2.24$, $p = .027$, and its impact on academic activities and learning environment, $t(148) = 2.08$, $p = .039$, while no significant difference existed between urban and rural pupils' perceptions moral and ethical value decline, $t(148) = 0.82$, $p = .414$. The study concluded that the threat to moral and ethical values poses a significant challenge to pupils' character development and academic achievement. It recommended strengthening value-based education through Social Studies and Civic Education,

alongside active collaboration among parents, teachers, and communities to reinforce positive moral behaviour among pupils.
Keywords: Moral Values, Ethical Values, Primary Schools, Citizenship, Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Education remains a fundamental instrument for promoting responsible citizenship, discipline, honesty, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. Beyond the transmission of knowledge and skills, education plays a critical role in shaping learners' moral character and preparing them to become responsible members of society. Moral values are accepted principles that distinguish right from wrong and guide human behaviour, while ethical values are standards that promote integrity, accountability, justice, fairness, and responsible conduct in personal and social relationships (Ndazhaga, Nokshuwan, & Polmi, 2025).

Schacter, Gilbert, Nock & Wegner (2022) argued that pupils' perceptions influence their attitudes, behaviours, and moral decision-making, making pupils' views an important source of evidence for evaluating the moral and ethical values.

Globally, several empirical studies have reported a steady threat to moral and ethical values among school children. Benedicto (2025) found that schools that effectively integrated ethical education recorded significantly higher levels of honesty, discipline, responsibility, and respect than schools with weak value education programmes. Similarly, Hau & Dan (2024) established that continuous participation in ethical education significantly improved pupils' empathy, moral reasoning, responsible decision-making, classroom behaviour, and interpersonal relationships. In Indonesia, Hafidhi, Hanafi, Hadi, Kusumaningrum & Radewi (2024) reported that about 68% of teachers perceived declining honesty, discipline, respect for authority, and social responsibility among primary school pupils, attributing the trend to digital media exposure, peer influence, and inadequate parental supervision. Likewise, Tiara, Danar, Santoso, and Agustin (2024) found that pupils exposed to structured character education demonstrated higher levels of accountability, cooperation, tolerance, honesty, and respect than those without such programmes.

Studies across Africa reveal similar patterns. Belay, Eneyew & Merawi (2025) reported that inadequate implementation of citizenship education, insufficient teacher preparation, and limited instructional resources reduced schools' effectiveness in promoting ethical behaviour. In addition, weak family structures, rapid urbanization, globalization, and increasing media exposure contribute significantly to declining moral values, indiscipline, aggression, and weak civic responsibility among primary school pupils.

In Nigeria, empirical evidence equally suggests increasing manifestations of dishonesty, bullying, truancy, aggression, examination malpractice, disrespect for teachers, and weak civic responsibility despite the emphasis placed on character formation in Federal Republic of Nigeria (2024). Akinola (2024) found that over 70% of teachers perceived a significant deterioration in pupils' moral behaviour and associated it with poor parental supervision, peer influence, economic hardship, and inappropriate digital media exposure. Similarly, Zubairu, Inuwa & Musa (2025) reported that inadequate instructional resources, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teacher training, and weak implementation of citizenship education limited the development of desirable moral values among pupils.

Evidence from Plateau State supports these national findings. Ndazhaga, Polmi & Nokshuwan (2024) reported declining honesty, discipline, cooperation, respect for authority, and responsibility among primary school pupils in Pankshin Local Government Area. Likewise,

Ndazhaga, Nokshuwan & Polmi (2025) documented increasing cases of truancy, bullying, dishonesty, disobedience, disrespect for teachers, and weak commitment to school rules. However, both studies relied primarily on teachers' perceptions, with limited empirical evidence on pupils' own perceptions of threats to moral and ethical values.

Empirical studies have also identified several factors responsible for threat to moral and ethical values among pupils. Korley & Mumuni (2024) found that consistent parental guidance, positive role modelling, and effective communication significantly enhanced honesty, discipline, empathy, responsibility, and respect among children. Conversely, Benedicto (2025) reported that excessive digital media exposure reduced face-to-face interaction and encouraged cyberbullying, aggression, disrespect for authority, and imitation of antisocial behaviours. Nigerian studies similarly identified poor parental supervision, poverty, peer pressure, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate instructional resources, and ineffective implementation of citizenship education as major contributors to declining moral standards among pupils (Akinola, 2024; Zubairu et al, 2025). In Plateau State, Ndazhaga et al (2024) identified social media exposure, weakening family structures, peer influence, and changing societal values as major predictors of truancy, dishonesty, bullying, and indiscipline among primary school pupils.

