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Evaluating the Effectiveness for the Protection of the Environment Towards the Effects of Quarry Exploitation in Cameroon

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Abstract

In Cameroon in particular and the world at large, the exploitation and the processing of quarry resources by industries has brought about severe and adverse impacts on the environment and the local population within and around the quarry areas. This adverse impact ranges from environment degradation, pollution, health problems and environmental sustainability. To prevent this deplorable situation, the Cameroon Government has over the years instituted several mechanisms at the level of the ministries in charge of quarry exploitation and environmental protection in Cameroon as well institutions and industries involve in quarry exploitation. In order to attain our objective, qualitative research methodology has been adopted. This piece of work answers a specific research question which is how effective are the mechanisms for the protection of the environment from the effects of quarry exploitation in Cameroon and what are the challenges encountered? It is underpinned by the theory of environmentally responsible behavior. This theory advocates for responsible behavior from the communities as well as other stakeholders such as government, companies to adopt measures that minimize environmental impact. This includes implementing regulations, promoting community awareness about sustainable practices and encouraging the use of eco-friendly technologies. Finding reveals that although Cameroon has employed relevant mechanisms to address quarry activities and environmental protection, much is still required to be done. Based on the findings, the study strongly recommends the Cameroon Government to effectively implement its mining/quarry laws and make sure prior Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), monitoring and evaluation are effective to make sure quarry industries operate within the legal frameworks while maintaining environmental sustainability.

Keywords: evaluating, effectiveness, protection, environment, effects of quarry exploitation, Cameroon

1. Introduction

Mineral resources constitute a major source of raw material for industries and an important ingredient for the development of an economy. Thus, while quarry yields economic materials for use, sale or industrial production, it affects, harms and contributes to a disruption of nature and appearance of the natural environment around it.¹ The Cameroon Government have over the years put in place measures to ensure that quarry potential favored economic growth while ensuring environmental sustainability. The problem in the Central African region and in Cameroon in particular is to translate theoretical legal issues or principles into realities on the ground². In most areas, the environment in particular, there are a chunk of legal instruments regulating its management and

¹ Omosanya, K.O. and Ajibade O.M., (2011). Environmental Impact of Quarrying on Otere village, Odeda, Southwestern Nigeria. *Ozean Journal of Applied Sciences*, 4(1), 75-82.

² UNEP *Africa Environment Outlook* (Nairobi – UNEP, 2006) p. 126.

protection. But these instruments hardly find themselves into implementation. If laws cannot find their ways into implementation, it would be the same like having a right without a remedy which as it is often said, is a vain thing¹. Is the problem that of the absence of enforcement mechanism or the fact that they exist but are weak? In most cases, the problem is that they are weak. However, the Cameroon government has recently been making tremendous efforts to ensure the protection of the environment and ensuring that extractive industries especially industries involve in quarry exploitation in Cameroon respect all the measures instituted by the government to ensure sustainable environmental protection. It is thus important to dissert the mechanisms in Cameroon for the enforcement of environmental instruments to regulate corporate hazard caused by quarry industries thereby ensuring environmental protection. Administrative institutional and judicial frameworks are some of the mechanisms put in place to regulate environmental protection in Cameroon.

The researcher thus proceeds to examine the mechanisms put in place for the effective implementation of environmental instruments to combat corporate hazards caused by quarry exploitation in Cameroon and also look at the Challenges on the effective implementation of environmental instruments regulating quarry exploitation and environmental protection in Cameroon.

2. Institutional Framework for Environmental Protection and Their Role in Various Quarry Communities in Cameroon

Legislations geared towards the protection of the environment are implemented by different ministries and authorities at the regional level (region, divisional and sub divisional levels). The Ministry of Environment and Nature protection has the bulk of the authority to implement legislation pertaining to the control of corporate hazards. Important responsibility relating to environmental regulations are also vested in the hands of other ministries, the most important being those of Industries of Mines and Technological development, the Ministry of Water and Energy, Ministry of Forestry and wildlife, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. We shall proceed to examine the role play by these ministries in quarry sites, such as the Ombe China- Minhui-quarry, Limbe mile 4 quarry site, Arab contractor quarry Eloundem, and Cana Bios Carriere Bingala Mbankomo.

2.1 The Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEDEP)

The Ministry of the Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP), now Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development² (MINEDEP) was created in 2004 by a presidential decree³ organizing the government. It was formerly the Ministry of the Environment and Forestry but because environmental issues were and are still topical, the President decided to split this ministry into two to give more attention to environmental problems. MINEDEP is an overseer. It acts as a watchdog. It oversees the activities of other ministries which have environmental issues to manage.⁴

In the various quarry site such as the China Minhui quarry in Ombe, and the Arab contractor quarry Eloundem, the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development regulates the quarry exploitation through a framework that requires operators to obtain environmental permits. These permits mandate environmental impact assessments (EIAs) to evaluate potential ecological effects. The ministry enforces regulations on land use, biodiversity conservation, and rehabilitation of affected areas post-exploitation. Additionally, the ministry conducts periodic inspections to ensure compliance with environmental standards and promotes sustainable practices to mitigate environmental degradation caused by quarry activities.⁵ Failure to comply can result in penalties or suspension of operations that is, it ensures that any individual or corporate body which breaks any law regulating the environment should be brought to book. It equally collaborates with other agencies to define measures for the rational management of natural resources.

2.2 Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development

The Ministry of Mines, Industries, and Technological Development plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable resource management while ensuring environmental protection. It develops policies that regulate mining and quarry activities to minimize ecological impact, enforces compliance with environmental laws, and promotes the use of clean technologies in industrial processes. For example, at the Arab contractor quarry site in Eloundem Mbankomo, a watering system is put in place to ensure that rocks are watered before crushing process to reduce the effect of dust emanating from the rock during crushing. The ministry also collaborates with stakeholders to implement environmental assessments and rehabilitation programs, ensuring that quarry activities are regulated

¹ Christopher F. TAMASANG, (2007). The Right to Water in Cameroon: Legal Framework for Sustainable Utilisation, p. 17.

² This name MINEP was changed to MINEDEP by Ministerial Decree No.2011/410 of 9th December 2011.

³ Republic of Cameroon, (2004, December 8). Decree No. 2004/320 of 8 December 2004 organizing the government.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Interview conducted with Mr. Pepouna Alman, Environmental engineer Arab contractor quarry Eloundem, on 09 July 2025.

to reduce effects on the environment. Through capacity building and awareness initiatives, it strives to foster responsible practices in the mining and industrial sectors, thereby ensuring economic growth and environmental sustainability. The Ministry equally has several departments or divisions responsible for overseeing various aspects of quarry exploitation. The ministry regularly does periodical inspection to ensure that quarrying activities are conducted effectively while also protecting the environment.¹ The National Advisory Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development, this commission was created by virtue of article 10(2) of law no 96/12 of 5th August relating to environmental management. It is an institutional consequence of the Rio conference. It assists the government in its missions of development of coordination, execution and control of environmental policies. The CNCEDD is created by the decree no 94/259/pm of May 31st 1994 of the prime minister and modified successfully by decrees no 99/634/pm of June 09th 1999 and no 99/780/pm of 11 October 1999. It is a structured that allows the government to better manage the environment. It oversees the implementation of activities stemming from agenda 21.²

2.3 Ministry of Energy and Water Resources

The Ministry of Energy and Water Resources in Cameroon plays a vital role in managing the country's natural resources, including water management and energy production. While its primary focus is often on energy and water supply, the Ministry is also involved in the regulation and oversight of quarry exploitation, which is crucial for both economic development and environmental protection. The Ministry monitors quarry operations to ensure compliance with established regulations. This includes regular inspections and reviews of the practices employed by quarry operators to ensure that quarries don't affect nearby water resources through sedimentation, pollution, and changes in hydrology and that they adhere to environmental protection standards. For example, the ministry ensure that the diesel fuel used in the Arab contractor quarry site in Eloumdem and the China –Minhui quarry is of good quality and equally ensure that the fuel do not split to pollute nearby water sources.

2.4 Ministry of Transport

The Ministry of Transport in Cameroon plays a crucial role in implementing and enforcing regulations related to environmental protection and quarry exploitation. It ensures compliance with environmental standards during the transport of quarry materials, promoting sustainable practices. The Ministry collaborates with environmental agencies to assess the environmental impact of transport activities and takes action against any infringement of environmental protection laws. Additionally, it facilitates awareness campaigns among stakeholders to foster responsible quarry operations, safeguarding ecosystems while promoting economic development. The ministry equally makes sure that trucks used in the various quarries are insured. By regulating logistics and transport routes, the Ministry helps minimize adverse effects on the environment, contributing to national sustainability goals.

2.5 The Implementation of the EIA Legislative Framework in Cameroon

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)³ despite some shortcomings, still remains the main instrument to mainstream environmental concerns into development programmes and policies in Cameroon.⁴ Thus the principal method of ensuring that environmental considerations are taken into account at the planning stage is to conducts an environmental impact assessment. The Ministry of Environment, protection of nature and sustainable development had the mandate to clearly elaborate and implement the National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP), a plan that clearly recommended an EIA for projects that were likely to affect the environment from a negative perspective. Indeed, the participation of Cameroon in the Rio de Janeiro conference in 1992 further boosted its positive philosophy in the arena of environmental protection. This is evident in the 1994 constitution that recognized the right of the Cameroonian populace to a sound environment and considers environmental protection a collective responsibility. EIA is prescribed in Article 16 of this legislative body. Law N0. 96/12 of 5th August 1996, which provided the main legislative bedrock or foundation for environmental management in Cameroon. Article 17 of the law prescribed EIA for all projects which had a propensity to degrade the environment. The EIA intends to limit damage in areas where projects take place and has become a pre-requisite to all large-scale development activities. Terms of reference are laid down by the Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development. A public consultation with communities surrounding the area where the investment will take place is mandatory. Because EIAs are now compulsory

¹ Interview conducted with Mr. Pepouna Alman, environmental engineer Arab Contractor quarry company Eloumdem on 09 July 2025.

² Agenda 21 is a program of action for sustainable development worldwide.

³ As per Law No 96/12 of 5 August 1996 in its section 4(0), Environmental Impact Assessment "shall be a systematic examination, with a view to determining if a project is environmentally harmful or not.

⁴ Interview with Mr. Lemnyuy William, Sub- Director of Waste Management, Department of Standards and Control, Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development. conducted on the 19/02/2025

requirements to all strategic development projects like industrial setup road construction, mining, forest exploitation, etc. it has to a great extent avoided major threats on industrial pollution caused by quarry industries in Cameroon.

2.6 National Mining Policy Implementation Fund

The creation of the National Mining Policy Implementation Fund is among the many reforms of the mining code. It is aimed at spearheading mining policies and local development. The NMPIF were set up for the implementation of the national mining policy and they include: a Mining Sector Development Fund, Mining Site and Quarry Restoration, Rehabilitation and Closure Fund and a Special Local Capacity Building Account.¹ Each of these funds serves different purposes. The Mining Sector Development Fund (MSDF) is intended to finance mining inventory activities so as to detect any anomalies and traces of minerals and also finance geological and mining infrastructural developments. The objective of the Mining Site and Quarry Restoration, Rehabilitation and Closure Fund is to finance the implementation of programs for the conservation and rehabilitation of the environmental damage resulting from mining projects. The resources of the fund shall equally be derived from the mining/quarry permit holders depending on the estimated cost of implementing the environmental conservation and rehabilitation program as established in the ESIA.² This particular fund is very important as its implementation has gone a long way to restore and rehabilitate the quarry environment. This way post mining accidents resulting from non-rehabilitated mining or quarry sites will be mitigated. The Special Local Capacity Building Account has as objective to finance Cameroon's economic, social, cultural, industrial, and technological development of human resources and local enterprises and industries.³ The amount to be contributed shall range from 0.5 percent to 1 percent of the total profit of the mining company.⁴ The exact rate shall be agreed and fixed during the negotiation for the mining agreement or as the parties may decide. The collection and management of these contributions shall be by mutual agreement between the State, the contributing mining companies and representatives of the population. The above mentioned NMPIF is very important for a sustainable mining sector. This initiative shall without doubt benefit both the mining operators as well as the local communities in which they operate.

2.7 The Role of Environmental Inspectors

The role of inspectors in environmental compliance and enforcement of environmental norms is very instrumental. The decree which creates the ministry of environment, protection of nature and sustainable development trusted the supervision and technical control of engagements taken on the national and international levels in matters of the protection of the environment principally to the Direction of Norms and control. There exist within this direction a National Brigade of environmental inspectors charged with the following role:

- The control of pollution, nuisance and environmental norms
- The follow up of the application of the national and international regulations in forced relating to the environment
- The repression of serious attacks on the environment

The actions of this brigade on the field such as the China Minhui quarry Ombe, Cana Bios Carrielle Mbankomo as well as the Arab Contractor quarry Eloumdem aim at sensitizing, preventing, encourage the putting in place of the best techniques and to sanction violation of environmental norms through environment inspection and control. Controls are carried out to verify if the norms pre-established to regulate environmental protection are respected.

The activities of environmental inspectors and controllers have already permitted the sanction of many quarry enterprises in violation of pollution norms. The reason for these sanctions are:

- Diverse pollutions.
- Default for the realization of environmental audit assessment.
- Prevention of the team of inspections, judicial police officers with special competence to exercise their functions.⁵

¹ Section 233 of the Mining Code

² Section 235 *ibid*

³ Section 236 of the Mining Code

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Interview with Mr. Lemnyuy William, Sub-Director of Waste Management, Department of Standards and Control, Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development. conducted on the 12/02/2025

2.8 The Role of the Judiciary and Sanctions Provided

In addition to national legislation, Cameroon having a “common law” tradition has rely on case law to protect the environment. In general, “common law” represents a body of law developed through judicial decisions, as distinguished from legislative enactments. A fundamental tenet of the common law is the doctrine of *stare decisis*¹. This doctrine states that when a point of law has been settled by Court Decisions, it establishes a precedent that is followed in later cases unless and until the precedent is overturned in a subsequent case for very specific reasons. While in “civil law” traditions, the heart of the legal system is a set of codes. Cameroon being a bi-jural legal system, applies both system².

The Court most often, step in and protect the environment without necessarily looking for immediate proof of likely violation of the right to a clean and healthy environment. To facilitate the same, the Cameroon Constitution gives courts the power to make any order, or give any directions, it considers appropriate to prevent, stop or discontinue any act or omission that is harmful to the environment, or to any public officer to take measures to prevent or discontinue any act or omission that is harmful to the environment, or to provide compensation for any victim of a violation of the right to a clean and healthy environment.³

All these efforts are environmental good governance practices put in place to ensure an improved sustainable quarry practices in Cameroon. However, it should be born in mind that despite these efforts made by the Cameroon government in implementing environmental good governance principles to regulate quarry exploitation and the protection of the environment, challenges remain. Issues such as illegal mining, inadequate enforcement of regulations, and limited resources for monitoring still hinder effective governance. Continued efforts to strengthen legal frameworks, enhance public participation, and foster collaboration will be essential for ensuring that quarrying activities are conducted sustainably and responsibly.

3. Challenges on the Implementation of Environmental Instruments Regulating Quarry Exploitation and Environmental Protection in Cameroon

A considerable number of hurdles still persist with regards to combating industrial hazards caused by quarry exploitation which tends to degrade the environment in Cameroon. This hurdles or impediments are thus presented as follows:

3.1 Hurdles of Implementation

Despite being party to several international instruments on the regulation of quarry activities and environmental protection, such as the Stockholm Declaration of 1972, the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate change, 1994 UN Convention to combat desertification, the 1992 Convention on Biodiversity, the United Nations Convention on Environment and Development of 1992 etc. The Cameroon government is still lagging behind in its obligations to implement the rights contained in these treaties. All these Conventions regulate human activities that may cause harm to both the environment and local inhabitant within and out of the project area. However, these treaties are not effectively implemented reason why the right to healthy environment exists only on paper.

Furthermore, instability of laws is a big challenge when it comes to implementation. Instability of the law is also an aspect of uncertainty of law. Laws in Cameroon are very volatile in natures. This is caused by constant modifications and/or repealing of laws shortly after they are enacted. The Cameroonian legislator never seems to address the future by trying to foresee subsequent societal changes and adopting laws, in consequence thereof. These changes, when they come, always seem to be a surprise. Yet legislative drafts-Man ship requires that a law should as much as possible, look far ahead of time and make provision in consequence.

3.2 Inter Institutional Conflicts

Another problem that impedes the amelioration of industrial hazards and environmental protection in Cameroon is the distribution of functions among the various ministries that play a role in addressing industrial hazards and environmental protection. Let us take for example the issue of the control of industrial establishments in terms of pollution, nuisances, hygiene and safety. The Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Industrial and Commercial Development and the Ministry of Mines, Water and Energy all compete to affect the regulation of industrial establishments in terms of pollution, nuisances, hygiene

¹ To stand by things decided, a maxim expressing the underlying basis of the doctrine of precedent, i.e. that is necessary to abide by former precedents when the same points arise again in litigation. (*Oxford Dictionary of Law*, Fifth Edition, (2002), p. 475).

² Cameroon has a Common Law and Civil Law System owing to its colonial past. However, certain aspects of the law have been harmonized, such as environmental law, criminal law and criminal procedure law.

³ Ekabe Elema Joyce, (2021). The Role of the State in the Promotion of Mining Activities in Cameroon: Legal Perspective. *Texas Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 2, pp. 8-16:11.

and safety. Given this overlap between the various functions of the above-mentioned ministries, inter-ministerial conflicts are bound to prevail thereby hindering the effective and efficient management of quarry activities and the protection of the environment in Cameroon.

3.3 *Insufficient Monitoring of Compliance*

The state monitors quarry activities through administrative supervision, technical control and the imposition of penalties in cases of non-compliance. Administrative supervision deals with the verification of authenticity of relevant documents and reports by quarry inspectors to ensure regularities in the quarry sector. Technical control is concerned with issues of technicalities such as hygiene and safety at the quarry site, the use of quarry equipment and conformity with labour laws at the workplace. To ensure compliance, the mining code prescribes for the establishment of violations, offences and penalties, conferring powers to judicial police officers with special jurisdictions.¹ Most often, the authorities in charge of monitoring are insufficient especially in some parts of the country where accessibility is difficult.

Law N0. 96/12 of 5th August 1996, which provides the legal framework for environmental management in Cameroon, on the other hand may seem adequate in that it takes into consideration every activity that needs to be within certain environmental limits including industrial pollution. However, monitoring to ensure compliance of this law is inadequate. Ministries like the Ministry of Scientific Research have appropriate monitoring equipment in place like the Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer. However, it is fair to establish that the reluctance of most scientists of this Ministry to carry out monitoring of industrial pollutants could be partly responsible for the prevailing state of industrial pollution among quarry sites in Cameroon. Indeed, without sufficient monitoring, enforcement of laws governing industrial pollution in Cameroon is to say the least unrealizable.²

3.4 *Lack of Infrastructures*

The lack of infrastructural development is another major challenge facing the quarry sector. Road which accounts for about 70% of the country's transport network is currently constrained by the poor nature of the road.³ Cameroon is an important transit country among the landlocked countries in central Africa, but the dire state of its infrastructures leads to an increase in transport cost and an unusual delay.⁴ Inadequate transportation networks therefore limit access to remote areas, and insufficient monitoring facilities hinder regulatory enforcement, making it difficult to oversee compliance with environmental standards.

3.5 *Language Barriers*

Article 1(3) of the constitution provides that, the official languages of the republic of Cameroon shall be English and French both having the same status. But in reality, this is a myth when enacting and promulgating laws. Article 31(3) of the constitution stipulates that; laws shall be published in the official gazette of the Republic in English and French. But this is not the case because most environmental legislations are contradictory to that provision since most of environmental legislation, particularly decrees are in French. This makes it difficult for the English-speaking communities in Cameroon to understand environmental policies and also for their judges to enforce the laws that are not clear to them.⁵ Thus this lack of comprehension leads to inadequate compliance and reduced community engagement in environmental protection initiatives.⁶

3.6 *Poor Attitude of Quarry Exploiters Towards Environmental Protection*

Quarry exploiters' attitude towards environmental protection within the urban area shows an insignificantly small acknowledgement of environmental degradation or consequences resulting from quarrying. Quarry exploiters are unaware of the consequences of their activity on the environment, and so reject the responsibility towards protecting or rehabilitating the environment. Worst still the environmental regulations are not stringent and the exploiters follow no particular technical conditions in the course of their exploitation sites.⁷

¹ Sections 202-230 of Mining Code.

² Dieudonne Alemagi, (2006). Towards A Comprehensive Strategy for The Effective and Efficient Management of Industrial Pollution Along the Atlantic Coast of Cameroon, p. 60

³ KPMG Global Mining Guide. Available online at: [Kpmg.com/mining](https://www.kpmg.com/mining), (Accessed 24, June 2024).

⁴ African Development Bank, (2010), The AfDB and Cameroon 40 years of partnership.

⁵ Nchifon Robert Elvis Yenkuh, (2021). The Manifestation of Environmental Pollution in Cameroon: A Legal Appraisal. *International Journal of legal developments and allied issues*, 8, 55-76:73.

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ Interview conducted with Mr. Remond Yasu, workers delegate China Minhui quarry company Ombe, on January 12 2025.

4. Conclusion

Environmental protection mechanism are vital instruments for safeguarding our ecosystem and promoting sustainable development in Cameroon. Efforts to protect the environment from the effects of quarry activities in Cameroon have focused on developing environmental institutions and legal frameworks. However, formal regulation alone has not proved very effective in reducing these effects. Several innovative approaches are now emerging as effective ways to improve environmental compliance. These include environmental management systems, Environmental Impact Assessment, cleaner production, negotiated agreements, and government-industry partnerships. The success of environmental regulations also depends on a culture of compliance that is the result of a country's legal traditions, the maturity of its institutions, the available resources, and the capacity and support of citizens and the private sector. Compliance does not automatically happen when requirements are legislated and issued; rather, it is achieved as a result of targeted efforts that encourage behavioral changes on the part of polluters, as well as coordinated efforts across all levels in the society.

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The Three-Dimensional Standard Framework and Industry Adaptation in Brand Marketing Informatization

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Abstract

The rapid development of information technology has made brand marketing informatization an essential driving force for modern enterprise development. By utilizing digital means to achieve precise marketing, brand monitoring, and consumer behavior analysis, enterprises can enhance their brand influence and market competitiveness. However, existing brand marketing informatization tools, mostly designed in a generalized manner, fail to meet the specific needs of different industries. To address this issue, this paper proposes the concepts of the “Three-Dimensional Standard Framework” and the “Industry Characteristic Coefficient.” The Three-Dimensional Standard Framework covers three key dimensions: brand health monitoring, dynamic updating of consumer profiles, and cross-channel content coordination, which comprehensively cover the crucial aspects of brand marketing informatization. The Industry Characteristic Coefficient, by quantifying the special needs of different industries, enhances the targeting and effectiveness of the tools.

Keywords: brand marketing, informatization, three-dimensional standard framework, industry characteristic coefficient, industry adaptation, brand health monitoring, consumer profiling, cross-channel content coordination, digital transformation, precise marketing, public opinion management, data-driven

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The rapid advancement of information technology has positioned brand marketing informatization as a crucial means for enterprises to enhance their competitiveness. In recent years, the widespread application of big data, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and other technologies has propelled the transition of brand marketing from traditional models to digital and intelligent ones. Enterprises leverage informatization tools to achieve precise marketing, brand monitoring, and consumer behavior analysis, thereby better meeting consumer needs and strengthening brand influence. However, most existing brand marketing informatization tools are designed in a generalized way, lacking in-depth adaptation to specific industries. As a result, when enterprises apply these tools, they often encounter issues such as insufficient functionality and inaccurate data. The differences in brand marketing informatization needs across various industries are significant. For instance, the new materials industry focuses more on technical parameters and engineering procurement decision chains, the B2B industry requires content push for multi-role decision-making, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), limited by budget, need low-cost and easy-to-operate solutions.

1.2 Research Purpose

This study aims to construct a brand marketing informatization framework with industry adaptation, addressing the insufficient vertical industry adaptation of existing tools. By proposing the Two Core Innovations of the “Three-Dimensional Standard Framework” and the “Industry Characteristic Coefficient,” this paper will provide more targeted informatization solutions for different industries.

1.3 Research Significance

The innovation and practicality of this research lie in the construction of the Three-Dimensional Standard Framework, which includes brand health monitoring, dynamic updating of consumer profiles, and cross-channel content coordination, and the introduction of the Industry Characteristic Coefficient to enhance the targeting of the tools (Li, K., Liu, L., Chen, J., Yu, D., Zhou, X., Li, M., ... & Li, Z., 2024). This effectively improves the industry adaptation of brand marketing informatization. It not only fills the gap in existing research regarding industry adaptation but also provides enterprises with more targeted informatization tools, promoting the digital transformation of brand marketing and holding significant theoretical and practical importance.

2. Current Status and Challenges of Brand Marketing Informatization

2.1 Development Course of Brand Marketing Informatization

The development of brand marketing informatization dates back to the traditional marketing era when enterprises mainly relied on advertising, public relations, and promotions to promote their brands and products. With the popularization of the Internet and the development of mobile technology, brand marketing gradually shifted from offline to online, with digital marketing becoming the mainstream. The emergence of big data, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and other emerging technologies has further propelled the evolution of brand marketing informatization. Enterprises began to use these technologies to achieve precise marketing, brand monitoring, and consumer behavior analysis, thereby better meeting consumer needs and enhancing brand influence.

In the evolution from traditional marketing to digital marketing, brand marketing informatization has gone through several stages. Initially, enterprises mainly conducted marketing activities through emails and simple websites. Subsequently, the rise of social media provided enterprises with new marketing channels, allowing them to interact and communicate with consumers through social media platforms. In recent years, with the development of big data and artificial intelligence technologies, brand marketing informatization has entered a new stage. Enterprises can now use data analysis and machine learning algorithms to achieve precise consumer profiling and personalized recommendations, thereby improving marketing effectiveness and consumer satisfaction.

2.2 Limitations of Existing Brand Marketing Informatization Tools

Despite significant progress in brand marketing informatization, existing tools still have some limitations. First, the insufficiency of generalized tools is one of the main problems currently faced by brand marketing informatization. Most brand marketing informatization tools are designed in a generalized manner, lacking in-depth adaptation to specific industries. As a result, when enterprises apply these tools, they often need to carry out a large amount of customized development, increasing costs and time investment.

Second, existing tools have deficiencies in data integration and analysis. Brand marketing informatization needs to handle a large amount of data, including consumer behavior data, social media data, sales data, etc. However, existing tools often have incomplete data integration and analysis, making it difficult for enterprises to obtain comprehensive and accurate market insights. Moreover, existing tools also have deficiencies in consumer profiling and precise marketing. Although some tools can generate consumer profiles, these profiles are often not accurate and comprehensive enough to meet the actual needs of enterprises.

Lastly, the particularity of vertical industry needs is also a significant challenge faced by existing brand marketing informatization tools. The differences in brand marketing informatization needs across various industries are significant. For example, the new materials industry focuses more on technical parameters and engineering procurement decision chains, the B2B industry requires content push for multi-role decision-making, and SMEs, limited by budget, need low-cost and easy-to-operate solutions. Existing tools find it difficult to meet these special needs, resulting in many difficulties for enterprises in the application process.

2.3 Enterprise Needs Analysis for Brand Marketing Informatization

Enterprises' needs for brand marketing informatization are becoming increasingly diversified and complex. There are significant differences in the specific informatization tool needs across various industries. For example, the new materials industry requires tools that can precisely monitor technical parameters and engineering procurement decision chains to support its complex technical marketing needs. The B2B industry needs tools that can push content for multi-role decision-making to increase sales conversion rates. SMEs are more concerned with low-cost and easy-to-operate solutions to adapt to their limited budgets and technical capabilities.

3. Construction of the Three-Dimensional Standard Framework

3.1 Brand Health Monitoring Dimension

Sentiment analysis is a key part of brand health monitoring. Through natural language processing (NLP) technology, the system can automatically analyze the sentiment tendency (positive, negative, or neutral) of brand mentions in multi-channel data from social media, e-commerce platforms, industry forums, etc. For example, the system can identify consumers' satisfaction, loyalty to the brand, and potential dissatisfaction. The public opinion early warning function can automatically send reminders to brand managers when the spread speed of negative public opinion exceeds the preset threshold, enabling them to take timely countermeasures.

The data sources for brand health monitoring are extensive, including social media platforms, e-commerce platforms, industry forums, news media, etc. These data are real-time crawled through web crawler technology and analyzed for sentiment and keyword extraction using NLP algorithms. The analysis results are displayed in the form of a visual dashboard, allowing brand managers to intuitively understand the changing trends of brand health and discover potential risks in time through the early warning system.

3.2 Dynamic Updating of Consumer Profiles Dimension

The construction of consumer profiles requires the integration of multi-channel consumer data, including consumer behavior data in the enterprise's CRM system, browsing trajectories on e-commerce platforms, customer service dialogue records, etc. Through data cleaning and integration, the system generates a three-dimensional label system containing "basic attributes + consumption preferences + brand interaction depth." For example, consumer profiles can include information such as age, gender, region, consumption frequency, preferred product types, and participation in brand activities.

The dynamic updating mechanism of consumer profiles ensures the timeliness and accuracy of consumer data. The system will automatically update consumer profiles in real-time when changes occur in consumer behavior data. For example, when a consumer's browsing behavior on the brand's official website changes, the system will immediately adjust its consumption preference label. The dynamically updated consumer profiles can be applied to precise marketing, personalized recommendations, customer relationship management, and other scenarios, helping brands better meet consumer needs and improve consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

3.3 Cross-Channel Content Coordination Dimension

The cross-channel content coordination module supports the synchronized release of brand content across multiple mainstream channels. Brand managers only need to edit the content once in the system, and the system will automatically adapt to the format requirements of different platforms to achieve multi-channel publishing. In addition, the module also provides a content scheduling function, allowing brand managers to plan the release time of content in advance to ensure the continuity and consistency of brand communication. The cross-channel content coordination module not only supports content publishing but also provides detailed data statistics functions. The system can automatically count key indicators such as the reading volume, conversion rate, and interaction rate of content across different channels and recommend the optimal release time and content format through A/B testing functions. For example, the system can compare the performance of short videos and graphic content on different platforms, providing data support for brand managers to help them optimize their content strategies and improve brand communication effectiveness.

4. Introduction of the Industry Characteristic Coefficient

4.1 Concept and Definition of the Industry Characteristic Coefficient

In the field of brand marketing informatization, there are significant differences in the needs of informatization tools across different industries. For example, the new materials industry focuses more on technical parameters and engineering procurement decision chains, the B2B industry requires content push for multi-role decision-making, and SMEs, limited by budget, need low-cost and easy-to-operate solutions. To solve the problem of insufficient vertical industry adaptation of existing tools, this paper proposes the concept of the "Industry Characteristic Coefficient." The Industry Characteristic Coefficient refers to the adjustment of the functions and algorithms of brand marketing informatization tools through quantification based on the special needs of different industries, in order to improve the targeting and effectiveness of the tools. The introduction of the Industry Characteristic Coefficient aims to optimize the performance of brand marketing informatization tools in a data-driven manner, enabling them to better meet the specific needs of particular industries.

4.2 Calculation and Application of the Industry Characteristic Coefficient

The calculation of the Industry Characteristic Coefficient is based on the collection and analysis of a large amount of industry data. Data sources include industry reports, enterprise internal data, market research results, etc. For example, in the new materials industry, data may include technical parameters of materials, procurement cycles, supplier evaluation criteria, etc.; in the B2B industry, data may include the length of the procurement decision chain and the decision-making weights of different roles.

In terms of algorithm design, this paper uses machine learning algorithms to calculate the Industry Characteristic

Coefficient. Taking the new materials industry as an example, through the analysis of procurement data from over 100 new materials enterprises, it was found that the weight of technical parameters in procurement decisions is approximately 0.6 (Wang J Y, Tse K T & Li S W., 2022), while the weight of price factors is about 0.4. Based on these data, the algorithm can calculate the Industry Characteristic Coefficient to adjust the functions and algorithms of brand marketing informatization tools.

In the new materials industry, brand health monitoring, with the help of the industry characteristic coefficient, precisely adjusts the sentiment analysis weight, focusing on comments related to technical parameters, significantly improving the monitoring accuracy. After a certain enterprise applied it, the effect was enhanced by 30%. In the B2B field, the industry characteristic coefficient optimizes the consumer profile label system, assigning reasonable weights to different roles in the procurement decision chain. As a result, the accuracy of consumer profiles in a certain enterprise was increased by 25%. For SMEs, the industry characteristic coefficient helps optimize content publishing strategies to better meet the needs of budget-limited enterprises. After a certain enterprise applied it, the content publishing conversion rate was increased by 20%.

5. Industry Adaptation Analysis of the Three-Dimensional Standard Framework and Industry Characteristic Coefficient

5.1 Adaptation of the Three-Dimensional Standard Framework to Different Industries

Huachuang Material Technology Co., Ltd. is a high-tech enterprise specializing in the research and development and production of new materials. After introducing the Three-Dimensional Standard Framework, the brand health monitoring module, through sentiment analysis and public opinion early warning functions, significantly improved the efficiency of brand public opinion management. Specifically, the accuracy of brand health monitoring increased from 70% to 92%, and the timeliness of public opinion early warning was enhanced by 40%. The dynamic updating of consumer profiles module increased the accuracy of consumer profiles from 60% to 85%, and the dynamic updating mechanism improved the timeliness of consumer profiles by 30%. The cross-channel content coordination module increased the content publishing conversion rate from 12% to 30%, and the efficiency of multi-platform content publishing was enhanced by 50%.

Table 1.

Module Name	Pre-Improvement Metrics	Post-Improvement Metrics
Brand Health Monitoring Module	Accuracy: 70%	Accuracy: 92%
	Public Sentiment Early Warning Timeliness	Public Sentiment Early Warning Timeliness Increased by 40%
User Profile Dynamic Update Module	Accuracy: 60%	Accuracy: 85%
	Timeliness	Timeliness Increased by 30%
Cross-Channel Content Coordination Module	Content Publishing Conversion Rate: 12%	Content Publishing Conversion Rate: 30%
	Multi-Platform Content Publishing Efficiency	Multi-Platform Content Publishing Efficiency Increased by 50%

Zhilian Supply Chain Co., Ltd. is a large B2B supply chain management enterprise. After introducing the Three-Dimensional Standard Framework, the performance of the consumer profile dynamic updating module and the cross-channel content coordination module was significantly enhanced. The accuracy of consumer profiles increased from 65% to 88% (Li, K., Chen, X., Song, T., Zhang, H., Zhang, W., & Shan, Q., 2024), and the dynamic updating mechanism improved the timeliness of consumer profiles by 35%. The cross-channel content coordination module increased the content publishing conversion rate from 15% to 38%, and the efficiency of multi-platform content publishing was enhanced by 60%. The accuracy of brand health monitoring increased from 72% to 90%, and the timeliness of public opinion early warning was enhanced by 45%.

Xiaozhi Innovation Technology Co., Ltd. is an SME specializing in the research and development and sales of smart hardware. After introducing the Three-Dimensional Standard Framework, the performance of the cross-channel content coordination module and the brand health monitoring module was significantly enhanced. The content publishing conversion rate increased from 10% to 28%, and the efficiency of multi-platform content publishing was enhanced by 55%. The accuracy of brand health monitoring increased from 68% to 88%, and the timeliness of public opinion early warning was enhanced by 50% (Luo, M., Zhang, W., Song, T., Li, K., Zhu, H., Du, B., & Wen, H., 2021). The accuracy of consumer profiles increased from 62% to 80%, and the dynamic

updating mechanism improved the timeliness of consumer profiles by 30%.

Table 2.

Module Name	Improvement Metric	Improvement Percentage (%)
Cross-Channel Content Coordination Module	Content Publishing Conversion Rate	18%
	Multi-Platform Content Publishing Efficiency	55%
Brand Health Monitoring Module	Brand Health Monitoring Accuracy	20%
	Public Sentiment Early Warning Timeliness	50%
User Profile Module	User Profile Accuracy	18%
	User Profile Timeliness	30%

5.2 Enhancement of Industry Adaptation by the Industry Characteristic Coefficient

The introduction of the Industry Characteristic Coefficient significantly improves the targeting and effectiveness of brand marketing informatization tools. By quantifying the special needs of different industries, the tools can better adapt to the specific needs of various industries. Taking Huachuang Material Technology Co., Ltd. as an example, the accuracy of brand health monitoring was increased by 22%, the accuracy of consumer profiles was increased by 25%, and the content publishing conversion rate was increased by 18%. For Zhilian Supply Chain Co., Ltd., the accuracy of consumer profiles was increased by 23%, the content publishing conversion rate was increased by 23%, and the accuracy of brand health monitoring was increased by 18%. For Xiaozhi Innovation Technology Co., Ltd., the content publishing conversion rate was increased by 18%, the accuracy of brand health monitoring was increased by 20%, and the accuracy of consumer profiles was increased by 18%. (Tao Y., 2023a)

5.3 Promotion of Brand Marketing Informatization by Industry Adaptation

The enhancement of industry adaptation significantly strengthens the performance of brand marketing informatization tools, thereby improving the overall efficiency of brand marketing. For Huachuang Material Technology Co., Ltd., the efficiency of brand marketing was increased by 45% (Tao Y., 2023b), and the response speed of marketing activities was enhanced by 30%. For Zhilian Supply Chain Co., Ltd., the efficiency of brand marketing was increased by 50%, and the response speed of marketing activities was enhanced by 35%. For Xiaozhi Innovation Technology Co., Ltd., the efficiency of brand marketing was increased by 40%, and the response speed of marketing activities was enhanced by 25%. (Yiyi Tao, Yiling Jia, Nan Wang, & Hongning Wang, 2019)

Table 3.

Company Name	Increase in Brand Marketing Efficiency (%)	Increase in Marketing Campaign Response Speed (%)
Huachuang Material Technology Co., Ltd.	45	30
Zhilian Supply Chain Co., Ltd.	50	35
Xiaozhi Innovation Technology Co., Ltd.	40	25

6. Conclusions and Prospects

6.1 Research Conclusions

The Three-Dimensional Standard Framework introduced in this study, combined with the Industry Characteristic Coefficient, proposes an innovative brand marketing informatization solution covering three dimensions: brand health monitoring, dynamic updating of consumer profiles, and cross-channel content coordination. Through case verification of Huachuang Material Technology Co., Ltd., Zhilian Supply Chain Co., Ltd., and Xiaozhi Innovation Technology Co., Ltd., the results show significant improvements in the accuracy of brand health monitoring, the accuracy of consumer profiles, and the content publishing conversion rate. The industry adaptation is enhanced, and the efficiency of brand marketing is improved, assisting enterprises in their digital

transformation.

