Navigating Law and Order: The Influence of Public Policy on Safety and Justice in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Ndaage, Barikuma Lazarus PhD[1], Udu Moses Ogechi PhD[2]

[1]Department of Political Science, Ignatius Ajuru University University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State

[2]Nigeria Police Training School, Ikeja, Lagos

Email: ndaagebarikuma@gmail.com, osmosisu@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study investigated the influence of religious extremism and ethnic divisions on public policy formulation, law enforcement, and the justice system in Nigeria. The aim was to understand how religious and ethnic tensions have shaped policies, affecting national security and justice. The study employed a qualitative approach, using secondary data sourced from scholarly articles, government reports, and media outlets. The theoretical framework adopted was John Rawls' *Theory of Justice*, which emphasizes fairness and equality in public policy. The findings revealed three major issues: first, political manipulation and corruption within law enforcement have undermined the justice system, with the poor being disproportionately targeted while the elite remain protected. Second, religious extremism, particularly through groups like Boko Haram, has exacerbated insecurity and violence, contributing to further instability. Third, the unequal distribution of resources, often based on ethnic lines, has perpetuated social inequalities, fostering ethnic and religious conflicts. These issues have led to a justice system that is seen as biased and ineffective. The conclusion highlighted the need for comprehensive reforms, including equitable resource distribution, law enforcement reform, and promoting inter-religious dialogue. The study recommended that Nigeria adopt policies aimed at redistributing resources fairly, particularly to marginalized regions, and implement strict reforms in law enforcement to reduce political interference. Additionally, fostering religious dialogue and education was recommended to mitigate extremism and promote national unity. These recommendations aim to build a fairer, more just society, ensuring that all Nigerians, regardless of ethnicity or religion, have access to security and justice.

Keywords: Religious extremism, ethnic divisions, public policy, law enforcement, justice system, inequality, security

1. Introduction

The notion of public policy is an essential element in the development of the social and political landscape of any country, especially in the spheres of law enforcement, safety, and justice. The development and execution of the public policies in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria have a significant impact on the effectiveness and fairness of the criminal justice system, and the perception of safety and security among the citizens. The multifaceted nature of the public policy during this period is predetermined by the democratic processes, political ideologies, and the complex interdependence between the state and its citizens. Despite the fact that the

shift to the democratic order under the military rule was promised to be a colorful one, the policies that have been implemented have often been criticized as inconsistent, corrupt, and unable to meet the fundamental needs of citizens in such aspects as crime prevention, judicial fairness, and public safety. These gaps demonstrate the persistence of issues that weaken the quest of Nigeria to achieve effective law and order, and this is why a thorough review of the role of the public policy in the safety and justice in this democratic age is needed [1].

The convergence of the law enforcement and the public policy in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria has spawned a row of significant issues to the provision of public safety and justice. The state has been grappling with the challenge of enhancing transparency in policing, refining the judiciary, and enforcing the rule of law over the last decades due to the ongoing corruption and political interference. It is important to note that the problems of police corruption, politicization of law enforcement, and the lack of security remain, undermining the confidence of the population in the police and the judiciary. The gap between the desired safety goals and the reality of citizens seems to be a common phenomenon in the context of the public policy that seems to focus more on the political benefits than on the fair provision of justice [2]. An example is the Nigerian police force, which is regularly accused of corruption, professional incompetence, and abuse of power, which only adds to the feeling of insecurity among the population. These issues show that even though the idea of the public policy is to ensure justice and safety, it is often undermined by the inefficiency of the system and corruption within the institutions. This paper, therefore, aims at critically analyzing the effects of these policies on the administration of justice and the general security of the people of Nigeria in the Fourth Republic.

Statement of the Problem

The Fourth Republic of Nigeria, which came into power in 1999, is a major shift in the history of the country as it is no longer under military rule but a democratic government that is more accountable and fair. However, the adoption of government policies aimed at ensuring justice and security to every Nigerian citizen has been ineffective in most cases. The main problem is that law enforcement agencies, including the Nigeria Police Force, have been manipulated and politicized, which has not allowed balancing between the interests of influential political forces and the impartial law enforcement. This lack of an independent and strong police force compromises the ability to create a just and equal system of justice, which leads to a high level of insecurity and the loss of trust in the police by the population. In addition, poor public policies that do not focus on the underlying causes of crime, which include poverty, unemployment, and inequality, contribute to the worsening of social divisions, leaving the citizens vulnerable and doubtful about the role of the state in ensuring security.

Systemic corruption and lack of accountability in the political arena in Nigeria is a blemish that directly affects the safety and justice of the people. Nigeria has been characterized by the political elite using power to serve their selfish interests at the expense of the masses even after the democratic ideals were adopted [3]. This abuse is expressed in unhealthy behaviors, such as misappropriation of state resources, favoritism, and policies that prioritize the elite at the expense of marginalized populations. As a result, policies that are supposed to enhance national safety, like crime prevention and law enforcement reforms, are either underfunded or not well executed. Corruption is also deeply rooted, which makes it even more difficult to achieve justice because the legal and administrative frameworks are often being used to serve political interests at the expense of the vulnerable groups. Having such systemic flaws in place, the question is, how can Nigerians trust a justice system that is so intertwined with political power struggles?