Research has further established that declining moral and ethical values adversely affect pupils' academic activities and learning evironment. Hau & Dan (2024) found that pupils who participated in ethical education programmes demonstrated better classroom participation, stronger academic motivation, improved concentration, and higher academic performance. Similarly, Tiara et al. (2024) reported that effective character education improved attendance, classroom discipline, cooperation, and learning outcomes. Chowdhury, Salkila & Obaydullah (2019) also reported that weak discipline increased classroom disruption, absenteeism, bullying, examination malpractice, and poor academic performance. Likewise, Akinola (2024) found that declining moral standards reduced classroom participation, learning motivation, and educational achievement. Ndazhaga, Polmi & Nokshuwan (2024) also reported that pupils who exhibit dishonesty, truancy, poor discipline, and disrespect for authority experienced lower classroom participation, increased absenteeism, weak concentration, and poor academic performance in Plateau State.

The threat to moral and ethical values among primary school pupils has become a major concern in contemporary Nigerian society. Behaviours such as dishonesty, disobedience, disrespect for authority, bullying, truancy, examination malpractice, aggression, and indiscipline are increasingly observed despite the inclusion of Social Studies and Civic Education in the primary school curriculum.

In Plateau State, parents, teachers, and community leaders have expressed concern over the growing erosion of moral standards among pupils. Although Social Studies and Civic Education are expected to promote responsible citizenship, honesty, discipline, tolerance, cooperation, and respect for authority, the persistence of unethical behaviours raises concerns about the effectiveness of value education and its implications for pupils' academic achievement. Although previous studies have examined moral and ethical value decline, they have focused largely on the perceptions of teachers, parents, and other stakeholders, with limited attention given to pupils' own perspectives. This represents an important gap because pupils are directly involved in school interactions and can provide first-hand information on the extent, causes, and effects of threats to moral and ethical values.

It is against this background that this study investigated pupils' perceptions of the threats to moral and ethical values in primary schools in Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study

examined the perceived threat to moral and ethical values, the factors responsible for the threats, and its effects on pupils' academic activities and learning environment.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess pupils' perceptions of the threats to moral and ethical values in primary schools in Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

i. examine pupils' perceptions of the threat to moral and ethical values in primary schools in Plateau State.
ii. identify the key factors responsible for the threats to moral and ethical values among primary school pupils.
iii. identify the perceived effects of the threat to moral and ethical values on pupils' academic activities and learning environment.
iv. find out if there is any gender difference in pupils' perceptions of the threats to moral and ethical values in primary schools.
v. find out if there is any difference between pupils' perceptions of the threats to moral and ethical values in primary schools in urban and rural areas.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

i. What is the perceptions of pupils to the threats of moral and ethical values in primary schools in Plateau State?
ii. What factors are responsible for the threats of moral and ethical values among primary school pupils in Plateau State?
iii. What are the perceived effects of the threats to moral and ethical value on pupils' academic activities and learning environment?
iv. Is there any gender difference in pupils' perceptions of the threats to moral and ethical values in primary schools?
v. Is there any difference between pupils' perceptions of the threats to moral and ethical values in primary schools in urban and rural?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female pupils regarding their perception of the threat to moral and ethical values in primary schools in Plateau State.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of pupils in urban and rural areas regarding the threats to moral and ethical values in primary schools in Plateau State.

H_{03}: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female pupils regarding the perceived effects of the threats to moral and ethical values on pupils' academic activities and learning environment.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised Primary 4 pupils in public primary schools in Plateau State, Nigeria. A sample of 150 pupils was selected through a multistage sampling technique involving the selection of one urban and one rural school from each of the 3 senatorial zones, giving 6 schools, from which 25 pupils were

randomly selected. Primary 4 pupils were chosen because they possess the cognitive ability and adequate exposure at that level to provide reliable responses. Data was collected using the Pupils' Perception of Moral and Ethical Values Questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts, and a pilot study yielded a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86. Frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using the Independent Samples t-test at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Pupils' perceptions of Moral and Ethical Values under threat in Primary Schools.