6.2 Research Limitations

The research mainly focuses on three industries: new materials, B2B supply chain, and SMEs. The data sources rely on enterprise internal data and industry reports, which limits the universality of the results and the completeness of the data. Future research needs to expand the scope of research and introduce more external data sources, such as market research and consumer feedback data, to improve the accuracy and reliability of the research.

6.3 Future Research Directions

Future research can be expanded in the following aspects: First, expand the scope of research to verify the applicability of the framework in more industries, such as finance, healthcare, education, etc. Second, enrich the data sources by introducing market research and consumer feedback data and using big data technology to optimize data collection and analysis. Third, optimize the Industry Characteristic Coefficient and explore dynamic adjustment mechanisms. Fourth, deepen theoretical research and propose forward-looking models in combination with the latest information technologies and management theories. Fifth, explore the application of the framework in brand management, customer service, supply chain management, and other fields to promote the overall informatization level of enterprises.

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Designing an External Recruitment Strategy for Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Craft Businesses in Germany Considering Digital Tools

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Abstract

The ongoing shortage of skilled workers poses major challenges, especially for micro, small, and medium-sized craft businesses. The building electrical, plumbing, heating, and air conditioning (HVAC) crafts are particularly affected in Germany, as they are additionally burdened by demographic change, the energy transition, and internal operational factors. The aim of this article is to develop a practical strategy for external recruitment for crafts businesses. Based on existing recommendations for action and expert interviews, a concept was developed that focuses in particular on digital channels, reverse recruiting, and personal contact points such as trade fairs. Empirical validation was carried out using 23 qualitative interviews with employers and employees in the aforementioned crafts sectors in Germany 2024 and 2025, whose expectations and experiences were incorporated into the design of the strategy. The concept is being optimized based on their opinions and experiences. The results show that a combination of clearly defined target groups, targeted communication of the employer brand, and direct contact with potential applicants offers the greatest chance of success. At the same time, it is clear that traditional and proven tools remain effective, but need to be adapted to the needs and expectations of the new target groups and to current trends. The article thus provides concrete recommendations for action to reduce the shortage of skilled workers in craft businesses.

Keywords: skills shortage, external recruitment, HVAC

1. Introduction

In Germany the skilled trades have always made a significant contribution to economic performance, employment, and training, and also ensure the infrastructure of the public sector, industry, and private households (<https://www.hwkno.de/artikel/was-ist-handwerk-76,3412,163.html>, accessed 07/23/2025). The shortage of skilled workers has been rising steadily for many years in Germany, as the skills gap shows. Since 2022, construction electricians and HVAC technicians have been among the top ten occupations with the largest skills gaps (<https://www.iwkoeln.de/studien/helen-hickmann-filiz-koneberg-die-berufe-mit-den-aktuell-groessten-fachkraeft-eluecken.html>, accessed 07/23/2025).

On the one hand, demographic change is a contributing factor, with a deficit of seven million people expected on the German labour market by 2035 due to retirement. On the other hand, the German energy transition is a major factor driving up demand for skilled workers in climate and electrical engineering (https://www.bpb.de/system/files/dokument_pdf/APuZ_28-Transkript.pdf, accessed 07/23/2025). Internal factors

such as recruitment channels and external communication in companies are further causes (<https://www.kofa.de/mitarbeiter-finden/branchen-im-fokus/kofa-fuers-handwerk/>, accessed 07/23/2025).

With the help of a practical recruitment strategy, many companies would find it easier to attract qualified skilled workers for themselves and the skilled trades. The choice of suitable measures and instruments is of paramount importance here, and a wide range of guidelines, packages of measures, and recommendations for action on recruitment already exist, for example, from the German Chamber of Skilled Crafts or the German Ludwig Fröhler Institut für Handwerkswissenschaften e. V.. However, these mostly refer to a broad range of trades, which means that there is no specialization.

This article answers the question which strategies and instruments for external recruitment should be used by micro, small, and medium-sized craft businesses considering digital tools to counteract the shortage of skilled workers in Germany. To answer this question, primary data from 23 interviews, conducted in Germany 2024 and 2025 with employers and employees in the electrical engineering and HVAC trades, is used. Chapter 2 covers the basics of the skilled crafts, the shortage of skilled workers, and recruitment, which serve as a basis for developing the concept. In addition, there is an insight into the recruitment strategy designed for the building electrical and HVAC crafts. Chapter 3 describes the empirical application. Chapter 4 summarizes the results of the qualitative research and answers the research question. In Chapter 5, the criteria of qualitative research are reviewed, followed by a conclusion and a brief outlook in Chapter 6.

2. Background

In Germany the term “craft business” is composed of the terms ‘craft’ and ‘business’. From a technical point of view, craft is defined as the production of goods by hand, and from a sociological point of view, it is defined by the occupational title (Glasl, Maiwald & Wolf, 2008). An enterprise is defined as a local, technical, and organizational unit for the purpose of producing goods and services (<https://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/definition/betrieb-30819>, accessed 07/24/2025). Craft businesses, or craft trades, do not form a separate economic sector based on the sectoral economic classification. They can be classified in both the secondary and tertiary sectors (<https://www.regionalentwicklung.de/regionales-wirtschaften/wirtschaft-gesellschaft/regionales-wirtschaften-als-ergaenzung-zur-globalisierung/>, accessed 08/24/2025). The skilled trades are primarily characterized by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); in 2022, 99.60% of skilled trades businesses fell into the SME category (<https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Branchen-Unternehmen/Handwerk/aktuell-struktur-handwerk.html>, accessed on 07/24/2025).

The German Crafts and Trades Code (Handwerksordnung, HwO) forms a uniform legal basis for the skilled trades. It contains regulations on the practice of a trade, the structure and organization of the skilled trades, and training and continuing education. The HwO is a dynamic structure that is subject to constant adaptation. The structure of the craft trade organization corresponds to a functional organization in which each body has the necessary competencies for a specific function within the overall organization (<https://www.hwk-stuttgart.de/artikel/so-organisiert-sich-das-handwerk-in-bund-im-land-und-regional-67,0,757.html>, accessed 07/24/2025).

In contrast to industry, freedom of trade in the skilled trades is restricted for trades requiring a license, as a business may only be opened if the owner has passed a master craftsman’s examination (<https://www.hwk-potsdam.de/artikel/rechtliche-grundlagen-des-handwerks-9,0,352.html>, accessed 07/24/2025). Another distinguishing feature from industry is the division of labour; in industrial companies, an employee usually only carries out part of the work processes, whereas in skilled trades, the employee carries out all work processes (Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag e. V., 2021). The dual nature of craft training is unique to the German education system and has been recognized as a closed system. It combines practical work and learning in the workplace with reflective theoretical training in a vocational school. The journeyman’s examination is a prerequisite for further education in the skilled trades (<https://www.zdh.de/daten-und-fakten/das-handwerk/#c2510>, accessed 07/24/2025).

In 2023, the German skilled trades increased their sales by a further 4.20% compared to the previous year. The reasons for the increase in sales are high inflation, the consequences of the war in Ukraine, material shortages, and delivery problems, which led to acute price increases. All these factors are dampening the economy, and the number of employees also fell by 1.30%, which is further exacerbating the shortage of skilled workers (<https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Branchen-Unternehmen/Handwerk/aktuell-konjunktur-handwerk.html>, accessed 07/24/2025). The skilled trades thus form an important pillar without which the state would lack both revenue and economic stability. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action describes the skilled trades as an important driver of growth and prosperity (<https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Textsammlungen/Mittelstand/handwerk.html>, accessed 07/24/2025).

In 2000, the term “skills shortage” was first used in the IT industry; since 2006, the terms “skills shortage” and “skills bottleneck” have been used independently of the occupational sector (Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln e.V., 2020). Considering essential factors such as qualifications, the number of job seekers, the occupational group, or the region, the following definition emerges: A skilled worker shortage is when the supply of workers with the right professional skills and qualifications to produce goods and services in a certain occupational group in a certain region is lower than the demand from employers over a longer period of time (Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln e.V., 2020). A skilled labour shortage, on the other hand, is a temporary imbalance between the supply of workers with specific qualifications and/or in a specific region and the demand for such workers (<https://www.bpb.de/themen/arbeitsmarktpolitik/178757/fachkraeftemangel/>, accessed 07/24/2025). There are therefore significant differences in terms of time frame and specification. However, there are also similarities, such as the requirement for completed vocational training or regional boundaries.

The causes of the steadily increasing shortage of skilled workers in the skilled trades are both cyclical and structural. In economic terms, the shortage of skilled workers can be attributed to the positive economic development of recent years. This is accompanied by a mismatch between supply and demand on the labour market, which is evident in the low number of available unemployed people and a mismatch between qualifications and requirements (Schirner, 2021).

The “three megatrends” of demographic change, digitalization, and decarbonization, which are listed in the German government’s skilled labour strategy, are the main structural causes. Demographic change is particularly noticeable in an aging society; the baby boomers are retiring from working life and there are not enough young people entering the labour market. In addition, digitalization will continue to advance in Germany, which requires a reliable and effective infrastructure—this can only be ensured by the right skilled workers (Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 2022). The mobility, construction, industry, and energy sectors play a decisive role in decarbonization. Skilled trades will play a key role in the implementation of the energy transition, which is why a significant reduction in the existing shortage is not expected in the coming years (Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 2022). Remuneration and work-life balance also play a decisive role in career choices, with skilled trades considered unattractive by school leavers in contrast to other sectors (Greilinger, 2023).

Recruitment is based on personnel requirements planning, which refers to measures for determining the current and future quantitative and qualitative personnel requirements of a company (Stock-Homburg & Groß, 2019). It is essential for successful personnel management and is tailored to the individual needs of the company. In order to develop a holistic concept, it is important to focus on strengthening the employer brand and the opportunities for recruitment.

A recruitment strategy can only be successful if the company builds a strong employer brand and is perceived as attractive by the labour market. Consequently, personnel marketing is used to accompany recruitment in order to increase the chances of effective and efficient recruitment. In the course of this, an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is developed as a distinguishing feature from other companies, on which the employer brand is gradually built and strengthened (Träger, 2021). Only when the EVP has been clearly defined can a meaningful selection of measures to increase employer attractiveness be made, depending on the corporate culture (Träger, 2021). The selection of measures is followed by communication of the measures in order to convince potential employees of the company. In the best case, this results in a positive reputation.

Personnel recruitment is a sub-function of human resource management and deals with the procurement of the workforce required by a company in terms of quality, quantity, time, and location (<https://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/definition/personalbeschaffung-44990>, accessed 07/24/2025). The main task is to develop a strategy for approaching applicants and candidates and to implement the associated tools. The aim is to provide the right people at the right time and in the required quantity (Träger, 2021). In addition to the division into internal and external recruitment, a further distinction can be made between active and passive recruitment (<https://www.studysmarter.de/ausbildung/kaufmaennisch/personalwirtschaft/personalbeschaffung/>, accessed 07/24/2025).

The basis of successful recruitment is a strategy tailored to the company that is guided by its own principles as well as the expectations of applicants and candidates. In the context of external recruitment, on which the concept is based, a distinction is made between active and passive recruitment, with the main difference lying in the initiative taken by the company.

Passive recruitment is characterized by presenting the company in an attractive light to applicants in order to indirectly appeal to them and spark their interest in the company (<https://www.pitchyou.de/de/hr-blog/passive-sourcing-recruiting-personalbeschaffung>, accessed 07/24/2025). Defining the target group is an essential core element in selecting and communicating measures to increase employer attractiveness. It relies on the following instruments:

(1) Publication of job advertisements

The publication of job advertisements has increasingly adapted to trends; companies are becoming more creative in terms of design and distribution in an attempt to stand out from the competition. Legal requirements must not be neglected; a job advertisement must comply with the provisions of Section 11 of the German General Act on Equal Treatment (Träger, 2021).

(2) Creation of a company website

A company website can provide both general and job-related information; possible content includes a description of the company culture, the fields of work, or the development opportunities within the company (Stock-Homburg & Groß, 2019).

(3) Company profile on social media

A company profile enables communication on an equal footing and allows further decision-making criteria, such as the working atmosphere or benefits, to be communicated to specific target groups (Wermke, 2004). Channels that are particularly suitable for this purpose are Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. According to a recent study by the German public tv stations ARD and ZDF, 82,00% of 14- to 29-year-olds use Instagram and more than 50,00% use Facebook and Snapchat. Facebook and Instagram are the frontrunners among 30- to 49-year-olds (Müller, 2024).

Active recruitment refers to the identification of and contact with suitably qualified candidates to fill vacant positions. In addition to filling vacancies, another benefit is the long-term establishment of contacts and networks with identified ideal candidates (<https://www.hrm.de/hr-glossar/active-sourcing/>, accessed 07/24/2025). It is carried out in two phases. Phase one involves the targeted search for candidates and phase two involves approaching individual candidates (<https://www.haufe.de/thema/active-sourcing/>, accessed 07/24/2025). It relies on the following tools:

(1) Active sourcing

One tool used in active sourcing is reverse recruiting portals, which are Internet-based platforms where individuals present their skill profiles and information about the job they are looking for, their salary expectations, and their desired location in order to receive job offers (Stock-Homburg & Groß, 2019).

(2) E-recruiting

This tool works with electronic media and is closely linked to activities aimed at strengthening the employer brand. Electronic job advertisements are published on job boards, the company's own website, or social media. The advantages here are target group-specific adaptation and independence from time constraints (Träger, 2021).

(3) Training fairs and job fairs

These events allow companies and candidates to come into direct contact and meet on equal terms to exchange information or hold informal discussions to build relationships.

In the skilled trades, training young people to become qualified skilled workers is an important aspect of recruitment. Accordingly, the 15 to 24 age group in particular should be encouraged to take up a skilled trade. In order to identify the target group more precisely, it is worth taking a look at the educational background of trainees and skilled workers. According to the nationwide evaluation by the Central Association of German Crafts (Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks), 43.20% of trainees in skilled trades have a secondary school diploma or equivalent. This is followed by 34.90% of trainees with a secondary school diploma and 16.40% with a university or technical college entrance qualification (Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks, 2023). Secondary school students attribute an important role to skilled trades and can imagine pursuing training in this sector (Greilinger, 2023). Of the total 151,243 training places offered in 2022, mainly in skilled trades, 20,977 remained unfilled; this is the highest figure in the last ten years (Köppen & Malin, 2023). In professions with persistent shortages, such as electronics technicians for energy and building technology and HVAC mechanics, however, both the number of training places offered and demand rose steadily between 2013 and 2022, and the trend is continuing. The number of vacancies increased by 19.00% and demand by 10.80%, with the greatest growth in the fields of construction electrics and HVAC. The reason for this is the need for these occupational groups to implement the energy transition and climate policy goals (Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln e.V., 2023).

(4) Immigration of foreign skilled labour

In addition, the qualified immigration of foreign skilled workers is an important pillar for countering the shortage of skilled workers in the future, as the proportion of migrants in the focused trades has been rising steadily since 2013. (<https://iab.de/grafiken-und-daten/beruf-struktur-entwicklung/?beruf=573&ion=1&qualifikation=2&jahre=2013>)

%2C2016%2C2019%2C2021%2C2022#iab-results, accessed 07/27/2025)
 (https://iab.de/grafiken-und-daten/beruf-struktur-entwicklung/?beruf=814®ion=1&qualifikation=2&jahre=2013%2C2016%2C2019%2C2021%2C2022#iab-results, accessed 07/27/2025).

The theoretical concept for recruitment includes four tools that have proven to be highly effective based on past scientific studies.

The following theoretical concept is intended to provide companies with guidelines for the recruitment process and to highlight alternative tools:

The first passive recruitment instrument is the publication of job advertisements in various media, both digital and analog, as these continue to be considered of medium to high importance (Freudig & Garnitz, 2022). The variety of design options and the choice between regional and national advertising offer flexibility and spontaneity in terms of publication timing. Multimedia publication is recommended, as applicants today are multimedia users. Possible contact points include regional daily newspapers, your own website, social media, or job boards. The timing of publication must be carefully considered in order to reach as many people as possible—accordingly, they should be shared on weekends if possible (ARD/ ZDF Research Commission, 2023). Content aspects such as the job title, requirements, or qualifications (Thommen, 2023) as well as design aspects such as color scheme, font selection, and image selection should also be taken into account. For more efficient and simplified creation of job advertisements, it is also worth taking a look at the world of artificial intelligence (AI). There are a variety of tools that generate fully formulated job advertisements with just a few pieces of information. In an interactive chat, the AI asks for relevant information and generates a job advertisement that can be customized afterwards (https://www.heyjobs.co/recruiting/stellenanzeige-schreiben-recruitgpt/, accessed 07/28/2025).

The creation of a company profile on social media as a second passive tool depends on the target group and current trends. The 14 to 29 age group primarily uses Instagram, with a share of over 80.00%; the 30 to 49 age group mainly uses Facebook and Instagram, with around 50.00% each (Müller, 2024). Accordingly, Instagram is best suited to reach both target groups in the best possible way. In principle, the authenticity of the company and the privacy of employees and customers must be maintained. Social media will continue to gain in importance in the future, which is why the potential of this recruiting channel should be exploited even more (Freudig & Garnitz, 2022).

Reverse recruiting portals are becoming increasingly important as an active tool against the backdrop of the shortage of skilled workers in recent years, including in the skilled trades. Job seekers create a profile with their qualifications, requirements, etc., and companies can filter and search based on various criteria. The candidates' profiles can then be viewed and, if interested, contact can be made (https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/bewerberboerse/, accessed 07/29/2025). According to recent studies, active sourcing, which includes reverse recruiting, is of greatest importance for small and medium-sized companies (Freudig & Garnitz, 2022).

Training fairs and job fairs are another active tool that offer further opportunities for informal contact. At training fairs, companies can present themselves to potential trainees and convince them of the benefits of vocational training. The career guidance information provided at fairs has a significant influence on the career choices of young people between the ages of 16 and 25 (Wirtschaftsjunioren Deutschland, 2023). Job fairs can be helpful for companies, as they usually attract seriously interested candidates who have already completed vocational training. After declining in importance during the coronavirus pandemic, training and job fairs have been experiencing an upswing since 2022 (Freudig & Garnitz, 2022).

This theoretical concept has been validated empirically in the HVAC sector in Germany in 2024 and 2025.

3. Approach

The research method used for data collection is the interview method, which uses direct questions to obtain explicit information that the interviewees consciously reflect on (Bak, Felser, & Fichter, 2022). The aim of the interviews is to explore opinions, experiences, and ideas on measures and instruments, thereby optimizing the content presented. The four fundamental principles of openness, individuality, significance, and reflexivity, which are important in the approach, must be observed (Bak, Felser, & Fichter, 2022).

The semi-standardized interview was chosen as the interview technique, as it is particularly suitable for deepening information already obtained. The problem-centered guided interview variant is used, as the socially relevant topic of the problem of recruiting personnel in the skilled trades is the focus due to the shortage of skilled workers (Hussy, 2008). The creation of an interview guide is considered a crucial preparatory step (Bortz & Döring, 2006). The guideline for employer interviews comprises 33 questions and the guideline for employee interviews comprises 23 questions. The general section of questions is used to collect personal and company-related data, such as age, educational status, personnel planning, and employee and company size. The

specific questions are used to identify problems in filling vacancies and to gather opinions, experiences, and ideas regarding measures to increase employer attractiveness and recruitment tools.¹

The 23 interviews were conducted between November 7th, 2024, and January 8th, 2025, and lasted between 20 and 60 minutes, depending on how talkative the interviewee was. The interviews were conducted in person or via MS Teams. During the contact phase, the interviewees were informed about the formalities and the interview process, including the replacement of their names with numbers and the destruction of the documents after evaluation. During the survey phase, the questions were answered in chronological order, with some questions being expanded or omitted depending on the interviewee's willingness to talk. The closing phase included thanks for participation and information on how the data obtained would be used. After the interviews, a transcript was created using the audio recordings, which was sent to the interviewees for approval and only then used for evaluation.

Mayring's qualitative content analysis serves as the basis for the empirical analysis, which refers to a structured and qualitative approach to the evaluation of text-based data. Based on interest, findings, and research questions, a variety of content analysis methods can be selected. In the context of this paper, deductive category application was used (Mayring, 2010). Mayring derived eight criteria for conducting qualitative content analysis from the quality criteria of validity and reliability: procedural documentation, regularity, argumentative interpretation assurance, object proximity, communicative validation, and triangulation (Mayring, 2022). These are analyzed in Chapter 5.

Another part of Mayring's content analysis is the determination of the analysis units, or the definition of coding, context, and evaluation units. Individual significant words are defined as coding units. Sentences relating to opinions and experiences of individual recruitment instruments are defined as context units. The answers given to the questions from the interviews are defined as evaluation units (Mayring, 2010). The category system formed for evaluating the interviews is designed to be as simple as possible and as comprehensive as necessary. For statements that cannot be assigned to an existing category but are nevertheless relevant to the recommendation for action, a separate category is formed using inductive category formation (Mayring, 2010).

4. Results of the Expert Interviews

A total of 23 interviews were conducted; 13 with employers (three from the electrical construction trade and 10 from the HVAC trade) and ten with employees (five from the electrical construction trade and five from the HVAC trade).

Evaluation of the general questions

The employers mostly run small or medium-sized businesses. The age groups are mixed — the people surveyed are between 28 and 66 years old. On average, the interviewees are 47 years old, which means they already have experience but are still open to innovation. Small companies employ between one and nine trainees, while medium-sized companies employ more than ten trainees.

The majority of those surveyed were Generation Z employees (born between 1995 and 2010), which provides a good understanding of their expectations and experiences (<https://www.ibau.de/akademie/wissenswertes/generation-x-y-z/>, accessed on 07/31/2025). All employees interviewed have completed their training and can be defined as skilled workers. The plans of the employees surveyed to obtain master craftsman qualifications demonstrate the motivation of young skilled workers to continue their development after completing their training.

Evaluation of the specific questions in the employer interviews

The age differences are clearly reflected in the results of the specific questions. While employers between the ages of 25 and 54 are open to the use of new tools and the adaptation of existing ones, employers aged 55 and above have a more conservative attitude.

Category: Job recruitment

All of the small and medium-sized companies interviewed are looking for skilled workers and trainees. The main problems they face in recruiting new staff are too few applicants for the number of vacancies, insufficient qualifications among applicants, and excessive wage and salary demands.

Employer attractiveness category

Companies already invest a lot of time, money, and effort in strengthening their employer brand. Larger companies generally offer more than micro and small businesses. Their focus is on the personal component—they aim to attract employees by creating a family-like working atmosphere and taking individual

¹ The interview outline can be provided upon request.

needs into account. The main reason for not implementing certain measures is the financial burden. Measures that could be considered in the future focus on the areas of challenges and support, work-life balance, and leadership and values. To communicate these measures, it is recommended to mention them in job advertisements and to present them in social media posts.

Category: Job advertisements

The strong position of this tool was highlighted in the interviews. All companies use job advertisements and would like to continue doing so. The shift from print to online media has reached the skilled trades, and employers want to focus primarily on digital job postings in the future, both on social media and on their own websites. There is consensus that job postings should be short and concise, with little text and extensive use of images.

Category: company profile on social media

Micro-enterprises either do not have a profile or only have a profile on Instagram or Facebook. Small and medium-sized enterprises, on the other hand, use several social media platforms, and more intensively than micro-enterprises. Popular social media platforms are Instagram and Facebook. However, LinkedIn and YouTube are only used by medium-sized enterprises. The time required and the lack of capacity to maintain the profile are cited as the main problems. Micro and small businesses are considering hiring a temporary employee to take care of their social media profiles. In terms of content, the focus should be on presenting the company and its employees; insights from the construction site and the publication of job advertisements are also conceivable. According to the interviewees, authenticity is the key component for creating a convincing and appealing image.

Category: Reverse recruiting portals

Only one company has used such a portal in the past; all other companies do not currently use reverse recruiting portals, nor have they done so in the past. The interviewees do not see this tool as relevant for the skilled trades.

Category: Training fairs and job fairs

Regional fairs are mentioned by all interviewees as their preferred type of fair. The reasons for this are the regional roots of the skilled trades and the risk of low added value when visiting national fairs. The time and financial investment required should also be considered a risk. When designing their trade fair stands, the interviewees consider the presentation of materials and tools and the uniqueness of the stand to be particularly important in order to stand out from the competition.

Category: Other ways of addressing potential skilled workers and trainees

Cooperation with schools and educational institutions emerged as a new category, as training will make an essential contribution to combating the shortage of skilled workers. In particular, the presentation of skilled trades in schools by trainees has proven successful for several years. Company tours or presentations at schools, especially at secondary schools, are recommended. Statistically, most trainees in skilled trades have a secondary school diploma and also have the best image of skilled trades. Companies can make themselves approachable and present themselves in a realistic and attractive way. In this way, an understanding of skilled trades can be created at an early stage and across different age groups. "Speed dating" events between skilled workers and employers are also very popular. A kind of open house at the company is another way to establish initial informal contact.

Evaluation of the specific questions in the employee interviews

Category: Employer attractiveness

In some cases, employees already receive many attractive offers, although older employees attach less importance to this. Younger employees would like to see a wider range of offers, particularly in the area of promotion and leadership, such as support for continuing professional development, both financially and personally. Health-promoting measures are also mentioned as desirable in order to create a physical balance to daily work.

Category: Job advertisements

Job advertisements were rarely used by the people surveyed. A classic design with color accents and images is preferred. Relevant information such as job duties, salary, and working hours should be included. For younger employees, continuing education opportunities are also important information. A casual, humorous slogan that sticks in the memory can be used as desired to convey a friendly and humorous working atmosphere.

Category: Company profile on social media

Respondents in the 15 to 29 age group are more sensitive to positive and negative posts than older employees.

Introducing employees, providing insights into the workplace, and sharing job postings every two weeks are considered appealing.

Category: Reverse recruiting portals

The results of the employee interviews confirm the results of the employer interviews. According to these, the relevance of this tool is negligible.

Category: Training fairs and job fairs

Regional fairs are particularly preferred by the employees surveyed as a source of information. By visiting training fairs, respondents get an idea of which career path they would like to pursue. In some cases, visiting a fair convinced them to pursue a skilled trade. When designing the fair booth, demonstrations of materials, tools, and techniques as well as a modern booth are desired. A team of journeymen, trainees, and master craftsmen as well as an open manner are preferred.

5. Review of the Quality Criteria

The procedural documentation was ensured by recording all interviews in audio format during the interview. In addition, the research method of semi-standardized interviews was chosen, using a guideline and subsequent qualitative content analysis to ensure the traceability of the data collection. Consistency was ensured by the structured categories defined in advance. The precise analysis and identification of similarities and differences in the interviewees' statements also guarantees the argumentative validity of the interpretation. The relevance of the topic was ensured by conducting the interviews in person and via MS Teams. Communicative validity was ensured by informing the interviewees at the end of the interview about the next steps, thus making them competent sources. After the transcript was created, it was sent to the interviewee by email for review and only then used for further analysis. The quality criterion "triangulation" was fulfilled, as qualitative content analyses were analyzed and compared according to Mayring (2010).

6. Conclusion

Against the backdrop of an acute shortage of skilled workers, it is essential for companies to choose an external strategy with active and passive instruments to ensure sustainable and future-oriented recruitment. To answer the underlying research question, a literature review and primary research in the form of qualitative research were conducted. Each instrument represents a piece of the puzzle that fits together to form a structure, whereby regular review and adjustment must be considered a success factor for achieving the objectives. The publication of job advertisements, the use of a company profile on social media, and participation in training fairs and job fairs have proven to be promising.

The acute shortage of skilled workers in the focused trades of building electrical engineering and HVAC is a ubiquitous topic, and employers are naturally aware of the tense situation on the labor market in the skilled trades. At the present time, passive instruments are particularly relevant, although the inclusion of active instruments is definitely recommended for the future. (Freudig & Garnitz, 2022). Actively approaching potential candidates has proven particularly promising for attracting trainees. Training fairs and cooperation with schools therefore play a decisive role in recruiting potential trainees. To increase employer attractiveness, social media must be used more extensively to provide information about the company and its advantages and offerings. Measures in the areas of support and leadership play an essential role in the choice of employer, especially for younger employees.

Looking ahead, it is essential to monitor the further development of the skilled labour shortage in all skilled trades, especially in those trades that are acutely affected. There is no doubt that further changes will occur in the future. Nevertheless, a holistic view of the past, present, and future is recommended.

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Within the Long Walls: Observations on Pericles' Defense Strategy

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Abstract

This paper examines Pericles' defensive strategy during the Peloponnesian War, focusing on his strategic vision centered on the "Long Walls" system and naval supremacy, its implementation, and its impact on Athens' short- and long-term fate. Drawing on primary sources such as Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War and contemporary research, the study evaluates the strategy's merits and shortcomings from military, economic, political, and social perspectives. The research indicates that Pericles' strategy effectively repelled Spartan land forces and safeguarded Athens in the short term. However, it also led to problems such as overcrowding triggering epidemics, severe depletion of fiscal resources, and lagging development of the land forces. Long-term consequences included an imbalance in Athens' military structure and distorted risk assessments, which in turn prompted later leadership to undertake radical and risky ventures (such as the Sicilian Expedition), ultimately exacerbating Athens' strategic failure. Through a comparative analysis of Athenian and Spartan strategies, the paper highlights differences in resource allocation, warfare methods, and endurance in protracted conflicts. It distills historical lessons with implications for modern strategic planning, focusing on balancing offense and defense, enhancing strategic adaptability, optimizing resource allocation, and expanding threat perception. This paper argues that Pericles' strategy not only reflects the strategic logic of classical city-state warfare but also provides a crucial case study for understanding the limitations of defensive strategies in protracted conflicts.

Keywords: Pericles, defensive strategy, Peloponnesian War, strategic equilibrium, risk perception

1. Introduction

In the long course of ancient Greek history, the Peloponnesian War marked a decisive turning point. It not only reshaped the political landscape of ancient Greece but also profoundly influenced subsequent generations' understanding of strategic thought. As the central figure in this nearly three-decade-long war, Pericles, the leader of Athens, secured temporary safety and stability for Athens through his unique defensive strategy. Pericles' decision-making process and strategic choices vividly illustrate the wisdom and dilemmas faced by ancient city-states in the face of survival and development challenges, offering us a valuable perspective on classical strategic thought.

This article aims to systematically analyze Pericles' defensive strategy, explore the strategic thinking behind the grand defensive structures and warships, and examine its profound impact on Athens' military, political, and economic spheres. Additionally, by drawing on research into Thucydides' original text and related literature, this article will assess the short-term and long-term effects of this strategy and further explore its potential implications for contemporary strategic decision-making.

2. Thucydides' Record and Commentary on Pericles' Strategy

In Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War, the main introduction to Pericles' strategy is contained in the record of his speeches and the final evaluation of his death. Pericles stated in his speech:

“In fact, from now on, we should regard ourselves as islanders as much as possible. We must abandon all thoughts of our land and houses and be prepared at all times to defend the sea and the city. We must not be provoked by the loss of our land into fighting the numerically superior Peloponnesians. If we win a single battle, we will then have to fight against a numerically superior army; if we lose, we will lose our allies, who are the source of our strength; and if our army cannot subdue them, they will not remain silent. What we should mourn is not the loss of houses and land, but the loss of human lives, for houses and land do not increase the population, but people can increase them.”¹

“If you all agree not to use war to pursue new plans for conquest and expansion, and if you do not voluntarily involve yourselves in new dangers, I can give you many more reasons why you have hope of achieving final victory.”²

Before the war began, Pericles refined his strategic ideas and presented them in a speech, including relocating rural property to the city; defending the city walls; utilizing a powerful navy; and controlling allies to ensure tribute payments.³ It is clear that Pericles, based on an objective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Sparta and the Athenian alliance, proposed a strategic system centered on the long walls to avoid decisive battles on land, maintain naval strength, firmly control allies, refrain from expanding territorial claims during the war, and avoid defensive actions that would threaten the city-state, with the aim of helping Athens achieve victory in the war. Thucydides highly praised Pericles' strategic design in his final evaluation after Pericles' death. He believed that Pericles' strategy was a correct judgment based on an analysis of Athens' actual situation. Athens' ultimate defeat could not be attributed to strategic errors, but rather to the fact that Pericles' successors did not follow his strategic guidelines, ultimately leading to Athens' defeat.⁴

3. Analysis of the Merits and Demerits of Pericles' Strategy

Pericles' defensive strategy centered on the long wall defense system, leveraging Athens' relative advantages to engage in asymmetric warfare against the Peloponnesian League. The implementation of the strategy and the underlying strategic thinking had a significant impact on the Athenian city-state. Building on the previous analysis of the proposal and implementation of Pericles' strategy, this chapter will analyze the gains and losses of Pericles' strategy from the perspectives of short-term gains and losses and long-term impacts.

3.1 Short-Term Gains and Losses

In the short term, Pericles' defensive strategy effectively prevented the Peloponnesian League from attacking Athens by comprehensively employing tactics such as deterrence and defense. First, the long wall served as a strategic barrier that blocked the Peloponnesian League from directly attacking the city-state of Athens, preventing Athens from engaging in direct combat with the Spartan army and forcing the Peloponnesian League to change its strategy. The primary objective of Spartan invasion of the Attica region was to locate the main force of the Athenian army, fully leverage its land army's advantage in open-field battles, and annihilate the Athenian main force through a decisive engagement, thereby forcing Athens to surrender. However, Pericles' defensive strategy did not give the Spartans such an opportunity. He persuaded the Athenians to remain within the walls and hold their ground, thereby avoiding a large-scale land battle against the Peloponnesian League that would have been difficult to win, and also thwarted Sparta's strategy of achieving a swift victory. In fact, the Peloponnesian army was unable to defeat Athens without engaging in a decisive battle with the Athenian army, nor could it inflict significant damage on the entire Attica region. Due to limitations in production methods and war conditions, the Peloponnesian army could not remain in the Attica region for too long, generally not exceeding one month⁵. Within such a short timeframe, they could neither besiege Athens nor, with the technological means available at the time, cause severe damage to the entire Attica region. It can be said that Sparta's strategy for a swift victory was largely neutralized by Pericles' defensive strategy.

Second, deploying naval forces along the Peloponnesian coast to harass the coastline, disrupt internal unity, and prevent the construction of a navy. As part of its deterrence strategy, the Athenian navy not only defended the safety of the long walls and nearby ports but also deployed a significant portion of its fleet along the coastline of the Peloponnesian peninsula. These fleets had two objectives: first, to launch surprise attacks on the Peloponnesian

¹ Thucydides, (1972). *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1, 143, (5).

² Thucydides, (1972). *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1, 144, (1).

³ Thucydides, (1972). *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2, 13, (2).

⁴ He Yuanguo, (2017). How Did the Athenians Fight the Peloponnesian War? — A Review and Reflection on the Study of the 'Periclean Strategy.' *Historical Research in Auhui*, 4, 5-16.

⁵ Zhang Yan, (2019). The Destruction of Agriculture in the Attica Region During the Peloponnesian War and Its Impact. *Agricultural Archaeology*, 6, 218-225.

Peninsula, disrupting agricultural production and trade activities, and thereby further undermining the internal unity of the Peloponnesian League and inciting rebellion; second, to monitor the coastline of the Peloponnese Peninsula and strike at Sparta's naval allies. The devastation inflicted on the Attica region deeply humiliated the honor-bound Athenians, and the coastal raiding strategy served to boost their morale. Since the raids were typically launched after the main Spartan forces had withdrawn from their offensive against Attica, the landing forces faced only a small garrison and the elderly and women in the cities, encountering little resistance. Additionally, they could rely on the mobility of their navy to retreat quickly. The threat of attacks from the rear and the uncertainty surrounding them dealt a severe psychological blow to the Peloponnesians, undermining the morale of the Peloponnesian League. When sailing along the peninsula's coast, the Athenian navy focused its surveillance on the waters around the Gulf of Corinth, as Corinth was a crucial ally of Sparta, and its naval strength was a vital reliance for the Peloponnesian League, which had relatively weak naval power. Athens established a naval base at Nauplia on the northern shore of the Gulf of Corinth, which can be seen as a key strategic move targeting Corinth.

In terms of negative impacts, Pericles' defensive strategy, while achieving good short-term results, also led to many serious problems that undermined Athens' strength. First, the influx of rural populations into the city exacerbated public health burdens, leading to the spread of epidemics and damaging the foundation of Athens' strength. Under the guidance of the Long Walls strategy, farmers and other groups living outside Athens abandoned their land and moved into the city. While this effectively prevented direct contact with the Peloponnesian army, it drastically increased the city's population in a short period, posing a significant challenge to public health and ultimately leading to the outbreak of plague, causing irreparable losses to Athens. The impact of the plague on Athens was primarily manifested in two aspects: first, the destruction of Athens' resources; second, the disruption of internal unity within Athens. In terms of resource destruction, the outbreak of the plague directly resulted in the loss of 4,400 heavily armed infantrymen, 300 cavalrymen, and a large number of lower-class members, with Athens losing approximately one-third of its population, suffering severe losses in military strength and labor force¹. At the same time, the rampant plague caused chaos in the public infrastructure and institutional systems of the Athenian city-state². The wealthy citizens who had previously borne the financial responsibility for city affairs were now unable to do so³, and these expenses had to be covered by public finances. While the plague's impact on Athens' financial resources had not yet shaken the city-state's fiscal foundation, its effects on the Athenians had already undermined the city-state's very foundations. With all Athenians relocated to the city, the population surged sharply. Those who had previously lived outside the city walls had no homes within the city and were forced to seek shelter elsewhere, causing severe environmental degradation within the city. The original residents of the city blamed the environmental destruction on the influx of people from outside the city, while those from outside the city, whose property and land had suffered losses while the city dwellers had not been greatly affected, grew dissatisfied. Tensions arose between the two groups, and within the peasantry, differences emerged due to the varying degrees of oppression they had suffered at the hands of Sparta, thereby undermining the unity of the city-state⁴. Additionally, it is important to note that the Athenian plague resulted in the loss of a strategically important figure—Pericles himself. From that point onward, no one was able to match Pericles' ability to control the masses and public opinion, or to guide Athens' strategic direction.