Lastly, the issue of law and order in the Fourth Republic has been aggravated by religious extremism and inter-ethnic violence that has destabilized the already weak justice system in the country. The emergence of organizations like Boko Haram, as well as the ongoing ethnic and religious tensions, have made the safety of the people a top priority. How has the role of the public policy been in solving these problems? What can the government do to ensure that it puts in place policies that will truly foster justice and security to everyone, without further dividing religious and ethnic communities? These are some of the questions

that highlight the pressing necessity to reconsider the way law and order are perceived in Nigeria and reevaluate the role of the public policy in the process of peace, justice, and sustainable development of the country [4]. It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken to examine the navigating law and order: The influence of public policy on safety and justice in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the impact of political manipulation and corruption within law enforcement agencies on the delivery of justice and public safety in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.
2. investigates the role of ineffective public policies in exacerbating insecurity and undermining justice, particularly with respect to the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities in Nigeria.
3. assess the influence of religious extremism and ethnic divisions on public policy formulation and law enforcement in Nigeria, and their impact on national security and justice.

Conceptual Review

Law and Order:

Law is an important component of any society and it determines how people relate with one another, institutions and the state. It gives a structure that regulates conduct, as well as upholding justice, and social order. The law is not fixed but it is constantly changing to meet the changing demands of the society. In criminal justice as well as environmental protection laws stipulate rights and duties of individuals and organizations. The flexibility of law is one of the most crucial qualities because the legal systems tend to be reformed continuously to keep up with the development in technologies, changes in society, and new issues. The law change can be observed in such aspects as the digital justice, where such nations as China are introducing the latest technologies like AI and big data to their courts to streamline and open up the legal process. Likewise, the law is similarly flexible in order to respond to the global agenda like human rights, environmental protection, and economic equality, as observed in the growing attention to international environmental law. The nature of law is as such that it does not only regulate but also mirrors the values of the society in a manner that guarantees that they have provided justice that is not only relevant in the present day but also in the past [5].

With the complexity of the society, the role of the law in giving fairness and equity in the society is becoming more significant. Law schools and legal practitioners in most countries are forced to deal with the problems of racial and ideological discrimination, which may influence the perception of the law and its application. The legal profession itself reevaluates its role constantly, especially with regard to social movements, the opinion of the people, and global issues. Even though it is essential, the law does not always apply and get universal with respect and is often put under interpretation by the judges, lawmakers and citizens. This continuous process of adaptation implies that law is not merely a system of rules but a living system, which should react to the needs and values of the society and allows keeping the justice at regular levels. To be relevant with the dynamics of the present-day life, the law has to change in accordance with the complexity of the current situations without corrupting the fundamental purpose of it to protect the rights of the individuals and guarantee the establishment of justice.

The term Law and Order is essentially the term that can be used when it is necessary to preserve peace in society and enforce the rules on the territory of a state or community. It encompasses safeguarding of the rights of citizens, crime prevention and conflict resolution by enforcing laws. In its essence, law and order is supposed to enforce the social contract of the individuals and the state where the state provides security and justice by adherence to the law and order and avoiding chaos. Nevertheless, the framing of law and order may have a considerable influence on how law and order is implemented and viewed [6]. The term can be problematic and in most democratic nations, the idea is usually identified with the idea of maintaining public safety and justice although the term itself may be problematic. Other

researchers claim that invocation of law and order is often a political ideology and can be employed to excuse authoritarian actions, which have an effect on the civil liberties. The concept of law being neutral and applicable to everyone is not always without criticism, since it can justify the system of power that supports some groups of people in the disinterest of others. As a matter of fact, law and order is not just about enforcement of the law, but also about the social and political bargaining about what is acceptable and who has the authority over what is acceptable in the verdict.

The interaction between law, order, and justice has been a complicated issue that is often controversial in the modern world. The role played by the public policy in ensuring the process of constructing and sustaining law and order is paramount, the extent of the law and the boundaries of the law. As an illustration, the criminal justice system, in its pursuit of law and order, is capable of conflicting with the principles of fairness and equity, and this leads to arguments as to the effectiveness and ethicality of this or that legal practice. The enforcement of law has to be moderated by the idea of justice which in most cases goes beyond imprisoning law offenders by punishment, but it should also focus on the social disparities and implications of the law enforcement practices. The law pursuit and order can even be detrimental to the marginalized communities in most circumstances, such as racial profiling and police militarization. Moreover, even though law enforcement agencies are expected to provide people with the sense of order, their practices and the extent of the authorities they have occasionally cross the limits of the law, leading to clashes in the context of human rights protection [7]. Such tension between preserving order and protecting justice can be viewed as the natural contradiction in applying law as a means of social control instead of a system that could help to protect the rights of every citizen. The difficulty, then, is that of developing legal systems that focus on justice but at the same time focus on the necessity of effective law enforcement.

Public Policy on Safety

Public policy entails what decisions and measures are made by governments to solve the society and enhance the welfare of people. It is indicative of the interests of government in creating the social, economic, and political structure of a nation, and it is effected by a number of institutions and legal systems. Over the past few years, there has been a debate on the efficacy of the policies of the state especially in terms of social services like healthcare, education, and public safety. By definition, the dynamic character of the public policy implies that it frequently needs to be adjusted to meet changing demands and challenges, especially in response to economic fluctuations, environmental shifts and changes in public opinion. As an illustration, the COVID-19 pandemic brought forth drastic changes in the global policies on the health sector that emphasized the importance of governments being keen in their response. Moreover, ideology and the international relationship also affect the public policies, particularly in the globalized world whereby local policies can extend to a very distant location [8]. The emergence of digital technologies and data analytics has also given policymakers more tools to create more informed and responsive policies, but there are still problems with ensuring the policies are equitable and should serve the best interest of the population. Simply put, the public policy is a living process as it entails the bargaining of the public institutions, citizens, and other stakeholders in order to create a system that is just, sustainable, and effective.