S/N	Statement	*M*	*SD*	Decision
1	Greeting elders	3.42	0.81	Accepted
2	Sharing lunch or school supplies with classmates	2.36	0.87	Rejected
3	Telling the truth even when punishment is involved	3.61	0.72	Accepted
4	Respecting pupils from different ethnic groups	3.28	0.89	Accepted
5	Keeping classrooms and playgrounds clean	2.43	0.91	Rejected
6	Helping injured classmates	3.18	0.93	Accepted
7	Waiting for one's turn during games	3.22	0.87	Accepted
8	Saying sorry after wrongdoing	2.48	0.86	Rejected
9	Not cheating during examinations or classwork	3.70	0.69	Accepted
10	Listening quietly when teachers speak	3.46	0.75	Accepted
	Grand Mean	**3.11**	**0.82**	**Accepted**

Criterion mean = 2.50

Source: Field Analysis, 2026

The results in (Table 1) indicate that pupils generally perceived moral and ethical values to be under threat in primary schools across Plateau State, as shown by the reported grand mean of 3.11, which exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50. Examination honesty recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.70, SD = 0.69), followed by personal truthfulness under pressure (M = 3.61, SD = 0.72) and obedience to teachers (M = 3.46, SD = 0.75). Conversely, sharing lunch or school supplies (M = 2.36, SD = 0.87), classroom orderliness (M = 2.43, SD = 0.91) and apologising after minor wrongdoing (M = 2.48, SD = 0.86) fell below the criterion mean. These findings suggest that pupils' concerns were more pronounced regarding honesty, truthfulness and respect for school authority than certain interpersonal behaviours.

The findings broadly agree with Zhao et al. (2025), whose study examined the relationship between children's moral judgments about cheating and their cheating behaviour. They also relate to Jelimo et al. (2025), who highlighted the importance of honesty, responsibility and respect in school moral education. However, these studies do not directly establish the prevalence of perceived threats among primary school pupils in Plateau State. The present findings therefore contribute context-specific evidence that academic integrity and truthfulness deserve greater attention in primary education.

The study concludes that schools should strengthen practical moral instruction, teacher role-modelling, fair assessment and the reinforcement of positive behaviour while recognising that the results reflect pupils' perceptions rather than independently measured changes in moral conduct.

Research Question 2

Table 2: **Mean Ratings of Pupils on Factors Responsible for the Threats to Moral and Ethical Values.**

S/N	Statement	*M*	*SD*	Decision
1	Friends laugh at pupils who do the right thing	3.26	0.90	Accepted
2	Parents remind pupils to respect others	2.10	0.95	Rejected
3	Teachers spend more time teaching academic subjects than values	3.45	0.82	Accepted
4	Nollywood movies influence pupils negatively	3.33	0.88	Accepted
5	Pupils who fight are rarely punished	2.44	0.89	Rejected
6	Older pupils bully younger pupils	3.41	0.80	Accepted
7	Communities celebrate kindness and good behaviour	2.18	0.92	Rejected
8	Pupils copy bad behaviour to avoid teasing	3.52	0.74	Accepted
9	Pupils with expensive items sometimes mistreat others	2.39	0.88	Rejected
10	Teachers rarely recognize good behavior	3.36	0.81	Accepted
	Grand Mean	**2.94**	**0.85**	**Accepted**

Criterion mean = 2.50

Source: Field Analysis, 2026

The findings in Table 2 revealed that pupils identified several factors contributing to the threats to moral and ethical values, with a grand mean of 2.94 above the criterion mean of 2.50. The results indicate that peer pressure, inadequate attention to moral instruction, negative media influence, bullying, and lack of recognition of good behaviour are major factors threatening morals among pupils. The highest-rated factor was pupils copying bad behaviour to avoid teasing (M = 3.52, SD = 0.74), followed by teachers spending more time on academic subjects than moral instruction (M = 3.45, SD = 0.82). This suggests that peer acceptance and school practices play significant roles in shaping pupils' moral behaviour.

The interpretation of this finding means that moral development among children does not occur in isolation but is influenced by their social environment. At the primary school level, pupils are highly influenced by their classmates; therefore, negative peer approval can encourage behaviours that contradict expected moral standards. The findings support Korley and Mumuni (2024), who found that peer relationships strongly influence children's moral reasoning and behavioural choices. Similarly, Chowdhury et al. (2019) identified weak emphasis on moral education as a challenge affecting value development among learners. The finding differs from studies that place family background as the dominant threat to moral. This variation may be explained by the age of respondents, as primary school pupils may have stronger awareness of school experiences and peer relationships than family-related influences. The implication is that schools should strengthen moral education, peer mentoring, and positive behaviour reinforcement strategies.

The findings above showed that peer influence, inadequate moral instruction, negative media exposure, bullying, and weak reinforcement of good behaviour are the major factors contributing to the threats to moral and ethical values among pupils. This implies that moral development among primary school pupils is influenced by multiple interacting social and environmental factors rather than by a single source.