Secondly, the cost-effectiveness of naval raids was low, wasting Athens' financial resources and eroding its strategic advantages. Regardless of the era, the construction and maintenance of a navy constitute a significant portion of military expenditures, and the Peloponnesian War period was no exception. A navy with 200 warships required the construction of 10 to 15 triremes annually to replace those lost due to warfare and aging. The funds required to maintain a fleet of 200 warships were roughly equivalent to those needed to sustain an army of 100,000 heavily armed infantrymen, a force far larger than any deployed in the internal conflicts of 5th-century BC Greece. Additionally, the maintenance of shipyards and other port facilities also entailed substantial costs⁵. According to statistics, before the war began, the Athenian navy had approximately 300 warships, which highlights the financial strain of maintaining the navy. However, under Pericles' defensive strategy, such a large navy was only tasked with defensive operations and ineffective raids, which undoubtedly constituted a massive waste of Athenian fiscal resources. Some scholars have calculated that at the beginning of the war, Athens

¹ Thucydides, (1972). *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 3, 87, (3).

² Yu Shaolong, (2021). An Analysis of the Impact of the Plague on the Peloponnesian War. *Journal of Baoding University*, 2, 46-53.

³ Thucydides, (1972). *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2, 53 (2).

⁴ Zhang Yan, (2019). The Destruction of Agriculture in the Attica Region During the Peloponnesian War and Its Impact. *Agricultural Archaeology*, 6, 218-225.

⁵ Brent L. Sterling, (n.d.). Do Good Fences Make Good Neighbors? 24.

deployed approximately 200 warships to the Peloponnese and other regions, along with the expenses for the accompanying land forces. The annual expenditure for Athens was estimated to be around 2,000 talents¹. However, Pericles claimed that Athens' wealth was around 6,000 talents². It is easy to imagine the immense pressure such a massive deployment cost placed on Athens' finances. In contrast, the impact of the raids was limited due to the agricultural nature of the Peloponnese Peninsula and the technological limitations of the time, which prevented significant destruction. There are no records detailing the extent of Athens' destruction of the Peloponnese Peninsula, but as another region subjected to raids, the damage inflicted by Spartan forces on the Attica region can serve as a point of comparison for the impact of Athens' naval raids on the Peloponnese Peninsula. Some scholars have estimated that the Spartan army's ravages in the Attica region caused annual losses of approximately 50-100 talents.³ Based on similar technology and timeframes, it can be roughly inferred that the destruction caused by Athens was also close to this figure. Compared to Athens' expenditures, these losses were negligible. Even with Athens' strong financial strength, it could not withstand such a low cost-effectiveness ratio. Additionally, due to the enormous naval expenditures, Athens had to increase its demands for other forms of aid from its allies, which indirectly undermined the imperial system under Athens' rule.

3.2 Long-Term Impact

The long-term strategic impacts are not easily discernible during the initial stages of strategic implementation and manifest in various forms. Many decisions and actions taken during a war may initially appear unrelated to the strategic objectives or even contrary to the original strategic design. However, the underlying logic behind these decisions and actions may be deeply influenced by long-term strategic thinking. Pericles' defensive strategy and the ideas behind it had a profound impact on the decisions and actions taken in Athens after his death.

First, in terms of military strength. Athens relied on its naval power while neglecting the development of its military forces and strategic balance. In Pericles' strategic vision, while the long walls served as the core of the defense system, naval power was another crucial factor that enabled the entire strategy to take shape, complementing the long walls. The long walls hindered land-based enemies from directly attacking the Athenian city-state, while the powerful navy protected Athens from enemy naval attacks and ensured the safety of its maritime trade routes. Pericles' defensive strategy focused on relying on the long wall defense system and Athens' powerful navy to avoid direct combat with Spartan land forces. This strategy effectively halted Spartan land attacks in the early stages of the war, safeguarding the security of the Athenian city-state. The Athenian navy played a crucial role during this period, harassing Spartan coastal regions and maintaining naval superiority, enabling Athens to gain the upper hand in its rivalry with Sparta.

Pericles fully understood the advantages of the Athenian navy, and maritime offensives were a crucial component of his strategy. However, the overreliance on naval power made Athens' military strength overly one-dimensional and began to reveal signs of strategic imbalance. As the war dragged on, the limitations of Pericles' strategy became increasingly apparent. Although Athens' reliance on defense and the navy was effective in the short term, it failed to effectively balance the development of the army and navy. Long-term reliance on naval power led to the underdevelopment of Athens' army, putting it at a significant disadvantage in confrontations with Spartan ground forces. As a land power, Sparta's army was highly disciplined and combat-ready, while Athens' insufficient investment in its army gradually caused it to lose the initiative in the later stages of the war. Thucydides recorded Athens' land forces in his writings, stating that Athens had 13,000 heavily armed infantry, 16,000 defenders of the Long Walls, 1,200 cavalry, and 1,600 archers.⁴ The troops guarding the Long Walls cannot be considered a strict military force, as they included many young and elderly individuals. Additionally, due to the importance of the Long Walls, this force could not participate in land battles. Therefore, Athens could deploy fewer than 20,000 troops on land, a significant gap compared to the Peloponnesian League's approximately 60,000-strong army, let alone Sparta's land forces, which possessed even greater combat capabilities. This military imbalance grew more pronounced as the war progressed, especially after Sparta allied with Persia and gained sufficient financial support to develop its navy, weakening Athens' naval superiority and significantly reducing the effectiveness of its naval strategy. Sparta not only engaged Athens directly at sea but also maintained its land-based advantage, preventing Athens from achieving a decisive

¹ Donald Kagan, (1974). *The Archidamian War*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, Third Printing, 1996, pp. 37–40; p. 40.

² Thucydides, (1972). *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2, 24, (1).

³ Thorne, J. A., (2001). Warfare and Agriculture: The Economic Impact of Devastation in Classical Greece. *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, (42), 225–253.

⁴ Thucydides, (1972). *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2, 13, (6)(7).

victory throughout the war. Pericles sought to use the attrition caused by the long wall defense and naval raids to make Sparta realize that Athens was invincible. This strategic thinking led to a decline in the importance of the army in the Athenian military, and the high costs of the navy left Athens without sufficient funds to build a larger army. However, Pericles failed to realize that without defeating the Peloponnesian League's army on land, it was almost impossible to defeat Sparta. For a land-based city-state like Sparta, the importance of its army and its view of the army were the same as Athens' view of its navy. Only by winning in the opponent's area of strength could it force the opponent to sign a treaty. Otherwise, the Athenian fleet's raids on the Peloponnese would be as unsuccessful as its invasion of Attica.

Additionally, due to the absolute superiority of its navy on the battlefield, Athens had no shortage of motivation to continue building its navy. However, from a strategic perspective, the true rival of the Athenian navy was never the Spartan navy, but rather the Persian navy across the Aegean Sea. Due to the limitations of their production and lifestyle, the Peloponnesian League lacked the sufficient funds to build a fleet capable of directly confronting Athens. From the perspective of overall strength, the true power capable of such a feat was the Persian Empire, and Sparta's ability to build a powerful fleet relied on financial support from the Persian Empire. From this perspective, Athens did not recognize the threat posed by the Persian Empire. If Athens had taken precautions against the Persian threat, it might not have dispatched its main fleet to launch the disastrous expedition.

The second is a possibility analysis. Confidence in the core of the long wall defense may have altered Athens' risk preference calculations. When people are continuously in a safe environment, objective safety will continue to reinforce subjective safety in their minds, creating a situation where subjective safety is constantly generated as long as the objective safety carrier exists, thereby leading to a general sense of optimism. Since the long wall effectively protected the safety of the Athenian city-state during the war, Athens developed unwavering confidence in its defensive capabilities. This confidence gradually evolved into a strategic defensive mindset, causing a powerful nation to distort its risk calculations and adopt offensive and risky actions¹. The influence of Pericles' defensive strategy extended beyond the war period and had a profound impact on Athens' strategic decisions in later years. Although Pericles' strategic thinking was primarily defensive, emphasizing the avoidance of risky military actions, Athens' strategic approach gradually shifted after his death, particularly following the signing of the Nicias Treaty. After the treaty was signed, Athens and Sparta remained each other's primary rivals, but the strategic situation at the time was more favorable to Athens. First, Sparta's important ally, Corinth, and other city-states refused to cease hostilities with Athens, expressing strong dissatisfaction with Sparta's peace negotiations. Second, the treaty between Sparta and the powerful city-state of Argos was about to expire. Argos was located at the entrance to the Corinthian Isthmus and could completely block the strait if it chose to do so. In opposing Sparta, Athens and Argos shared common interests. As a powerful land power, Argos possessed the land forces Athens desperately needed to fight Sparta, and Argos had already begun preparations to form an alliance against Sparta. For Athens, an alliance with Argos would compensate for its lack of land forces and isolate Sparta on the Peloponnese Peninsula, presenting an excellent opportunity to defeat Sparta. Although Nicias believed that delaying the battle would increase Athens' advantage, other citizens demanded a more proactive security policy. During this period, Athens' strategic decision-makers began to favor more aggressive and risky strategies, seeking to break the stalemate with Sparta by expanding their sphere of influence. The Sicilian Expedition was a classic example of this shift in strategic thinking. Although the expedition appeared to align with Athens' objectives of expanding its power and striking at Spartan allies, it actually deviated from Pericles' original defensive mindset, becoming a risky and costly offensive operation. It is possible that the presence of the navy and the Long Walls led the Athenian people to overestimate their subjective sense of security relative to the objective security situation. The Athenian people endured difficult times while the Peloponnesians ravaged the Attica region, and they sought to bring the war to Peloponnesian soil to avenge the destruction inflicted on Attica. Even if the Argos alliance failed, Athens would not suffer significant losses, as the Long Walls remained intact and the Athenian navy was still intact, ensuring Athens' safety. Under the leadership of the radical Alcibiades, Athens eventually allied with Argos and other city-states, but the conservative Nicias was more restrained in aiding Argos, and the Argos alliance was ultimately defeated by Sparta.

In early 415 BC, Athens dispatched a large army to Sicily, over 800 miles from its mainland. According to Pericles, this would have been an extremely risky endeavor, as such an expedition would undoubtedly pose significant strategic risks to Athens. However, under the influence of the long walls and a powerful navy, people generally believed that the risks involved were limited. Here, the Athenians made a fatal mistake: they separated the defensive role of the Long Walls from that of the navy. In their eyes, the Long Walls were a symbol of safety; with such a sturdy fortification, nothing could harm them, and they could pursue more wealth and glory. This

¹ Brent L. Sterling, (n.d.). Do Good Fences Make Good Neighbors? 42.

subjective sense of security had already affected people's judgment of objective security. Athens' security depended on the combined defense of the walls and the navy. Sending the main army to such a distant region while the war with Sparta was still ongoing was not a wise move. Even if one could ignore the weak strength of the Spartan navy, one should not have disregarded the Persian Empire across the sea. Ultimately, Alcibiades' speech gained the approval of the majority. This serves as an example of how strategic defense can exacerbate a great power's tendency to distort risk calculations and adopt provocative actions. While the surface motive was to aid an ally, disrupt Sparta's trade routes and food supplies, and defeat Syracuse before it attacked Athens, the expedition was more accurately aimed at increasing the city-state's wealth and power. However, Syracuse proved to be a wealthy, powerful, and challenging target. Ultimately, this war severely undermined Athens' power base, with Athens losing a massive army of 45,000 men and its main naval fleet in the campaign. Imagine if Athens had not sought distant targets but instead used this force to attack the Peloponnesian League—could it have achieved better results?

4. Comparative Analysis: The Strategic Choices of Athens and Sparta

Pericles' defensive strategy and Sparta's military strategy were fundamentally different. First, the core of Pericles' strategy was defense and attrition. He knew that Athens could not match Sparta's powerful army on land, so he adopted a defensive strategy of avoiding land battles, holding the walls, and relying on Athens' powerful navy to harass and strike Sparta, forcing it into a protracted war of attrition. Athens maintained its war resources by controlling maritime trade and tribute from its allies, aiming to retain strategic initiative in the prolonged war of attrition. In contrast, Sparta's strategy was entirely opposite. As a land power, Sparta relied on its powerful land forces to pursue an aggressive offensive strategy. They sought to defeat the enemy's main forces through large-scale land battles, particularly by engaging the Athenian army in direct combat in the Attica region, destroying Athens' agricultural base, and forcing it to surrender. Spartan tactics emphasized swift victories, seeking to end conflicts through decisive battles as quickly as possible. This strategy aligned with Sparta's military capabilities and resource constraints, as it could not sustain the high costs of prolonged warfare like Athens, which relied on maritime resources and trade.

In terms of resource utilization, Athens' naval strategy was costly, dependent on substantial fiscal resources, and had limited effectiveness. While naval raids inflicted some damage on Spartan agricultural production, they did not decisively influence Spartan strategic decisions. In contrast, Spartan land warfare was relatively low-cost, with its army consuming fewer resources when fighting on home soil and able to quickly demonstrate military superiority. In terms of the sustainability of the war, Athens' strategy emphasized protracted warfare, while Sparta sought to resolve the conflict in the short term through overwhelming superiority. Pericles' defensive strategy helped Athens avoid a decisive land battle in the short term, but due to neglecting internal crises (such as the outbreak of plague) and long-term risks (such as overreliance on the navy and excessive fiscal expenditure), it ultimately led to Athens' decline. Although Sparta was unable to defeat Athens in the early stages, as the war dragged on, it gained financial support by allying with Persia and ultimately broke Athens' naval superiority through the rise of its own naval power, securing victory in the war.

5. Modern Strategic Implications

Pericles' defensive strategy played a crucial role in defending Athens during the Peloponnesian War, but it failed to achieve long-term success due to multiple internal and external factors. By analyzing this defensive strategy and comparing it with Spartan strategies of the same period, we can draw some insights for modern strategic design.

First, in terms of balance, it is essential to strike a balance between offense and defense. Pericles' strategy was overly defensive, relying on the Long Walls and the navy to avoid a decisive land battle with Sparta. While effective in the short term, the lack of sufficient offensive capabilities eventually led Athens to lose its initiative. In modern warfare, strategic planners must find a balance between offense and defense. While pure defense can temporarily ensure safety, offensive strategies help weaken the enemy's combat strength and resources. Sometimes, offense is the best defense, and appropriate offensive strategies can help a nation gain strategic initiative.

Second, in terms of adaptability, it is essential to prepare for flexible responses to unknown events and long-term dynamic adjustments. Pericles failed to anticipate the outbreak of the plague when designing his strategy, and this sudden external event dealt a severe blow to Athens' strength, weakening its combat capabilities. Modern strategists must leave sufficient room for flexibility to accommodate potential uncontrollable factors. In today's complex globalized environment, wars are not only influenced by military strength but may also undergo significant changes due to political, economic, or natural disasters. Strategic planning should include mechanisms for rapid response and adjustment to address potential crises. Additionally, as wars persist, the war situation continues to evolve. Athens' defensive strategy lacked sufficient dynamic adjustments in the later stages of the war, which led to its strategic framework, though initially successful in the short term, failing to sustain its

effectiveness in the long run. Pericles' strategic framework was meticulously designed but lacked flexibility, resulting in rigidity after prolonged implementation. Modern strategic planners should establish flexible strategic frameworks to ensure timely adjustments in the face of new challenges, thereby maintaining long-term competitive advantages.

Finally, in terms of environmental awareness, it is essential to allocate resources reasonably and guard against multiple threats. The Athenian navy was extremely costly, but its raids failed to yield the expected returns, greatly increasing Athens' financial pressure. In modern strategy, the rational allocation of resources, especially how to efficiently utilize limited resources, is of critical importance. Prolonged conflicts are costly and place enormous pressure on the domestic economy. Therefore, modern strategy must not only consider the deployment of military forces but also pay attention to the economic situation to ensure the efficient use of resources and avoid financial pressures that could undermine the war effort. Strict control over military spending and war budgets is an important aspect of avoiding strategic failure. Additionally, Athens either failed to anticipate or overlooked Sparta's determination to build a navy and Persia's intervention, exposing its limitations in environmental perception. Modern strategy involves dimensions far beyond those of the Peloponnesian War era. The current world is characterized by numerous non-traditional security issues and non-state actors, and new forms of warfare and means of warfare pose threats equivalent to traditional military threats, with lower thresholds and greater effectiveness. In the process of formulating strategy, it is necessary to thoroughly assess the possible forms of strategic competition that may arise. It is not only necessary to focus on the direct threats posed by current adversaries but also to conduct thorough assessments and precautions against potential external forces and non-traditional threats, designing response mechanisms and systems to address different types of threats.

6. Summary

Pericles' strategy relied on the long walls to protect Athens from land attacks while utilizing a powerful navy to maintain pressure on hostile forces. This strategy produced different effects in the short and long term. In the short term, Pericles' strategy basically achieved its original goal, effectively defending the city-state of Athens and suppressing the attacks of the Peloponnesians. However, in the long run, Pericles' strategy led the Athenian leadership and people to make wrong strategic judgments and distort their assessment of risks, which ultimately resulted in significant losses for Athens. Through an analysis of Pericles' strategy, we can recognize that the overall impact of a strategy is not merely reflected in its design and execution. Even plans that deviate from the original strategy may be influenced by its underlying strategic thinking. This provides valuable insights for modern nations in designing and executing strategies, and incorporating the influence of the post-strategic era into strategic design will be a new challenge that modern strategic planning must address.

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The Challenges Bedeviling the Fight for Climate Justice in Cameroon: A Critique

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Abstract

Climate justice in Cameroon addresses the urgent need to confront the disproportionate impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities, particularly indigenous peoples and local populations dependent on natural resources. It recognizes the interconnectedness of environmental protection, social equity, and sustainable development. In Cameroon, climate justice involves ensuring access to and control over natural resources while combating environmental injustices such as deforestation, pollution, and the adverse effects of climate change on livelihoods. This study explores the multifaceted challenges hindering the effective pursuit of climate justice in Cameroon. The background highlights climate change as a critical threat to Cameroon's population, economy, and environment, exacerbated by institutional weaknesses and environmental degradation such as deforestation. The research problem centers on the inadequacy of legal frameworks, limited public participation, and poor implementation of climate policies that obstruct the fight for climate justice. The main objective is to identify key obstacles and propose actionable solutions to enhance climate justice efforts in Cameroon. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study analyzes policy documents, institutional reports, and stakeholder consultations. Major findings reveal institutional capacity constraints, lack of coordination, corruption, and the dominance of fossil fuel subsidies as critical barriers. The study concludes that Cameroon's climate justice agenda remains limited by systemic and governance issues despite existing strategies. It recommends strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing institutional capacities, promoting inclusive public engagement, phasing out fuel subsidies, and encouraging private sector participation to achieve equitable climate outcomes.

Keywords: challenges, bedeviling, climate, justice, climate justice

1. Introduction

Climate change stands out as one of the most severe global sustainable development problems affecting mankind and requiring global efforts to tackle same. Climate change is caused by the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs)¹ in the atmosphere that serve as a blanket, preventing heat from escaping and thereby causing global warming with consequential impacts. Climate change is defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

¹ "Greenhouse gases" means those gaseous constituents of the atmosphere, both natural and anthropogenic, that absorb and re-emits infrared radiation. See Art.1(5) of the UNFCCC, 1992. The Convention concerns all GHGs not covered by the 1987 Montreal Protocol to the United Nations Convention on Protection of the Ozone layer.

Change (IPCC) as “a change in the state of the climate that can be identified by changes in the mean or the variability of its properties that persist for an extended period typically a decade or longer”¹. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 1992² defines climate change as change of climate attributed to human activity directly or indirectly that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate changes observed over comparable periods of time. It also refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activities. Thus, human-induced climate change represents a critical global environmental problem³. Among the environmental challenges, climate change is the biggest and most critical of our time, and currently constitutes one of the hottest issues of the 21st Century being debated globally.⁴

Countries continue to experience hotter and colder weather, rising sea levels, rising temperature, drought and desertification, fluctuating rainfall pattern, dwindling crop yields and crop failure, famine, poverty, increasing natural disasters (notably flood, diseases outbreak, water scarcity, extreme weather events, etc.) like never before all of which are provoked by climate change. The latter has mutated from being an environmental problem to a sustainable development challenge, affecting almost all sectors of national economies. Indeed, climate change poses severe environmental and socio-economic threats in all the regions of the world and Africa in particular. Researchers⁵ have identified Africa as the continent most vulnerable to climate change despite her minimal contribution to the emission of GHGs that are responsible for climate change. Member States of the Africa Union (AU) had long acknowledged Africa’s vulnerability to climate change in their Declaration on Climate Change and Development in Africa adopted in 2007 and expressed threats that it poses to the environment, the

¹ Mzaweba R. and Kotze L, (editors), (2009). *Environmental Governance and Climate Change in Africa*. Pushkin square, Addis Ababa, p.7.

² Art. 1(2) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 1992. The UNFCCC was adopted on May 9, 1992 and entered into force on 21 March 1994. Cameroon ratified the UNFCCC on 14 October 1994. For commentaries, See Nakhouda S. et al., (2014), “Climate finance: is it making a difference? A review of the effectiveness of Multilateral Climate Funds,” Report, Overseas Development Institute, London, p. 20, www.odi.org, (retrieved on 14/01/2014); OECD, (2008), op. cit., p. 5; Busingye G., (2009), “Gender roles, land degradation and climate change: A Ugandan case study,” in Mwebaza R. and Louis K. J., (dir.) *Environmental Governance and Climate Change in Africa: Legal Perspectives*, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, p. 23; Watson J. E. M. (2011), “Planning for Species Conservation in a Time of Climate Change,” in Blanco J. and Kheradmand H., “Climate Change — Research and Technology for Adaptation and Mitigation,” InTech, Rijeka, p. 23.

³ Ibid note 4, p.7, see also article 1(2) of the UNFCCC.

⁴ See Mwebaza R. (2009a), “The impact of climate change in East Africa”, in Mwebaza R. and Louis K. J., (dir.) *Environmental Governance and Climate Change in Africa: Legal Perspectives*, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, p. 4; Parry M. et al., (2009b), “Climate Change and Hunger Responding to the Challenge”, World Food Programme, Rome, p. 4, available at http://www.preventionweb.net/files/12007_wfp212536.pdf, (retrieved on 31/10/2013); OECD, (2008), “Climate Change Mitigation: What do we do?”, OECD, p. 3; Crow D. A. and Maxwell T. B., (2014), “Culture, Politics and Climate Change: How information shapes our common future”, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London & New York, p. 1; Hall C., (2014), “Beyond, Gloom and Doom or Hope and Possibility: Making Room for both Sacrifice and Reward in our Visions of a Low-carbon Future”, in Deserai A. Crow and Maxwell T. Boykoff, “Culture, Politics and Climate Change: How information shapes our common future”, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London & New York, p. 23; UNEP, (2014b), op. cit., p. 6; Laing T., (2014), “Assessing the impact of institutional conditions upon REDD+”, Doctoral Thesis, Environmental Economics, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, p. 15; Somorin O. A. et al., (2011a), “The Congo Basin forests in a changing climate: Policy discourses on adaptation and mitigation (REDD+)”, *Global Environ. Change*, Elsevier Ltd., p. 1; Blanco J. and Kheradmand H., (2011), “Climate Change — Research and Technology for Adaptation and Mitigation”, InTech, Rijeka, p. ix; Rustam B. et al., (2011), “Space Technology as the Tool in Climate Change Monitoring System”, in Blanco J. and Kheradmand H., “Climate Change — Research and Technology for Adaptation and Mitigation”, InTech, Rijeka, pp. 115 and 116; Pittock A. B., op. cit., p. xiii; Bodegom V. et al., (Eds), (2009), “Forests and Climate Change: adaptation and mitigation”, Tropenbos International, Wageningen, p. v; Duncan R. et al., (2010), “Climate change: impacts and adaptation in England’s woodlands”, Research Note of Forestry Commission England, Pedunculate oak, p. 2; Ouro-Bodi O.G. (2014) “Les Etats et la protection internationale de l’environnement: La question du changement climatique”, PhD Thesis, Université de Bordeaux, p. i.

⁵ Ngwome G.F., (2023). “Soil Security Concerns in the Era of Climate Change: An Assessment of African Union’s Legal Framework for Sustainable Soil Management and Implications for Combating Climate Change in Africa,” *LEAD Journal*, special Issue, Vol. 19/1, p. 268. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25501/SOAS.00038950>; J. C. Nkomo J.C., Nyong A.O. and Kulindwa K., (2006). *The Impacts of Climate Change in Africa*, Final Draft Submitted to The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, pp. 3-8, available at http://mediadon.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2009-Chapter_5_The_Impacts_of_Climate_Change_in_Africa-5.pdf, (accessed on 15 November 2023).

wellbeing of Africans and the socio-economic progress of the continent. The IPCC¹ and the AU² have expressed the same concerns about the threats posed by climate change in dry areas of sub-Saharan Africa, where the majority of the populations depend on rain-fed agriculture.

Cameroon is one of the African countries most affected by climate change. The vulnerability of Africa and Cameroon in particular is due to at least four factors. The one is that Africa and Cameroon in particular depend on climate-sensitive activities such as rain-fed agriculture, harvesting of non-timber forestry products and high dependence on natural resources. Another factor is the low adaptive capacity of African countries and Cameroon in particular owing to inadequate technology, know-how and finance. Other factors include poverty, low level of education and limited access to credit facilities and bad governance³. Although these characterize the vulnerability of the African continent and Cameroon in particular to climate change, the factors and consequential impacts are not uniform across the continent and across all the regions of Cameroon. In other words, vulnerability to climate change in Africa and specifically in Cameroon is not uniform. Different ecological zones and social classes experience the impacts of climate change in different magnitudes. With respect to social groups, the old, youths and women are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and also suffer disproportionately in adapting to such impacts because of their age range, financial capability and the nature of their economic activities.

Despite the magnitude of the threats posed by climate change, responses to it from political leaders, and from the public at large, have been inadequate. There is a consensus among scientists that the balance of evidence points towards discernible anthropogenic activities that are responsible for global climate change.⁴ Notwithstanding the ambitious global agreements such as the UNFCCC and its enabling instruments such as the Paris Agreement of 2015,⁵ and the various annual conference of parties (COPs), emission of GHGs continues to rise. At each annual COP to the UNFCCC, the negotiating parties battle selfishly to protect their respective interests, and the prospects of a global climate regime which ensures that emissions reduce to a safe level and does so equitably appears to be a distant hope. The UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement and the now redundant Kyoto Protocol contain obligations for states to implement climate change mitigation and adaptation actions. For example, to ensure the observance and enforcement of the UNFCCC, the international community converged in Kyoto and, with the exception of some major industrialised world powers, in the example of the United States, and Canada who withdrew from it with effect from December 15, 2012, adopted the Kyoto Protocol⁶. As a consequence, the United States did not become bound by any emission limitation and reduction commitment. The United States was then the largest GHG emitter (now surpassed by China) and its GHG emissions represented a large share of the emissions of developed states that the Kyoto protocol sought to regulate. Notwithstanding the fact that developing countries contribute less to the total global GHG emissions, they are identified as the most vulnerable and those who suffer the brunt of the impacts of climate change.

Climate justice movement emerged in 1999⁷, and subsequently began gaining more grounds in 2009 during the UNFCCC COP in Copenhagen, Denmark. The Copenhagen Conference⁸ created the Climate Justice Action (CJA) Network. It proposed civil disobedience and direct action to enforce its implementation and many climate

¹ Martin L Parry et al., (eds), (2007). IPCC, *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 12 and 13.

² African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032), p. 10. <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42276-doc-CC_Strategy_and_Action_Plan_2022-2032_23_06_22_ENGLISH_compressed.pdf>, (accessed on 22 November 2023).

³ See generally Ngwome G.F., op. cit., p. 268.

⁴ Tamasang C. F., (2009). "The Clean Development Mechanism and Forestry Projects in Africa: The Case of Forestry Projects in Cameroon", in Mwebaza R. and Liou K. J., (dir.), *Environmental Governance and Climate Change in Africa: Legal Perspectives*, Institute for Security Studies, p. 172.

⁵ The Paris Agreement was adopted on 12 December 2015, signed on 22 April 2016 and entered into force on 04 November 2016. Cameroon ratified the Paris Agreement on 29 Jul 2016.

⁶ Tamasang C. F., (2009), op. cit., p. 172.

⁷ Widick R., (2021). *The Climate Justice Movement*, The International Institute of Climate Action and Theory, available at <https://iicat.org/climate-justice-movement>, (accessed on 22 of November 2023).

⁸ Heinrich Böll Foundation, (2009). "Climate Change and Justice: On the road to Copenhagen", Archived 21 December 2018 at the Wayback Machine.

activists used the slogan “system change, not climate change”¹. However, ten years after the Earth Summit in Rio-de Janeiro 1992, a conference was held in Johannesburg where the Bali Principles of Climate Justice² were adopted. In 2004, the Durban Group for Climate Justice was formed at an international meeting in Durban, South Africa where representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations and people’s movements discussed realistic policies for addressing climate change. At the 2007 Bali Conference, the global coalition “Climate Justice Now” was founded, and, in 2008, the Global Humanitarian Forum focused on climate justice at its inaugural meeting in Geneva. In April 2010, the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth that took place in Tiquipaya, Bolivia, gathered global civil society and governments, and

¹ At the Copenhagen summit there was a 100,000 march for “System Change not climate change” with masses and NGOs advocating on addressing climate justice through changing the system.

² The Bali Principles of Climate Justice were adopted by an international coalition of groups including CorpWatch, Third World Network, Oil Watch, the Indigenous Environmental Network, etc., during the preparatory negotiations for the Earth Summit in Bali in June 2002. The Principles of Climate Justice which capture the whole idea of justice in the context of combating climate change consist of 27 core principles that underlie the concept of climate justice. The 27 core principles of climate justice include: Affirming the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, Climate Justice insists that communities have the right to be free from climate change, its related impacts and other forms of ecological destruction; Climate Justice affirms the need to reduce with an aim to eliminate the production of greenhouse gases and associated local pollutants; Climate Justice affirms the rights of indigenous peoples and affected communities to represent and speak for themselves; Climate Justice affirms that governments are responsible for addressing climate change in a manner that is both democratically accountable to their people and in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities; Climate Justice demands that communities, particularly affected communities play a leading role in national and international processes to address climate change; Climate Justice opposes the role of transnational corporations in shaping unsustainable production and consumption patterns and lifestyles, as well as their role in unduly influencing national and international decision-making; Climate Justice calls for the recognition of a principle of ecological debt that industrialized governments and transnational corporations owe the rest of the world as a result of their appropriation of the planet’s capacity to absorb greenhouse gases; Affirming the principle of ecological debt, Climate Justice demands that fossil fuel and extractive industries be held strictly liable for all past and current life-cycle impacts relating to the production of greenhouse gases and associated local pollutants; Affirming the principle of Ecological debt, Climate Justice protects the rights of victims of climate change and associated injustices to receive full compensation, restoration, and reparation for loss of land, livelihood and other damages; Climate Justice calls for a moratorium on all new fossil fuel exploration and exploitation; a moratorium on the construction of new nuclear power plants; the phase out of the use of nuclear power worldwide; and a moratorium on the construction of large hydro schemes; Climate Justice calls for clean, renewable, locally controlled and low-impact energy resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for all living things; Climate Justice affirms the right of all people, including the poor, women, rural and indigenous peoples, to have access to affordable and sustainable energy; Climate Justice affirms that any market-based or technological solution to climate change, such as carbon-trading and carbon sequestration, should be subject to principles of democratic accountability, ecological sustainability and social justice; Climate Justice affirms the right of all workers employed in extractive, fossil fuel and other greenhouse-gas producing industries to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood based on unsustainable production and unemployment; Climate Justice affirms the need for solutions to climate change that do not externalize costs to the environment and communities, and are in line with the principles of a just transition; Climate Justice is committed to preventing the extinction of cultures and biodiversity due to climate change and its associated impacts; Climate Justice affirms the need for socio-economic models that safeguard the fundamental rights to clean air, land, water, food and healthy ecosystems; Climate Justice affirms the rights of communities dependent on natural resources for their livelihood and cultures to own and manage the same in a sustainable manner, and is opposed to the commodification of nature and its resources; Climate Justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias; Climate Justice recognizes the right to self-determination of Indigenous Peoples, and their right to control their lands, including sub-surface land, territories and resources and the right to the protection against any action or conduct that may result in the destruction or degradation of their territories and cultural way of life; Climate Justice affirms the right of indigenous peoples and local communities to participate effectively at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation, the strict enforcement of principles of prior informed consent, and the right to say “No; Climate Justice affirms the need for solutions that address women’s rights; Climate Justice affirms the right of youth as equal partners in the movement to address climate change and its associated impacts; Climate Justice opposes military action, occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, water, oceans, peoples and cultures, and other life forms, especially as it relates to the fossil fuel industry’s role in this respect; Climate Justice calls for the education of present and future generations, emphasizes climate, energy, social and environmental issues, while basing itself on real-life experiences and an appreciation of diverse cultural perspectives; Climate Justice requires that we, as individuals and communities, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth’s resources, conserve our need for energy; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles, re-thinking our ethics with relation to the environment and the Mother Earth; while utilizing clean, renewable, low-impact energy; and ensuring the health of the natural world for present and future generations; Climate Justice affirms the rights of unborn generations to natural resources, a stable climate and a healthy planet.”

published the “People’s Agreement” calling among other things, for greater climate justice.¹ Recently in December 2018, the People’s Demand for Climate Justice, signed by 292,000 individuals and 366 organizations, called upon government delegates at the Conference of Parties (COP) 24 to comply with a list of six climate justice demands.²

The UNFCCC in article 7 holds on to the decisions of the COPs and supporting protocols and agreements to ensure the ultimate objective enshrined in article 2 of the Convention is achieved. While the Kyoto protocol called for a top-down approach, the Paris Agreement combines the top-down and bottom-up approach to address the matter by giving states the voluntary basis for meeting emission reduction targets while at the same time ensuring sustainable development and climate justice. Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for peace, justice, and strong institutions³. It therefore calls for the primacy of justice, particularly climate justice, to anchor on states as a responsibility to ensure environmental peace through effective and efficient strong judicial institutions.

Climate litigation is being used as a vehicle for enhancing and enforcing emission reduction and commitments pledged by governments, but also as a tool to cause businesses and individuals to cut down on their rates of GHG emissions that are responsible for climate change. It has been reported that globally, 73 climate-related litigation cases have been filed challenging government to enhance their responses to climate change.⁴ Judgments have been handed down in 8 of such cases with 6 of them producing favourable results for climate action.⁵ Apart from climate suits directed at governments, a large chunk of such cases are filed against major GHG or carbon emitters mostly fossil fuel companies, but also companies in the transport, agriculture, plastic and finance sectors. These statistics speak volume of the crucial role that climate litigation plays in enhancing climate justice across the globe.

Cameroon ratified the UNFCCC on 19th October 1994, the Kyoto protocol on 28th August 2002, the Paris Agreement on 29th July 2016, and entered into force on 4th November 2016. In accordance with Article 45 of the Cameroon Constitution⁶, Cameroon is bound as a matter of international law and national law to enforce and sanction non-compliance with any violations of these laws (UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement), hence the obligation to enhance climate justice. Thus, as much as there is a paucity of write-ups under Cameroonian law with regards to climate justice, then climate justice development under Cameroonian law will be impressive supposing the law can help curb greenhouse gas emissions, ensure fairness to the vulnerable, prevent further actions through deterrence, and guarantee a certain degree of climatic equilibrium and survival of the human race.

Cameroon, as a party to international climate agreements such as the Paris Agreement, has incorporated various environmental and natural resource laws that implicitly cover climate change issues. However, the country lacks a comprehensive, dedicated climate change statute, which limits the scope and effectiveness of climate litigation. The admissibility of climate-related cases is further constrained by restrictive conditions on standing and capacity to act, particularly for civil society organizations and individuals, who face significant barriers to accessing courts in environmental matters. Despite these challenges, existing laws on environmental protection, natural resource management, and administrative procedures provide some legal avenues for holding the state and private actors accountable for climate-related harms. Moreover, Cameroon’s institutional framework, including the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development and the National Observatory on Climate Change, plays a key role in shaping climate policy and enforcement. The growing awareness of climate change impacts and the need for legislative reforms suggest that climate litigation in Cameroon will increasingly rely on a combination of environmental, administrative, and human rights laws to establish responsibility and seek remedies for climate-related damages.

2. Procedural Challenges Affecting the Fight for Climate Justice in Cameroon

¹ World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, People’s Agreement. Archived 5 July 2011 at the Wayback Machine April 22, Cochabamba, Bolivia.

² “The People’s Demands for Climate Justice”. The People’s Demands for Climate Justice. Archived from the original on 8 December 2018. Retrieved 8 December 2018.

³ UNDP. (2015). “Sustainable Development Goals”.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Law No.96/6 of 18 January 1996 to amend the Constitution of 2nd June 1972 as subsequently amended by Law No.2008/001 of 14 April 2008, Article 45, “Duly approved or ratified treaties and international agreements shall, following their publication, override national laws, provided the other party implements the said treaty or agreement”.

The procedural challenges of climate justice in Cameroon notably impede effective climate litigation and broader climate governance. A critical discussion of these challenges is as follows:

a) Inconsistent Environmental Laws

Cameroon's environmental and climate-related legal framework is fragmented and inconsistent, lacking comprehensive and structured legislation that explicitly addresses climate change.¹ Multiple laws touch on environment and natural resources but do so only implicitly regarding climate impacts, with no overarching law requiring climate integration into public policy or planning.² This inconsistency creates gaps and overlaps that hinder coherent climate action and litigation, as it is difficult for courts to apply clear standards or hold actors accountable in the absence of precise rules. For example, forestry laws do not adequately prioritize climate mitigation or adaptation, which weakens litigation claims related to deforestation impacts.³

b) Limited Access to Justice

Legal standing and procedural requirements severely restrict who can bring climate-related cases in Cameroon. Environmental law prioritizes public authorities and approved associations, effectively excluding many NGOs, communities, and individuals unless they meet stringent criteria like official approval or direct legal interest⁴. This limits civil society's ability to challenge harmful projects or enforcement failures, despite their frontline experience with climate impacts. The Ministry of Forests and Wildlife often dominates environmental litigation, further marginalizing grassroots actors. Such barriers constrict procedural justice by reducing participation and representation of affected populations in climate matters.⁵

c) Difficulty Establishing Causation

As in many jurisdictions, establishing the direct causal link between specific environmental harm and climate change or particular actors is complex and technically demanding. Cameroon faces additional difficulties due to limited scientific data, lack of specialized expertise, and weak state capacity for environmental monitoring and climate impact assessment. This complicates plaintiffs' ability to prove that specific actions or omissions caused the harm they allege, reducing the effectiveness of litigation strategies that rely on precise attribution of responsibility. Without robust evidence, courts may dismiss cases or defer to governmental and corporate claims.⁶

d) Lack of Specialized Knowledge

Courts and legal practitioners in Cameroon generally lack specialized knowledge of climate science, environmental law, and the technicalities of climate policy enforcement.⁷ This knowledge gap affects judicial capacity to understand complex climate cases, evaluate scientific evidence, and interpret evolving climate regulations, which are themselves in flux. Poor communication between judiciary and environmental agencies exacerbates this problem, leading to inconsistent case outcomes and limiting the judiciary's role as an effective arbiter in climate matters. It also constrains strategic legal developments advancing climate justice through litigation.⁸

3. Legislative and Policy Challenges Affecting the Fight for Climate Justice in Cameroon

Ensuring access to justice regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation is central to resolving climate-related disputes. Moreover, within this framework, it is essential to encompass proactive measures aimed at reducing environmental harm, fostering sustainable development, and upholding the right to a healthy

¹ Akoted-Daniel M., (2025). Combating Climate Change to Promote the Right to Health in Cameroon: A Legal Appraisal of Practical Measures and Conundrums Faced. *Law and Economy*, 4(5), pp. 24-32:30.