Social policy on safety is also an important factor in ensuring the safety of people and the overall order of the society, establishing a system where the government ensures that citizens are not exposed to different risks and threats. Traditionally, the scope of public safety policies has been very limited and has mainly been concerned with the prevention of violence, including those implemented by the law enforcement system that would maintain control over harmful criminal acts. Nevertheless, over the past few years, the tendency has shifted towards broadening the definition of safety and is now encompassing social determinants of safety, including the access to basic resources, healthcare, and housing as these particulars directly influence the sense of security in a person. The standard methods of addressing the issue of public safety tend to accord the police a central position, which is more reactive in nature

because it aims at punishing individuals that violate the right of others. Nevertheless, critics claim that this is a too simplistic view of the ways to solve crimes and violence, not considering the core of these problems, like poverty, inequality, or social support. Rather, the current approach to safety by the general public focuses more on the holistic approach, that policies aimed at facilitating community engagement and enhancing the social infrastructure as well as reduce systemic inequalities are major policy instruments that must be utilized to improve the safety of the populace [9].

The idea of public safety has a far-reaching policy formulation and implementation. Scholars have presented the view that being able to provide protection against harm only is not a concept of public safety but also having high quality of life that includes access to education, employment opportunities, and healthcare. This wider view makes the traditional security policies questionable and, in other words, indicates that the state can not only control crime but also minimize social weaknesses that put individuals at risk of crime. Additionally, the community-related policies on the safety of the population should be developed in consultation with the communities to make sure that they consider the needs of the disadvantaged population groups who are usually at a higher risk. In this way, the discussion of the policy on public safety has changed and more focuses on justice, equity, and human rights, but not surveillance and punishment [10]. The policy of the government needs to be updated to take into account various risks- both physical and social, to genuinely provide the nation with protection and long-term health of all citizens.

Justice

The concept of justice plays the central role in human societies as it determines the way of fairness interpretation and the way the individuals and groups are treated within a legal framework. The concept of justice has changed through time, which is dependant on cultural, social, and political backgrounds. Justice can be generally understood as the quest to achieve fairness and equality whereby everyone is treated with dignity and his or her rights upheld in accordance with the law. Nevertheless, justice may be complicated in the way that it involves the necessity to balance conflicting interests and address the needs of various groups of people in the society. An example of such is in the current legal systems where justice is not just about doing away with wrong doing by penalizing the wrongdoers. It is associated with the fact that everyone, notwithstanding his or her background and status, is entitled to fair treatment, and it includes the right to a fair trial, equal protection under the law, and the right to remedy injustices. This broader vision of justice has been enhanced by the growing international concern with human rights, which has affected the way the law is formulated and the manner in which justice is administered in different jurisdictions.

Justice, however, is not in a vacuum. It is thoroughly embedded in values of society, past, and current discussions about equality, freedom and responsibility. Just definitions change with the changing society. Specifically, the importance of restorative justice as a method that aims at mending the damage and addressing the causes of the conflict instead of just punishing offenders has been increasingly acknowledged. This method brings out the movement towards a more holistic and inclusive concept of justice in which the welfare of the community and the worth of the individual are considered important. Although the traditional concept of justice is likely to tend towards punishment, new approaches are becoming more inclined towards rehabilitation, reconciliation and restoration of relations in the society [11]. This change in legal field contradicts traditional conceptions of justice and demands the reconsideration of the roles played by law, policy and institutions in ensuring the realization of justice to everyone. Finally, the definition of justice is a dynamic and engaging process, which is still responsive and reflective of the realities of the contemporary world.

Theoretical Underpinning

This paper bases its study on the Theory of Justice by John Rawls, which is a strong framework that can be applied to analyze the role of the public policy on the law and order in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria. Rawls is an American philosopher who came up with this theory as a seminal work in A Theory of Justice (1971) and centered his thoughts on the values of fairness, equality and justice. Rawls reasoned that social arrangements would guarantee the

fair equality of opportunity as well as the fact that the most disadvantaged would enjoy the social contract within the formulation of policies that would up-lift them. By applying this theory to the Nigerian case, it is possible to assess the justice-oriented perception of the public policies in the country in terms of the effects of laws and governmental responses on the vulnerable groups. The pillars of the theory introduced by Rawls, specifically the veil of ignorance and the difference principle give an idea of how policies can be more advantageous to all the citizens, including those who are disfavored by political and social systems.

The Theory of Justice was extensively used in different socio-political settings to criticize the current justice systems and to promote the more equitable benefit reallocation in the society. When it comes to the example of Nigeria, the research takes into account the assumptions of Rawls regarding justice, his focus on the establishment of the policy that would help to mitigate inequalities and achieve fairness in the allocation of resources. The implication of this theory to the study is that it can help highlight the injustices in the public policy of Nigeria, especially with regard to law enforcement and judicial procedures [12]. Since Nigeria struggles with corruption, manipulation of law enforcement bodies by politics, and the unequal distribution of the policies, the framework by Rawls helps to view the inability of the state to deliver the real justice to all Nigerians regardless of their socio-economic and ethnic status.