Research Question 3

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Pupils on the Effects of the threats to Moral and Ethical Values on Academic Activities and learning environment.

S/N	Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Decision
1	Pupils from different tribes avoid playing together	2.38	0.94	Rejected
2	Classmates steal others' belongings	3.12	0.87	Accepted
3	Pupils who refuse cheating are mocked	3.46	0.80	Accepted
4	Friends reject pupils who obey rules	2.72	0.91	Accepted
5	Pupils make fun of respectful classmates	2.41	0.96	Rejected
6	Lack of sharing creates sadness among pupils	3.18	0.82	Accepted
7	Pupils lie to teachers to avoid duties	3.54	0.72	Accepted
8	Frequent fights occur during break	2.88	0.86	Accepted
9	Cheating sometimes appears to be rewarded	3.58	0.69	Accepted
10	Loss of trust among friends	3.32	0.79	Accepted
	Grand Mean	**3.06**	**0.84**	**Accepted**

Note. Criterion mean = 2.50. Mean scores of 2.50 and above were accepted, while mean scores below 2.50 were rejected.

Source: Field Analysis, 2026

Table 4.3 shows that pupils generally perceived the threat to moral and ethical values as having negative effects on academic activities and learning environment, as indicated by the grand mean of 3.06, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Eight of the ten statements were accepted, with the highest-rated effects being that cheating sometimes appears to be rewarded (M = 3.58, SD = 0.69), pupils lie to teachers to avoid duties (M = 3.54, SD = 0.72), and pupils who refuse cheating are mocked (M = 3.46, SD = 0.80). Pupils also agreed that threats to moral values contribute to loss of trust among friends, lack of sharing, stealing, frequent fight, and rejection of pupils who obey rules, suggesting that moral decline weakens discipline, honesty, peer relationships, and the overall learning environment. However, pupils did not agree that pupils from different tribes avoid playing together (M = 2.38, SD = 0.94) or that respectful classmates are mocked (M = 2.41, SD = 0.96), indicating that these behaviours were not perceived as major threats to moral and ethical values in the study area.

This study revealed that pupils perceived that the threats to moral and ethical values as having considerable effects on academic activities and learning environment. The accepted items demonstrate that behaviours such as cheating, dishonesty, indiscipline, peer pressure, and lack of trust contributed to an unhealthy learning environment. When unethical behaviours become common, pupils may lose motivation for hard work, develop poor attitudes toward learning, and experience reduced academic engagement.

This finding agrees with Jelimo et al. (2025), who found that discipline, honesty, and responsibility contribute positively to academic achievement. Their study emphasized that learners with strong moral values demonstrate better commitment to academic activities and improved learning outcomes. The current finding supports this position by showing that the absence of these values may encourage behaviours that negatively influence pupils' academic progress.

Similarly, the finding agrees with Tiara et al. (2024), who found that character education strengthens behaviours necessary for effective learning. They noted that values such as honesty, respect, cooperation, and responsibility support positive learner attitudes and academic success. The present study confirms that strengthening moral education can help reduce academic dishonesty, improve discipline, and promote a supportive learning environment. Therefore, schools should intensify moral and ethical education to promote responsible behaviours that enhance pupils' academic achievement.

The findings revealed that declining moral and ethical values negatively affect pupils' academic activities and learning environment by encouraging cheating, dishonesty, indiscipline, and poor interpersonal relationships within the school environment. This implies that moral and ethical values constitute an important component of the learning environment and have a direct relationship with pupils' academic experiences and educational outcomes.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Table 4: Independent Samples *t*-Test of Male and Female Pupils' Perceptions of the threats to Moral and Ethical Value

Group	M	SD	*T*	Df	*p*-value
Male	3.08	0.81	2.24	148	.027
Female	3.15	0.83			

Note. p < .05.

Source: Field Analysis, 2026

The findings in Table 4 indicate no statistically significant difference between male pupils (\(M = 3.08, SD = 0.81) and female pupils (M = 3.15, SD = 0.83) in their perceptions of threats to moral and ethical values, t(148) = -0.45, p > .05). Consequently, the null hypothesis was not rejected at the 0.05 significance level. Although female pupils recorded a slightly higher mean score than male pupils, the reported test did not establish that the difference was statistically significant. The findings suggest that the study did not identify sufficient evidence of a gender-related difference in the overall scores measured.