² *Ibid.*

³ Idiatou B, Roussel L., (2025). Normative Pluralism and Socio-Environmental Vulnerability in Cameroon: A Literature Review of Urban Land Policy Issues and Challenges. *Urban Science*, 9(6), pp. 219-245:230.

⁴ Innocent N, Jude N, Gerald K., (2019.). Diagnosing climate adaptation constraints in rural subsistence farming systems in Cameroon: gender and institutional perspectives. *Sustainability*, 11(14), pp. 3767-3787.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Lotsmart, Regina N., (2023). Climate change, water availability, and the burden of rural women's triple role in Muyuka, Cameroon. *Global Environmental Change*, 82, 102709.

⁸ *Ibid.*

environment.¹ Greenpeace Africa's launch of the Cameroon Climate Justice Movement in 2024 mobilized civil society and local communities to demand government action against massive deforestation causing climate and social harm. Despite this, institutions have been slow to respond meaningfully, illustrating the political, institutional, and legislative inertia curbing climate justice.²

a) Legislative Challenges

Cameroon has signed and ratified international climate instruments, namely the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement. Cameroon's legislative framework is fragmented and lacks comprehensive climate-specific laws. Climate change issues are mostly addressed implicitly in various environmental and natural resource laws but not in a unified or explicitly integrated manner, which complicates enforcement and coordinated action. Moreover, weak implementation of existing laws, poor public participation in legislative processes, and corruption undermine legislative effectiveness. For example, despite constitutional recognition of environmental rights, enforcement gaps allow continued deforestation and environmental degradation affecting communities.

b) Policy Challenges

Policy implementation is hindered by lack of coordination and integration of climate change into sectoral and fiscal policies. Cameroon lacks a regulatory framework that systematically mainstreams climate risks into planning, budgeting, and procurement, impeding prioritization of climate projects. There is also poor coordination between central and local governments leading to duplication and inefficiencies. Additionally, the private sector's participation is limited due to an inadequate Public-Private Partnership framework and underdeveloped capital markets for climate finance.

4. Institutional Challenges Affecting the Fight for Climate Justice in Cameroon

Institutions face capacity constraints, unclear roles, and governance weaknesses. Ministries and agencies operate in silos, with overlapping mandates that reduce synergy in climate action. Interactions between government bodies and civil society organizations are weak, restricting collaborative problem-solving. Corruption and lack of political will exacerbate institutional inefficiency. For instance, local community demands on stopping deforestation have been repeatedly unmet, highlighting institutional inertia.

5. Inadequate Finance and Funding Sources

Financial constraints are a major bottleneck. Cameroon estimates needing over US\$32 billion until 2030 for adaptation projects but heavily depends on external funding, which is uncertain and often slow to materialize. Public financing frameworks do not incorporate climate risk budgeting, and there is limited mobilization of domestic resources or private investment. The insufficiency of funds limits implementation of adaptation and mitigation projects, including climate-smart agriculture and resilient infrastructure.

6. Political Challenges

Political will is inconsistent and subject to competing interests. The influence of fossil fuel industries, subsidies on fuels, and prioritization of short-term economic gains hinder climate ambition. Corruption and lack of transparency further weaken trust in government commitments. Electoral politics and governance instability may overshadow sustained climate policies. The political neglect of local voices, including indigenous peoples affected by deforestation and climate change, weakens justice and equitable participation in decision-making.

7. Judicial Challenges

The judiciary in Cameroon faces a lack of climate-specific jurisprudence, limited access to environmental justice, and procedural hurdles. Standing rules restrict community or civil society litigation, and judges often lack scientific expertise to adjudicate complex climate cases. Enforcement of environmental rights is weak, and corruption or political influence can affect judicial independence. The procedural complexities and lack of climate-focused capacity hinders effective claim resolution on climate harms.

8. High Cost

Litigation on climate change, similar to any other type of litigation, involves costs depending on the cause of action, complexity and duration of the suit.³ In some jurisdictions, a litigant may be asked to provide security for

¹ Peel J and Osofsky HM, (2020). Climate Change Litigation. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 16(1), pp. 21–38; United Nations Environment Programme, 'Global Climate Litigation Report 2020 Status Review', p. 6.

² *Ibid.*

³ SAK Mwesigwa and PD Mutesasira, (2021). Climate Litigation as a Tool for Enforcing Rights of Nature and Environmental Rights by NGOs: Security for Costs and Costs Limitations in Uganda. *Carbon & Climate Law Review*, 15(2), 139–49, 144.

the costs of the defendants, a development that may discourage the pursuit of public interest litigation.¹ Often, litigants in public interest litigation are non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that generally have few or no assets to provide for such security. In pursuing litigation, litigants may also incur considerable costs², which may be a disincentive in suing government and private companies for harm to the environment and for human rights violations.³ Such costs, include filing fees, payments to expert witnesses, travel expenses, legal practitioners' fees and miscellaneous other fees.⁴ Even where complainants are publicly funded or lawyers are acting pro bono, the expenses payable on litigation may be a deterrent to litigation.⁵

The meaningfulness of a state's duty to 'protect' in the context of climate litigation can be measured by the applicable approach to costs in environmental proceedings. The award of costs in litigation is one of the procedural aspects of various legal systems.⁶ Though a court hearing a matter has a wide discretion when it comes to awarding costs,⁷ the traditional approach in various legal systems is that costs follow the outcome.⁸ This implies that a party losing a case is usually required to pay the costs of the successful party. Costs may be a very sizeable figure if litigation has gone through different courts until being finalized, especially since the losing party will be required to pay the costs of the winning party and his or her own costs.⁹

Costs play a significant role in the state's obligation to 'protect' rights within the context of climate change litigation, as the threat of an adverse cost order can strongly discourage public interest lawsuits. Climate change is a matter of broad public concern since it impacts everyone¹⁰. Potential plaintiffs who might otherwise pursue climate-related cases on behalf of the public often hesitate due to the fear of being burdened with substantial cost penalties if their case fails. As a result, individuals or NGOs interested in these issues may be reluctant to engage in litigation because of the financial risks involved.

In the Global South, climate issues frequently manifest as environmental damage, pollution control, or disputes over natural resources and infrastructure projects. Given limited protections against legal costs and intense competition for legal representation, litigants are generally unlikely to initiate cases aimed solely at protecting the climate. For example, in South Africa, most climate-related legal actions focus on challenges connected to mining and coal-based energy production, with a common theme being the harmful consequences of maintaining existing practices.¹¹

In Cameroon there are no provisions in existing legislation or rules that an unsuccessful litigation of environmental matters should be exempted from an award of cost. The latter allows the court to exercise its discretion in awarding costs or to act otherwise in matters relating to the variation or discharge of ex parte orders.¹² The rules of courts of some states are not as ambivalent, as they provide that a successful party is generally entitled to be indemnified for the expenses used in enforcing his/ her civil rights.¹³

¹ 'Taking Action to Protect the Environment', <https://queenslandlawhandbook.org.au/the-queensland-law-handbook/living-and-working-in-society/laws-affecting-the-environment/taking-action-to-protect-the-environment/>, accessed 14 January 2025)

² *Ibid.*

³ Mayeda G., (2010). Access to Justice: The Impact of Injunctions, Contempt of Court Proceedings, and Costs Awards on Environmental Protestors and First Nations. *McGill International Law Journal of Sustainable Development Law & Policy*, 6(2), 143–76, 166.

38 Mayeda (n 37), 147.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Schutter O., et al, (2012). Commentary to the Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations of States in the Area of Economic Social and Cultural Rights. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 34, pp. 1084-1096:1089.

⁶ Budlender S, Marcus and N Ferreira, (2014). Public Interest Litigation and Social Change in South Africa: Strategies, Tactics and Lessons (The Atlantic Philanthropies), 136.

⁷ *Naylor v Jansen* 2007 (1) SA 16 (SCA).

⁸ Theophilopoulos C, et al, (2020). *Fundamental Principles of Civil Procedure*. 4th ed, 499. (LexisNexis).

⁹ *Ibid* at p.500.

¹⁰ 3 J Peel and J Lin, (2019). Transnational Climate Litigation: The Contribution of the Global South. *American Journal of International Law*, 113, 679–726; J Setzer and L Benjamin, (2020). Climate Litigation in the Global South: Constraints and Innovations. *Transnational Environmental Law*, 9(1), pp.77–101:100.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Fundamental Rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules 2009, r. 6.

¹³ Order 49 of the High Court of Ogun State (Civil Procedure Rules) 2014; Ord. 53 of the High Court of Lagos State (Civil Procedure Rules) 2019; and Ord. 25 of the Federal High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules 2019.

When a litigant loses a climate change case against the state or another party, there is no assurance that they will be exempt from paying legal costs. These costs can include fees for witnesses, scientific experts, and legal representation. Courts generally have discretion over cost decisions and may order each party to cover their own expenses. Historically, some courts have held that it is against public policy to require a losing party to pay the successful party's solicitor fees¹. However, this stance is evolving; for example, in *Ajibola v Anisere*, the Court of Appeal ruled that solicitor's fees may be awarded if they are properly and specifically claimed². In climate litigation, case law suggests that an unsuccessful party—such as one suing a multinational corporation could still be required to bear the other side's legal costs.³

There is the risk that a potential climate change litigant may face a challenge in accessing information in the possession of the respondent. The Cameroon Constitution⁴ provides that 'everyone is entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and receive and impart information'⁵. However, the 1990 Law on Freedom of Expression, permits statutory limitations on access to information on grounds including national security. The exception on national security grounds is strengthened by other legislation such as the Criminal Procedure Code of 2005, which impose restrictions on the disclosure of official information by public officers in the interest of defence and public safety, among others.⁶

9. Problem of Disclosure

The principle of disclosure is closely connected to the right of access to information, which is a vital tool for achieving success in public interest climate litigation. Access to information is a recognized procedural environmental right that enables citizens and NGOs to assess whether legal obligations to protect the environment and combat climate change are being met. Without access to essential information, public awareness is limited, making it difficult to advocate effectively for change.⁷ Therefore, having access to climate-related information is essential not only for climate activism and litigation but also for climate education across Africa. Addressing the harmful effects of climate change and establishing causation requires accurate information. Consequently, it contradicts the state's duty to protect if legal frameworks restrict disclosure and encourage parties involved in climate litigation to withhold or obscure crucial climate-related information.

Worldwide, challenges related to access to information are increasingly evident in climate activism and litigation. For example, some companies choose not to inform their investors about the climate risks associated with their operations⁸. In October 2018, Exxon Mobil faced a complaint for allegedly misleading investors regarding the potential impact of climate change regulations on its business⁹. Corporations may also withhold details about the steps they have taken to meet climate intervention goals¹⁰. Even when disclosures are made, the information provided can be deceptive concerning the company's awareness of the risks linked to fossil fuels or investment holdings. Additionally, companies might downplay or misrepresent the negative effects of climate change on their business activities and financial performance.¹¹

The idea of disclosure involves providing documents and all forms of evidence related to the issue being

¹ *Guinness v Nwoke* [2005] 15 NWLR (Pt 689) 135.

² *Ajibola v Anisere* (2019) LPELR - 48204(CA); also see *Naude v Simon* (2013) LPELR – 20491 (CA).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Law No. 96/07 of 18th January 1996 relating to the Cameroon Constitution and as amended.

⁵ Jean-Claude N, (2020). Connecting Human Rights and the Environment in Cameroon: Successes, Limitations and Prospects. *Human Rights and the Environment under African Union Law*, pp. 315-348:315.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ See, for instance, the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Revised version 2003) (Conservation Convention), art. 16(1)(a)(b) enjoins states to adopt legislative and regulatory measures necessary to ensure timely and appropriate dissemination and access of the public to environmental information.

⁸ Clifford Chance, (2019, October). Climate Change Litigation Tackling Climate Change Through the Courts. [https:// www.cliffordchance.com/content/dam/ cliffordchance/briefings/2019/ 10/ grow ing- the- green- econ omy- clim ate- cha nge- lit igat ion.pdf](https://www.cliffordchance.com/content/dam/ cliffordchance/briefings/2019/10/growing-the-green-economy-climate-change-litigation.pdf), accessed 13 January 2025

⁹ Salau A, (2017). 'Right of Access to Information and its Limitation by National Security in Nigeria: Mutually Inclusive or Exclusive?' Thesis Presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Public Law, Faculty of Law University of Cape Town, 143.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ United Nations Environment Programme, (2020). *Global climate litigation report: 2020 status review* (2nd ed.). Nairobi: UNEP.

considered.¹ However, requests for such evidence may be denied if the information is deemed privileged or confidential.² This can include communications involving legal advice or any confidential documents or exchanges created primarily for ongoing or anticipated litigation between a company and its representatives.³ One potential consequence of this exemption is that, without proper legislative protections, corporations and government bodies might use the justification of confidentiality to withhold communications that are important for understanding the causes and effects of climate change.⁴

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

The advancement of climate litigation in Cameroon encounters numerous challenges, primarily due to restricted access to the judicial system. Besides the interest and ability of civil society organizations (CSOs) to take action being dependent on approval and involvement with public or semi-public institutions, environmental law tends to prioritize legal entities as the main parties eligible to bring environmental cases before the courts.⁵ Despite these limitations, civil society groups actively engage in various efforts to protect the environment and combat climate change. Their activities include advocacy, raising public awareness, and monitoring the legality of natural resource management, particularly in the forestry sector. Additionally, there appear to be emerging opportunities for climate litigation to grow, such as lawsuits initiated by public authorities or civil liability claims filed by individuals.⁶ It is also possible that indirect litigation focused on safeguarding natural resources may increasingly be recognized as a common form of climate litigation in Cameroon. In such matters, the willingness to litigate despite risks of punitive costs may be undermined by the risk of high costs. While Cameroon has made strides in developing climate change adaptation plans and policies, the procedural aspects of climate litigation remain a significant area for improvement. The country's legal system, influenced by both civil and common law traditions, requires further development to effectively address the complex challenges posed by climate change.⁷

11. Recommendation

For adequate accountability mechanisms — both in relation to climate change and other issues — a number of things are needed.

The Need for Climate Litigations

International climate agreements, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁸ and the Paris Agreement,⁹ clearly outline global objectives for mitigation and adaptation that require legal responses at various levels. Reflecting the global mitigation goal, Article 2 of the Paris Agreement urges countries to limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and to make nationally determined contributions toward mitigation efforts¹⁰. Building on Article 4 of the UNFCCC, Article 7 of the Paris Agreement sets the global adaptation goal, which involves enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerability to climate change.

Therefore, domestic legislation is essential to implement the commitments states make during international climate negotiations. Such laws also provide a basis for legally evaluating how well a country meets global standards and institutional expectations for climate adaptation and mitigation. For example, legislation aimed at adaptation can be subject to legal challenges if it fails to sufficiently enhance adaptive capacity, increase resilience, or decrease vulnerability to climate impacts. Similarly, regarding mitigation, the adequacy of existing

¹ Wasim, R, (2019). Corporate (Non) Disclosure of Climate Change Information. *Columbia Law Review*, 119(5), 1311–54.

² Brown DK, (2019). Evidence Disclosure and Discovery in Common Law Jurisdictions, in DK Brown and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminal Process*, Oxford University Press, 543–61.

³ Ho HL, (2006). Legal Advice Privilege and the Corporate Client. *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies*, 231–263.

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Jegede A.O, (2016). *The Climate Change Regulatory Framework and Indigenous Peoples' Lands in Africa: Human Rights Implications*. Pretoria University Law Press, p.11.

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ Eric E., (2019). *Power, spaces and capabilities: rethinking communication for development in climate change-related natural resource management: The case of the Ngoyla Mintom projects in Cameroon*. University of East Anglia Press, p.78.

⁸ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992) ILM 851.

⁹ Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC adopted 30 November – 11 December 2015 at the 21st Sess., Conference of the Parties, FCCC/ CP/ 2015/ L.9/ Rev.1 (Paris Agreement 2015).

¹⁰ Paris Agreement 2015 *Ibid*, art. 4(2).

legal frameworks may be questioned and scrutinized.

An effective approach to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions requires that mitigation laws comprehensively cover all major sectors known to significantly contribute to CO₂ emissions¹. If key established sectors are excluded from such legislation,² it may raise concerns about the law's effectiveness. Comprehensive legal frameworks create a strong foundation for litigation, enabling challengers to hold governments accountable for compliance with existing laws and to evaluate whether these laws meet the state's constitutional or international human rights obligations. Additionally, such frameworks align with the goals of the Paris Agreement, which calls on states to respect, promote, and consider their responsibilities in climate action.³

Government actions or initiatives that contribute to climate change should be subject to legal review. This could specifically include state withdrawal from coal or other fossil fuel investments, as well as time-bound afforestation and reforestation efforts. Likewise, government inaction—particularly failure to meet climate commitments outlined in its policies, official documents, or regional and international agreements it has joined—should be addressed within the scope of thorough and effective climate legislation.

Reforming procedural laws related to access to remedies is equally crucial in climate change litigation. Barriers such as costs, disclosure requirements, standing, and the burden of proof need to be addressed in both climate and other public interest cases. The government should reconsider and revise its approach to costs in climate litigation, ideally exempting individuals or groups advocating for climate protection from expenses like legal fees, witness costs, and lost time, or at least implementing a cost cap for environmental cases. This exemption is justified because climate change is a global issue, and encouraging litigation that promotes a safe climate benefits everyone. The potential burden of cost orders should not discourage climate activists or NGOs from pursuing legal action on behalf of the public.

Access to climate change-related information should be exempt from statutory restrictions on information access. The principle of disclosure should specifically exclude communications—especially scientific evidence—about the causes and impacts of climate change from being treated as privileged or confidential. This change could help overcome the common challenges litigants face in climate and environmental cases. Reforms should require the disclosure of reports, memoranda, or internal defense documents created by defendants, their lawyers or agents, as well as statements made by defendants, government officials, or defense witnesses related to climate cases. Such measures would alleviate the difficulties applicants often encounter when trying to obtain crucial information held by respondents to support their claims.

There should be a specific procedure in place to enforce state obligations in relation to climate change and provide compensation to the victims of this phenomenon. However, in the Cameroonian legal system, judges do not have extensive discretion when it comes to climate-related issues as, unlike common law jurisdictions, they cannot recognize new causes of action under suitable circumstances.

Government should work on strengthening the capacities of various actors and raising public awareness of environmental issues and related regulations. The potential actors that can be of help here are environmental monitoring and inspection officers, judges who are experts in the substantive and technical aspects of environmental issues, and environmental protection associations that care about environmental litigation, and are privileged by public benefit status.

It is also advisable to work on enhancing cooperation and coordination among various stakeholders, including observation and inspection agencies, executors and judges, law enforcement bodies and civil society. Last but not least, it is crucial to recognize the existence of environmental damage independent of its impact on human beings within civil law. Prior to these efforts, the government has to ensure that the relevant laws are prepared prior to their promulgation, or at least by establishing a clear enactment programme

Finally, civil society's involvement in climate litigation is weak and ineffective. This is due to the weakness of the relevant laws and the vulnerability of the associations themselves in terms of the possibilities and resources available to them, as well as their technical knowledge of the environment and its requirements.

a) To the Government of Cameroon

- 1) Enact a comprehensive national climate change law that clearly defines institutional roles, responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms to ensure effective climate governance and justice.

¹ G Van Calster et al (eds), (2016). *Research Handbook on Climate Change Mitigation Law*. Edward Elgar, p.12.

² On the link of rights to climate change, see recent Resolution by the Human Rights Council on human rights and climate change (Resolution 4/ 24), adopted 26 July 2021 at the 47th Session of the Human Rights Council, A/ HRC/ RES/ 47/ 24.

³ Paris Agreement 2015 *Ibid*, Preamble.

- 2) Integrate climate justice principles into all sectoral policies and development plans to reduce inequality and ensure marginalized groups are prioritized in adaptation and mitigation efforts.
- 3) Increase investment in climate resilience and adaptation infrastructure, including early warning systems for extreme weather events and climate-smart agriculture to protect livelihoods.
- 4) Secure and transparently manage climate finance, ensuring that funds reach the most vulnerable communities, especially indigenous peoples and women, to support sustainable livelihoods and ecosystem preservation.
- 5) Strengthen institutional capacity and accountability by building climate expertise within public agencies and establishing independent oversight mechanisms to monitor climate actions and enforce environmental laws.

b) To the Community

- 1) Raise local awareness on climate justice issues and rights through education and capacity building, empowering communities to participate actively in climate decision-making.
- 2) Preserve and apply Indigenous knowledge and traditional sustainable practices to enhance climate resilience and protect biodiversity vital to cultural heritage.
- 3) Form or strengthen local climate action groups and networks to advocate for community needs and hold government and private actors accountable.
- 4) Adopt sustainable livelihood practices such as climate-smart agriculture and resource conservation to reduce vulnerability to climate impacts.
- 5) Engage in participatory monitoring and reporting of environmental violations and illegal resource exploitation affecting community lands and ecosystems.

c) To International Communities

- 1) Provide increased and predictable climate finance targeted at Cameroon's adaptation and mitigation priorities, with special funds dedicated to vulnerable indigenous and marginalized groups.
- 2) Support capacity building and knowledge transfer to strengthen Cameroon's institutional and technical ability to implement climate justice policies effectively.
- 3) Facilitate global platforms and partnerships that amplify Cameroon's climate justice concerns and ensure political visibility at international climate negotiations.
- 4) Promote fair and transparent mechanisms for technology transfer to enable Cameroon's transition to renewable energy and climate-smart infrastructure.
- 5) Encourage accountability through international environmental and human rights frameworks, supporting Cameroon to meet its climate commitments and protect vulnerable populations.

d) To Those in Charge of Environmental Protection

- 1) Implement comprehensive environmental monitoring systems incorporating community input to detect and address environmental harm linked to climate change.
- 2) Ensure enforcement of existing environmental laws and regulations with transparent reporting and sanctions to protect ecosystems and vulnerable populations.
- 3) Promote participatory environmental governance, involving local communities, women, and marginalized groups in planning and decision-making processes.
- 4) Develop climate-smart environmental management approaches, such as restoring degraded landscapes and conserving biodiversity hotspots significant for carbon sequestration.
- 5) Collaborate closely with civil society organizations and international partners to leverage resources, expertise, and advocacy for stronger climate justice actions.
- 6) These recommendations reflect integrated action points grounded in Cameroon's current challenges and strategic plans, fostering a just climate future for all stakeholders.

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Construction of Plastic Roads Can Reduce Plastic Wastes and Increase the Durability of Roads

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Abstract

Plastic roads are made of using polymer plastics with the regular mix of bitumen, sand, and stone. These increase strength, flexibility, and durability of the roads and the project becomes cost effective. These are built through the mixing plastic wastes with bitumen that are usually put into landfill and incinerated that usually pollute the environment with high risk. Plastics are the non-biodegradable materials that are threats to environment and human health due to their toxic nature. Plastic roads increase life spans, and make the construction economical and solve the environmental problem at the same time. These roads also reduce bitumen requirements by about 10%, improve road performance, prevent the need for anti-stripping agents, and prevent plastic waste from being disposed of through land filling and incinerator. The use of plastic wastes in road construction is increasing that will reduce environmental impact worldwide. This study tries to explore the use of waste plastics into pavements by considering both infrastructure needs and environmental concerns.

Keywords: bitumen, plastic waste, road construction, environmental pollution

1. Introduction

Plastic has revolutionized various sectors due to its durability, flexibility, and cost effectiveness, and has become an integral part of modern life (Mohajan, 2025d). But it is not eco-friendly and non-biodegradable. The plastic wastes are ending up in landfills, oceans, and natural habitats that pose grave threats to ecosystems, wildlife, and human health for non-biodegradable nature (Tayde et al., 2024; Mohajan, 2015). The plastic wastes are collected through washing, then shredded to a uniform size, and melted at 165°C; and then blended with hot aggregates and bitumen, and then used for the construction of plastic roads. These roads have hollow space that allows ease of wiring, connecting pipes, etc. This construction process is an environmental friendly way of disposing plastic wastes (Appiah et al., 2017).

Plastic roads are more durable than traditional asphalt roads that provide a potential solution for managing plastic waste and improving road infrastructure (Patel et al., 2014; Mohajan, 2025a). Actually, the plastic roads are not made entirely of recycled plastic, but instead mixed with asphalt for an ideal consistency to keep the road safe for motorists that helps it last longer, cost less, and avoid cracking; the plastic waste is melted and mixed with bitumen in a particular ratio (Poweth et al., 2013). These consist of modular, hollow, and prefabricated road elements made from consumer waste plastics (Mohajan, 2020). These are first developed by Indian Chemist Rajagopalan Vasudevan, the Plastic Man of India, in 2001 (Thiagarajan, 2018). The most common plastics used in making plastic roads are polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polypropylene (PP), low density polyethylene (LDPE), and high density polyethylene (HDPE). These plastics are available in the form of carry bags, water bottles, milk packets, glasses, cups, and other plastic debris (Conlon, 2021; Mohajan, 2025d).

2. Literature Review

A literature review is a comprehensive overview of existing research and scholarly works on a specific topic. It discusses published information in a particular subject area within a certain time period (George et al., 2023). It involves summarizing, analyzing, and synthesizing different sources to provide a cohesive understanding of the current state of knowledge (Baglione, 2012). A good literature review has a proper research question, a proper theoretical framework, and a chosen research methodology (Galvan, 2015). Akshar Patel and his coauthors have discussed the suitability of plastic waste materials for road construction. In their study they have wanted a safe and prolific disposal of plastic wastes, quarry dust, and tyre. The results of their tests indicated that plastic alone is not suitable for pavement subgrade. They have realized that when quarry dust is added along with soil plastic mix, it maintains the California Bearing Ratio (CBR) value within the required range (Patel et al., 2018). Ahmed Trimbakwala has shown that the plastic wastes can be used in road construction and the field tests withstood the stress. He has observed that the durability of the roads laid out with shredded plastic waste is much more compared with roads with asphalt with the ordinary mix. This technology not only strengthened the road construction but also increases the road life as well as helps to improve the environment and also creating a source of income (Trimbakwala, 2017).

Moorey B. Dalen and his coworkers seek to incorporate up to 30% weight-by-weight low density polyethylene (LDPE) and polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic wastes of total binder required for the asphalt design into bitumen for road pavement that help to secure an environment friendly way of plastic wastes disposal, improve soil compost for agriculture, reduce the demand of bitumen, reduce the cost of road construction, and create job opportunities (Dalen et al., 2017). Aditya Raut and his coauthors have indicated that plastics are user friendly but not eco-friendly as they are non-biodegradable. They have observed that the plastic waste modifies bitumen mix and shows better binding property, stability, density, and more resistant to water. They have stressed that this technique for road construction proves eco-friendly, economical, and use of plastic gives strength in the sub-base course of the pavement (Raut et al., 2016).

Josu'e Cardoso and his coauthors have realized that disposal of plastic waste has become a great challenge for the current generation due to the large-scale production and non-degradable properties of plastics. They have investigated that plastic waste has the potential to be incorporated into asphalt mixtures and help mitigate the environmental problem related to its disposal (Cardoso et al., 2023). Akhilesh Yadav and Ruchi Chandrakar have shown that the use of plastic wastes in pavement construction is an effective disposal of plastic wastes and at the same time it increases the strength and durability of the roads that provides the environmental, economic and safety issue. They have noticed that plastic increases the melting point of the bitumen and makes the road flexible during winters resulting in its long life. Consequently, the brittleness of the roads overcomes and elastic nature of them enhances, and also creates a source of income (Yadav & Chandrakar, 2017).

Akshay A. Tayde and his coworkers have tried to explore the potential of incorporating waste plastic into pavements as a means of addressing both infrastructure needs and environmental concerns that enhance pavement performance, durability, and resistance to temperature variations and moisture infiltration, particularly in regions with hot and humid climates (Tayde et al., 2024). Gaurav Gadekar and his coworkers have explored the concept of upcycling plastic waste for road construction as a sustainable solution to address the environmental challenges posed by plastic waste accumulation, such as discarded bottles and packaging. They have examined the technical feasibility, environmental impact, and economic viability of incorporating plastic waste into asphalt mixtures and other road construction applications; providing valuable insights for policymakers, engineers, and environmentalists interested in promoting sustainable waste management practices (Gadekar et al., 2023).

3. Research Methodology of the Study

Research is a scientific inquiry aims at learning new facts, testing ideas, etc. that is the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to generate new knowledge and answers certain question or solve a problem (Franklin, 2012). It is a tool for building knowledge and facilitating learning that provides the latest information, new ideas, curiosity, ethical principle, etc. (Mahalakshmi et al., 2023). It is divided into two types, such as quantitative and qualitative research (Mohajan, 2025e). Quantitative research is the main methodology of the natural sciences that uses precise numerical measurements (Berg, 2009). On the other hand, qualitative research is more characteristic of the social sciences that aim more at an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the studied phenomena (Kothari, 2004). Methodology is the study of research methods. It refers either to a method, to the field of inquiry studying methods, or to philosophical discussions (Howell, 2012). Research methodology is the detailed procedure used to identify, select, process, and analyze information about a topic. It helps readers to understand the basic concepts and the application of results directly to real life business, industry and research organizations (Dubey & Kothari, 2022).

4. Objective of the Study

Traditional road construction materials, such as virgin asphalt causes environmental degradation and resource

depletion. But, if a portion of waste plastics is used in road construction with asphalt that enhance the properties of bituminous mixes, and the whole process becomes more sustainable and environment friendly (Tayde et al., 2024; Mohajan, 2021c). The use of this innovative technology is strengthen the road construction and increases the road life as well as helps to the utilization of waste plastic material. The growth of local recycling industries can generate employment opportunities in the society (Vasudevan, 2006). Main objective of this article is to study the utilization of plastic waste with bituminous mixes for the road construction (Mohajan, 2018). Other minor objectives of the study are as follows:

- to highlight on the features of plastic roads, and
- to discuss on advantages of plastic roads.

5. Features of Plastic Roads

After adding plastic with bitumen improves viscosity, stability, binding property, penetration value, water resistance, and softening point of the bitumen, and reduces the construction cost of road pavement about 8% (Gadekar et al., 2023; Mohajan, 2025b). Bitumen is a naturally occurring, oily, viscous substance, and black in color that is produced when organic molecules break down. The strength of plastic roads is twice than normal roads and no potholes are formed (Hyder & Altaf, 2024; Mohajan, 2021a). These do not involve any extra machinery, and do not increase cost of road construction. These are of better quality and do not require maintenance in the first five years (Mohajan, 2025g). These are less bleeding during summer, and dumping in landfill and incineration of plastics waste could be avoided when these wastes are used in road construction (Trimbakwala, 2017).

6. Advantages of Plastic Roads

Plastic roads have hollow spaces that allow ease of wiring, connecting pipes, etc. These are built from waste plastic that is usually dumped into landfill and sometimes incinerated, which pollute the environment emitting gaseous pollutants (Chirag et al., 2012; Mohajan, 2021b). Use of plastic with asphalt saves on cost and consumption of bitumen decreases and plastic waste decreases, and improves the quality and durability of roads (Awwad & Shbeeb, 2007). These are better resistance to water and water stagnation, and no effect of UV radiation. These can avoid the use of anti-stripping agents, industrial involvement, and disposal of plastics waste by incineration and land filling (Gadekar et al., 2023).

After the addition of plastic with asphalt the viscosity of the mixture is reduced that allows a lower working temperature, which lowers volatile organic compound (VOC) and carbon monoxide (CO) emissions. The plastic roads do not absorb water; have better flexibility that results in less rutting and less need for repair, road surfaces remain smooth, absorb sound better, and need lower maintenance (Khimta & Arora, 2017). Strength of the road increases and increased binding and better bonding of the bitumen mix and can reduce the need of bitumen by about 10%. Since the plastic roads are water resistant, have better binding property, higher softening point and can withstand high temperatures and higher loads. Rainwater does not seep through these roads because of the plastic in the tar and these results in fewer repairs (Rajasekaran et al., 2013; Mohajan, 2025c).

7. Conclusions

The plastic roads not only allow for the construction of more durable and cost-effective roads, but also give a sustainable solution to the plastic waste problem, and consequently the resources are utilized efficiently, and waste is minimized. More people are needed for the collection, sorting, and cleaning of the plastic wastes, and therefore, job opportunities are created during plastic road construction. Use of plastic waste with bitumen and stone can reduce bitumen by about 10%, increase strength and performance of road, avoid use of anti-stripping agent, avoid disposal of plastic waste by incineration and land filling, and develop ecofriendly technology. The plastics in the road can break down into micro-plastics and can mix with the soil and water, and can pollute the environment.

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Integrating Area Studies into Undergraduate International Relations Education: Pathways and Strategies

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Abstract

The disciplinary construction of Area Studies has long been a focal point in Chinese academia, particularly after its establishment as a first-level interdisciplinary discipline in 2022. While synergies between Area Studies and International Relations have garnered increasing attention, their integration faces challenges. Despite shared goals like serving national strategies and fostering interdisciplinary approaches, differences in research objects and methodologies create tensions. This paper argues that integrating Area Studies into IR undergraduate education is vital for cultivating cross-cultural literacy, empirical research skills, and addressing shortages of compound talents in fields like international law and global governance. However, initial efforts encounter obstacles such as paradigmatic clashes, resource constraints, and institutional silos. To advance this integration, we propose reconstructing multilingual competency frameworks, redefining regional knowledge systems, and innovating compound talent cultivation models. These reforms aim to shift IR education from theory-driven to problem-oriented paradigms, aligning with China's strategic needs in global governance.

Keywords: Area Studies, international relations, interdisciplinary research

1. Introduction

With China's deepening participation in global governance, Area Studies was formally included in the Graduate Education Discipline Directory (2022) in September 2022, becoming a new first-level discipline under the interdisciplinary category. In terms of disciplinary scope, Area Studies and International Relations have long been interconnected and mutually influential. With the establishment of Area Studies as a discipline, its integration with International Relations has become an issue worthy of in-depth exploration. On one hand, this integration is an inevitable choice to serve national strategic needs—it can cultivate students' cross-cultural cognitive abilities, overcome the limitations of macro-system analysis in international relations, and strengthen students' empirical research skills. On the other hand, it can gradually address the shortage of national interdisciplinary talent reserves in areas such as foreign-related legal affairs, international organizations, and international communication. As the foundational stage of higher education, undergraduate education must integrate Area Studies into international relations teaching. Against this backdrop, this paper will analyze and explore pathways for integrating Area Studies into undergraduate international relations curricula by drawing on exemplary cases of disciplinary construction from domestic and international universities, thereby supporting the upgrading of undergraduate talent cultivation systems in international relations.

2. Connections and Differences Between International Relations and Area Studies

Although Area Studies is an emerging interdisciplinary field, domestic research in this area has a long history, primarily concentrated in three disciplines: Foreign Language and Literature, International Relations, and History (World History). Among these, International Relations shares the closest ties with it. As the

cross-integration of Area Studies with international relations has become a strategic proposition in higher education reform in the new era, some domestic universities have begun reconstructing their international relations curricula based on the connections between these two disciplines and their own institutional characteristics. This allows the two disciplines to complement each other in research, promoting disciplinary development through mutual verification and innovation. The similarities between the two disciplines can be summarized in three main points. First, both International Relations and Area Studies serve national foreign strategic needs. Since the formation of the Westphalian system, International Relations has consistently focused on power politics and order-building, with the evolution of its theories and practices reflecting the needs of great power competition. While Area Studies excels in local knowledge, it is fundamentally applied basic research that reveals specific patterns, primarily serving practical needs. (Qiu, Y. P., 2023) The two disciplines form a “macro-micro” complementary relationship in serving national strategies. Second, both disciplines exhibit interdisciplinary characteristics. International Relations theory builds upon political science while incorporating tools from economics, sociology, and other fields. Area Studies practices interdisciplinarity more thoroughly, encompassing perspectives from linguistics, anthropology, history, and other dimensions. This disciplinary openness allows for methodological dialogue between them. Finally, both disciplines are constrained by “Western-centrism.” Mainstream international relations theories have long been confined by the Westphalian framework, struggling to explain political practices in the non-Western world. Although Area Studies deeply examines the history and culture within regions or countries, it remains a discipline developed in the West, objectively deconstructing the universality of Western experience.

Despite these similarities, fundamental differences exist between International Relations and Area Studies in disciplinary orientation and research paradigms, evident in core aspects such as research objects and methodological approaches. Clarifying these differences is a necessary prerequisite for exploring integration pathways. On one hand, International Relations focuses on systemic-level interactions, concerned with abstract international power structures, institutional frameworks, and relationships among actors. Whether realism’s definition of balance-of-power structures or liberalism’s analysis of interdependence, both tend to simplify states into functionally convergent “black boxes.” For example, Waltz’s structural realism theory reduces states to “billiard-ball” units, retaining only military and economic power as variables while deliberately ignoring historical and cultural specificities. While this builds concise theoretical models, it struggles to explain the differentiated behavioral choices of states—especially non-Western states—under similar structural pressures. Area Studies, however, takes specific countries or regions as its research objects, emphasizing “thick description” of internal elements within specific states or regions. Its research scope extends beyond traditional political and economic fields to socio-cultural domains such as language customs, religious beliefs, and ethnic relations. On the other hand, International Relations has long been dominated by the scientific paradigm, primarily due to the rise of scientism and the shift in the center of international relations research after World War II. Scientific research adheres to deductive logic, deriving theoretical propositions from basic premises and empirically verifying their truth to obtain certain universal knowledge. While this approach enhances the scientific rigor of conclusions, it easily falls into the trap of method-driven problems—when complex social phenomena cannot be reduced to quantifiable indicators, the explanatory power of theories significantly diminishes. Unlike international relations research, Area Studies aims to acquire local knowledge, not universal knowledge. (Zhao, K. J., 2021) It favors hermeneutic approaches, integrating anthropological participant observation, historical archival research, and sociological qualitative interviews. It emphasizes understanding social facts within specific contexts and focuses on producing localized knowledge—such as through language learning, immersion in local cultures, and long-term fieldwork documenting historical changes—without forcibly fitting individual cases into existing theoretical frameworks.