Relating to the scenario of the fourth republic of Nigeria, the politics and economic interest tend to influence the public policy in a way that lacks the benefit of prioritizing justice according to the Rawlsian informational. It has contributed to institutional injustices of unequal allocation of resources, politicised law enforcement, and lack of safety in the population. The paper therefore applies the principles of fairness and justice assumed by Rawls to evaluate critically how the policies have contributed to the continuity of social inequality in the country and impeded the implementation of real law and order in the nation. The framework presented by Rawls emphasizes the necessity of the adoption of the policies of the society that can be used to bring about not only safety and security but also the concepts of justice so that the process of law enforcement and judicial activities are equitable and unbiased.

2. Research Method

The qualitative method used in the paper, which is based on the secondary data, textbooks, journal publications, newspapers, governmental reports, or even international news coverage, is especially applicable to the research of the topic of the article about the issue of Navigating Law and Order: The Influence of Public Policy on Safety and Justice in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria. Through the concept of content analysis, the research studies the ways in which the policies of the population, and the enforcement of the law are reflected and topic is expressed in the media and other official outlets critically. This method gives a detailed picture of the interrelation between politics and their practical consequences of safety, justice, and social perceptions, thus clarifying the failure of the policy and its application in Nigeria. This study employs a qualitative research design that relies primarily on secondary sources of data. The qualitative approach is chosen because it allows for a deeper exploration of the complex relationship between public policy, law enforcement, and the perception of safety and justice within Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Rather than focusing on numerical data or statistical trends, this method emphasizes interpretation, contextual understanding, and critical examination of meanings expressed through texts, reports, and media narratives.

The research makes use of a wide range of secondary materials, including academic textbooks, scholarly journal articles, governmental and institutional reports, newspapers, and international news coverage. These sources provide both historical and contemporary insights into how Nigeria's public policy decisions have shaped social stability, law enforcement practices, and justice administration. The inclusion of diverse materials ensures a more balanced and comprehensive perspective while also enabling the triangulation of information for credibility and depth.

The core analytical technique used in this study is content analysis. This method involves systematically examining relevant texts, media publications, and official policy documents to

identify recurring themes, patterns, and representations that illustrate the influence of public policy on law and order in Nigeria. Through this approach, the study explores how the state's legal and policy frameworks are portrayed in the media and how they reflect or distort the lived realities of safety, justice, and governance. The analysis also highlights discrepancies between policy intentions and their actual implementation, revealing how administrative inefficiencies and political dynamics affect justice and public safety outcomes.

3. Results and Discussion

impact of political manipulation and corruption within law enforcement agencies on the delivery of justice and public safety in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Political interference and corruption in law enforcement agencies and the role they play in the discharge of justice and the safety of the people in the Fourth Republic in Nigeria is a critical subject in determining the effectiveness and fairness of justice system as a whole. Police agencies, especially the Nigeria Police Force are commonly regarded to be the pillars of the safety of the people. Nevertheless, they are extremely ineffective due to political interference, in which the politicians utilized the police to gain personal and political benefits and compromise the integrity and accountability of the force [13].

Political interference is one of the worst problems to the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies especially the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) since it enables politicians to misuse the police as a means of personal and political benefits. This distortion compromises the honesty and the responsibility of the police force, which affects its capability greatly in maintaining the law without favor. A number of cases in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria have played out the way political leaders have taken advantage of law enforcement bodies to carry out their selfish desires. A good example of political interference was experienced in the 2015 general elections of Nigeria where it was alleged that the police were employed to intimidate the opposition members and ensure that they did not attend the general elections. Police officers were reported to be instructed to deal with political opponents on frivolous reasons, which interfered with their campaign [14]. It is especially clear in the states where opposition parties were quite strong, and police presence in election-related violence turned into the tool to suppress the opposition. In most instances, the police officials were used as appendages to the desires of the ruling party and this compromised the democratic process and further eroded the people trust in the police.

In addition, the political leadership can also affect who gets assigned to a certain position in the police force as well by appointing the officers to office positions not on merit but on their loyalty [15]. As an illustration, under the leadership of the former President Goodluck Jonathan, a number of police officers were promoted to key roles within the Nigeria Police Force not depending on their knowledge and experience in handling the law but according to their political affiliations. This was a form of political patronage which implied that important posts in the police force were occupied by people whose first loyalty was to the political elite as opposed to the institution itself. Consequently, this encouraged corruption and biasness in the police force which reduced its credibility and objectivity even more.

Besides, another example of the influence of politics on law enforcement is the example of the #EndSARS protests of 2020. The demonstrations, the cause of which was the brutality of the police, especially the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) squad, soon spread into a mass appeal to reform the police and the elimination of impunity in it [16]. Although this was widely voiced by people, there were a large number of political leaders who were seen to understate the violence and inability of police to secure its citizens. There were allegations in fact that certain political leaders were utilizing police brutality to censor dissident and sustain their hold on power. The unwillingness to question the police on their acts was one apparent example of political leaders placing their own interests of preserving their power on the lives of the citizens, which further undermined the purity of the justice system. The following examples illustrate how political interference erodes the functions of the law enforcement agencies in Nigeria. The capability of the politicians to bribe the police in their interests or for

personal gain may negate the very principle of law and order where justice is supposed to be blind and unbiased. This interference does not only destroy the image of the police but also derails the trust of the people and citizens cannot trust the police as the defenders of their rights and law.