The finding is relevant to the broader literature on moral development, including Zhao et al. (2025), who investigated children's moral judgments about cheating, and Jelimo et al. (2025), who examined students' perceptions of moral education. However, these studies should not be cited as direct confirmation of gender similarity unless their analyses explicitly examined comparable gender differences. The present result therefore provides evidence specific to the sampled primary school pupils in Plateau State.

The study concludes that male and female pupils did not differ significantly in their overall perceptions of moral and ethical threats in this analysis. This does not prove that both genders have identical experiences or that gender differences cannot occur in particular behavioural dimensions.

Hypothesis 2

Table 5: Independent Samples t-Test of Urban and Rural Pupils' Perceptions of the threats to Moral and Ethical Values

Group	M	SD	*T*	Df	*p*-value
Urban	2.91	0.83	0.43	148	.414
Rural	2.98	0.87			

Note. p > .05.

Source: Field Analysis, 2026

The results in Table 5 show no statistically significant difference between urban pupils (M = 2.91, SD = 0.83) and rural pupils (M = 2.98, SD = 0.87) in their perceptions of factors responsible for threats to moral and ethical values, t(148) = -0.43, p > .05). The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected at the 0.05 significance level. Although rural pupils recorded a slightly higher mean score than urban pupils, the reported difference was not statistically significant. The finding indicates that the study did not establish a location-based difference in the overall ratings of the factors examined.

The result broadly relates to Korley and Mumuni (2024), whose research highlighted the contribution of home, school and social environments to children's moral development. It also relates to Jelimo et al. (2025), which discussed peer pressure and school practices as concerns in moral education. Nevertheless, these studies cannot directly confirm that urban and rural pupils have similar perceptions unless comparable location-based tests were conducted.

The study concludes that no statistically significant difference was established between the two groups in the sampled schools. Educational authorities may therefore consider common measures to strengthen moral education and school discipline while allowing individual schools to respond to their particular circumstances. The result does not demonstrate that urban and rural school environments are identical.

Hypothesis 3

Table 6: Independent Samples *t*-Test of Male and Female Pupils' Perceived Effects of the Threats to Moral and Ethical Values on Academic Activities and Learning Environment

Group	M	SD	*T*	Df	*p*-value
Male	3.03	0.82	-0.44	148	.039
Female	3.09	0.85			

Note. p < .05.

Source: Field Analysis,2026

The results in Table 6 show no statistically significant difference between male pupils (M = 3.03, SD = 0.82) and female pupils (M = 3.09, SD = 0.85) in the perceptions of the effects of moral and ethical threats on academic activities and the learning environment, t(148) = -0.44, p > .05). Accordingly, the null hypothesis was not rejected at the 0.05 significance level. Female pupils recorded a slightly higher mean score, but the reported analysis did not establish a statistically significant difference. The finding suggests that the study did not identify sufficient evidence that gender differentiated pupils' overall perceptions of these effects.

The findings relate broadly to Zhao et al. (2025), which examined children's moral judgments and cheating behaviour, and Jelimo et al. (2025), which discussed honesty, responsibility and respect within school moral education. However, these studies do not directly confirm that boys and girls perceive the effects of moral and ethical threats similarly. The present result should therefore be interpreted as a finding specific to the sampled pupils rather than proof of complete gender equivalence.

The study concludes that school-wide strategies promoting academic honesty, accountability, respectful relationships and consistent behavioural expectations are appropriate for both male and female pupils. Such measures should be complemented by attention to individual needs and any specific challenges identified through further assessment.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that pupils perceive noticeable threats in moral and ethical values within primary schools in Plateau State. This is as a result of inadequate parental guidance, and inconsistent enforcement of discipline in primary schools. Strengthening value-based education therefore requires coordinated efforts involving teachers, parents, school administrators, government agencies, and community stakeholders to reinforce positive behaviour and responsible citizenship among pupils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Since a significant gender difference was found in pupils' perception of the threats to moral and ethical values, schools should adopt gender-responsive moral education strategies that encourage equal participation of male and female pupils in activities promoting honesty, respect, responsibility, and discipline.
- As no significant difference was found between urban and rural pupils regarding factors responsible for the threats to moral and ethical values, value-based education programmes should be implemented across all primary schools in Plateau State. Primary schools, parents, and communities should collaborate to address common challenges such as peer pressure, media influence, and weak reinforcement of positive behaviour.
- Since a significant gender difference was found in pupils' perception of the effects of the threats to moral and ethical values on academic activities, moral instruction should be integrated into academic activities to help pupils understand the relationship between ethical behaviour, discipline, and learning success.

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