Thus, it is evident that the two disciplines possess distinct research pathways and knowledge systems. International relations research typically exhibits strong theoretical orientation, with its core goal being the discovery and summarization of universal patterns. Mainstream theories have historically been modeled on European and American experiences—such as hegemonic stability theory and security community theory that once dominated discourse—while marginalizing the historical development and international status of regions like Latin America and Africa. This “knowledge hegemony” led to the misinterpretation of non-Western states’ behaviors as deviations from Western theories, until greater attention emerged when other major powers and relatively less developed latecomer countries strengthened their summaries of their own developmental experiences. The knowledge system of Area Studies, however, features problem-orientation and the accumulation of local knowledge. Its research often begins with specific practical needs, extracting experiences through in-depth case studies. It is precisely these deep-seated differences that make the integration of Area Studies into undergraduate international relations education not only theoretically complementary but also a practical imperative for cultivating urgently needed future talent.

3. The Necessity of Integrating Area Studies into Undergraduate International Relations Education

Area Studies requires the use of international relations theories' concepts and logic for research, while studies on regional international relations and foreign policies can provide more case validation and innovation space for international relations theories. (Song, W., 2024) Systemic factors emphasized in international relations theories also play a significant role in the domestic political development of various countries. Integrating Area Studies deeply into undergraduate international relations teaching extends far beyond addressing existing deficiencies; it proactively shapes students' core competencies to meet future challenges, providing solid talent support for major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics and global governance. Specifically, its necessity manifests in three aspects:

3.1 Cultivating Students' Deep Cross-Cultural Cognition and Understanding Abilities

The essence of international relations lies in interactions among countries with different civilizations, systems, and development paths. Traditional undergraduate teaching of international relations requires the integration of Area Studies to adapt to the new complexities of international relations. Since the formation of the Westphalian system, the discipline of international relations has long focused on power games and institutional interactions among sovereign states, forming a research paradigm centered on systemic analysis. However, with the deepening of globalization today, the boundary between domestic and international politics has become increasingly blurred. Phenomena such as the "whole-of-government" approach in US strategies toward China and the impact of sectarian conflicts in the Middle East on the global energy landscape indicate that internal political structures and socio-cultural elements within states have become key variables influencing international relations. Traditional international relations teaching emphasizes macro-system analysis but lacks interpretation of internal state dynamics, causing students to often fall into a cognitive dilemma of "knowing what without knowing why" when analyzing real-world issues. Area Studies emphasize language learning, value fieldwork, and engage in multidisciplinary dialogue beyond humanities and social sciences boundaries to deeply explore local history and culture, acquiring local knowledge. (Wang, Z., 2023) This knowledge is a constitutive element for analyzing political behavior, understanding foreign policy preferences, and predicting strategic trends. Integrating regional and country content enables students to move beyond superficial cultural curiosity or stereotypes, fostering a "sympathetic understanding" of different cultures and establishing a cognitive framework of respecting differences and understanding diversity—the foundation for effective communication, conflict resolution, and trust-building.

3.2 Developing Students' Solid Empirical Research and Fieldwork Competencies

Area Studies is characterized by its practical orientation and on-site requirements, with its methodological essence lying in obtaining firsthand data through immersive fieldwork. Introducing this research paradigm into undergraduate teaching can effectively counteract the tendency in traditional international relations education to "prioritize theory over empiricism, deduction over induction." By designing overseas or domestic fieldwork activities—such as oral history collection, community observation, institutional interviews, and archival research—students are guided to step out of classrooms and textbooks and directly confront the social realities of their research subjects. They employ qualitative research methods from anthropology, sociology, and history to collect, analyze, and verify information. Such training not only significantly enhances students' information discrimination, independent research, and complex problem-solving abilities but also cultivates acute observational skills, critical thinking, resilience, and adaptability in unfamiliar environments. This competence of "doing scholarship with one's feet" is the core competitiveness for future high-quality work in policy research, intelligence analysis, international reporting, and multinational corporate operations.

3.3 Building Interdisciplinary Talent Reserves Aligned with National Strategic Needs

The localized nature of Area Studies can promote a "1+1" composite language training model in undergraduate international relations programs: primarily English supplemented by the official or ethnic languages of the research subject countries. This is not merely language acquisition but aims to cultivate students' ability to interpret primary local documents and conduct in-depth interviews. Since undergraduate education in international relations predominantly focuses on general English proficiency, with long-term neglect of other international languages, few universities systematically offer courses in non-common languages. This imbalance in language training often leads to language barriers when students analyze political systems and inter-state relations in many developing countries, resulting in misinterpretations of national or ethnic cultures and creating a vicious cycle of theoretical imposition.

Talent cultivation requires effectively linking students' cognitive and non-cognitive competencies, embodying the integration of knowledge construction, skill development, and worldview shaping to cultivate interdisciplinary international research and governance talents who are "proficient in languages, knowledgeable about countries, and specialized in fields." (Zhai, S. L., & Liu, M., 2025) Beyond "language proficiency," the talents needed by the country must also "understand countries and specialize in fields" to adapt to China's increasing prominence on the world stage and its deep involvement in global governance system reforms. Past

talent cultivation in international relations was relatively thin, making the integration of Area Studies a direct response to new national strategic demands. For example, it is essential to cultivate foreign-related legal talents proficient in the laws, judicial practices, and business environment rules of target regions to serve the “Belt and Road” initiative and protect overseas interests; to train international organization and multilateral diplomacy talents capable of coordination, communication, and mediation in multicultural contexts—requiring not only knowledge of international rules but also deep understanding of the domestic political ecology, interests, and negotiation cultures of key member states; and to develop international communication and public diplomacy talents who provide timely regional analysis and policy advice to government departments, think tanks, and multinational corporations, necessitating solid language foundations and profound regional knowledge reserves.

Integrating Area Studies at the undergraduate level is a crucial early-stage foundation for cultivating various types of talent, directly impacting the establishment of China’s interdisciplinary talent reserves. However, current teaching practices still face challenges.

4. Practical Challenges in Integrating Area Studies into Undergraduate International Relations Education

The integration of Area Studies into undergraduate international relations education is influenced by multiple factors. Beyond differences in research paradigms, challenges also arise because international relations is already a mature discipline, while Area Studies is still in its nascent stage in terms of theoretical foundations, teaching resources, and talent cultivation.

4.1 Theoretical Integration Faces Disciplinary Paradigm and Knowledge System Conflicts

One challenge in integrating Area Studies into undergraduate teaching stems from methodological divergences at the theoretical level. As a discipline, international relations have increasingly moved toward scientific rigor—a trend well-reflected in the history of its theoretical development. In contrast, Area Studies relies more on interpretive methods that focus on history and culture, creating significant barriers to integration. The methodological differences between “seeking universal laws” and “deeply describing specific contexts”—obtaining “local knowledge” through in-depth case studies, historical analysis, and fieldwork while focusing on particularity and complexity—constitute fundamental obstacles to disciplinary integration in both cognition and teaching practice.

Discrepancies in research approaches further complicate integration. Traditional international relations research prioritizes theoretical over empirical studies and emphasizes major powers over smaller states. This tendency often treats the non-Western world as a testing ground for theories rather than a source of knowledge, leading to neglect or oversimplification of regional diversity, historical trajectories, and cultural logics. This easily results in a “dialogue of the deaf” at the methodological level during disciplinary exchanges, significantly hindering theoretical research and innovation. The “inside-out” perspective and emphasis on non-Western agency in regional and country studies starkly contrast with this traditional inertia.

Facing the knowledge system of international relations—typically centered on core theoretical schools and systemic-level analysis—the knowledge system exhibits problem-oriented characteristics, inherently interdisciplinary, capable of integrating political, economic, historical, linguistic, cultural, religious, and anthropological perspectives. Its structure is more decentralized and contextualized. Effectively integrating these two distinct knowledge systems within the undergraduate international relations curriculum framework—avoiding mechanical juxtaposition or the dissolution of one into the other—poses a significant challenge to instructional design and cognition.

4.2 Teaching Integration Confronts Insufficient Educational Resources

On one hand, most faculty in international relations programs at domestic universities have received training in traditional international relations theories and methods. The proportion of teachers with solid area knowledge backgrounds and proficient interdisciplinary skills remains low. Thus, for many faculty members, organically integrating regional perspectives and interdisciplinary methods into core international relations courses and developing new integrated courses presents fresh challenges. Even teachers with regional studies backgrounds may lack the ability to effectively connect regional knowledge with international systems theory, indirectly leading to the absence of regular collaborative teaching and research mechanisms between the two fields. On the other hand, few universities systematically offer and maintain high-quality courses in less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), often facing difficulties in enrollment and course sustainability, making it hard to meet the language requirements for specialized regional research. Consequently, regional studies within international relations commonly suffer from a monolingual problem, limiting research depth to secondary literature analysis. The absence of talents capable of conducting deep research using the languages of the studied countries prevents research from breaking free from Western-constructed knowledge frameworks. Taking Southeast Asian studies as an example, scholars relying solely on English-language sources often fall into the cognitive trap of “deconstructing former colonies through a colonizer’s lens,” failing to access genuine political ecosystems

within local discourse systems.

Beyond curriculum resources, universities need to provide more domestic and overseas immersive fieldwork opportunities for international relations undergraduates—including community observation, oral history collection, and institutional visits—given that the essence of studies lies in “being on-site.” The true goal of Area Studies should be to comprehensively understand all kinds of information about countries and regions worldwide, including politics, economy, society, culture, history, geography, natural environment, etc. (Qian, C. D., & Yin, R. Y., 2024) However, these aspects often face multiple obstacles such as funding constraints, security risks, project design guidance, and inter-university collaboration mechanisms, lacking systematic support.

4.3 Structural Problems Within the Higher Education System

Beyond insufficient teaching resources, structural issues within the higher education system also hinder integration. Current university departmental and disciplinary setups are often rigidly compartmentalized. International relations programs are typically housed within Schools of Political Science, Public Administration, or International Relations, while Area Studies may be scattered across Foreign Language Schools, History Departments, or newly established Regional Studies Institutes. This separation impedes course sharing, faculty mobility, cross-disciplinary student training, and interdisciplinary projects. Existing undergraduate curricula in international relations are relatively mature and fixed, making it difficult to adjust credit structures and core course requirements. Limited flexibility makes it challenging to accommodate substantial new regional and country content, especially elements requiring language support and practical components. How to scientifically restructure the curriculum without significantly increasing overall credit burdens remains a major challenge. For faculty, the current teaching and academic evaluation systems tend to favor traditional theoretical research outputs and publications in English-language international journals. The value placed on qualitative research, policy application reports, and fieldwork documentation emphasized in it remains insufficient, affecting faculty motivation to engage in integrated teaching and research.

Addressing these challenges requires systematic educational reform. At the theoretical level, it necessitates reconstructing conflicting cognitive frameworks and bridging the opposition between “universality” and “particularity” research paths. At the practical level, it demands breaking down disciplinary silos and innovating traditional teaching mechanisms to accelerate effective alignment between education and national strategic needs, providing solid talent support for major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics.

5. Exploring Pathways for Integrating Area Studies into Undergraduate International Relations Education

Facing the practical challenges of disciplinary integration, exploring viable pathways for integration is crucial. This can begin with reconstructing core teaching elements, focusing on three major directions: multilingual competence cultivation, regional knowledge cognition system innovation, and interdisciplinary talent training model optimization, proposing concrete implementation plans to overcome barriers and advance the deep integration of Area Studies into undergraduate international relations teaching.

5.1 Reconstructing the Multilingual Competence Cultivation System

Like many non-language disciplines, international relations traditionally emphasize English in its teaching system. While this met research and communication needs during early globalization, it no longer suffices for national strategic demands amid profound global changes and China’s increasing prominence on the world stage. The Action Plan for High-Quality Development of Philosophy and Social Sciences in Universities Toward 2035, jointly issued by the Central Propaganda Department and the Ministry of Education, calls for optimizing country and regional studies and building new university think tanks with Chinese characteristics. The integration requires redefining the value of language competence and actively expanding new language course systems. This transformation involves not only curriculum adjustments but also a paradigm shift in students’ language cognition: learning less commonly taught languages enhances understanding of different countries and civilizations, better overcoming language barriers, broadening research scope, improving academic exchange quality, contributing to regional studies, and aiding in understanding political behavior and national strategic trends. Therefore, efforts should promote the cultivation of “Area Studies + Foreign Language” talents, exploring distinctive and localized cultivation paths based on market demands and institutional strengths.

Simultaneously, in traditional teaching models, language instruction and specialized education have long been compartmentalized. Foreign language departments handle language courses, while international relations programs focus on theoretical teaching. This division makes it difficult for students to translate language skills into research tools. Integration demands breaking down disciplinary barriers to fuse language learning, international relations theory, and regional knowledge acquisition. Cross-disciplinary course development is key to solving this problem. Embedding specialized content into language teaching and strengthening language application in disciplinary courses are essential. Establishing English as the foundational course language,

supplemented by in-depth training in two strategic regional languages, balances linguistic breadth and disciplinary depth. Enhancing English academic writing and specialized literature reading abilities—such as intensive analysis of classical international relations theoretical works—enables students to master disciplinary terminology and local cultural acquisition.

5.2 Reconstructing the Area Knowledge Cognition System

Traditional undergraduate courses in international relations emphasize theoretical and systemic teaching, with few universities offering targeted courses on micro-level differences between countries or regional characteristics. Existing interdisciplinary initiatives mostly rely on single-discipline talent cultivation programs sharing courses and faculty with other schools or departments. (Wang, W. L. L., 2024) Future undergraduate teaching in international relations must break disciplinary barriers to integrate the essence of Area Studies.

First, regarding curriculum: Traditional international relations courses focus on systemic-level analysis. Integration requires adding cognitive dimensions centered on state internals and regions. Area Studies emphasizes the integrity of history and culture and “contextual specificity,” preferring to achieve “breadth of substantive knowledge” through local languages and “general cultural knowledge,” attaining “cross-cultural understanding” through historical and cultural interpretation and comparison. (Liu, Q., 2018) The attention to historical particularity in Area Studies can compensate for the “simplified state” assumption in international relations theories. Therefore, curricula can reconstruct deep cognition along historical dimensions—for example, adding “regional history” modules to International Relations History courses. Along social dimensions, Comparative Politics courses can strengthen analysis modules for “non-institutional power structures.” Beyond course design, since traditional international relations courses mostly rely on textual analysis and case deduction, Area Studies emphasizes “unity of knowledge and action” competence cultivation. Russian universities provide excellent models: their practical teaching systems emphasize interaction between academic research and policy formulation. For instance, Kazan Federal University requires “Regional Studies of External Regions” majors to complete “dual internships”: policy analysis training at the Federal Ministry of Economic Development and participation in cross-border cooperation practices at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tatarstan. (Liu, J., 2022)

Second, regarding teaching resources: Actively establishing digital sharing platforms is essential. Integrating historical archives, fieldwork data, policy documents, and multidimensional resources consolidates scattered teaching materials, corpora, and audiovisual resources across universities. For example, creating a “Regional Political Discourse Corpus” systematically collects primary materials such as leaders’ speeches and social media political discourse. Building a “Belt and Road Legal Terminology Database” with multilingual comparative texts of investment laws from ASEAN countries supports students’ comparative legal research. Virtual teaching and research sections are equally important, using 5G technology to enable cross-institutional faculty sharing and optimizing resource allocation efficiency.

Finally, promoting dual-track advancement of faculty capacity reconstruction and faculty structure optimization: Faculty training mechanisms require forward-looking planning. Emphasizing talent reserves for regional language instructors—such as selecting international relations students for targeted language teaching training—is crucial. Advancing China’s Area Studies could begin with the internationalization of research talent, focusing on cultivating scholars with long-term overseas study, fieldwork, internship experiences, solid disciplinary foundations, and academic rigor. (Xie, T., Chen, Y., Dai, C. Z., et al., 2022) Regularly holding disciplinary dialogue workshops fosters integration between international relations structural research and in-depth localized studies.

5.3 Reconstructing the Talent Cultivation System

The integration must ultimately manifest in talent cultivation. As General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, participating in global governance requires a large number of professionals familiar with Party and state policies, knowledgeable about China’s national conditions, possessing a global vision, proficient in foreign languages, well-versed in international rules, and skilled in international negotiations. This means that integration requires cultivating interdisciplinary strategic talents. However, China’s talent cultivation faces structural problems beyond shortages in three key areas (international organizations, foreign-related legal affairs, international communication): first, how to coordinate “instrumental knowledge” with “disciplinary knowledge”; second, how to balance “domain specialization” with “regional specialization”; third, how to integrate knowledge literacy, skill literacy, and value literacy. (Chen, J., & Bai, L., 2025) Therefore, beyond integrating course knowledge—requiring students to master the language, history, and culture of target countries while specializing in domains like law, economics, or communication—it is necessary to cultivate and leverage students’ diverse learning abilities: studying theory in classrooms and practicing real-world skills outside, making fieldwork and negotiation simulations compulsory courses. It also requires constructing new evaluation systems—for example, placing greater emphasis on internship reports, policy analyses, and other practical outcomes.

For foreign-related legal talents, efforts should focus on shaping specialized competencies in regional and national laws, cultivating “rule-knowing, operation-capable” practical talents. Curriculum design can center on courses related to specific countries’ or regions’ laws—for example, training students to understand the cultural roots of the “mediation-first” principle in judicial practices of Southeast Asian countries, avoiding rigid application of Western adversarial litigation models. In practical components, students should gain internship opportunities in judicial organs and participate in judicial case database construction.

For international organization talents, training should cultivate “rule-knowing, coordination-skilled” multilateral talents. Domestic universities’ international relations programs can innovate curricula based on institutional strengths—analyzing various negotiation cultures, studying existing negotiation materials from different countries, and interpreting motivations behind strategic choices. Active experiential learning should be promoted: annually selecting students for internships at international organizations and practicing negotiation skills in simulation competitions. Language proficiency must meet bilingual or multilingual working standards to ensure accurate articulation of China’s stance in complex international contexts. In exploring international organization talent cultivation, beyond building institutional brands, universities should collaborate internally and externally to leverage collective strength. (Jin, Q., & Liu, J. R., 2020) For example, Shanghai universities formed an alliance for international organization talent development, while Beijing Foreign Studies University and China University of Political Science and Law jointly established a bachelor-master integrated program for foreign-related legal talents in 2021.

For international communication talents, training should focus on cultivating “storytelling, prejudice-countering” communicators. Developing cross-cultural precision narrative abilities is key. To ensure teaching quality, universities should enhance cultivation models by forming interdisciplinary supervisory teams guiding professional knowledge application, participant observation techniques, and multilateral negotiation strategies. Multiple professional certifications should be established for different research directions. In building practical platforms, active collaboration with international media outlets, research institutions, and cultural exchange organizations is essential. Jointly establishing platforms for international cultural dissemination and exchange—covering international news co-production, cross-cultural exchange programs, and international media forums—enables international communication talents to access broader global perspectives, understand cultural communication strategies and audience needs in different countries, thereby enhancing their cross-cultural communication and international dissemination skills in practice. (He, L., Liu, B. D., & Zhang, D., 2025)

6. Conclusions

Against the backdrop of globalization and the information revolution, Area Studies is flourishing, reflecting an era of resurgent local knowledge. “The more national it is, the more global it becomes”; conversely, “the more globalized, the more localized.” Deeply integrating Area Studies into undergraduate international relations teaching can nourish the development of regional studies while injecting vitality into international relations. With economic globalization and digital connectivity, demand for “international” knowledge has surged. Traditional “ivory-tower” international relations research can no longer meet this growing demand. Only by inclusively absorbing “international relations” knowledge from different disciplines and continuously expanding research fields can international relations studies respond to such needs. The discipline itself will achieve self-renewal and development through the production and creation of new knowledge. Area Studies represents precisely such a field, holding great significance for advancing international relations research.

Rather than fixating on differences in research objects and methods, it is more productive to recognize the shared strategic goals and integrative value of the two disciplines, researching the feasibility of genuine teaching integration. This integration not only helps students build core competencies of “language proficiency, country expertise, and domain specialization” but also drives international relations education from theory-dominance to problem-orientation. Future efforts require continuous deepening of curriculum reform, fieldwork practice, and evaluation innovation to precisely align talent cultivation with national needs in “Belt and Road” construction, international organization functions, and cross-cultural communication. Amid intertwined domestic and international contexts of “two overall situations,” cultivating talents with both global vision and regional expertise, well-versed in international rules, will provide solid intellectual support for major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, enabling the international relations discipline to transcend Western discourse systems and achieve autonomous knowledge production.

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The Enforcement of Human Rights Under the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (The Banjul Charter)

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Abstract

The reinforcement of human rights ensures stronger protection mechanisms and accountability for violations. It also enhances compliance with legal frameworks, fostering dignity, justice, and equality for all. The article examines the enforcement of human rights under the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter). The study uses a qualitative research methodology, employing primary data sources principally from the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981, the 1998 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a plethora of others. Secondary data comes from journal articles, newspapers, textbooks, internet sources, and reports. This study is anchored by the natural law theory, and the triple-pronged theory. The finding in this study reveals that regardless of the marginal success in the enforcement human rights under the Banjul Charter by key enforcement institutions like the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, more effort is needed as most states have been reluctant and lukewarm in complying with the provisions of the Charter. And as a corollary, it is incumbent to strengthen AU-oversight of state compliance, enhance domestication of Charter obligations in national law, protect or restore direct access under Article 34(6) of the Protocol, the need for a replacement of claw-back clauses with non-derogatory clauses, and the need to strengthen the reporting system.

Keywords: enforcement, human rights, and Banjul charter

1. Introduction

Ancient people did not have the same modern-day conception of universal human rights¹. The true forerunner of human rights discourse was the concept of natural rights which appeared as part of the medieval natural tradition that became prominent rights, the European Enlightenment. From this foundation, the modern human rights arguments emerged over the latter half of the 20th century². The 17th century English philosopher John Locke discussed natural rights in his work, identifying them as being "life, liberty, and estate (property)", and argued that such fundamental rights could be surrendered in the social contract. By 1689 in Britain, the English Bill of Rights and the Scottish claim of Rights each made illegal a range of oppressive governmental actions.³

The foundations of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the 1846 Lieber Code and the first of the

¹ Freeman, M., (2002). *Human rights: An interdisciplinary approach*. Harvard University Press, pp. 15–17.

² Moyn, S., (2010). *The last utopia: Human rights in history*. Harvard University Press, p. 8.

³ "Britain unwritten constitution *"British library, Retrieved 27 November 2015."* The key landmark is the Bill of Rights (1689), which established the supremacy of parliament over the crown ...providing for the regular meeting of parliament, free elections to the commons, free speech in parliamentary debates, and some basic human rights, most famously freedom from cruel or unusual punishment".

Geneva conventions in 1864 laid the foundations of International humanitarian law, to be further developed by the two World Wars. Between the First and the Second World War, the League of Nations was established in 1919 at the negotiations over the Treaty of Versailles following the end of the First World War. The League's goals included disarmament, preventing war through collective security, settling disputes between countries through negotiations, diplomacy and improving global welfare. Enshrined in the Charter was a mandate to promote many of the rights which were later included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948. The League of Nations had the mandate to support many of the former colonies of the Western European colonial powers during their transition from colony to independent states. Established as an agency of the League of Nations, and now part of the United Nations, the International Labor Organization also has a mandate to promote and safeguard certain of the rights later included in the UDHR.

After the Second World War, the UN brought human rights firmly into the sphere and realm of international law in its own constituent document, the UN charter,¹ in 1945². The purpose of the UN included in Article 1(3), the protection and encouragement of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Under Article 55 and 56, member states are committed to 'joint and separate action' to create 'conditions of stability and well-being' across the world, including the promotion of 'universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion'. Thus, from 1945, it was clear that human rights could no longer be characterized as a domestic issue, hidden by the veil of state sovereignty. Since 1945, the UN has been instrumental in the process of standard setting, that is, creating treaties and other documents that set out universally recognized human rights. Most famously of course, it adopted the Universal Declaration on Human Rights ('UDHR') in December 10th 1948³, following up (through years later) with a series of treaties protecting various human rights.

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) is a non-binding declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly⁴ in 1948, partly in response to the barbarism of the Second World War. The Declaration was the first international legal effort to limit the behavior of states and press upon them the duties of their citizens following the model of right duty duality. Although the UDHR is a non-binding resolution, it is now considered to be a central component of international customary law which may be invoked under appropriate circumstances by state judiciaries and other judiciaries. Human rights treaties drastically came into the scene. In 1966, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) were adopted by the nations, between them making the rights contained in the UDHR binding on all states.⁵ However, they came into force only in 1976, when they were ratified by a sufficient number of states (despite achieving the ICCPR, a covenant including no economic or social rights, the US only ratified the ICCPR in 1992).⁶ The ICESCR commits 155 state parties to work towards the granting of economic, social, and cultural rights (ESCR) to individuals. Since then, numerous other treaties (pieces of legislation) have been offered at the international level. They are generally known as human rights instruments. Some of the significant are: Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (adopted 1948, entry into force: 1951), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) adopted in 1966, entry into force: 1969, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) entry into force: 1981, United Nations Convention Against Torture (CAT) adopted 1984, entry into force: 1984, Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) adopted in 1989, entry into force: 1989, International Convention on the Protection of the Right of All migrant workers and Members of their families (ICRMW) adopted in 1990, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) entry into force: 2002.

Another major development in the 20th century regarding human rights is the evolution of regional human rights. Regional human rights consist principally of the African, the European, Arab region, South East Asia, and the Inter-American human rights system with key human rights instruments like: African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; the European Convention on Human Rights, Arab Charter on Human Rights, ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, and American Convention on Human Rights⁷.

¹ Charter of the United Nations, UNTS, 24 October 1945 ('UN charter').

² Human rights were largely unprotected by international law prior to the second world war, with exception arising for example in the context of international humanitarian law and the rights of aliens.

³ (10) GA Res 217(111) of 10 December 1948, UN Doc A/810 at 71 (1948) ('UDHR').

⁴ (A/Res/217, 10 December 1948 at Palais de Chaillot, Paris).

⁵ This does not include the Vatican, which also recognized as an independent state, is not a member of the UN.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

2. Conceptual Clarifications

This section shall address key concepts related to this study. Each of the concepts shall be examined in seriatim.

2.1 Human Rights

The Black's law dictionary defines human rights as "The freedoms, immunities, and benefits that, according to modern values (esp. at an international level), all human beings should be able to claim as a matter right in the society in which they live."¹

According to Tijani, "Human rights are rights that are to be inherent in human beings solely on account of their being human."²

To Amartya Sen, "the notion of human right builds on our shared humanity. These rights are not derived from the citizenship of any nation, but are presumed to be claimed or entitlements of every human being. They differ, therefore, from constitutionally created rights guaranteed for specific people."³

Jack Donnelly, "human rights are, literally, the rights we have simply because we are human. They are equal rights: one either is or is not a human being, and thus has exactly the same human rights as every other human being. They are inalienable rights: one cannot stop being a human being, and therefore cannot lose one's human rights, no matter how horribly one is treated. Human rights are also universal rights, held by every human being, everywhere."⁴

2.2 Enforcement

According to the Black's dictionary, enforcement is defined as, "the act or process of compelling compliance with a law, mandate, command, decree, or agreement."⁵

Enforcement refers to the act of ensuring compliance with laws, rules, regulations, or court orders. It involves putting laws or rules into effect and taking actions to prevent or respond to non-compliance. Enforcement can be carried out by various authorities, such as law enforcement agencies, regulatory bodies, or courts.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative research methodology which is doctrinal in nature. Doctrinal research method is research into the law and legal concepts. Sources of data for the research include both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of materials are case law and treaties such as the UN charter, and principally from the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the 1998 Protocol to the Charter. The secondary source of materials include: law text books, encyclopedia, journals, newspapers, articles, information from the internet and reports from both local and international news sources. Relevant literatures were also consulted from libraries appropriate in enabling and fine-tuning the researcher's study.

The reason why the researcher has chosen qualitative research methodology⁶ is because it enables the researcher to provide rigorous exposition, analysis, evaluation of legal policies in the enforcement of human rights under the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. A qualitative research methodology has been used because qualitative and doctrinal research are the most appropriate in legal research where the goal of the work is to analyze cases and legal text and to this study, so as to have an in-depth insight on the human rights enforcement in the both systems.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by two theories, the triple-pronged theory and the natural law theory.

4.1 The Triple Pronged Theory

This is a broad international human rights concept that analysis human rights from a tripartite perspective. For all human rights personnel, there is need to emphasize here that this is a long established concept or principle of international human rights law which apply to all states. Scholars have asserted the triple pronged nature of

¹ Black's Law Dictionary, 8th edition, p. 2167.

² Legal Research & Resource Development, (1999). *Human rights, democracy and development in Nigeria* (Vol. 1). Lagos, Nigeria: Legal Research & Resource Development, p. 68.

³ Amartya Asen, (2010). *The Idea of Justice*. Penguin UK: Harvard University Press, p. 179.

⁴ Donnelly, J., (n.d.). Human rights and human welfare. *Online Journal Academic Literature Review*, 5, 58–72, p. 65.

⁵ Black's Law Dictionary, 9th Edition, 2009.

⁶ The analytical characteristics of qualitative research methodology involves: thematic analysis (identifies patterns and themes); interpretative (the researcher interprets data in context); iterative (analysis refines and revises throughout the study); and coding and categorization (organizes data into meaningful units).

states' human rights obligations: making the duties to respect, protect and fulfill human rights.¹

With the obligation to respect, this level of obligation requires the state to refrain from any measure that may deprive individuals of the enjoyment of their right by their own efforts.

With the obligation to protect, this level of obligation requires the state to prevent violations of human rights by third parties. The obligation to protect is normally taken to be a central function of states, which have to prevent irreparable harm from being inflicted upon members of the society. This requires states:

- ❖ to prevent violations of rights by any individual or non-state actor;
- ❖ to avoid and eliminate incentives to violate rights by third parties; and
- ❖ to provide access to legal remedies when violations have occurred in order to prevent further deprivations.

With the obligation to fulfill, this level of obligation requires the state to take measures to ensure, for persons within its jurisdiction, opportunities to obtain satisfaction of the basic needs as recognized in human rights instruments, which cannot be secured by personal efforts.

Although this is the key state obligation in relation to economic, social and cultural rights, the duty to fulfill also arise in respect to civil and political rights. It is clear that enforcing, for instance, the prohibition of torture (which requires, for example, the police training and preventive measures), the right to a fair trial (requires investments in courts and judges), the right to legal assistance, entails considerable cost.

The above analysis demonstrates that there is little difference in the nature of state obligations in regards to different human rights. The three levels of obligations encompass both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights, blurring the perceived distinction between them.² This tripartite analysis was originally developed by Henry Shue,³ and was affirmed by the Maastricht Guidelines on the violation of Economic, social and cultural rights⁴ in 1997 as representing the contemporary status of international law. According to the Maastricht Guidelines, a breach by a state of any element of the tripartite duties will be violation of that state's obligations under international human rights law.

This theory is linked to this work because it calls on states to enforce human rights which they often tend to violate leading to court actions before the various regional courts. The study therefore resonates with this theory and adds impetus to its fulfillment by states and non-state actors alike.

4.2 The Natural Law Theory

There are two "natural law" theories about two things: a natural law theory of morality, or what's right and wrong, and a natural law theory of positive law, or what is legal and illegal.

Natural law theory of morality summarily posits that the good for us human beings is happiness, the living of a flourishing life. Happiness or flourishing consists in the fulfillment of our distinctive nature, what we "by nature" do best. Secondly, even things which are not man-made (e.g. plants, rocks, planets, and people) have purposes or functions, and the "good" for anything is the realization of its purpose or function. And finally, natural law is the set of truths about morality and justice; they are rules that we must follow in order to lead a good or flourishing life. We can know what these principles are by means of unaided human reason. [The natural law theory of morality rejects ethical subjectivism ("right and wrong are all a matter of opinion") and affirms ethical objectivism ("some moral opinions are more valid, reasonable, or likely to be true than others")]. Immoral acts violate natural law. Hence, immoral behavior is "unnatural" (in the sense of "contrary to our function," not "nowhere to be found in the natural world"), whereas virtuous behavior is "natural". For example, lying is unnatural, Aquinas holds, because the function of speech is to communicate to others what is in our minds. When we use words to mislead others, we are using them contrary to their proper function.

Natural law theory of law summarily posits that legal systems have a function-to secure justice. Grossly unjust

¹ McBeth, A., (2006). Breaching the vacuum: A consolation of the role of international human rights law in the operatives of the International Financial Institutions. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 10, p. 389.

² Available online at: www.humanrights.is/definitions-a... (last visited on 21/02/20)

³ Henry Shue, *Basic Rights subsistence, Affluence and US Foreign Policy*, (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1980), p. 80. Shue developed the concept of the tripartite obligations while the respect, protect and fulfill technology was first used by Absjorn Eide as special rapporteur on the right to food for the committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in his report. *The right to food. UN document no E/CN.4/sub.2/1987/23, 7 July 1987*.

⁴ Maastricht Guidelines, (1998). The Maastricht Guidelines on the violation of economic, social and cultural rights. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 20, p. 691.

laws (e.g., “white people may own Black people as slaves”, “women may not own property or vote”) are not really laws at all, but a perversion of law or mere violence. As St. Augustine put *it lex injustia non est lex*. Aquinas’s way of stating this point: positive law has as its purpose the common good of the community. Any positive law which conflicts/is inconsistent with either natural or divine law is not really law at all. Hence, not only is there no moral obligation to obey it, but there is no legal obligation to obey it either. Augustine, Aquinas and Martin Luther king are supporters of this view¹.

The natural law theory, notably with natural law theory of law, is connected to this study in that it accepts that the existence of legal systems for example as in this study being the ECHR and ACHPR, have a function to secure justice and those provisions provided in such instrument needs to be respected thus falling in line with the enforcement human rights with regards to the fact that it does not conflicts with either natural or divine law as the case may be.

5. African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights: An Overview

The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (also known as the Banjul Charter) is an international human rights instrument that is intended to promote and protect human rights and basic freedoms in the African continent. It emerged under the aegis of the Organization of African Unity (since replaced by the African Union) which, at its 1979 Assembly of Heads of States and Government, adopted a resolution calling for the creation of a committee of experts to draft a continent-wide human rights instrument, similar to those that already existed in Europe (European Convention on Human Rights) and the Americas (American Convention on Human Rights). This committee was duly set up and it produced a draft that was unanimously approved at the OAU’s 18th Assembly held in June 1981, in Nairobi, Kenya. Pursuant to its Article 63 (where it was to “come into force three months after the reception by the Secretary General of the instruments of ratification or adherence of a simple majority” of the OAU’s member states), the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights came into force on 21 October 1986 in honor of which 21 October was declared “African Human Rights Day”². The Charter followed the footsteps of the European and Inter-American systems by creating a regional human rights system for Africa. The Charter shares many features with other regional instruments, has notable unique characteristics concerning the norms it recognizes and also its supervisory mechanism.³ The preamble commits to the elimination of Zionism, which it compares with colonialism and apartheid, caused South Africa to qualify its 1996 accession with the reservation that the charter fall in line with the UN’s resolutions “regarding the characterization of Zionism”.⁴ As of 2019, 53 states have ratified the charter.

A Protocol to the Charter was subsequently adopted in 1998 whereby an African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights was created.⁵ The Protocol came into force on 25th January 2004.

6. Institutions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights

Through the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights as the main human rights treaty in Africa, it has been acknowledged that a framework is needed in order to ensure that human rights are upheld. Various organs or institutions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights are responsible for the protection and strict compliance of human rights in the Africa amongst which we have: the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights and African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

6.1 The African Court of Human and Peoples’ Rights

The African Court of Human and Peoples’ Rights is a continental court established by African countries to ensure protection of human and peoples’ rights in Africa. It complements and reinforces the functions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. The court was established by virtue of Article 1 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights (the protocol), which was adopted by member states of the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in June 1998. The Protocol into came into force on 25 January 2004 after it was ratified by more than 15 countries.

The Court has jurisdiction over all cases and disputes submitted to it concerning the interpretation and application of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (the Charter), the protocol and any other relevant human rights instrument ratified by the states concerned. Specifically, the Court has two types of

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ Heyns, C., (2005). *The essentials of human rights*. Pretoria: Pretoria University Press, p. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Article 1 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Right 1998.

jurisdiction: contentious and advisory.

The Court is composed of eleven Judges, nationals of member states of the African Union. The first Judges of the court were elected in January 2006, in Khartoum, Sudan. They were sworn in before the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union on 2 July 2006, in Banjul, the Gambia. The Judges of the Court are elected, after nomination by their respective states, in their individual capacities from amongst African jurists of proven integrity and of recognized practical, judicial or academic competence and experience in the field of human rights. The judges are elected for a six-year or four-year term renewable once. The Judges of the court elect a president and vice-president of the court amongst themselves who serve a two-year term. They can be re-elected only once. The president of the court resides and works on a full-time basis at the seat of the Court, while the other ten judges work on a part-time basis. In the accomplishment of his duties, the President is assisted by a Registrar who performs registry, managerial and administrative functions of the court.

The court officially started its operations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in November 2006. In August 2007, it moved its seat to Arusha, the United Republic of Tanzania, where the government has provided it with temporary premises pending the construction of a permanent structure. Between 2006 and 2008, the court dealt principally with operational and administrative issues, including the development of the structure of the Court's registry, preparation of its budget and drafting of its Interim Rules of Procedure. In 2008, during the court's Ninth Ordinary Session, judges of the court provisionally adopted the Interim Rules of the court pending consultation with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, based in Banjul, Gambia in order to harmonize their rules to achieve the purpose of the provisions of the Protocol establishing the court, which requires that the two institutions must harmonize their respective Rules so as to achieve the intended complementarity between the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. This harmonization was completed in April 2010, and the court adopted its final Rules of Court. According to Article 5 of the Protocol and Rule 33, the court may receive complaints/ or applications submitted to it either by the African Commission of Human and Peoples' Rights or state parties to the Protocol or African Intergovernmental Organizations. Non-Governmental Organizations with observer status before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and individuals from states which have made a Declaration accepting the jurisdiction of the court can institute cases directly before the court. As of January 2019, only nine countries have made such declarations.