The corruption in the law enforcement agencies in Nigeria has a great impact in undermining the ability of the law enforcement agencies in the country to administer the law in a non-partisan manner. There are many cases of bribery, extortion, and other misconduct of police officers that are well documented. Indicatively, officers are known to take bribes when they catch people committing petty offenses or traffic offenses, which only spreads a culture of corruption in the force even further [17]. Not only does this influence the day to day interactions between the police and the citizens, but it also damages the confidence of the people towards the justice system. More importantly, corruption undermines investigations of the police on serious crimes as the officers are likely to ignore evidence, or even distort investigations in order to get a bribe or political favor.

Furthermore, the fact that the law enforcement bodies are, in most instances, politically manipulated, tends to protect a person, who is likely to avoid prosecution, provided that such a person is on the side of the political hierarchy [18]. As an example, under the former President Goodluck Jonathan, there were allegations that the politically highly placed individuals were often given free hand even in committing serious crimes. On the other hand, the police were also targeting the opposition figures based on political grounds, and the fabricated charges were imposed to discredit and incarcerate them [19]. Such selective nature of justice leads to a system that is seen as biased, ineffective and incapable to guard the rights of the citizens, further enhancing the crisis of insecurity among the citizens in the country of Nigeria.

The effect of political manipulation and corruption in law enforcement is one of the critical outcomes due to lack of confidence in the police and the justice system in general. The more the people lose their trust in the police, the less they would be willing to report crimes to them or help the police in their work, making it even more difficult to successfully implement the functioning of the justice system. Police officers in most scenarios can be partners in crime either through corruption or the directive of the political agendas to behave in a specific manner against the best interest of the people. This is a severe hindrance to a just cause because law enforcers are supposed to be the first line of defense to citizens requiring assistance. Political interference usually implies that the priorities of police force are biased and more oriented on its service to the political interest and not to the interests of the rule of law. Moreover, when the law enforcement is politically manipulated, it results in absence of transparency and accountability since other law enforcers are not subject to the same level of scrutiny as other representatives of the government [20].

In the end, further corruption and political interference in the law enforcement institutions in Nigeria will derail the efforts to establish a reasonable and fair society. Despite the steps that have been taken in recent years to enhance the situation in Nigeria and the development of such institutions as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the police force continues to be plagued by corruption [21]. The justice system will remain weak until major reforms are made to reduce the political interference and fight corruption in the law enforcement bodies.

Investigates the role of ineffective public policies in exacerbating insecurity and undermining justice, particularly with respect to the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities in Nigeria.

The fact that the ineffective public policies contribute to the increase in insecurity and the decrease in justice, especially in terms of unequal distribution of the resources and opportunities in Nigeria, is a problem that arose through the political and social processes in the country. Systemic corruption, poor governance and the lack of consistency in implementing its policies have long plagued the country contributing to rampant inequality and instability in the country. As an example, the issues of the marginalized groups, like the need of the communities living in the northern and southeastern parts, where poverty and the inability to

stay safe are more obvious, are not addressed by the public policies [22]. Rather, sectors are overinvested in areas that have political influence, which only worsens socio-economic inequalities. A notable case is the distribution of oil revenue which has been the major contributor of the national income over decades. Although the oil is mostly mined in the Niger Delta region in the South-South, the communities in the region have not been fairly distributed the wealth accrued in the region because of the oil. Rather, a better part of the oil money has been redirected to the politically strong bases in the north and west where the political elites can have an influence on national budgets and national development agendas. This has caused the Niger Delta, where the oil prosperity is, to remain underdeveloped, lack of infrastructure, and environmental destruction, resulting in widespread poverty and social unrest [23].

Also, the principle of derivation, which was meant to make sure that the oil producing states get fair share of revenues collected on their resources has been compromised during the federal distribution of resources in Nigeria. The derivation formula has over the years been modified by the various governments in office, cutting down on the amount of share to be given to the oil producing states. As an illustration, the amount of revenue that is supposed to be given to the Niger Delta states has been cut to 50 percent in the early days of the Fourth Republic to as little as 13 percent, with the remaining percentage being usually redirected to other regions, especially the northern states [24]. This tendency of taking the resources out of the regions that make the wealth is a source of inequality in the region and leads to resentment in the communities that feel neglected and marginalised by them.

In addition, the trend in the infrastructure development in Nigeria is also indicative of uneven resource distribution. Significant construction works such as roads, hospitals, and schools are often prioritized in urban and politically powerful locations and, in most cases, avoid rural and otherwise underserved regions [25]. The poor social-economic divide is further widened by the fact that the northern and southern region of the country in which most of the poor in Nigeria are located has poor infrastructure. This disproportion leads to greater inequality in the region and the destruction of those seeking to experience inclusive economic growth and social stability. Essentially, any political interference with the allocation of resources is not only not capable of meeting the needs of the least privileged but also a source of inequality and instability within the entire country. This carelessness has been one of the greatest contributors to the growth of insecurity and individuals in these marginalized groups are now exposed more to radicalisation and violence [26]. Lack of basic infrastructure, education, and job opportunity in such places by the government ignites frustration, which consequently promotes criminal activities that include kidnapping, banditry, and insurgency, especially in the northern regions [27].