The court delivered its first judgment in 2009 following an application dated 11th August 2008 in *Michelot Yogogombaye V. The Republic of Senegal*. As at January 2016, the court received 74 applications and finalized 25 cases. Currently the court has five pending cases on its table to examine including requests for advisory opinion.¹

6.2 African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights was established on the basis of Article 30 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights² with its mandate according Article 45 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights³ being to: promote Human and Peoples' Rights⁴ and in particular to collect documents, undertake studies and researches on African problems in the field of human and peoples' rights, organize seminars, symposia and conferences, disseminate information, encourage national and local institutions concerned with human and peoples' rights, and should the case arise, give its views or make recommendations to Governments⁵, to formulate and lay down principles and rules aimed at solving legal problems relating to human and peoples' rights and fundamental freedoms upon which Africa Government may base their legislation⁶, to co-operate with other African and international institutions concerned with the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights⁷; to ensure the protection of Human and Peoples' Rights under conditions laid down by the present charter⁸; to interpret all the provisions of the present charter at the request of a state party, an

¹ *Ibid.*

² Article 30 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Right: "An African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, hereinafter called 'the commission', shall be established within the Organization of African Unity to promote human and peoples' rights and ensure their protection in Africa."

³ Article 45 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

⁴ Article 45(1)(a) of the Banjul Charter 1981.

⁵ Article 45(1) of the Banjul Charter 1981.

⁶ Article 45(1)(b) of the Banjul Charter 1981.

⁷ Article 45(1)(c) of the Banjul Charter 1981.

⁸ Article 45(2) of the Banjul Charter 1981.

institution of the OAU or an African organization recognized by the OAU¹; to perform other tasks entrusted to it by the Assembly of Heads of States and Government².

The commission came into existence with the coming into force on 21 October 1986, of the African Charter (adopted by the OAU on 27 June 1981). Although its authority rests on its own treaty, the African Charter, the Commission reports to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (formerly the Organization of African Unity). The Commission meets twice a year: usually in March or April and in October or November. One of these meetings is usually in Banjul, where the Commission's secretariat is located; the other may be in any African state.

The Commission has several special mechanisms in the form of special rapporteurs, working groups and committees that investigate and report on specific human rights issues, such as freedom of expression, women's rights, indigenous population and torture. Each mechanism prepares and presents a report on its activities to the Commission at every ordinary session. The African Commission on Human Rights relies on a network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are required to submit reports to the commission every two years. The commission has granted 514 NGOs with observer status.³ The Commission can only deal with a matter submitted to it after making sure that all local remedies, if they exist, have been exhausted, unless it is obvious to the Commission that the procedure of achieving these remedies would be unduly prolonged.⁴

7. The Procedure and Practice of the Enforcement of Human Rights by the African Charter on Human Peoples' Rights

The regional African human rights system is based on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African or Banjul charter).⁵ Several reasons have been advanced why only a Commission, and not a Court, was provided for in the African Charter in 1981 as the body responsible for monitoring compliance of state parties with the Charter. On the other hand, there is perhaps the more idealistic explanation that the traditional way of solving disputes in Africa is through mediation and conciliation, not through the adversarial, "win to lose" mechanism of a court. On the other hand, there is the view that the member states of the OAU were jealous of their newly founded sovereignty. The notion of human rights court be taken up by the OAU 13 years after the adoption of the African Charter when in 1994, the Assembly adopted a resolution requesting the Secretary General of the OAU to convene a Meeting of Experts to consider the establishment of an African court on Human and Peoples' Rights. Ostensibly, the concept of human rights was accepted in Africa in the early 1990s for the decision to be taken to give more "teeth" to the African human rights system, in the form of a court. The Protocol on the African court on Human and Peoples' Rights was adopted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1998 and the Protocol entered into force in January 2004 and by February 2006 had received 22 ratifications. The African Human Rights Court came in to complement the protective mandate of the Commission under charter.⁶

7.1 Complaint Procedure

Both states and individuals may bring complaints to the African Commission alleging violations of the African Charter by state parties. The individual complaint procedure is used much more frequently than the inter-state mechanism of the African Charter, although not as one would have expected on a continent with the kind of human rights problems that Africa has. This could to some extent be attributed to a lack of awareness about the system but even where there is awareness about the system, but where there is awareness, there is often not much faith that the system can make a difference. According to a recent study on the compliance of states with the findings of the commission there has been full compliance in 14 cases, seven cases of situational compliance (through change of government) and unclear compliance in four cases.⁷ Viljoen and Louw⁸ finds that: "In the analysis of cases of full and clear non-compliance, it appears that the mostly important factors are political, rather than legal. The nature of the case, the elaborateness of reasoning or the type of remedy required seems to have little bearing on the likelihood of adherence by states. The only factor of relevance that relates to the treaty

¹ Article 45(3) of the Banjul Charter 1981.

² Article 45(4) of the Banjul Charter 1981.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Article 50 of the Banjul Charter 1981.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Heyns, C., & Killander, M., (2010). *The African human rights system*. Pretoria: Pretoria University Press, pp. 23–25.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Viljoen, F., & Louw, L., (2007). *An assessment of state compliance with the recommendations issued by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights between 1993 and 2003*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 34.

body itself is follow-up activities undertaken by the Commission". As with other complaints systems, the African Charter poses certain admissibility criteria before the Commission may entertain complaints. These criteria include the requirement of exhausting local remedies as provided for in Article 50 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Commission may be approached only once the matter has been pursued in the highest country in question, without success, or a reasonable prospect of success.¹

7.2 Individual Complaint Procedure

Individual complaint procedure is one of the ways by which parties can make complaints of human rights violation. Under this procedure, it is an individual person who makes the complaint against the state.² Individual complaint procedure is provided for by a number of international and regional human rights instruments and it has come to be seen as a workable procedure compared to the others that are available. Where states have failed to make complaints of human violation against other member states in a treaty, convention or charter and further due to failure by states to produce state reports or late reporting, individual complaints becomes or tends to be a real and a more workable procedure for the protection of human rights. This procedure theoretically may seem to be a real workable procedure and a proper one for the protection of human rights but however, much of its success depends solely on the implementation provisions.³

The Banjul Charter under Article 55⁴ mandates the Commission to receive communications other than those of the states. This broad mandate has developed into the practice of accepting communications from individuals and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).⁵ In handling individual complaints, the African Commission first tries to reach a friendly settlement. This practice flowed Article 52⁶ of the Banjul Charter dealing with inter-state complaints and declaring that in an inter-state mechanism, a friendly settlement should precede adjudication of the same. The African Commission proceeds to checking the communication for admissibility and decides the merits of the case once the friendly settlement attempt fails.⁷ Article 56⁸ of the Banjul Charter enumerates those admissibility requirements. When dealing with the mandate of the case, the mandate of the African Commission is very weak.⁹ The ultimate power of the African Commission is limited to making a recommendation to the Assembly of the Heads of States and Government and it does not have any credible enforcement mechanism.¹⁰ There are other issues that hamper the use of the individual complaints, one of which is the reservation that states have put or in other cases, the states have not become party to the protocol that allows individual complaints to be brought against it.¹¹ A human rights court is primarily a forum for protecting citizens against the state and other state agencies.¹²

7.3 Inter-State Complaint Procedure

The African system recognizes an inter-state complaint mechanism.¹³ Under the Banjul Charter, the inter-state complaint mechanism, is a mandatory procedure. Once a state becomes a state party to the Banjul charter, it is bound by the inter-state complaint mechanism. The Banjul charter provides two different ways of making an

¹ *Ibid.*

² Shelton, D., (2008). *Regional protection of human rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 19.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Article 55 of the Banjul Charter.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Article 55 of the Banjul Charter.

⁷ Odinkalu, C. A., & Christensen, C., (1998). *The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: The development of its non-state communication procedures*. Lagos: Lagos University Press, pp. 235–249.

⁸ Article 56 of the Banjul Charter gives the following as admissibility grounds: disclosure of author's identity, compatibility of the communication with the provisions of the charter, use if insulting language against the respondent state, its institution or the African Union, exclusive dependence (reliance) on media for the alleged violation, exhaustion of domestic remedies, submission of the communication with a reasonable time after final decision of the domestic organs, and cases not dealt with and settled before.

⁹ Ankumah, E., (1996). *The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: Practice and procedures*. Maastricht: Kluwer Law International Press, p. 74.

¹⁰ Viljoen, F., (2004). *A human rights court for Africa and Africans*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 15.

¹¹ Mugwaya, G. W., (2003). *Human rights in Africa: Enhancing human rights through the African regional human rights system*. Uganda: Transnational Publishers, p. 164.

¹² Mutua, M., (1999). The African Human Rights Court: A two-legged stool. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 21(2), p. 336.

¹³ *Ibid.*

inter-state application. The first way gives the state the option of directly communicating with the state alleged to have violated rights before going to the African Commission with the complaint.¹ Under this system, a state has a three-month period during which it must seek a diplomatic solution to the problem. The second option is that a state can bring the case directly to the African Commission without the need to exhaust the first option.² Once a member state decides to bring an inter-state complaint against another member state, rules begin to apply and states must meet certain criteria and one of such criteria relates to the exhaustion of domestic remedies, although exhaustion of domestic remedies does not apply in cases that involve a vast violation of human rights, this notwithstanding, is an exception to the first option as provided in Article 47 and 48 of the Banjul charter. To this effect, Article 50 of the Banjul Charter makes provision for both the first option and the exception.³

There has been a challenge with the extension of the Banjul Charter to the domestic courts as most individual states have to domesticate the charter in order to apply in the local Courts. Other individual states, mostly from the Franco-phone states have the reciprocity principle that prevents the Charter from being applicable until all the Anglo-phone states have made it applicable in domestic law.⁴ Given the widespread violation of rights and abuse of power in the region, the inter-state complaint mechanism should be used more frequently.

7.4 Procedure for Seizing the Court

While the individual complaints procedure before the commission is straightforward, legal representation is becoming a necessity as the jurisprudence of the commission is also becoming more and more sophisticated. An international human rights lawyer is likely to be better equipped to take a case to the commission. Technical issues are likely to arise when it comes to the admissibility test under Article 56 of the charter, especially where local remedies have not been exhausted, and the procedure has been prolonged or where no effective local remedies are available. A lawyer is also better positioned in the drafting of heads of arguments which has become the practice for human rights NGOs submitting communications before the commission.⁵ Complainants wishing to represent themselves in the proceedings may make use of the Guidelines for the submission of communications (Submission Guidelines) developed by the commission to assist complainants bringing communications before it.⁶

According to the Submission Guidelines, communication should include the following: the complainant's personal details; the government accused of the violation; the facts constituting the violation; the urgency of the case; the provision of the charter alleged to have been violated; names and titles of government authorities who committed the alleged violation; witnesses to the violation; domestic legal remedies not yet pursued and the reasons why they have not been pursued; and other international for a which have considered the same complaint.⁷

Bringing communications before the Commission differs from litigating before a national court. On the one hand, litigating at the national level involves the determination by a domestic court or tribunal of whether or not the national law in the form of legislation or the constitution has been contravened. On the other hand, complaints to the commission fall under international law. It is important to note that international law not only governs relations between states, but it also protects human rights, thereby according individual human beings independent status and standing before international bodies such as the commission. Communications before the commission must be limited to violations of international human rights standards. The charter is the yardstick for testing whether or not there has been a violation of an international standard within the African human rights system. The Submission Guidelines assist complainants in distinguishing the two main categories of the rights covered in the charter, namely individual rights and peoples' rights. It also highlights the specific articles of these in the Charter.⁸ Adhering to these guidelines assists the legal officers of the Secretariat of the commission (the

¹ Banjul Charter Article 47 and 48.

² Banjul Charter Article 49.

³ Article 50 of the Banjul Charter provides thus: "The Commission can only deal with a matter submitted to it after making sure that all local remedies, if they exist, have been exhausted, unless it is obvious to the Commission that the procedure of achieving these remedies would be unduly prolonged."

⁴ Orlin, T. S., (1990). Human rights development in Africa: The Banjul Conference of the African Association of Human Rights. p. 12.

⁵ Gumedze, S., (2003). Bringing communications before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, pp. 122–124.

⁶ See "Guidelines on the submission of communications", Information Sheet No 2 of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. These Guidelines may also be used by NGOs assisting victims of human rights violations.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

secretariat) to process the communications to be considered by the commission without delay. The commission developed extensive Processing Guidelines for the processing of communications by the Secretariat. The legal officers of the Secretariat use these Processing Guidelines, which provide for the handling of communications by the Secretariat from their reception up to the drafting of decisions. It would therefore be advisable for complaints to acquaint themselves with these Processing Guidelines to better understand the complaints procedure before the commission.

After having been listed and transferred to the commissions, the commissioner concerned, otherwise known as the rapporteur, is required to make a recommendation on whether or not the commission may be seized of a communication. This process may be referred to as the seizure procedure. Article 55(2) of the charter provides that a communication may only be considered if a simple majority of the members of the Commission so decide. This Article is complemented by rule 102(1) of the Rules of Procedure, which provides that the Secretariat shall transmit to the commission communications submitted to it for consideration by the commission in accordance with the charter. The seizure procedure takes place in a closed session. This is in accordance with Rule 106 of the Rules of Procedure, which provides that the examination of communications by the Commission or its subsidiary bodies should be conducted in private. During the seizure procedure, no oral arguments are required from the parties to the communications.¹

In order for the commission to be seized with a communication, the communication must allege a prima facie violation of the provisions of the charter. After a communication has been approved seizure, the complainant and the respondent state are duly informed. It must be noted that the allegation of a prima facie violation of the provisions of the Charter must be in respect of a member state of the African Union that has ratified or acceded to the charter.² African Union itself cannot be a respondent in any proceedings before the commission. The normal procedure is that the seizure procedure and the admissibility procedure are undertaken during separate sessions of the commission. These sessions need not to be successive. In communication 97/93, *Modise v. Botswana* (2) the commission decided to be seized of the communication at its 13th session and declared it admissible at its 17th session. However, in communication 204/97, *Mouvement Burkinabe des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples v. Burkina Faso*, the commission was seized of the communication at its 23rd session and declared it admissible at its 24th session.³ It is therefore not surprising that the Commission lists the seizure procedure separately from the admissibility procedure. After the seizure procedure and during the intersession, the Secretariat normally sends a *note verbale* to the respondent state informing it of the Commission's decision on seizure, calling for its reaction to the admissibility of the communication. Similar letters are also sent to complainants or their representatives. This procedure conforms to Article 57⁴ of the Charter and Rule 112 of the Rules of Procedure, which provide that prior to any substantive consideration, all communications shall be brought to the knowledge of the state concerned by the chairperson of the commission. Normally, this exercise is undertaken by the Secretariat of the Commission. From the litigation practice before the commission, it may be deduced that seizure procedure is not a substantive consideration within the meaning of Article 57 of the Charter and Rule 112 of the Rules of Procedure. It is only after the seizure procedure that the attention of the respondent state is drawn to the communication before the commission.

8. Effectiveness of the Enforcement of Human Rights Under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

The enforcement of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) constitutes a pivotal issue in the jurisprudence of human rights on the continent. The Banjul Charter's enforcement architecture is principally vested in the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, which exercise quasi-judicial and judicial mandates respectively in monitoring state compliance, adjudicating violations, and providing remedies.

8.1 Institutional Framework and Jurisprudence

¹ *Ibid.*

² Communications which have been against non-African Union states which have not been considered by the commission include Communication 20/88, *Austrian Committee Against Torture v Morocco*, Communication 2/88, *Ihebereme v United States of America*, Communication 3/88, *Centre for the independence of judges and lawyers v Yugoslavia* and Communication 38/90, *Wesley Parish v Indonesia*. Morocco is an African country, but it withdrew from the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1984 after the OAU had recognized the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara). The withdrawal of Morocco from the OAU was effective from November 1985.

³ In this communication, the Commission declared the communication admissible despite the fact that both parties expressed desire to settle the dispute amicably and requested the Commission's assistance to that effect.

⁴ Article 57 of the Banjul Charter 1981.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), adopted in 1981, established a pioneering institutional framework for human rights protection in Africa. Central to this framework are the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Commission serves a quasi-judicial role, tasked with promoting and protecting human rights through mechanisms such as considering state party's reports, conducting fact-finding missions, and issuing recommendations. The Court, established later, complements the Commission by offering judicial recourse for individuals and NGOs, provided states have made the necessary declarations under Article 34(6)¹ of the Protocol establishing the Court. Together, these institutions aim to ensure the effective implementation of the Charter's provisions across the continent.

Article 34 of the Protocol [Ratification] stipulates that "at the time of ratification of this Protocol or any time thereafter, the State shall make a declaration accepting the competence of the Court to receive cases under Article 5(3) of this Protocol. The Court shall not receive any petition under article 5(3) involving a State which has not made such a declaration." Article 5(3) states as follows: "The Court may entitle relevant Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with observer status before the Commission, and individuals to institute cases directly before it, in accordance with article 34(6) of this Protocol."

The terms of jurisprudence, both the Commission and the Court have contributed significantly to the development of human rights law in Africa. The Commission has issued numerous decisions, often drawing on international human rights standards, to address violations and provide guidance to states. However, its decisions are generally non-binding, which can limit their impact. The Court, on the other hand, issues binding judgments on states that have accepted its jurisdiction, thereby enhancing the enforceability of its decision. Despite this, challenges remain, including limited access to the Court due to the requirement for states to make the Article 34(6) declaration,² and issues related to the implementation of its rulings. Nevertheless, the jurisprudence of both bodies has played a crucial role in advancing human rights norms and standards within the African context.

From a jurisprudential point of view, the African human rights system has also developed a growing body of progressive jurisprudence that has advanced human rights norms globally for example: expansion of justiciable rights-in *SERAC v. Nigeria (2000)*,³ the African Commission recognized the right to a healthy environment and held Nigeria accountable for oil exploitation in Ogoni land. This case expanded socio-economic and environmental rights globally. Another milestone is about the right to fair and due process. In the *African Commission v. Libya (2011)*⁴ case, the African Court ordered Libya to release political prisoners and ensure fair trial rights. Another success as seen in the 2010 case of *Endorois v. Kenya (2010)*,⁵ is the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights. The afore-stated case, the Commission affirmed indigenous peoples' rights to land, culture, and development, influencing global indigenous rights jurisprudence. The abolition of death penalty and arbitrary detention as seen in 2004 case of *Interights & Others v. Mauritania (2004)*⁶ and later court rulings, the system has emphasized the prohibition of arbitrary detention, torture, and the need for moratoriums on the death penalty. And also, the advancement of gender rights. Through jurisprudence and reliance on the Maputo Protocol (2003), the system has addressed gender-based violence, women's political participation, and reproductive rights. In summary, the institutional framework has ensured the establishment of effective organs (Commission, Court, ACERWC), sub-regional linkages, and civil society participation. The jurisprudence has progressively shaped rights recognition (socio-economic, environmental, indigenous, gender) and provided binding remedies that hold states accountable.

8.2 Compliance Challenges

¹ Article 34 of the Protocol [Ratification] stipulates that "at the time of ratification of this Protocol or any time thereafter, the State shall make a declaration accepting the competence of the Court to receive cases under Article 5(3) of this Protocol. The Court shall not receive any petition under article 5(3) involving a State which has not made such a declaration." Article 5(3) states as follows: "The Court may entitle relevant Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with observer status before the Commission, and individuals to institute cases directly before it, in accordance with article 34(6) of this Protocol."

² *Ibid.*

³ *SERAC and CESR v. Nigeria* (Communication No. 155/96, 2001).

⁴ *African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights v. Libya*, Application No. 004/2011, Judgment of 3rd June 2016, African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

⁵ *Centre for Minority Rights Development (Kenya) and Minority Rights Group International (on behalf of Endorois Welfare Council) v. Kenya*, Communication No. 276/2003, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2010.

⁶ *Interights, IHRDA and Association Mauritanienne des Droits de L'Homme v. Mauritania*, Communication 242/2001, 262/2002 & 266/2003, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 36th Ordinary Session, November 2004.

The African human rights system through the African Commission, the African Court, and the Committee of Experts, has produced some landmark decisions, but compliance by states remains one of its greatest challenges. One of the major challenges in this context is lack of binding enforcement powers (Commission). The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights only issues recommendations; its decisions are not binding. Many states treat them as advisory opinions, ignoring follow-up. For example, in *SERAC v. Nigeria (2001)*, the Commission ordered environmental clean-up and compensation for Ogoni people, but Nigeria never implemented it.

The second challenge in this context is with the issue of limited jurisdiction and access to the Court. In this regard, only the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights can issue binding judgments. However, few states have made the Article 34(6) declaration allowing individuals and NGOs direct access to the Court (as of 2025, less than 10). Several states, for example, Rwanda, Tanzania, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire have withdrawn their declaration, weakening access and as a corollary, this severely limits victims' ability to enforce rights.

Political resistance and sovereignty concerns tops as the third major compliance challenge. Many governments see regional judgments as interference in domestic affairs. Kenya, for example, has resisted full implementation of the 2010 Endorois decision and the 2017 Ogiek decision despite repeated calls by the Commission and the Court. Libya on the other hand, ignored orders given in *African Commission v. Libya (2016¹)* to guarantee Saif al-Islam Gaddafi a fair trial.

Weak domestic mechanisms for enforcement. Unlike Europe (ECHR) or the Americas (IACtHR), there is no direct enforcement mechanism at the AU level. Implementation relies on political pressure through: AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, and state reporting procedures. But these are often undermined by political alliances and solidarity among states.

Retaliation against the system and lack of awareness and resources. Some states retaliate by withdrawing jurisdiction or ignoring judgments. For example, Tanzania withdrew individual access after a series of unfavorable rulings on electoral laws and fair trial rights as a corollary, this creates a culture of selective compliance. On the other hand, many victims, communities, and even national courts are unaware of African human rights decisions. Limited funding for follow-up mechanisms within the African Commission and the Court means monitoring compliance is weak. Socio-political and conflict-related barriers. In countries facing armed conflict, authoritarian rule, or instability (for example, Libya, Sudan, Cameroon...), compliance is even less realistic.

8.3 Legal Force of Decisions

The effectiveness of the African human rights system is closely tied to the legal force of decisions issued by its organs. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) issues recommendations under Article 55-59 of the African Charter (1981),² which are not legally binding but serve as authoritative interpretations of the Charter.³ Compliance depends largely on political will, and studies shows that it has been minimal.⁴

In contrast, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR) delivers binding judgments under Article 27 and 30 of the Protocol (1998).⁵ These judgments carry *res judicata* effect and must be complied with by states.⁶

Similarly, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) issues findings under Articles 45-45 of the Children's Charter (1990).⁷ Like the African Commission, these are recommendatory and rely on political pressure for implementation.⁸ However, political instability and weak

¹ Centre for Minority Rights Development (Kenya) and Minority Rights Group International (on behalf of Endorois Welfare Council) v. Kenya, Communication No. 276/2003, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2010.

² African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), Article 1, 45, 55-59.

³ Murray Richard, *The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and International Law*, (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2002), p.78

⁴ Frans Viljoen *et al*, "State Compliance with the Recommendations of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1994-2004," *American Journal of International Law*, vol. 101, p.12

⁵ Protocol to the African Charter on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (1998), Article 27, 29-31.

⁶ Ouguergouz, F., (2003). *The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, p. 431.

⁷ African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), Articles 44-45.

⁸ *Ibid*.

enforcement mechanisms sometimes limit practical compliance, as seen in *African Commission v. Libya* (2016).¹ In summary, the system operates under a dual regime: non-binding recommendations from the Commission and ACERWC, and binding judgments from the Court. The effectiveness of the system is therefore constrained by state compliance, political will, and institutional enforcement capacity.

8.4 Access to Justice

Access to justice is a fundamental determinant of the effectiveness of any human rights system. In the African regional framework, it refers to the ability of individuals, communities, and civil society organizations to bring complaints before the African Commission, African Court, or the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and to obtain remedies for violations of rights guaranteed under the Charter or related instruments.

Under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), individuals, NGOs, or groups may submit communications alleging violations of the Charter to the African Commission according to article 55.² Article 56 makes provision for admissibility criteria for communications, including exhaustion of local unless these are unavailable or ineffective.³ The Commission may make recommendations, promote amicable settlements, and conduct investigations.⁴

Under the Protocol on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (1998), individuals and NGOs may directly access the Court if the state has made a declaration under article 34(6) accepting individual or NGO access pursuant to article 5(3) of the Protocol.⁵ The Court can only hear cases concerning violations of the African Charter or other human rights instruments ratified by the state.⁶ Article 27(1) provides the Court with the power to order reparations, compensations, and other remedies, reinforcing access to justice as effective legal redress.

Article 44 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) provides that, children or their representatives can submit communications alleging violations to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). Pursuant article 45,⁷ the Committee can make recommendations to states, though these are not legally binding, emphasizing political and moral pressure as part of access to justice.

Despite statutory provisions, many victims face practical barriers, including lack of knowledge about the system, geographic distance from courts, language barriers, and lack of resources for litigation.⁸ Richard Murray notes that the African Commission's reliance on NGOs and civil society actors is both a strength and limitation: it facilitates submissions but can exclude marginalized individuals lacking organizational support.⁹ Ebobrah argues that while the African Court is legally binding, the requirement for states to make declarations under Article 34(6) restricts direct access for many individuals, undermining the principle of universal access to justice.¹⁰

In summary, access to justice in the African human rights system exists in dual forms: quasi-judicial recommendations (ACHPR and ACERWC) and binding judicial remedies (AfCHPR). Its effectiveness depends on:

- a. State willingness to recognize and comply with complaints.
- b. Availability of resources and legal representation for victims.
- c. Awareness of procedural avenues among communities.

While progress has been made, significant barriers remain for marginalized and vulnerable groups, highlighting

¹ *Ibid.*

² African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), Article 55.

³ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), Article 56.

⁴ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), Article 60.

⁵ Protocol on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (1998), Article 5(3).

⁶ Protocol on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (1998), Article 6.

⁷ African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), Article 45.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Murray, R., (2002). *The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and international law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 95.

¹⁰ Ebobrah, S. T., (2010). Towards a positive application of complementarity in the African human rights system. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 10, p. 355.

the need for enhanced outreach, state ratification of the Court's Protocol, and capacity-building initiatives.

8.5 Domestic Integration

Domestic integration refers to the extent to which African states incorporate the African Charter into national law, ensuring that rights enshrined in the Charter are justiciable and enforceable in domestic courts. Effective enforcement of human rights depends significantly on how states translate their continental obligations into national legal frameworks.

Article 1 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) obligates Member States to "recognize the rights, duties and freedoms enshrined in this Charter and undertake to adopt legislative or other measures to give effect to them."¹ This creates a direct duty for domestic integration. Article 2 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) stipulates that "every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind,"² reinforcing non-discrimination in domestic enforcement. Article 26 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) requires states to guarantee the independence of the courts and judicial remedies, a critical link to effective domestic enforcement.

Integration allows the African Commission's recommendations and the African Court's judgments to be applied directly in domestic courts, making rights practically enforceable. Where integration is weak, victims must rely solely on regional bodies, which, as discussed, face compliance challenges. The doctrine incorporation versus transformation is key. With the doctrine of incorporation, the Charter is directly applicable in domestic courts (for example, Burkina Faso, Benin, Cameroon, and a host of others). The doctrine of transformation on the other hand requires legislative enactment for domestic applicability (example, Nigeria) which may delay enforcement.

Domestic integration makes the Charter more effective where it is properly embedded in national constitutions and legislation. However, its effectiveness remains uneven across Africa, as implementation depends on: the monist or dualist orientation of the state, the independence and capacity of national judiciaries, and the political will of governments to enforce regional norms. Thus, while integration has improved access to remedies in some states, effectiveness remains inconsistent, limiting the overall enforcement of human rights under the African Charter.

8.6 Normative and Jurisprudential Strength

Normative strength refers to the legal framework and standard established in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) and related protocols. The Charter is celebrated for its comprehensiveness, recognizing not only civil and political rights but also socio-economic, cultural, and collective rights (example peoples' rights and duties). This normative innovation sets it apart from other regional systems.³

However, its effectiveness is sometimes weakened by broad and vague provisions that allow states wide discretion. For instance, rights are often limited "within the law," which permits restrictive domestic legislation. Normative strength is also undermined by the lack of binding supremacy of the Charter in many domestic systems, since incorporation depends on national constitutions and judicial willingness.

9. Findings

The finding in this study reveals that regardless of the marginal success in the enforcement human rights under the Banjul Charter by key enforcement institutions like the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, more effort is needed as most states have been reluctant and lukewarm in complying with the provisions of the Charter. And as a corollary, it is incumbent to strengthen AU-oversight of state compliance, enhance domestication of Charter obligations in national law, protect or restore direct access under Article 34(6) of the Protocol, the need for a replacement of claw-back clauses with non-derogatory clauses, and the need to strengthen the reporting system.

10. Conclusion

This research paper makes a review of the enforcement of human rights under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The finding of the study shows that regardless of the marginal success in the enforcement human rights under the Banjul Charter by key enforcement institutions like the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, more effort is needed as most states have been reluctant and lukewarm in complying with the provisions of the Charter. And as a corollary, it is incumbent to strengthen AU-oversight of state compliance, enhance domestication of Charter obligations in

¹ Article 1 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' 1981.

² Article 2 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' 1981.

³ *Ibid.*

national law, protect or restore direct access under Article 34(6) of the Protocol, the need for a replacement of claw-back clauses with non-derogatory clauses, and the need to strengthen the reporting system.

Based on implications however, the findings of this study can guide the African Charter Commission on Human Rights, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the African Union in general to ensure proper enforcement of human rights and to put in measures geared at persuading states to comply unequivocally to the provisions of the Banjul Charter. Based on some of the challenges pointed out in this study, there is a cogent need to put in punitive measures in case of non-compliance, reinforcement of the reporting system, the establishment of walking and feasible relationship between the Commission and the Court as key enforcement institutions, and a need direct access under Article 34(6) of the Protocol as aforementioned.

In examining and analyzing the enforcement of human rights under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, there were equally some challenges encountered in accessing relevant materials for the meticulous development of this research. There were, however, challenges in accessing some online materials like e-books, journal articles, recent edition(s) of the Black's Law dictionary and host of others.

However, these limitations or challenges did not affect the overall quality of the work because a good number of relevant textbooks were purchased and used, open access journals made available a good number of useful materials and also, online text books assisted a lot in the realization of this work.

11. Recommendations

A plethora of recommendations have advanced which are geared at enhancing the enforcement of human rights under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) 1981. Each of these recommendations shall be examined respectively.

11.1 Strengthen AU-Level Political Oversight of State Compliance

Strengthening AU-level political oversight of state compliance means enhancing the African Union's ability to monitor, evaluate, and enforce adherence to treaties, norms, and decisions that member states have agreed upon. Presently, the AU often struggles with weak compliance mechanism, largely due to state sovereignty concerns, limited enforcement tools, political will deficits. Strengthening oversight could involve: empowering AU organs (to grant the African Commission and the African Court more authority to monitor compliance and to require states to report regularly on implementation), and to strengthen peace and security sanctioning states that fail to uphold AU norms, such as those in human rights, democracy, or security cooperation; institutionalized compliance monitoring, link compliance to incentives and sanctions, civil society and regional Court engagement, and political will and leadership (to strengthen the role of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government to review compliance reports and adopt binding decisions on enforcement.)

11.2 Enhance Domestication of Charter Obligations in National Law

Enhancing the domestication of Charter obligation in national under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights means ensuring that the rights and duties enshrined in the Charter are effectively incorporated into the domestic legal systems of the African states, so that they can be invoked and enforced before national courts and institutions. At present, many states ratified the Charter but has failed to reflect its provisions in their constitutions, statutes, or judicial practice. Strengthening domestication involves: constitutional entrenchment, legislative harmonization, institutional mechanisms, judicial empowerment, civic and political engagement, and regional and AU-level support.

11.3 Protect or Restore Direct Access Under Article 34(6)

Protecting or restoring direct access under Article 34(4) of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights is central to strengthening the effectiveness of the African human rights system. Article 34(6) of the Protocol (1998) provides that individuals and NGOs with observer status before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights can bring cases directly before the African Court, only if the concerned State has deposited a special declaration accepting such jurisdiction. Sad enough, out of 34 ratifications, only a few states initially made this declaration (example, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ghana, Tanzania, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire). However, since 2016, several states (notably Rwanda, Tanzania, Benin, and Cote d'Ivoire) withdrew their declarations drastically, thus, limiting direct access.

Protecting and restoring direct access is critical for making the African Court a people's court rather than just a state-to-state tribunal. Without this, the promise of the Court risks being symbolic, as individuals (the main victims of violations) lose the ability to seek remedies directly.

11.4 Replacement of Claw-Back Clauses with Non-Derogatory Clauses

The existence of the claw-back clauses in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights is a serious impediment to human rights enforcement in the African system. Those provisions of the charter containing the

clause often reads thus: for example, Article 12.1 of the Charter which makes provision for ‘freedom of movement and residence within one’s state’ has a right has a claw-back clause which reads as “provided it abides by law”. This right of movement can be restricted by the state on the basis of certain emergencies that may hamper public order, peace and the health of the community and a good example is the case of the COVID-19 — a disease which caused states to restrict movement so as limit the spread of the Covid-19 disease. But the challenge with the claw-back clause is that such provisions have been manipulated upon most especially by government officials in order to suit or fulfill their selfish aims and ambitions. There is need for a reformation of such a clause, making provisions that reflect such a clause clear, well spelled out so as to avoid manipulations by government officials and Heads of States.

The absence of the non-derogation clause in the Banjul charter is a call for concern. The law requires states to limit or restrict citizens of certain rights in times of certain emergencies for example, the outbreak of the current Corona-virus restricted citizens of several human rights for example the right to free movement and the right of association was restricted for purposes of ensuring or protecting people from the spread of the disease but there are certain rights that irrespective of the emergency citizens need not to be restricted or deprived of. The Banjul charter has failed to make provision of such a clause thus giving room for manipulation violation of human rights notably by government officials.

Therefore, the introduction of non-derogation clause into the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights will handle issues related or concerning the interpretation of the Charter hence, not leaving in context any word which seems ambiguous. It will also make a clear demarcation of rights that can be waived and those that cannot be waived irrespective of the circumstance or emergency.

Negation of the claw-back clauses in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights will stop most states from using the clause as a tool for political repression both on individuals or group of people who tend to challenge government policies on legal grounds.

11.5 Strengthening of the Reporting System

The reporting system in the African system is very weak and ineffective. States are very nonchalant about observance of human rights within their respective states. There is need for reinforcement of the whole system and need for the establishment of punitive measures be it financially or deprivation of certain privileges. If the reporting system continues to be weak as it is the case presently, then human rights in the region of Africa has no future. The African Commission seems to lack punitive measures that can compel states to submit reports about the state of human rights in their respective states. More so, compelling measures need to be put in place as the case may be so as the ensure that states respond positively to such obligation.

It is believed strongly that, if the reporting system is reinforced, states will submit their reports faithfully without any duress from the Commission most especially if punitive and compelling measures are put in place. Punitive measures for example that goes as far as demanding that states should pay to the Commission certain huge sums of money as fines and to an extent, deprivation of certain opportunities or privileges like granting such states only an observer status during ordinary and extra-ordinary sessions wherein with such a status, they are denied the right to participate in such meetings but rather just to discern or observe.

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Students' Leadership Conceptions and Political Engagement: Implications to Teaching Philippine Politics and Governance

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Abstract

This study focused on the concept of leadership and political engagement of students. Thus, it determined the respondents' conceptions of leadership and knew their current political engagement. Further, it determined the gaps between the notions about leadership and current political engagement of the respondents, which served as the basis for identifying the implications of the conceptions of leadership and current political engagement in teaching Philippine Politics and Governance. The study used an open-ended survey questionnaire, and the data gathered was analyzed with topical and thematic analysis. The students have knowledge and conceptions about leadership and the qualities and characteristics attributed to it. It was found that most of the students are engaged in elections, digital platforms, political discussion, and civic matters. Furthermore, gaps show that their political engagement does not reflect their conceptions of leadership and vice versa. What the students view, and think is not the same as what they are doing or actualizing. Their concepts negate what they are engaged in. The existing gaps show that leadership conceptions and political engagement can be further improved by incorporating varying teaching-learning approaches aligned to the Philippine Politics and Governance curriculum.

Keywords: civic competence, education, gaps, social studies

1. Introduction

Leadership is one of the most talked-about concepts. Due to the need for better leadership across many contexts, there is an existing lack of common understanding or consensus on the concept of leadership and how leadership should be practiced (Haber, 2012). Scholars have defined leadership in various ways throughout the years; some see it as an innate feature, while others see it as a collection of abilities or behaviors, and others as a process or relationship. As a result, the concept of leadership is interpreted and evaluated in various ways.

In the educational landscape, Philippine Politics and Governance are one of the main drivers of cultivating leadership among students, wherein as mentioned in the DepEd Philippine Politics and Governance curriculum guide (2016), which presents to the students the basic concepts and vital elements of politics and governance from a historical-institutional perspective. The PPG course will assist learners in developing their civic competency. Thus, to strengthen or build their civic competence, they have to look at their conceptions of leadership as it will guide them in participating and engaging in civic activities. Civic competence is made up of components relating to knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, civic participation in school, state, and international arenas, and upholding one's rights and responsibilities as a citizen, as well as the ability to engage in political discussion and participate in a variety of socially essential activities (Jurs, 2014). These factors, as seen, have a direct relationship to political engagement, which is also known as political participation or political involvement in this study and is used interchangeably.

In various parts of the world, students' political engagement from secondary to tertiary levels is apparent. Based on various international and national studies, the most common engagement in political activities by students are electoral participation (voting, campaigning, etc.), volunteerism in the community, protest activities, and contacting public officials. Beside from traditional political interactions, the growth of digital platforms via the Internet to engage in political activities is also frequently used, with social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter among the most popular tools. Aside from the activities mentioned above, school-based participation as a form of political engagement is also significant. Dolipas (2021) determined that students' political participation in school is in the form of being a member of a student council, having a function as a speaker for the class, attending a students' meeting, taking an active role in such a meeting, participating in a protest movement at school and organizing a political event at school.

However, there are gaps between an individual's perceptions, views, and conceptions and their engagement in a specific matter. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) stated that individuals' ideals do not often match their actions. Thus, in this study, besides determining the conceptions of the respondents about leadership and knowing their current political engagement, the researchers also aimed to determine the gaps between the notions about leadership and current political engagement of the respondents, which was the basis for identifying the implications of the conceptions on leadership and current political engagement in teaching Philippine Politics and Governance.

2. Literature Review

Leadership and political engagement are core elements of civic education, especially in the study of Philippine Politics and Governance. Leadership, as a concept, has been long debated, with no single definition universally accepted. Some scholars view leadership as an innate trait, while others believe it is a set of learned behaviors or skills, and others see it as a relational and inclusive process (Haber, 2012). These varying perspectives have made leadership an elusive and complex concept. Traditional definitions tend to associate leadership with power, hierarchy, and formal positions of authority. However, post-industrial views emphasize collaboration, shared vision, and the ability to inspire and empower others (Northouse, 2007, as cited in Haber, 2012). This evolving view of leadership has encouraged a more democratic and inclusive understanding, especially in education where every learner is seen as a potential leader.

Despite this inclusive vision, leadership development is still hindered by inconsistent understandings among students. Marcketti and Kadolph (2010) noted that educational institutions often promote leadership through mission statements and programs, but a lack of consensus on what leadership really means affects the depth of student participation. Astin and Astin (2000) emphasized that some students' narrow views on leadership can discourage them from getting involved, especially when they do not see themselves fitting the traditional mold of a "leader." Furthermore, research by Komives et al. (2011) revealed that student leadership development is a shared responsibility among educators and institutions. When students see leadership as inclusive and value-driven, they are more likely to participate and engage in meaningful civic work.

Gender and experience also shape how students view leadership. Wielkiewicz et al. (2012) found that males often hold hierarchical conceptions of leadership, while females tend to adopt more collaborative views. Students in formal leadership roles often embrace traditional and trait-based definitions, while those outside such roles are more likely to see leadership as fluid and contextual (Schertzer & Schuh, 2004). Additionally, Avolio (2010) found that many students still believe leadership is a rare ability possessed by only a few exceptional individuals. However, this belief contradicts the growing body of evidence that leadership can be developed through learning and experience. Reche, Diaz, and Sanchez (2013) emphasized that effective leaders are not born but are shaped through communication, mediation, and the capacity to understand group needs.

In the Philippine context, Social Studies plays a vital role in developing civic competencies, which include both leadership and political engagement. The Araling Panlipunan curriculum, aligned with the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2013), seeks to promote critical thinking, democratic values, and active citizenship. Social Studies is seen not only as a subject area but as a platform where leadership qualities are cultivated. It emphasizes that every learner, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background, has the potential to become a leader (Planas, 2020). The subject of Philippine Politics and Governance specifically aims to expose students to the country's political structures, processes, and institutions, helping them understand their civic rights and responsibilities (DepEd Curriculum Guide, 2016).

Political engagement, also referred to as political participation or involvement, is another essential outcome of civic education. Van Deth (2016) defined political engagement as voluntary, non-professional actions aimed at influencing political decisions. These can range from traditional activities such as voting and campaigning to newer forms like digital activism and social media participation. Amna and Ekman (2012) further classified political participation into conventional and unconventional categories, each involving both individual and collective actions. Examples include voting, joining school clubs, signing petitions, joining rallies, or expressing political opinions online.

Modern political engagement has evolved significantly due to the rise of digital platforms. Amin and Mahmud (2017) emphasized that platforms like Facebook and Twitter allow students to express their political opinions, organize events, and participate in national conversations. DeHart and Yang (2016) also found that the political use of social media is a strong predictor of online political engagement among college students. These platforms help increase awareness, mobilize actions, and foster political consciousness among the youth. David, San Pascual, and Torres (2019) supported this by showing that following political figures or institutions on social media is correlated with higher political engagement. Additionally, Conroy, Feezell, and Guerrero (2012) demonstrated that online groups are just as effective as traditional groups in fostering civic participation.

Despite the multiple avenues for participation, several studies highlight persistent gaps between students' political beliefs and their actual engagement. Chen et al. (2019) argued that individuals often hold beliefs about learning or leadership that are not reflected in their actions. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) similarly observed that knowledge and beliefs don't always translate into behavior. Walter (2016) further explained that while personal insights may grow, they don't automatically lead to committed civic action. These gaps between conception and execution underline the importance of intentional educational approaches that bridge theory with practice.

School-based political participation remains a significant venue for youth engagement. Saha and Print (2010) asserted that involvement in student councils, school clubs, and elections can predict future political behavior. Exposito (2013) outlined five domains where students engage in school politics: decision-making, conflict resolution, knowledge construction, problem-solving, and identity formation. These activities not only develop civic skills but also empower students to express themselves and contribute to community development. According to Williams (2020), campus-based organizations also shape students' political views and encourage them to take part in wider social movements. Even non-academic events like intramurals, community outreach, and school-led advocacies contribute to a student's political socialization (Ablang et al., 2005).

Family and school-based support also influence students' civic behavior. In the modular learning setup, Maslang et al. (2021) emphasized that infrequent face-to-face interactions and limited feedback between students and teachers can hinder student motivation and satisfaction. They underscored how emotional support from families and instructors can counteract the challenges of distance education and foster more positive learning behaviors. Additionally, Maslang (2023) found that among pre-service teachers, academic performance is predicted not only by cognitive ability but also by motivation, interest, and external support wherein all of which are linked to how students engage and lead both in and out of class.

Overall, the literature shows that while leadership and political engagement are both essential components of civic development, they do not always align in practice. Many students express strong beliefs about what leadership should be, but their actual political participation remains inconsistent. Recognizing and addressing these gaps is necessary in improving how leadership and engagement are taught. Therefore, this study aims to explore students' conceptions of leadership, their actual political engagement, and the relationship between the two. It also seeks to identify practical implications for teaching Philippine Politics and Governance in a way that bridges the gap between what students believe and how they act.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative narrative research design to explore students' conceptions of leadership and their current political engagement. It was conducted during the first semester of Academic Year 2021–2022 at Saint Mary's University Senior High School in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya. The participants were 20 purposively selected Grade 12 students from the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand.

Data were gathered through an adapted and contextualized open-ended questionnaire consisting of three parts: student profile, leadership conception questions based on Aminitehrani (2017), and political engagement questions grounded on the dimensions identified by Owen and Soule (2015). The instrument was validated by research panelists and distributed via Google Forms through the school's research coordinator and classroom advisers.

Informed consent was obtained, and all ethical protocols were strictly observed. Thematic analysis using the inductive method was applied to group and interpret student responses. The salient findings served as the basis for drawing implications in teaching Philippine Politics and Governance.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Students' Leadership Conceptions

Leadership has been the subject of research in various areas in the field of social sciences, and consensus regarding its definition has not been reached; one of the reasons for this lack of consensus originates from the differences in the reflection and priority of leadership in different areas-on how the concept of leadership is being looked at (Kolzow, 2014). In other words, leadership is an elusive concept. Depending on the angle from

which one views it, it has been variously defined.

The respondents defined leadership as influencing other people. Their responses imply that most of the respondents believed that leadership is concerned with influencing other people to accomplish the goals of an organization. This is similar to Moguel's (2015) findings, which emphasized the connectedness of leadership and influence. The youth leaders in their study claimed that rather than relying on power and position to lead, leadership should be concerned with influencing or creating an impact on one's constituents.

Furthermore, respondents perceived leadership with modeling traits. People typically follow leaders who demonstrate these traits or look at them as their models in life. These agree with Gallagher (2014), who opined that leadership is concerned with having leaders who "model the way" in which leaders model or display desirable behaviors such as "demonstrating effective time management, showing the ability to set goals, building positive relationships, and promoting understanding and respect across racial and ethnic groups" for their followers to follow, thus leading by example.

Meanwhile, respondents also believed that leadership entails serving people, as reflected in their responses which state that leadership is to be of service to your fellow people and be a servant. This is consistent with the study of Summer (2012), wherein he found that the students perceived leadership as being of service to the people by helping, supporting, or giving assistance to an individual.

On the other hand, when the students were asked about the importance of leadership, they mentioned that leadership is essential in goal achievement wherein they highlighted that leadership is key to goal achievement in any organization or group endeavor. In other words, leadership serves as the instrument to guide and direct individuals in achieving a common goal into a reality. As Beato (2020) reiterated, it is through leadership that a society can create a vision and motivate people to make it a reality.

Furthermore, the respondents also shared that leadership is important because it helps build an organized, peaceful, and progressive society. As Alain (2022) emphasized, leadership is instrumental in achieving social progress. It mobilizes the people and ignites that passion for working together to improve society.

Moving forward, the respondents had various conceptions of the traits of a good leader and what traits they value most. Data showed that the respondents said that the qualities or traits of a good leader include being kind, understanding, and humble. The idea of good leaders being understanding and humble was highlighted by Fabian (2021), stating that it is one of the essential characteristics of a successful leader.

Furthermore, the respondents mentioned that the qualities or traits of a good leader are being creative, critical thinker, transparent, accountable, and fair. This is supported by Kasowski (2020), who mentioned that critical thinking is a skill that must be developed in leaders since it allows leaders at every level to evaluate their decision-making and how these decisions ultimately impact results.

In addition, other qualities of a good leader are transparency, accountability, and fairness. The respondents believe that leaders should be equal and clear in their actions. Edith (2015) said that the fairness of an ethical leader is highly sought among senior executives.

Another characteristic of a good leader valued the most is goal-orientedness. This is consistent with what Espinoza (2021) has stated regarding influential leaders' comprehension of the execution of long-term goals that should be achieved.

Moreover, respondents also value the passion of a good leader. Ray (2019) pointed out that good leaders are passionate in that they are fully engaged and committed to achieving their goals while helping others achieve theirs.

The data gathered also reveal that self-confidence is also one of the qualities or traits of a good leader, as shown in the respondents' responses. According to them, a good leader is someone confident or with self-confidence. This suggests that good leadership is coupled with confidence. While Bregman (2018) asserted that self-confidence, knowing what they want to become and how they work towards the future and strategically and wisely contributing one's energy strategically and wisely are qualities of an effective leader.

Concerning healthy communication, respondents also mentioned that leaders should have good communication skills. Dewan and Myatt (2008) stated that a critical quality of a good leader is the ability to convey ideas demonstrated by a clear communication style. As highlighted by Kapur (2020), promoting healthy communication is regarded as the fundamental quality in leadership wherein when leaders integrate effective communication processes, they will be able to impart instructions, ideas, and viewpoints to their constituents efficiently and effectively.

The respondents' responses regarding the traits or qualities of a good leader are consistent with the findings of Mortenson et.al. (2014) wherein students do not put emphasis on power, authority, and specific traits in characterizing a good leader observed in adult leadership theories.

Instead, the students' conceptions of the traits of a good leader focused more on the commitment of character, dedication, and a firm belief in what is right and good for everybody.

Conversely, this study also looked into how people become leaders. The respondents conceived that people become leaders because they aspire to bring change and have accepted the challenge of leading others. This is affirmed by the study of Kapur (2020), which noted that the desire to lead enables the leaders to provide adequate knowledge and understanding to their subordinates.

Meanwhile, the students also conceptualized that people become leaders through their leadership potential, qualities, and skills. They become leaders by having the leadership skills such as good influence on other people and acting with dignity and accountability.

Lastly, the students answered that people become leaders through their experiences. They mentioned that people become leaders with so much process and experience. They do not simply become leaders; people do not dictate who the leaders are. This connotes that leadership is not a one-shot process; instead, it entails incidents for someone to activate their leadership potential. Grimard and Pellerin (2018) emphasized leadership development through action learning which leaders develop through experiences.

The respondents also answered why people become leaders. The respondents indicated in their response that one of the motivations why people become leaders is because they want to make a difference. This is similar to the findings of Rice (2019), who articulated those leaders who derive from individuals the distinctive skills and passion for making a difference. Moreover, the respondents shared that people become leaders because they possess leadership skills. In the study conducted by Kiefer (2021), he found that people become leaders because they see a dynamic and integrity, which are some of the leadership qualities that motivate them to become leaders.

Lastly, respondents said that leaders are destined to lead. This makes individuals become leaders. In consonance with McKeown (2013), people are meant to become leaders if they possess the signs such as: leading when they have to, seeing much more than they do, changing people, and achieving outcomes. Data also show that people become leaders for popularity. The respondents think that leaders do the task and responsibilities of a leader for fame and recognition. Apart from this, as underscored by Kua (2020), leaders want to lead so they can be in the spotlight and network with people from throughout the company.

However, some respondents also stated that leadership is innate and natural among individuals. Blass and Haraida (2019) stated that everyone is born a leader. However, the idea that leaders are made is supported by Swaroop and Prasad & Swaroop (2013). They articulated that leaders are made, not born, wherein it is through the people's desire and willpower that makes them leaders. Thus, leadership does not come naturally. Instead, it develops through a never-ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience.

Overall, the students conceived leadership as modeling traits, serving people, and influencing others to benefit people in an organization. They also perceived that leadership is important in achieving the goals of an organization and building a better society. The respondents believe that the traits of a leader include humility, critical thinking and creativity, transparency, accountability, and fairness. In addition, the other characteristics identified by the students include dedication, goal-orientedness, good communication skills, and, lastly, self-confidence. Meanwhile, according to the students, the most valued traits of a leader are humility, self-confidence, and good communication skills.

Furthermore, people become leaders to bring change and accept the challenge of leading others. They also believe that leadership requires potential, qualities, and skills, including experience leading people. There are different motivations of leaders in leading other people. The identified major reason people become leaders is that they want to make a difference in our society, considering their capabilities and skills. They also believe that leadership requires potential, qualities, and abilities, including experience leading people. Indeed, leadership is innate and natural within a person, but it is learned through experiences.

4.2 Students' Current Political Engagement

In terms of the political activities present in the community of the students, the upcoming 2022 national and local elections mainly were observed. This implies that election is one of the most observed political activities in the community due to the incoming 2022 national and local elections in the Philippines.

Another political activity observed in the respondents' community is their awareness of corruption. This manifests that the respondents are aware of the corruption in their respective communities as it was rampant and constantly happening. As Batalla (2015) mentioned in his study, the issue of corruption in the Philippines is prevalent in the political arena.

Moreover, respondents also stated that social media use is one of the political activities present in the community. The study by Loader, Vromen, and Xenos (2015) found political engagement among young people

in three countries. Their research also showed a strong and positive relationship between political engagement and social media use among young students. Furthermore, the students also observed political education in their community as one of the political activities. This shows that HUMSS learners are involved in political education by educating themselves and other people with legitimate facts and information. In the study of Cabo (2018), she mentioned that youths focus on seeking correct information and learning more about politics, such as participating in simulations of political processes, attending training or learning at school, and engaging in youth activities.

Also, the students mentioned that community engagement is a present political activity in their community. According to Boulianne & Brailey (2014), community attachment and the related notions of integration, embeddedness, belonging, and feeling of the community have long been used to predict civic and political engagement. Concerning the issues and activities present in their community, the students' current political engagement are political education, electoral participation, and civic participation. The study of Ekman and Amna (2012) on political participation typology is instructive of how political education is now construed as a new form of political engagement among young people, and this is manifested by taking their interest in educating themselves about politics and society, discussing politics and societal issues with friends as well as educating others with regards to political issues in the society.

Moreover, electoral participation is also one of the current political engagements of the respondents. Owen and Soules (2015) have emphasized the huge involvement of students in electoral participation, such as voting in presidential elections regularly, voting in local elections regularly, working on a candidate's political campaign, and working as a canvasser for a political or social group or candidate. Lastly, the respondents are also currently engaged in civic matters. According to Owen and Soules (2015), students are likely to participate in community issues such as getting involved with issues like health and safety that affect one's community and working with a group to solve a problem in the community where you live. The discovered engagement among the respondents shows that they are engaged in their community by helping with community problems and even national issues.

Most of the students stated that election was one of the main political activities present in their community. In terms of political issues, some of them mentioned corruption as one of the political issues prevalent in their community. Aside from election and corruption as political issues or activities prevalent in the community of the respondents, they also mentioned political education and community engagement. On the other hand, most of the students' current political engagement is engaged in political education, followed by electoral participation and civic participation.

4.3 Gaps Between Students' Leadership Conceptions and Political Engagement

The researchers found a gap between the students' leadership conceptions and their current political engagement from the students' responses.

a. The difference between Leadership Views and Disengagement

One of the visible gaps is their idealistic and theoretical view of leadership and its non-observance when it comes to their political engagement. For instance, they view that leadership is a collaborative task that involves the participation of both the leaders and members of the community but when they were asked on their current political engagement, they said they do not engage themselves in any political activities. According to Cabo (2018), the traditional perception that the Filipino youths are uninterested, if not apathetic, to politics remains unchallenged.

b. The gap in the Conceptions of Leadership Qualities and Personal Experience

There is also a gap in their conceptions of the qualities of a leader and their personal experiences with the political leaders. To illustrate, they view a leader that is transparent and dignified, however, they have encountered and participated in political activities such as vote selling. According to Shaul (2019), the results of her study were in contrast to the hypothesis that high knowledge of politics among individuals will more likely trust the government because of a greater understanding of the government process. This study showed the same results.

In connection to voting selling, there is also a gap in their conception of leaders that are honest and with integrity to what they are experiencing in their community. Students have experienced corruption happening in their place and it is conflicting to what they have viewed that those leaders are honest and possess integrity. As cited by Brillantes and Fernandes (2011), a review of recent literature suggests that all levels of corruption, from petty bribery to grand corruption, patronage, and state capture, exist in the Philippines at a considerable scale and scope. Furthermore, the respondents' conception of leaders being open to communication and listening to their fellow people is contrary to what they have experienced. Respondents experienced that students are powerless regarding expressing their views on political activities and issues happening in their community. This is in contrast with what Qadri (2016) highlighted, which states that open communication is crucial in leadership, open

communication is still needed wherein communication should be two ways in the sense that the members of the community should also be given the right to share their opinions of feedback regarding the policies set or decided on by the political leader.

Concerning the gaps above, the respondents have viewed those leaders as role models with a heart. However, there is a gap in the engagement of the students in political activities as the leader that was trusted and elected by the people are the one involved in negative political issues and activities such as bribery and corruption. This implies a difference in their conceptions of a trustworthy leader to what they have experienced in their community as the leaders are involved in activities that destroy the trust of their people.

From the respondents' conception of leadership and their current political engagement, there exists a gap between these two aspects wherein there is a gap between students' perception of leadership about their current political engagement. Another gap that prevailed was the gap in the students' personal experiences with their leaders in connection to their leadership conceptions, specifically on the characteristics of leadership and qualities of leaders.

4.4 Implications in Teaching Philippine Politics and Governance

Philippine Politics and Governance is one of the specialized subjects in Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS). From a historical-institutional perspective, it introduces the students to the basic concepts and vital elements of politics and governance.

a. Widening leadership conceptions among students

First, students have defined leadership characteristics and qualities based on their community's observed characteristics. Other leadership attributes aside from what they have mentioned can be seen in other communities or settings. These may also be attributed to the lack of leadership topics in the Philippine Politics and Governance curriculum. Leadership among the governmental institutions and its leader is a core skill and value worthy of discussion. Thus, to expand their knowledge regarding leadership, teachers can let their students' interface with various political leaders to have the experience of assessing leadership qualities. With leadership topics highlighted in the curriculum, students can widen their conceptions of leaders theoretically and realistically.

b. Voters' Education in PPG classes

Since elections are part and parcel of the Philippine political landscape and most of the major political engagement of students is related to the upcoming national and local elections, this shows that the students are well aware of their civic roles, specifically in electoral participation.

Thus, teachers must integrate voters' education in teaching Philippine Politics and Governance. In other words, teachers should enlighten students about the mechanics and specifics of the voting process during elections to develop the voters' awareness and participation in using their suffrage. Moreover, teachers should also explain to the students their responsibilities as voters so that they will become wise, responsible, and rational voters.

c. Disengagement to active engagement

One problem with students' participation is their derisory political engagement or even disengagement in political activities. This may be attributed to the teacher's teaching style, or it could also be because of the environment that the students are into. Thus, teachers should strategize to encourage the students to be involved in political activities starting in their respective communities. For instance, in the classroom setting, teachers can integrate enrichment activities like debates, group discussions on political issues, developing reflection papers on political topics, and simulation in connection to political activities to encourage the learners to be involved or engaged in political activities. Furthermore, one mechanism to encourage the students to be actively involved is to employ service learning. This educational approach integrates meaningful community service into the curriculum. Service-learning contains two main elements: engagement within the community (service) and reflection on that engagement (Preradovic, 2015). By applying service-learning, students will be given a chance to participate in some community volunteerism. These experiences will lead to greater engagement in politics (Evans, 2015).

Overall, the study found that the students have leadership conceptions based on their experiences within their community and the lack of focus on leadership topics within the Philippine Politics and Governance curriculum. Moreover, most of the students have experience in engaging in political activities. Still, they are not quite rich, while others have none, which can be attributed to limited opportunities to participate in school and the community. Lastly, the teacher's job is crucial to forming a concrete and meaningful political self by implementing various activities and strategies such as service-learning.

5. Conclusions

The students are conscious of what leadership is based on their individual experiences. They are also critical in pointing out the qualities and traits of a leader. Students are engaged in political activities such as in elections, on digital platforms, and in their communities. They are also involved in political discussions and civic matters. Most of the students are engaged in political activities in various ways, physically and virtually. Still, a few of them are not actively involved in political activities. There are gaps between the leadership conceptions and political engagement of the students wherein their political engagement is not reflective of their conceptions of leadership and vice versa. What the students view and think is not the same as what they are doing or actualizing. Their conceptions negate what they are engaged in. The existing gaps show that leadership conceptions and political engagement can be further improved by incorporating varying teaching and learning approaches aligned to the Philippine Politics and Governance curriculum.

6. Recommendations

Based on the summary of findings and conclusions derived in this study, this study recommends that students should attend or organize future seminars and workshops related to different theories and perspectives on leadership may be conducted to enhance further and widen their knowledge of students regarding leadership. Moreover, the students can strengthen their active engagement in political activities by joining political activities in school, their communities, and in the national and international political landscape. This study also recommends that teachers integrate the study's results and implications into the teaching and learning process, such as conducting voters' education, interface with leaders, and service-learning. They can apply innovative strategies to engage students in political issues and have a holistic view of leadership. Lastly, this study recommends that future researchers include other strands and tracks in Senior High school as respondents, such as ABM, STEM, Arts, Design, and others. Future research can also be conducted focusing on student leaders of organizations in the school.

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Empirical Research on the Cultivation of Information Management Talents Under the Industry-University-Research Collaboration Model

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Abstract

With the rapid development of information technology, information management has become a core element for modern enterprises to enhance their competitiveness. However, traditional education models fall short in cultivating information management talents with sufficient practical abilities. This study takes the collaboration project between Beijing Qihui Desheng Technology Co., Ltd. and University of Science and Technology Beijing as a case to explore the application effects of the industry-university-research collaboration model in the cultivation of information management talents. Through empirical research, it is verified that the industry-university-research collaboration model can significantly improve students' practical and innovative abilities, especially in terms of resource integration, practical project internships, and guidance from industrial professors. The findings show that students participating in the project have an average score improvement of 20%, a 30% increase in practical ability scores, and 80% of them received internship recommendation letters from enterprises. Moreover, the application of software tools as teaching carriers further enhances students' understanding and application abilities of information management knowledge. The conclusions of this study provide empirical evidence for universities and enterprises to optimize talent cultivation plans and improve students' practical abilities, and also offer references for policymakers to promote the development of the industry-university-research collaboration model.

Keywords: industry-university-research collaboration, information management, talent cultivation, practical ability, software tools, industrial professors, university cooperation, enterprise practice, teaching model innovation

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In the era of rapid information technology development, information management has emerged as a core element for modern enterprises to enhance their competitiveness. The demand for information management talents in enterprises is growing rapidly, yet traditional education models fail to meet the enterprises' requirements for practical abilities. The industry-university-research collaboration model, as an innovative talent cultivation approach, integrates the resources of universities and enterprises and provides a new solution to this problem. In recent years, the national "Tens of Thousands of Enterprises and Thousands of Universities" plan has been vigorously promoted to encourage in-depth cooperation between enterprises and universities in cultivating high-quality talents that meet market demands. Against this backdrop, exploring how to cultivate information management talents through the industry-university-research collaboration model holds significant practical importance. This study is based on the cooperation project between Beijing Qihui Desheng Technology Co., Ltd. and universities, and combines the practical experience of "team management and system construction" to conduct an in-depth analysis of the talent cultivation model with software tools as teaching carriers.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study aims to verify the effectiveness of the industry-university-research collaboration model in the cultivation of information management talents through empirical research. The specific objectives include: (1) analyzing the advantages and challenges of the talent cultivation model under the industry-university-research collaboration model with software tools as teaching carriers; (2) exploring the role and contributions of “industrial professors from tens of thousands of enterprises and thousands of universities” in talent cultivation; (3) verifying the actual effects of this model in improving students’ practical and innovative abilities through actual case data from university cooperation. The research results will provide reference basis for universities and enterprises to optimize talent cultivation plans and promote the further development of the industry-university-research collaboration model.

2. Research Methods and Design

2.1 Research Methods

This study employs the case study method to conduct an in-depth analysis of the actual cooperation cases between universities and enterprises. By selecting the cooperation project between Beijing Qihui Desheng Technology Co., Ltd. and University of Science and Technology Beijing as the research object, the project background, cooperation model, implementation process, and final results are recorded in detail. The case study method can help us gain a deep understanding of the specific application of the industry-university-research collaboration model in the cultivation of information management talents, reveal its advantages and shortcomings, and provide rich empirical data for subsequent research. To fully understand the views of university students and enterprise employees on the industry-university-research collaboration talent cultivation model, this study designs a detailed questionnaire survey. The questionnaire content covers students’ satisfaction with curriculum settings, practical opportunities, and teaching methods, as well as enterprise employees’ evaluation of the cooperation project’s effectiveness and students’ practical abilities. The questionnaire survey method can widely collect opinions and feedback from different groups, providing multi-dimensional data support for the research. After collecting the questionnaire survey data, this study uses statistical software (such as SPSS) to analyze the data. Through descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis, the research hypotheses are verified, the impact of the industry-university-research collaboration model on talent cultivation quality is revealed, and the actual effects of software tools as teaching carriers are examined. The data analysis method can ensure the scientificity and reliability of the research results, providing a solid basis for subsequent discussions.

2.2 Research Objects and Sample Selection

This study selects the university cooperating with Beijing Qihui Desheng Technology Co., Ltd. as the research object. The university has rich teaching experience and research strength in the field of information management and has established a long-term and stable cooperative relationship with the enterprise, making it a typical representative of the industry-university-research collaboration model (Feng, H., Dai, Y., & Gao, Y., 2025). The samples include university students and enterprise employees participating in the industry-university-research cooperation project. The university student samples cover different grades and professional backgrounds to ensure the representativeness of the data; the enterprise employee samples include project leaders, technical backbones, and ordinary employees to fully understand the views and suggestions of enterprises on the talent cultivation model. The random sampling method is used to ensure the diversity and objectivity of the samples.

2.3 Research Hypotheses

This study hypothesizes that through the industry-university-research collaboration model, universities and enterprises can fully leverage their respective advantages to provide students with higher-quality educational resources and practical opportunities, thereby significantly improving the cultivation quality of information management talents. The validity of this hypothesis is verified through case analysis and data analysis. This study further hypothesizes that software tools as teaching carriers can effectively improve students’ practical and innovative abilities. Software tools can not only help students better understand and apply information management knowledge but also stimulate students’ innovative thinking and problem-solving abilities. The actual effects are verified through questionnaire surveys and data analysis.

3. Theoretical Framework of Information Management Talent Cultivation Under the Industry-University-Research Collaboration Model

3.1 The Role of Team Management and System Construction in Talent Cultivation

Under the industry-university-research collaboration model, team management is a key factor in ensuring the smooth implementation of projects and the quality of talent cultivation. Through effective team management, the resources of universities and enterprises can be integrated and communication and cooperation between the two

sides can be promoted. For example, in the cooperation project between Beijing Qihui Desheng Technology Co., Ltd. and University of Science and Technology Beijing, a cross-disciplinary and cross-field project team was established, enabling students to directly participate in the actual projects of enterprises and gain valuable practical experience. The data shows that the practical ability scores of students participating in the project are more than 20% higher than those of students who did not participate, which fully illustrates the important role of team management in industry-university-research collaboration (Wang J, Cao S, Tim K T, et al., 2025). System construction is an indispensable part of the industry-university-research collaboration model, providing norms and guarantees for talent cultivation. By formulating clear management systems, the implementation of projects can be standardized and standardized, improving the quality and efficiency of talent cultivation. For example, Beijing Qihui Desheng Technology Co., Ltd. and the university have jointly formulated detailed project management systems, including project objectives, task allocation, progress monitoring, quality assessment and other links. The implementation of these systems enables students to clarify their responsibilities and tasks in the project participation process, improving the quality and efficiency of project completion. The data shows that the satisfaction of students participating in the project with institutionalized management is over 85%, while the satisfaction of projects without institutionalized management is only about 60%.

3.2 The Role and Contributions of Industrial Professors from Tens of Thousands of Enterprises and Thousands of Universities

Industrial professors, as a bridge between universities and enterprises, can effectively promote communication and cooperation between the two sides. They not only possess rich industry experience and professional knowledge but also can combine the actual needs of enterprises with the teaching content of universities to provide more targeted guidance for students. For example, in the cooperation project between Beijing Qihui Desheng Technology Co., Ltd. and universities, industrial professors are responsible for coordinating enterprise resources to provide students with internship opportunities and practical projects. The data shows that in projects with the participation of industrial professors, the satisfaction of students with project content is over 90%, while in projects without the participation of industrial professors, the satisfaction is only about 70% (Zhu, H., Luo, Y., Liu, Q., Fan, H., Song, T., Yu, C. W., & Du, B., 2019). Industrial professors undertake multiple responsibilities in the cultivation of information management talents. They are not only responsible for guiding students' practical projects but also participate in curriculum design and the updating of teaching content. For example, according to the actual needs of enterprises, industrial professors have designed several practical courses related to information management for universities, such as "Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System Application" and "Big Data Analysis and Decision-Making Support". The introduction of these courses has significantly improved students' practical abilities and employability. The data shows that the employment rate of students who have participated in the guidance of industrial professors within one year after graduation is over 95%, while the employment rate of students who have not participated is only about 80%.

Table 1.

Project Type	Student Satisfaction (%)	Employment Rate Within One Year After Graduation (%)
Internship and Practice Programs	Over 90%	-
Internship and Practice Programs	Around 70%	-
Talent Cultivation in Information Management	-	Over 95%
Talent Cultivation in Information Management	-	Around 80%

3.3 The Theoretical Basis of Software Tools as Teaching Carriers

Software tools, as teaching carriers, can effectively enhance the effectiveness of information management teaching. Through the use of professional software tools, students can better understand and apply information management knowledge. For example, in the "Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System Application" course, students can intuitively understand the functions and operation processes of the ERP system through the use of SAP software. The data shows that in courses with software tools used for teaching, the degree of students' knowledge mastery after the course is more than 30% higher than that of courses without software tools used for teaching.

Software tools can not only help students better understand theoretical knowledge but also improve their practical abilities. By simulating actual working scenarios, students can conduct practical operations in software tools and accumulate valuable practical experience. For example, in the "Big Data Analysis and

Decision-Making Support” course, students use Python and R languages for data analysis and model building. The data shows that students who use software tools for practical operations have practical ability scores more than 40% higher than those who do not use software tools after project completion. In addition, software tools can also stimulate students’ innovative thinking and cultivate their ability to solve practical problems. Through the construction of the above theoretical framework, this study provides a solid theoretical basis for the subsequent empirical research (Yiyi Tao, Zhuoyue Wang, Hang Zhang & Lun Wang, 2024). Team management and system construction, the bridging role of industrial professors, and the application of software tools together constitute the core elements of information management talent cultivation under the industry-university-research collaboration model. The effective combination of these elements will provide strong support for cultivating high-quality information management talents.

4. Empirical Research

4.1 Case Description

This study selects the cooperation project between Beijing Qihui Desheng Technology Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as “Qihui Desheng”) and University of Science and Technology Beijing as a case. The project, which began in 2021, aims to cultivate high-quality information management talents through the industry-university-research collaboration model. Qihui Desheng, a high-tech enterprise with rich experience in the field of information management, cooperates with universities to jointly design courses, build practice bases, guide students’ project internships, and dispatch industrial professors to participate in teaching. The implementation of the project is divided into three stages: the first stage is curriculum development and teaching, during which both parties jointly developed courses such as “Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System Application” and “Big Data Analysis and Decision-Making Support” and adopted a teaching method combining theory with practice; the second stage is the construction of practice bases and project internships, during which Qihui Desheng provided a practice platform for students to participate in the actual projects of enterprises; the final stage is project evaluation and feedback, during which the project effects were assessed through questionnaire surveys and data analysis. The project has achieved significant results, with students’ practical and innovative abilities significantly improved in the process of course learning and project internship. The average score of students increased by 20%, the practical ability score increased by 30%, 80% of students received internship recommendation letters from enterprises (Feng, H., & Gao, Y., 2025), and enterprises also gave high evaluations of students’ practical performance.

Table 2.

Outcome Indicator	Outcome Data
Average Improvement in Student Grades	20%
Increase in Student Practical Ability Scores	30%
Proportion of Students Receiving Internship Recommendation Letters from Companies	80%
Corporate Evaluation of Student Practical Performance	Highly Evaluated

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

To fully understand the project effects, a questionnaire survey was designed to collect feedback from university students and enterprise employees. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, and 450 valid questionnaires were recovered, with a recovery rate of 90% (Wang, Z., Zhang, Q., & Cheng, Z., 2025). Statistical software was used to analyze the data, including descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis shows that students’ satisfaction with curriculum settings is 85%, with practical opportunities is 90%, and with teaching methods is 88%; enterprise employees’ overall satisfaction with the cooperation project is 87%, and their evaluation of students’ practical abilities is 85%. Correlation analysis indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between students’ satisfaction with curriculum settings and practical abilities, indicating that reasonable curriculum settings are crucial for improving students’ practical abilities. The results of regression analysis further confirm that both the industry-university-research collaboration model and software tools as teaching carriers have significant impacts on improving students’ practical abilities.

Table 3.

Survey Respondents	Survey Content	Satisfaction/Evaluation (%)
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University Students	Satisfaction with Course Settings	85
University Students	Satisfaction with Practical Opportunities	90
University Students	Satisfaction with Teaching Methods	88
Corporate Employees	Overall Satisfaction with Collaborative Projects	87
Corporate Employees	Evaluation of Students' Practical Abilities	85

4.3 Research Results

The research results show that the industry-university-research collaboration model has a significant positive impact on the cultivation of information management talents. Through resource integration and practical project internships, students' practical and innovative abilities have been significantly improved, with significant increases in students' scores and practical ability scores, and enterprises have also given high evaluations of students' practical performance. Software tools as teaching carriers have played an important role in improving students' practical abilities. Through the use of professional software tools, students can better understand and apply information management knowledge, and their knowledge mastery and innovative thinking abilities have been significantly improved. Industrial professors have played an important bridging role in industry-university-research collaboration. Their participation in curriculum design, teaching content updating, and project guidance has significantly improved students' satisfaction with project content and employability.

5. Discussion and Suggestions

5.1 Research Conclusions

This study, through empirical research methods, has conducted an in-depth analysis of the application effects of the industry-university-research collaboration model in the cultivation of information management talents. The research results show that the model can significantly enhance students' practical and innovative abilities, effectively verifying the correctness of the research hypotheses. Through resource integration, practical project internships, and professional guidance from industrial professors, students have achieved significant improvements in both course learning and project practice. In addition, the application of software tools as teaching carriers has further deepened students' understanding and application abilities of information management knowledge. The in-depth participation of industrial professors has not only improved students' satisfaction with project content but also significantly enhanced their employability.

5.2 Discussion

The research results have significant theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, this study further expands the theoretical basis of the industry-university-research collaboration model in the field of information management talent cultivation, fully confirming the key roles of team management, system construction, the role of industrial professors, and the application of software tools in talent cultivation. From a practical standpoint, the research results provide strong empirical support for universities and enterprises to optimize talent cultivation plans and improve students' practical abilities. Through the industry-university-research collaboration model, universities can accurately meet enterprise needs and efficiently cultivate high-quality information management talents that meet market demands.

However, in the actual application of the industry-university-research collaboration model in the cultivation of information management talents, there are still many challenges. First, if the time arrangement is unreasonable, it can easily lead to excessive learning pressure for students, thereby affecting learning outcomes. Second, if the curriculum content is not updated in time, it may become disconnected from the actual needs of enterprises, reducing students' interest in learning and practical abilities. In addition, if the enterprise participation is insufficient, it may weaken the implementation effects of the project and students' practical experiences. To effectively address these challenges, it is suggested that universities and enterprises reasonably plan the time arrangement of courses and practical projects to ensure that students have sufficient time to balance theoretical learning and practical operations. Universities should maintain close communication with enterprises and update curriculum content in a timely manner according to the actual needs of enterprises. Enterprises should actively participate in project design and implementation, provide rich practical opportunities and resource support, and ensure that students can deeply participate in the actual projects of enterprises.

5.3 Suggestions

Based on the above research results and discussions, the following suggestions are made to universities, enterprises, and policymakers respectively: Universities should further strengthen cooperation with enterprises and build long-term and stable cooperative relationships. In the curriculum design phase, emphasis should be placed on the deep integration of theory and practice, the proportion of practical courses should be appropriately

increased, and industrial professors should be actively invited to participate in teaching activities to provide students with more practical professional guidance. Enterprises should actively participate in university talent cultivation projects, provide practice bases and project resources, select experienced employees to serve as industrial professors to guide students' practical projects, and jointly formulate talent cultivation plans with universities to ensure that the direction of talent cultivation is accurately connected with enterprise needs.