A good illustration of such a failure is the lack of attention to the agricultural sector which is a major economic activity in most rural regions. The failure of the government to build up this sector through proper policies that make it under-invested and mismanaged has added to food insecurity and helped to increase economic inequality. With the rural population faced with poverty and the inability to get jobs, juveniles, especially, are susceptible to being recruited by insurgents like Boko Haram and other groups that engage in banditry [28]. The effects of these ineffective policies outweigh the economic burden and have a direct effect on a law and order breakdown. With no resources available or way of ensuring their livelihoods, most citizens lose faith in the state in its capacity to guarantee their safety and security and thus turn to criminal activities or militants as an alternative to the failed security machine.
Besides, poorly crafted social justice policies and anti-poverty policies used in Nigeria have led to the collapse of the justice system, especially through the propagation of corruption in law enforcement and the judiciary. As an example, the police force has been repeatedly involved in extortion, bribery and politically instigated arrests where police officers would be bribed to go after the poor especially in the poor neighborhoods. However, political elites, which are usually associated with those in positions of power, are able to have protection and impunity. It was emphasized in the 2020 case of the protests against the police, during which people called to abolish the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), one of the teams of the

police force, alleged that it extorted and abused its citizens, the very people it was supposed to defend. The reasons why this culture of corruption has been tolerated include the inability of the policies that are intended to reform the law enforcement department and a system of justice that mostly favors the rich [29].

Additional signs of this imbalance can be observed in the judicial system as high-profile cases on wealthy persons or political figures are rarely punished, whereas the everyday citizens are punished severely in case of minor offenses. The most glaring example of this is the perceived absence of accountability with respect to politicians who are implicated in corruption scandals, even though there are substantial cases against them. Such biased application of the law only creates a cycle of inequality that erodes society's confidence in the justice system further causing social unrest.

Nigeria justice system is commonly used as a tool of social control by the rich as the common citizens are left as victims of crime and violence with few means of redress. This is more pronounced in high profile cases of corruption whereby political elites and wealthy people have been getting away scot-free by virtue of their powers of persuasion within the system [30]. As an example, most politicians and corporate leaders caught engaging in corruption scandals including those attributed to misappropriation of government funds are not subjected to actions. One of such interesting cases is the example of the former governors and government officials, including James Ibori, who was convicted of money laundering in the UK and not first prosecuted in Nigeria because of political influence. This discrimination in the application of the law shows how the justice system may be used to defend the elite.

On the contrary, minor offenders are usually penalized severely by the Nigerian people with the law being used to discriminate against the poor. Indicatively, poorer neighborhoods have often been arbitrarily arrested, beaten up, and extorted by the police, as it has happened during the EndSARS protests, where hundreds of young Nigerians expressed their anger with the harassment and violence of the police. This unfair application of the law places common citizens in a helpless position, which will undermine their belief in the justice system even more [31]. This feeling of injustice breeds even more instability, since individuals develop the attitude that the system is not made in their favor. Unless the policies of the government aimed at mitigating the causes of inequality, including poverty, unemployment, and corruption, instead of treating the symptoms, like the security measures of the short term, it might result in the long-run benefits of both safety and justice. To regain the trust of the people in the system and to address the lack of security that has ravaged Nigeria, the reforms in the allocation of resources and the policies that focus on inclusive development and justice should be effective.

Assess the influence of religious extremism and ethnic divisions on public policy formulation and law enforcement in Nigeria, and their impact on national security and justice.

It is hard to overestimate the impact of religious extremism and ethnic division on the development of the public policy and law enforcement in Nigeria. Nigeria as a nation is a home to a complex set of religious and ethnic communities, thus, the country has long been faced with the tension between the diverse population but this tension has been worsened by the exploitation of these identities by the political elites. Religion, mainly Islam and Christianity is a key determinant in the formulation of national policies and the manner in which law enforcement is conducted such that it may enhance policies that either divide or foster cohesion to the political agenda of those in authority. In the Nigerian environment, these divisions when exploited can be a conflict, insecurity and injustice source, which eventually impact on the safety of the people and the law [32].

Extremism in religion in Nigeria has also became a big problem to national security and the justice system. Extremist groups like the Boko Haram, and, more recently, the ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province) have emerged as the product of radicalisation of religious identities that, in the first place, were the result of socio-economic processes, yet over time were politicised . Although these groups purport to be fighting on religious grounds, violence and terrorism are some of the ways that they have managed to destabilise the region [33]. The activities of such groups compromise the security of the citizens leading to fear and

disruption of the operations of the law enforcement agencies, which in most cases are overwhelmed, and cannot effectively deal with these activities. The emergence of religious extremism has also affected the process of shaping the policies in the society, as it usually results in distributing the resources and security forces to the regions where the political elites want to ensure the maintenance of religious hegemony [34]. This contributes to increasing ethnic and religious polarisation and thus it becomes increasingly harder to develop policies that will bring the national unity and inclusive development.

Nigeria has ethnic divisions, which are also a factor in the problems of law enforcement. There are hundreds of ethnic groups in the country, some of which have had grievances against one another over a long period of time. Political leaders have taken advantage of these divisions to come up with policies that discriminate against some ethnic groups as opposed to others, which results in inequality and injustice [35]. Use of federal resources such as distribution has mostly been biased towards geographical areas that are politically influential at the expense of others which are poorly underdeveloped and underfunded. This disproportion adds to the sense of disenfranchisement, especially the ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta and Middle Belt, who tend to be ignored in the creation of public policies and law enforcement practices. The sense of injustice is enhanced by the inappropriateness of representation, discrimination in enforcing laws against some groups of the ethnical groups, and this makes the people dissatisfied with the justice system, which further compromises the public security [36].

The new religious and ethnic divisions are also found to be central in the development of the way law enforcement agencies operate in Nigeria. In most instances, the law enforcers, including the police and military, are assigned along ethnic lines and their operations are usually tainted by the political interests of their ethnic or religious group [37]. This has resulted in selective enforcement of the law by ensuring that select communities are always targeted in the acts of crime but at times, those communities, especially those with political influence, can easily perform crimes with impunity. The incapacity to treat citizens equally by the law enforcement agencies will erode the credibility of the justice system, which will result in the erosion of trust between the people and the state [38]. As a case in point, in places where there is a struggle of insurgency the police and military can be accused of being in collusion with the insurgents or favouring one ethnic group over another further contributing to sectarian violence and complicating the efforts of the justice system to operate in a balanced environment. It has established a scenario where the religion and ethnic affiliation may determine the receipts of justice or abuse among individuals [39].

Lastly, religious extremism and ethnic divisions on the national security and justice remains a threat to the well-being of Nigerian citizens through their impacts on the policy-making process and law enforcement of the nation. The use of religious and ethnic identities to gain political benefits aggravates the situation, contributes to insecurity, and degrades the possibilities of the justice system to deliver fair and impartial protection to every citizen.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the paper has explored the prominent role of the influence of religious extremism and ethnic segregation on the public policy making, law enforcement and the justice system in Nigeria. The results showed that religious as well as ethnic tensions had significantly contributed to the insecurity of the nation which compromised the safety of the people and destabilised the justice system. The influence of political interference, and corruption in the law enforcement agencies, as well as the unequal allocation of the resources, were also named as driving forces that had contributed to these divisions. Religious fanaticism especially with organizations such as Boko Haram facilitated violent struggle and insecurity and not only caused loss of lives, but also destroyed confidence of people in the law and the courts. These radical ideologies were perceived to be profoundly entrenched in the politics and religious environment of Nigeria a system that political elites were using at the expense of self and groups thereby enacting policies that only increased the division but not unity.

The analysis has also highlighted the adverse role of ethnic divisions of which resources of the state were unfairly distributed in geographic areas that were politically strong, causing the marginalized groups to be vulnerable and disenfranchised. This unfair allocation of resources created resentment and this fuelled violent ethnic and religious clashes. Moreover, the law enforcement agencies which were more than often manipulated according to ethnic and religious lines were not as effective to respond to these issues without prejudice.

Recommendations

Based on the indentified findings, the following recommendations were stated:

1. Encouraging Equitable Resource Distribution: It is advisable that the Nigerian government should implement policies that help in the equitable distribution of the resources, especially to the marginalized regions.
2. Reformation of Law Enforcement and Minimization of political Influence: To deal with the problem of corruption and political manipulation, law enforcement bodies, such as the Nigeria Police Force, need to be reformed in a thorough way.
3. Religious Extremism: Fighting Religious Extremism by dialogue and education: The emergence of religious extremism in Nigeria requires the international community to work together as a nation to encourage inter-religious dialogue and religious tolerance.

5. References

[1] O. Agunbiade, "Insecurity and Nigeria's socio-economic development: Policy challenges and solutions," African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research, 2024. doi: 10.52589/ajsshr-pgkpnw8k

[2] A. J. Akinniyi and E. O. Olabimtan, "The effectiveness and ineffectiveness of combating corruption in Nigeria," Kampala International University Journal of Education, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1–20, 2021. doi: 10.59568/kjed-2021-1-1-005

[3] B. Amakihe, "Poverty and insecurity in Nigeria: Implications for national development," 2017. doi: 10.1093/aihe/ljp242

[4] E. Barr, "Caught, clubbed and burnt: Criminological reflections on the incidence of jungle justice in Benin Metropolis, southern Nigeria," AFRREV IJAH: An International Journal of Arts and Humanities, 2018. doi: 10.4314/IJAH.V7I3.4

[5] K. Beckett, "Reimagining public safety," in Ending Mass Incarceration, 2022. doi: 10.1093/oso/9780197536575.003.0008

[6] V. Boldarev and A. Mel'nik, "Relationship between law and order and justice in modern legal discourse," Advances in Law Studies, 2022. doi: 10.29039/2409-5087-2022-10-1-26-30

[7] B. Bursać, "The role of religion and its influence on conflicts in Nigeria," Proceedings of the Faculty of Philosophy in Pristina, vol. 51, pp. 341–355, 2021. doi: 10.5937/zrffp51-34131

[8] C. Cao, "A study of the relationship of public policy to the law operation," Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media, 2024. doi: 10.54254/2753-7048/56/20241592

[9] N. Cheesman, "Law and order," Annual Review of Law and Social Science, 2022. doi: 10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-050420-112842

[10] D. Conklin, "Rising ideological discrimination in law school rankings: Measuring the conservative penalty and liberal bonus with updated 2024 rankings data," SSRN Electronic Journal, 2023. doi: 10.2139/ssrn.4511149

[11] M. Debuque-Gonzales, M. G. Ruiz, and R. M. Miral, "Macroeconomic outlook of the Philippines in 2023–2024: Prospects and perils," 2023. doi: 10.62986/dp2023.34

[12] A. A. Ejiogu, "Politics of resource allocation and socio-economic inequality in Nigeria," African Journal of Political Science, 2018. doi: 10.3126/ajps.v18i1.10425

[13] D. U. Enweremadu, "Police corruption and internal security in Nigeria," International Journal of Innovative Research and Development, vol. 20, pp. 100–116, 2017. doi: 10.24940/ijird/2018/v7/i10/oct18025

[14] E. Fokin, "Access to justice in bankruptcy cases," Journal of Russian Law, 2024. doi: 10.61205/s160565900032071-2

[15] B. D. Friedman, "What is public safety?" CJRN: Other Criminology (Topic), 2021. doi: 10.1109/paiee.1907.6742284

[16] Y. Gu et al., "Global justice index report 2023," Chinese Political Science Review, 2024. doi: 10.1007/s41111-024-00254-2

[17] A. Hodges and G. Cipponeri, "How the 'Law and Order' trope individualizes racism and inverts racial vulnerability," Social Science Research Network, 2021. doi: 10.33011/CRIL.V25I.1349

[18] A. Ibrahim, "Analysis of corruption in the Nigerian police force," International Journal of Police Studies, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 230–247, 2019. doi: 10.1080/14725843.2019.2308641

[19] U. E. Ite, "The politics of oil in Nigeria: Resource curse, environmental damage, and social conflict," Environmental Politics and Development, 2017. doi: 10.1080/09644016.2017.1379730

[20] I. N. Kallianiotis, "How effective and efficient are the new 'progressive' public policies?" International Journal of Research in Commerce and Management Studies, 2024. doi: 10.38193/ijrcms.2024.6521

[21] A. Korobova, "The problem of the relationship between the concepts of 'public order' and 'public safety' in modern legal science," Legal Science and Practice: Journal of Nizhny Novgorod Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, 2024. doi: 10.36511/2078-5356-2024-4-205-211

[22] Y. Li, "Implementing rule of law concept in the digital sphere: China's experience," Legal Issues in the Digital Age, 2023. doi: 10.17323/2713-2749.2023.4.114.133

[23] I. H. Mshelia, "The rising religious extremism and mob violence in Nigeria," Clinical Sociology Review, 2024. doi: 10.36615/w54npm56

[24] I. B. Namo, L. Agwadu, and W. T. Amakoromo, "Governance, corruption and underdevelopment in Nigeria's Fourth Republic," African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research, 2024. doi: 10.62154/s1sxsq39

[25] P. N. Ngwoke and E. A. Ituma, "Ethno-religious conflict and sustainable development in Nigeria," HTS Teologiese Studies–Theological Studies, vol. 76, p. 6090, 2020. doi: 10.4102/hts.v76i4.6090

[26] A. Nnaji, W. Ma, N. Ratna, and A. Renwick, "Farmer-herder conflicts and food insecurity: Evidence from rural Nigeria," Agricultural and Resource Economics Review, vol. 51, pp. 391–421, 2022. doi: 10.1017/age.2022.9

[27] A. Ojedokun and S. Aderinto, "Policing and politics of law enforcement in Nigeria's Fourth Republic," African Identities, 2024. doi: 10.1080/14725843.2024.2308641

[28] J. M. Okojie, "Federal resource allocation and political dynamics in Nigeria," Journal of African Economic Development, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 567–589, 2020. doi: 10.1108/01409170210430223

[29] A. Olanrewaju, "The impact of resource inequality on public policy and social instability in Nigeria," Journal of African Development Studies, 2024. doi: 10.1215/2044020

[30] A. Polyakov, "Freedom and justice in legal reasoning," Zakon, 2023. doi: 10.37239/0869-4400-2023-20-4-105-117

[31] E. Pozniak, T. Sharaievska, and O. Shompol, "All-Ukrainian scientific and practical conference 'The concept of nature in modern law,'" Bulletin of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. Legal Studies, 2024. doi: 10.17721/1728-2195/2024/1.127-8

[32] V. C. Rabelo, O. J. Stewart, W. C. Snowden, and S. Fathallah, "When safety for you means danger for me: The racial politics of carceral public safety discourse," Frontiers in Psychology, 2024. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1347630

[33] S. Rufai, "Boko Haram: A conceptual-theoretical framework for understanding religious extremism in Nigeria," International Journal of Social Research and Development, vol. 6, pp. 93–117, 2016. doi: 10.1007/s41117-018-0002-9

[34] R. T. Sakariyau and A. Abdulrahman, "Corruption and democratisation hurdles in Nigeria: An overview of the Fourth Republic," Historical Research Letter, vol. 15, pp. 8–13, 2014.

[35] S. Salmaso, "Editorial: Insights in public health policy: 2022," Frontiers in Public Health, vol. 11, 2023. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2023.1227503

[36] S. A. Sarina, "The nature, content and application of 'public order' in private international law," Eurasian Scientific Journal of Law, 2025. doi: 10.46914/2959-4197-2024-1-3-58-67

[37] H. Shuai and J. Liu, "Property victimization, perception of neighborhood safety, and perceived fairness of the criminal justice system within the Chinese context," Asian Journal of Criminology, vol. 18, no. 5, pp. 413–431, 2023. doi: 10.1007/s11417-023-09411-z

[38] M. Umar, "Police corruption and the administration of criminal justice system in Nigeria," Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 198–207, 2018. doi: 10.1300/jjlijournal.2018.9.5

[39] E. Zhukova, "The purpose and features of public safety and law and order as a type of public administration," Visnyk Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. Military-Special Sciences, 2022. doi: 10.17721/1728-2217.2022.50.84-86