For policymakers, the government should introduce relevant incentive policies to actively promote cooperation between universities and enterprises in industry-university-research collaboration, set up special funds to support industry-university-research cooperation projects, and provide necessary financial support for participating universities and enterprises. At the same time, the government should actively build industry-university-research cooperation platforms to promote information exchange and resource sharing between universities and enterprises, and establish and improve the evaluation and supervision mechanisms for industry-university-research cooperation projects to ensure that the projects achieve the expected results.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Research Summary

This study has conducted an in-depth exploration of the application of the industry-university-research collaboration model in the cultivation of information management talents and verified its effectiveness through empirical research. It is found that the industry-university-research collaboration model can significantly improve students' practical and innovative abilities, especially in terms of resource integration, practical project internships, and professional guidance from industrial professors. Specifically, the average score of students participating in the project increased by 20%, the practical ability score increased by 30%, and 80% of them received internship recommendation letters from enterprises. These results not only verify the research hypotheses but also highlight the important role of the industry-university-research collaboration model in cultivating high-quality information management talents.

The contribution of this study lies in providing empirical evidence for universities and enterprises to optimize talent cultivation plans and improve students' practical abilities. Through the industry-university-research collaboration model, universities can better meet enterprise needs and cultivate high-quality information management talents that meet market demands. At the same time, the research results also provide references for policymakers to promote the further development of the industry-university-research collaboration model.

6.2 Research Limitations and Future Outlook

Despite the positive results achieved in this study, there are still some limitations. First, the research samples mainly come from the cooperation project between Beijing Qihui Desheng Technology Co., Ltd. and University of Science and Technology Beijing, and the relatively limited sample scope may affect the universality of the research results. Second, the study mainly focuses on students' short-term performance and project outcomes, and the long-term impact on students' career development has not been deeply tracked. Looking to the future, further research can expand the sample scope to include more universities and enterprises to enhance the representativeness and universality of the research results. At the same time, long-term tracking of the growth trajectories of students participating in the project can be conducted to assess the impact of the industry-university-research collaboration model on students' long-term career development.

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A Legal Appraisal of the Role of Foreign Direct Investment in Promoting Sustainable Development in Cameroon: A Focus on Food Security

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Abstract

Since the promulgation of the Cameroon Investment Charter of 2002 and subsequent liberalization reforms, FDI has been strategically mobilized as an instrument to modernize agriculture through capital inflows, mechanization, technology transfer, and agro-industrial development. However, the outcomes have been ambivalent: while investment has spurred export growth, employment creation, and infrastructural expansion, it has also exacerbated land tenure disputes, environmental degradation, displacement of smallholder farmers, and the prioritization of cash crops over staple foods. Despite Cameroon's agricultural endowment, food insecurity persists, with nearly one in four citizens experiencing chronic hunger and malnutrition. Against this backdrop, this study examines the nexus between Foreign Direct Investment and food security in Cameroon, situating the discourse within the aspirations of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Findings reveals both opportunities and systemic risks: increased yields, market integration, and nutrition programs on one hand, and monoculture expansion, governance failures, and inequitable distribution on the other. We therefore recommend the need for sound institutional frameworks, transparent land governance, equitable labor practices, and complementary national policies that safeguard domestic food needs while leveraging foreign capital for sustainable transformation. This will go a long way for charting a development trajectory that is economically inclusive, socially just, and environmentally sustainable for Cameroon.

Keywords: legal appraisal, foreign direct investment, promoting, sustainable development, food security, Cameroon

1. Background

In recent years, Cameroon has sought to attract foreign investors into its agricultural sector through the Cameroon Investment Charter of 2002 and subsequent sectoral reforms aimed at liberalizing land access, offering tax incentives, and facilitating public-private partnerships. These policy frameworks have led to the establishment of agro-industrial plantations, agro-processing zones, and large-scale farming projects. While such ventures have introduced capital, mechanization, and employment opportunities, they have also generated tensions over land rights, environmental sustainability, the displacement of local farmers, and the prioritization of export crops over domestic food needs.¹

Food security remains one of the most pressing challenges in Cameroon's pursuit of sustainable development. Despite its vast agricultural potential, fertile soils, and favourable agro-ecological zones, a significant proportion

¹ Bamou, E., et al. (2009). Trade and investment policy reforms in Cameroon: Impact assessment and perspectives. *African Journal of Economic Policy*, 13(1).

of the population continues to face chronic food insecurity, malnutrition, and limited access to nutritious and affordable food. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), approximately one in four Cameroonians is food insecure, a paradox in a country where agriculture employs more than 70% of the rural population and contributes significantly to GDP.¹ Against this backdrop, Foreign Direct Investment is increasingly being projected as a strategic instrument to augment agricultural productivity and enhance national food security. While agricultural investment can promote food security in the home country by increased availability of food, their efficacy in meeting these objectives remains a subject of intense scrutiny, particularly within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.²

This research investigates the relationship between FDI and food security in Cameroon, situating the discourse within the normative ambitions of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), which calls for the eradication of hunger, the achievement of food security, improved nutrition, and the promotion of sustainable agriculture. Beyond SDG 2, the research draws connections to SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) which ensures sustainable consumption and production patterns, promoting resource efficiency and waste reduction. As Cameroon stands at the crossroads of a food crisis and an investment-driven agricultural transformation, the lessons drawn here will be instrumental in developing a development path that truly reconciles foreign capital inflows with the sovereign right of all Cameroonians to food.

2. Conceptual Clarification of Food Security and Its Dimensions

Food security is a concept that has evolved in scope and depth since it first entered global policy discourse in the mid-1970s. Initially, the term was closely tied to the notion of ensuring sufficient global food supplies, reflecting a production- and trade-oriented perspective that emerged during the 1974 World Food Conference in response to acute shortages and price shocks.³ Over time, however, scholars and international institutions recognized that the mere presence of adequate food at the national or global level did not guarantee that all individuals could access it. This recognition prompted a definitional shift toward more people-centered approaches, which emphasized the distribution, access, and utilization of food at the household and individual level.⁴

The most widely accepted modern definition comes from the 1996 World Food Summit, where the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) articulated food security as existing “when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.⁵ This definition captures the concept’s inherent multidimensionality, which is often summarized in four pillars: availability, utilization, and stability.⁶ Each pillar relates with the others, and failure in any one dimension can precipitate food insecurity even when the others are met.

Recent academic and policy debates have expanded the scope of food security beyond these four pillars to include notions of *agency*, *cultural acceptability*, and *sustainability*. Agency refers to individuals’ and communities’ capacity to make informed choices about what they eat and how food is produced and distributed, reflecting a human rights perspective on food systems.⁷ Cultural acceptability ensures that food security is not only about caloric sufficiency but also about aligning diets with social norms, religious practices, and culinary traditions. Sustainability emphasizes that long-term food security must be underpinned by agricultural, economic, and ecological systems that do not undermine the ability of future generations to meet their food needs, a concern increasingly urgent in the context of climate change and environmental degradation.⁸

Food security is measured by two indicators to capture two FAO dimensions of food security, namely: (i) the prevalence of undernourishment, to measure access to food; and (ii) dietary energy consumption, to measure the

¹ Fonjong, L. N., & Gyapong, A. Y. (2021). Plantations, women, and food security in Africa: Interrogating the investment pathway towards zero hunger in Cameroon and Ghana. *World Development*, 140, 105356. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105356>

² *Ibid.*

³ Shaw, D. J. (2007). *World Food Security: A History since 1945*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴ Maxwell, S., & Smith, M. (1992). Household food security: A conceptual review. *World Development*, 21(3), pp. 419–431.

⁵ FAO. (1996). Rome Declaration on World Food Security. World Food Summit. Available at <https://www.fao.org/4/w3613e/w3613e00.htm> (visited on the 09/08/2025)

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ HLPE. (2020). *Food security and nutrition: Building a global narrative towards 2030*.

⁸ Banerjee, A. (2025). Gender-transformative adaptation for food security, rural livelihoods, and agriculture. In *Climate Change Adaptation*. Springer.

availability of food.¹ Prevalence of undernourishment expresses the share of population that continuously consumes an amount of calories that is insufficient to cover their energy requirement for an active and healthy life. Dietary energy consumption is proxied by dietary energy supply.

Despite broad consensus on these conceptual dimensions, operationalizing and measuring food security remains challenging. The range of methodologies used from national food balance sheets to household-level indicators like the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) reflects differing priorities and contexts, but also complicates cross-country comparability.² Food security is not a static or purely technical condition; it is a socio-political construct that embodies questions of equity, justice, and governance. Its definitions mirrors the nature of hunger and malnutrition, where solutions must address not just the quantity of food, but its quality, cultural fit, and the systemic conditions that enable all individuals to enjoy a stable and dignified access to nourishment. Understanding food security in this comprehensive sense allows for more effective interventions that are resilient in the face of environmental, economic, and social change.³

2.1 The Dimensions of Food Security

There exists four main dimensions of food security including;

- **Availability**

Food availability refers to the physical presence of food in a given area, whether sourced from domestic production, imports, or food aid. It is fundamentally linked to agricultural productivity, storage capacity, and supply infrastructure and concerned with ensuring that adequate quantities of food are physically present within a given territory at all times. This presence can result from three main channels: domestic agricultural production, commercial imports, and food aid.⁴ In the case of Cameroon, the availability of food is affected by its diverse agro-ecological zones, ranging from the humid coastal lowlands suitable for cocoa, banana, and oil palm production, to the Guinea savannahs and Sudano-Sahelian regions where cereals such as maize, millet, and sorghum are predominant.⁵ Food availability in Cameroon is heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture and the performance of the informal farming sector, which accounts for more than 70% of food production.⁶ The country is largely self-sufficient in root crops like cassava and plantains, but it remains a net importer of rice, wheat, and certain dairy and meat products.⁷ This reliance on imports for key staples exposes Cameroon to global market fluctuations, currency volatility, and supply disruptions, all of which sometimes affects food availability in the domestic market.

Agricultural productivity in Cameroon, characterized by fertile soils and favorable climatic conditions in certain regions, faces challenges that constrain overall food availability. These include low mechanization rates, limited access to quality inputs, weak extension services, and post-harvest losses estimated at between 20–30% for perishable crops.⁸ Infrastructural deficits such as poor rural roads, inadequate storage facilities, and limited market connectivity further exacerbate the situation by reducing the efficiency with which food moves from production areas to consumption centers.⁹ Seasonal variability and climatic shocks also play a significant role. For example, erratic rainfall patterns and prolonged dry spells in the Far North region have repeatedly reduced yields of staple cereals, leading to localized shortages despite surpluses elsewhere in the country.¹⁰

¹ The most widely accepted definition of food security is that “[it] exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO et al., 2022, p. 202). This definition encompasses the four dimensions of food security, namely: (i) availability; (ii) access; (iii) stability; and (iv) utilization.

² Coates, J., Swindale, A., & Bilinsky, P. (2007). *Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) for Measurement of Food Access*. USAID.

³ Liu, B., Chen, M., Kharbeche, M., & Kerbache, L. (2025). A systematic review of food accessibility in food supply chains. *Supply Chain Analytics*, 3, 100049.

⁴ FAO. (2008). *An Introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security*.

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⁶ IFPRI. (2021). *Cameroon: Agricultural Sector Growth and Investment Opportunities*. International Food Policy Research Institute. <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/agriculture-sector-growth-and-investment-opportunities-cameroon>

⁷ World Bank. (2021). *Cameroon: Agricultural Sector Risk Assessment*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

⁸ FAO. (2021). *Country Programming Framework for Cameroon 2022–2026*.

⁹ FAO Improving Infrastructure and Trade-related Capacities for Market Access. Available at <https://www.fao.org/4/y6831e/y6831e-04.htm> (visited on the 09/08/2025)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Food availability dimension in Cameroon is also affected by socio-political instability, particularly in the North-West and South-West regions, which are major production zones for crops such as maize, beans, and cocoa. Ongoing conflict in these areas has led to displacement of farming populations, abandonment of arable land, and disruption of agricultural supply chains.¹ This has not only reduced domestic production volumes but also increased pressure on food availability in more stable regions through internal migration and market distortions.

In the wake of these, Foreign Direct Investments has been promoted as a mechanism to increase availability through technology transfer, improved irrigation, and expanded agro-processing capacity. However, the focus of some FDI-backed agribusinesses on export-oriented crops (e.g., palm oil, rubber) rather than staple food production may not always enhance national food availability.²

- **Accessibility**

Accessibility addresses whether individuals and households have the economic and physical means to acquire adequate food. It involves both market access (infrastructure, transportation, and distance to food sources) and purchasing power (income levels, food prices, and social safety nets). Even in food-surplus areas, poor households may remain food insecure due to low incomes or high market prices. Accessibility is the hinge of food security, the everyday test of whether food is close enough and cheap enough to be claimed by real households.³ In authoritative usage, food security exists only when people have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food; the “access” pillar therefore fuses geography with purchasing power: working roads, working markets, and wages that keep pace with prices.⁴

History (and present crises) show that hunger often grows not from empty granaries but from broken entitlements when incomes collapse, prices surge, roads fail, or conflict severs the last mile, people lose command over food even when national supply looks adequate. In plain terms: if markets are too far or food is priced beyond a week’s earnings, availability on paper does not translate into dinner on the table.⁵

In Cameroon, access has tightened because prices have outpaced incomes and because the physical cost of moving food remains high in too many corridors. Official statistics recorded inflation running at an average 5.7% over the twelve months to June 2024, with food driving much of the pressure; in this context even modest price shocks push poor households to cut meal frequency, substitute toward cheaper starches, or sell assets.⁶ Field outlooks through 2024–2025 echo the same pattern: elevated prices and insecurity constrain access ahead of lean seasons, especially for market-dependent poor households. These are classic access failures households cannot reach or afford adequate food long before the country runs short in aggregate.⁷

Banana and palm-oil estate such as Plantations du Haut Penja (Compagnie Fruitière group) and the Cameroon Development Corporation have historically been among the country’s major private employers, with PHP alone representing the dominant share of national banana exports in 2024 and many thousands of direct jobs; those wages ripple through township markets and raise the economic side of access. Yet the caution is equally real: when investments are derailed by conflict (as with CDC operations in the Anglophone regions) or when land governance and community safeguards are weak (as shown in recurrent allegations around SOCAPALM estates), entitlements can be undercut wages interrupted, smallholders displaced, and community market routes strained. The policy lesson is blunt and practical: anchor FDI in enforceable labor standards, transparent concessions, grievance redress, smallholder and out-grower contracts, and co-financed feeder-road maintenance; do that, and investment reliably converts to food within reach and within budget.

¹ Nebamforsa, P. C., & Wuchu, C. W. (2025). Socio-political crisis and agricultural production in Mezam, North West Region of Cameroon. *Global Scientific Journals*, 13(3). ISSN 2320-9186.

² De Schutter, O. (2011). “How Not to Think of Land-Grabbing: Three Critiques of Large-Scale Investments in Farmland”. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(2), 249–279.

³ World Bank. What is Food Security? There are Four Dimensions. Available at https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update/what-is-food-security?utm_source (visited on the 09/08/2025)

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ INS Cameroon. Brief on trends of household final consumer prices – June 2024 (inflation 5.7% 12-month average). Available at <https://ins-cameroun.cm/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Brief-on-trends-of-household-final-consumer-prices-in-june-2024.pdf?utm> (visited on the 09/08/2025)

⁷ FEWS NET. Cameroon Food Security Outlook (Oct 2023–May 2024) and Outlook Feb–Sept 2024 (price-driven access constraints). Available at <https://fewsn.net/west-africa/cameroon/food-security-outlook/october-2023?utm> (visited on the 09/08/2025)

• Utilization

Utilization encompasses the biological and nutritional use of food, including dietary diversity, food safety, and access to clean water and healthcare. It refers not just to the quantity of food consumed but also to its quality and the body's ability to absorb and use nutrients. Utilization as a dimension of food security refers to the way in which the body effectively uses the food consumed to meet its dietary needs for a healthy and active life. It extends beyond the mere presence of food to include its nutritional quality, safety, preparation, and the health conditions necessary for nutrient absorption. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, utilization encompasses inter-alia food handling, preparation, diversity, and access to safe drinking water, as well as adequate sanitation and healthcare, all of which influence the body's capacity to absorb and metabolize nutrients effectively.¹ Poor food utilization can occur even in contexts where availability and access are secure if diets lack essential nutrients, or if diseases and unsafe water compromise the body's ability to use those nutrients.²

In the Cameroonian context, utilization is a concern due to the rate of malnutrition, inadequate sanitation, and limited dietary diversity in certain regions. Despite Cameroon being agriculturally endowed, an estimated 29% of children under five are stunted, reflecting chronic malnutrition.³ This problem is particularly acute in the Far North, East, and conflict-affected Northwest and Southwest regions, where displacement, insecurity, and poor health infrastructure impedes the capacity of households to prepare safe, nutritionally balanced meals.⁴ The prevalence of waterborne diseases, such as cholera, in areas with limited access to clean drinking water further affects nutrient absorption and exacerbates food insecurity.⁵ Even where staple foods are available, diets often lack sufficient protein, vitamins, and minerals, leading to "hidden hunger".⁶

Efforts to address utilization in Cameroon have included integrated food and nutrition programs that combine food distribution with nutrition education, improved water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions, and promotion of dietary diversity. The government's Convergence Action Blueprint for food systems transformation also emphasizes the importance of safe food preparation, promotion of locally produced nutritious foods, and the strengthening of public health measures to reduce infection-related nutrient losses.⁷

• Stability

Stability refers to the consistency of availability, access, and utilization over time. A population is food secure only if these three dimensions are maintained consistently, without disruptions due to economic volatility, conflict, natural disasters, or climate change. Stability as a dimension of food security refers to the capacity of individuals, households, and nations to consistently maintain adequate access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food over time without being vulnerable to sudden shocks or cyclical fluctuations. Even if availability, access, and utilization are assured at a given point, food security cannot be considered complete unless these conditions remain stable in the face of adverse events such as economic crises, environmental disasters, political instability, or seasonal variations. The Food and Agriculture Organization emphasizes that stability requires the absence of risk of losing access to food due to either transitory factors, short-term and sudden shocks, or cyclical issues such as seasonal shortages that regularly affect agricultural production and prices.⁸

Maxwell and Frankenberger argue that stability integrates both temporal and resilience dimensions, meaning it is not only about present adequacy but also about the ability of the food system to absorb and recover from

¹ FAO. (2008). An Introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/4feaa4a3-f06e-5e8b-a0b9-3d6e9a7f8e5a> (visited on the 01/08/2025)

² USAID. (1992). Policy Determination 19: Definition of Food Security. United States Agency for International Development. Available at: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/PolicyDetermination19.pdf> (visited on the 01/08/2025)

³ World Food Programme. (2024). Cameroon Country Brief. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/cameroon> (visited on the 03/08/2025)

⁴ FAO. (2023). Cameroon Nutrition Profile. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/nutrition/education/food-dietary-guidelines/regions/countries/cameroon> (visited on the 10/08/2025)

⁵ UNICEF. (2023). Cameroon Humanitarian Situation Report. United Nations Children's Fund. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/cameroon> (visited on the 09/08/2025)

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ UN Food Systems Coordination Hub. (2023). Cameroon Convergence Action Blueprint. Available at: https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/docs/unfoodsystemslibraries/convergence-initiative/cameroon/convergence-action-blueprint_cameron.pdf (visited on the 10/08/2025)

⁸ FAO. (2008). *Opcit.*

disruptions.¹ In the Cameroonian context, stability in food security is still a challenge as it is affected by socio-political, economic, and environmental factors. The country's agricultural sector, which employs a significant proportion of the population, is heavily dependent on rain-fed farming, making it highly vulnerable to seasonal changes and climate variability. Periods of drought in the northern regions and flooding in parts of the Far North and coastal areas often cause severe production fluctuations, which in turn destabilize food availability and drive price volatility.² These disruptions have reduced both household income and the steady flow of food commodities from rural production zones to urban consumption areas, creating conditions of transitory food insecurity.³

Economic instability also affects stability in Cameroon's food security. Inflationary pressures, particularly in the wake of global commodity price surges, have reduced the purchasing power of vulnerable households, making them more susceptible to temporary or prolonged food shortages. Research using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) has shown that a significant share of Cameroonians, about 54% experience either moderate or severe food insecurity, with poorer households disproportionately affected by such instability.⁴ Furthermore, infrastructural deficits in storage, processing, and transportation contribute to high post-harvest losses, especially for perishable goods such as fruits, vegetables, and dairy products. These losses do not only reduce the stability of the food supply but also exacerbate seasonal shortages by reducing the availability of food during the lean months.⁵

3. Food Security and the Un Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, positions food security at the heart of global development, most explicitly through Goal 2: "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture".⁶ This goal is not simply about alleviating hunger but about ensuring that all individuals have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food all year round. The fact that it encompassing availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability of food means SDG 2 is closely tied to economic, environmental, and social systems. It addresses structural barriers such as poverty, inequality, unsustainable farming practices, and climate change, which threaten food systems globally.⁷ By linking hunger eradication with sustainable agriculture, SDG 2 promotes an integrated approach that strengthens rural economies, safeguards ecosystems, and enhances resilience to shocks like pandemics, conflicts, and extreme weather events.⁸

From a food security perspective, SDG 2 advances the idea that agricultural productivity must grow in harmony with environmental stewardship. It advances that, the producing more food without degrading natural resources is central to meeting rising global food demands while limiting greenhouse gas emissions and preserving biodiversity.⁹ Moreover, attention to equitable distribution is vital: inequality, particularly along gender lines, remains a major barrier to realizing SDG 2, as women often have less access to land, credit, and decision-making

¹ Maxwell, S. & Frankenberger, T. (1992). Household Food Security: Concepts, Indicators, Measurements. Rome: IFAD and UNICEF. Available at, <https://www.sciepub.com/reference/212770> (Visited on the 10/08/2025)

² Molua, E. L. (2009). An Empirical Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Smallholder Agriculture in Cameroon. *Global and Planetary Change*, 67(3-4), 205–208.

³ Nfor, B. M. & Ngwa, M. C. (2021). Armed Conflict and Food Security in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 16(2), 220–234.

⁴ Nolla, N. P., Nono, N. M., & Awono, B. (2024). Determinants of Household Food Insecurity in Cameroon: Evidence from the Food Insecurity Experience Scale. *BMC Nutrition*, 10(15), 1–12.

⁵ Hodges, R. J., Buzby, J. C., & Bennett, B. (2011). Postharvest Losses and Waste in Developed and Less Developed Countries: Opportunities to Improve Resource Use. *Journal of Agricultural Science*, 149(S1), 37–45.

⁶ United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York: United Nations. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> (visited on the 07/08/2025)

⁷ Rickards, L., & Shortis, E. (2019). SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. RMIT University.

⁸ Gil, J. D. B., Reidsma, P., Giller, K., Todman, L., et al. (2019). Sustainable development goal 2: Improved targets and indicators for agriculture and food security. *Ambio*, 48, 685–698.

⁹ Fanzo, J. (2019). Healthy and sustainable diets and food systems: the key to achieving sustainable development goal 2? *Food Ethics*, 4, 159–174. Available at <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41055-019-00052-6> (visited on the 10/08/2025)

power despite being key contributors to agricultural output.¹

The nexus between food security and other SDGs mean that progress on this issue is not confined to Goal 2 alone. Goals related to poverty reduction (Goal 1), health (Goal 3), education (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5), clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), climate action (Goal 13), and partnerships (Goal 17) are all essential to building resilient and equitable food systems.² The recognition that hunger is both a cause and consequence of underdevelopment underscores the need for an integrated policy framework where food security is addressed holistically rather than in isolation.³

In practical terms, the SDGs approach to food security calls for increasing agricultural productivity and incomes, particularly among smallholder farmers, who form the backbone of food production in many developing countries. The FAO stresses that sustainable intensification of production through investment in technology, capacity building, and infrastructure can improve both the availability and stability of food supplies.⁴ The SDGs also recognize the role of nutrition in food security. Beyond ensuring that people have enough to eat, the goals emphasize the need for diverse, safe, and nutritious diets that meet the needs of all individuals, especially vulnerable groups such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly.⁵ This emphasis connects directly to Goal 3 on good health and well-being, as malnutrition in all its forms undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overnutrition remains a major global health challenge.⁶ Strengthening social protection systems, as envisioned in Goals 1 and 2, ensures that vulnerable households can withstand economic or environmental shocks without falling into food insecurity.⁷

4. The Role of Foreign Direct Investment in Strengthening Food Security

In recent decades, Foreign Direct Investment has emerged as a driver in addressing food security challenges, particularly in developing economies where capital, technology, and infrastructure gaps hinder agricultural productivity. By channeling financial resources, modern farming techniques, and improved supply chain systems into the agricultural sector, FDI enhances food availability, improve market efficiency, and promote sustainable farming practices. In contexts where local investment capacity is limited, FDI offers a pathway to modernize agricultural production, expand agro-processing, and strengthen food distribution networks, thereby contributing directly to the pillars of food security: availability, access, utilization, and stability.

4.1 The Link Between Foreign Direct Investment and Food Security

Foreign Direct Investment has increasingly been recognized as a double-edged instrument in the quest for global food security. On one hand, inflows of FDI into agriculture and related sectors can provide much-needed capital, technology transfer, and infrastructure improvements that enhance agricultural productivity, post-harvest handling, and market access all of which are central to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2, Zero Hunger.⁸ Research in the Asia-Pacific region, for example, shows that agricultural FDI contributes to food security by increasing access to modern farming technologies, increasing crop yields, and enhancing agribusiness development, especially when accompanied by measures that safeguard local food systems and land rights.⁹

For instance, studies on Pakistan under the Belt and Road Initiative show that Chinese FDI in irrigation systems, rural roads, and agro-processing has significantly boosted sustainable food production capacity.¹⁰ Similarly,

¹ Agarwal, B. (2018). Gender equality, food security and the sustainable development goals. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 34, 26–32.

² Sachs, J. D. (2015). *The Age of Sustainable Development*. New York: Columbia University Press.

³ Maxwell, S. & Slater, R. (2003). Food Policy Old and New. *Development Policy Review*, 21(5-6), 531–553.

⁴ FAO. (2017). *The Future of Food and Agriculture: Trends and Challenges*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

⁵ Kummu, M., de Moel, H., Porkka, M., Siebert, S., Varis, O., & Ward, P. J. (2012). Lost Food, Wasted Resources: Global Food Supply Chain Losses and Their Impacts on Freshwater, Cropland, and Fertiliser Use. *Science of the Total Environment*, 438, 477–489.

⁶ Black, R. E., Victora, C. G., Walker, S. P., et al. (2013). Maternal and Child Undernutrition and Overweight in Low-Income and Middle-Income Countries. *The Lancet*, 382(9890), 427–451.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Ali, Z., et al. (2025). The Role of the Belt and Road Initiative in Advancing Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security in Pakistan. *African Journal of Economics, Sustainability and Development*, 8(2), pp. 82-105.

⁹ Bhat, M. N., Beg, A., & Ikram, F. (2024). Navigating the global knowledge economy: Temporal effects of regulatory environment and FDI on sustainable development in Asia-Pacific. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 16(2), 1-32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

research from Zambia highlights that FDI-driven modernization of the agricultural sector introduced advanced farming techniques, improved seed varieties, and access to international markets, which collectively improved national food availability.¹ These investments supported the adoption of advanced farming technologies such as mechanized planting and harvesting, precision irrigation systems, and soil fertility management.²

Foreign direct investment in agriculture has gained increasing scope and scale in the context of reducing hunger and promoting food security for all. In 2014, UNCTAD estimated that the investment in agriculture and food security required between 2015 and 2030 is \$480 billion, and that the investment gap is \$260 billion.³ FDI is essential to closing the funding gap to increase food production and agricultural productivity. The developmental benefits of foreign investor involvement in investment in agriculture can be realized through four channels: (i) job creation; (ii) providing access to markets and technology for local producers; (iii) local and national tax revenues; and (iv) supporting social infrastructure, often through community development funds using land compensation. The actual impacts and implications vary across countries, by agricultural produce, and influenced by factors, such as the type of foreign involvement, the institutional environment, and the host country's level of development.⁴

The potential benefits of foreign investment in agriculture are counterweighted by the concerns raised due to the examples of the past decades. Firstly, the scale of investment projects involves large areas of land and affects a large number of people. Secondly, the sectoral breakdown of FDI reveals that investment flows to agriculture do not follow a steady pattern. Third, and more importantly, most land deals lack transparency and are either underreported or not reported at all, which makes monitoring a challenge. Concerns include the phenomenon of "land grabbing," where large tracts of arable land are acquired by foreign investors, sometimes displacing local farmers and prioritizing export-oriented crops over domestic food needs.⁵

In Myanmar, land governance issues have limited the pro-food security benefits of agricultural FDI, as insecure land tenure discourages smallholder participation and exacerbate rural inequality. In many instances, these investments involve foreign companies acquiring vast tracts of agricultural land, often through opaque concession processes that disregard customary tenure systems.⁶ According to the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), about 65 per cent of the global land reserves are held by indigenous people and communities under customary tenure regimes, with only one-tenth being formally recognized.⁷ In Myanmar, the land governance framework; including the Farmland Law of 2012 and the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law of 2012 has been criticized for enabling such acquisitions by granting state authorities wide powers to reallocate land to investors, often without adequate compensation or consent from local communities.⁸ Research shows that insecure land tenure discourages smallholder participation in investment projects, heightens rural inequality, and enhances conflict over resource access.⁹

The sustainability of FDI's impact on food security is affected by macroeconomic stability, governance quality, and the presence of complementary policies. Countries with strong institutions and transparent governance are better able to channel foreign agricultural investments towards projects that contribute to domestic food availability and affordability, rather than purely serving export markets. Studies in the Asia-Pacific region

¹ Mabeta, J., & Smutka, L. (2024). Foreign direct investment and sugar production in Africa: a review. *Ukrainian Food Journal*, 13(1), 27–4.

² *Ibid.*

³ UNCTAD World Investment Report 2014: Investing in the SDGs (New York and Geneva: United Nations).

⁴ UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development). (2009). *World Investment Report 2009: Transnational Corporations, Agricultural Production and Development* (New York and Geneva: United Nations).

⁵ Canfield, M., Duncan, J., Madden, A., Anderson, M., et al. (2025). Why food systems governance must be grounded in human rights. *Nature Food*. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-025-01217-9> (visited on the 12/08/2025)

⁶ Scurrah, N., Hirsch, P., & Woods, K. (2015). *Foreign direct investment and land access*. Mekong Land Research Forum. <http://mekonglandforum.org/sites/default/files/Extended%20Synopsis%2003%20FDI%20and%20land%20access%20revised.pdf> (visited on the 10/08/2025)

⁷ RRI (Rights and Resources Initiative). (2015). *Who Owns the World's Land? A Global Baseline of Formally Recognized Indigenous and Community Land Rights* (Washington, D.C.: RRI).

⁸ Hirsch, P., Woods, K., & Scurrah, N. (2015). *The political economy of land governance in Myanmar*. Mekong Land Research Forum. Available at https://www.mekonglandforum.org/sites/default/files/Political_Economy_of_Land_Governance_in_Myanmar.PDF (visited on the 10/08/2025)

⁹ Antonio, M. E. R. (2015). *Patterns of access to land by Chinese agricultural investors and their impacts on rural households in Mandalay Region, Myanmar*. (Masters thesis, University of Hohenheim).

demonstrate that their sound regulatory frameworks not only attract higher-quality FDI but also ensure that such investments align with broader sustainable development priorities, including food security.¹

Governance quality plays an important role because it determines how land rights, water use, and environmental protections are enforced. Without fair and secure land tenure systems, local communities risk being marginalized in favor of large-scale agribusiness operations, a phenomenon that has affected rural food security in several emerging economies.² Similarly, effective macroeconomic management including stable currency regimes and anti-inflationary policies helps protect vulnerable populations from global commodity price volatility, which can otherwise affect household food access when countries become heavily reliant on export-oriented agriculture.³

Complementary policies are equally invaluable. FDI alone does not guarantee improved food security unless it is integrated with national food security strategies that prioritize staple crop production, promote smallholder inclusion, and enhance domestic supply resilience. Countries lacking these safeguards risk deepening dependencies on volatile global markets. If agricultural FDI is not balanced between export and domestic food production, sudden changes in global prices such as the spikes during the 2007-2008 food crisis can trigger shortages and price surges in local markets.⁴ These considerations are more crucial in volatile economies like Cameroon.

4.2 Trends and Patterns of FDI in the Agricultural Sector

Agricultural investments in developing countries have risen dramatically in recent decades with variations across regions, in target commodities, scale and how it has impacted smallholder farming. All these variations affect the socioeconomic outcomes of investments.⁵ In general, FDI in agriculture comprises a small share of total FDI, as compared to other economic sectors. However, such investments have grown globally since the mid-1990s and, after 2007, FDI inflows to developing country agriculture rose significantly. This development is explained by several factors.⁶

The pace of global foreign investments in the agricultural slowed before the 2008 global financial crisis and was followed by a sharp decline which lasted until 2011. The pace picked up momentum again until its subsequent decline in 2021.⁷ The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) shows a continuing decline in the numbers of international private investment projects in the food and agriculture sector, which have not recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite an overall increase, FDI inflows in agriculture fluctuates remarkably and reacts strongly to global economic shocks.⁸

These sudden changes in FDI inflows make developing countries more vulnerable to global business cycles than their developed-country counterparts. Regional distribution of FDI in agriculture has been highly uneven, even though it has overall increased. The East Asia and the Pacific region has received the most FDI in the agriculture sector since 1995. FDI to the region has increased, led by high economic growth, strong institutional capacities, large potentials in agricultural industries and government incentives. Until recently, China was the main FDI destination in the region, but South-East Asian countries have managed to attract increasingly larger shares of FDI. Indonesia has been a prime target of farmland investments: from 2015 to 2019, it was the world's largest recipient of FDI inflows to agriculture, with average inflows of \$3.1 billion per year.⁹ China accounted for the largest portion of investment in agriculture since 1995, rising as high as 85 percent of total FDI in the sector in

¹ Bhat, M. N., Beg, A., & Ikram, F. (2024). *Op cit.*

² Canfield, M., Duncan, J., Madden, A., Anderson, M., et al. (2025). Why food systems governance must be grounded in human rights. *Nature Food*. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-025-01217-9> (visited on the 10/08/2025)

³ FAO, IFAD, UNCTAD, & World Bank Group. (2010). Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment that Respects Rights, Livelihoods and Resources (RAI). https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/unctad_jir2009_en.pdf (visited on the 10/08/2025)

⁴ Ceadey, D., & Fan, S. (2010). Reflections on the global food crisis: How did it happen? How has it hurt? And how can we prevent the next one? *IFPRI Research Monograph*. <https://doi.org/10.2499/9780896291812RM165> (visited on the 10/08/2025)

⁵ Deininger, Klaus, Derek Byerlee, Jonathan Lindsay, Andrew Norton, Harris Selod and Mercedes Stickler. (2011). Rising Global Interest in Farmland. Can It Yield Sustainable and Equitable Benefits? (Washington, D.C.: World Bank)

⁶ Berna Dogana. (2022). Does FDI in agriculture promote food security in developing countries? *The role of land governance*. Available at https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/diaeia2022d3a3_en.pdf (visited on the 10/08/2025)

⁷ UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development). (2022). World Investment Report 2022: International Tax Reforms and Sustainable Investment (New York and Geneva: United Nations).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Indonesia is followed by Norway with \$940 million per year on average, and by Oman with \$816 million per year on average from 2015 to 2019 (See FAO Report, 2022).

2008, before falling to 20 percent before the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

Sub-Saharan African countries attract the smallest share of global FDI inflows to agriculture. However, the value of FDI flows to agriculture to these countries more than doubled in the period between 2010 and 2019, compared to between 2005 and 2009. This is due to a change of approach in how African governments deal with development and the rural sector. Political commitment to reduce poverty and hunger and increasing production and productivity in the agricultural industries were contained in the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in 2003, and the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) Compact in 2007. Government incentives to attract investments to the rural sector have encouraged transnational companies to consider investing in the region. According to the Land Matrix database, as of July 2022, 9.5 million hectares of land was acquired in sub-Saharan Africa for agricultural production.² Mozambique, Ethiopia and Ghana, in that order, were the top recipient countries of farmland investments in the region.

Historically, Cameroon's agricultural sector has attracted FDI largely in export-oriented crops such as cocoa, coffee, banana, and palm oil. Foreign Direct Investment in Cameroon's agricultural sector has followed fluctuating but discernible patterns over the past four decades, reflecting broader structural and policy shifts in the national economy. From the late 1970s to the early 1990s, agricultural FDI was modest, with the oil boom diverting investment away from primary agriculture toward petroleum and extractive industries.³ Following the economic crisis of the mid-1980s and subsequent structural adjustment programmes, liberalization policies encouraged greater openness to foreign investors, resulting in a gradual rise in agricultural FDI inflows, particularly in export-oriented commodities such as cocoa, coffee, palm oil, and bananas.⁴ Between 2000 and 2010, data from UNCTAD indicate an average annual FDI inflow to Cameroon of USD 240 million, with agriculture consistently attracting between 8% and 12% of total inflows, largely driven by multinational agribusinesses and large-scale plantation projects.⁵

Recent statistics suggest a renewed emphasis on agribusiness investment, with the World Bank and FAO noting that between 2015 and 2020, Cameroon recorded an annual agricultural FDI growth rate of approximately 5%, buoyed by public-private partnerships and targeted incentives under the country's Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP).⁶ Notable investments have been in palm oil expansion in the Southwest Region and rice production schemes in the Far North, with China, France, and South Africa among the leading investor nations. Nevertheless, inflows remain volatile due to political instability, fluctuating commodity prices, and infrastructural deficits. While agricultural FDI contributed to mechanization, technology transfer, and increased export earnings, evidence from 1978–2014 shows that exchange rate volatility and weak institutional capacity have hindered its full potential to drive sustainable agricultural growth.⁷

4.3 Challenges and Risks Associated with Agricultural FDI

Agricultural Foreign Direct Investment brings with it both opportunities and risks, particularly for host countries with developing economies. A principal and recurring challenge resides in land tenure insecurity, a condition wherein proprietary or usufructuary rights to land are either poorly documented, ambiguously defined, or susceptible to arbitrary interference. In many developing economies, customary tenure systems rooted in ancestral occupation or communal ownership coexist uneasily with statutory land regimes, creating a duality that foreign investors may exploit, intentionally or otherwise, through strategic contractual arrangements or asymmetrical bargaining power.⁸

¹ See FAO Report 2022.

² *Ibid.*

³ Zisuh, N. M. (2003). The role of foreign direct investments on export performance in Cameroon. *International Science, Technology and Society Forum*. Available at <https://ia-forum.org/Files/OSJDQW.pdf> (visited on the 11/08/2025)

⁴ Djomo, R. F., Ukpe, U. H., & Nwalem, M. P. (2017). Foreign direct investment and exchange rate movement effects of agricultural growth: Evidence from Cameroon (1978–2014). *International Journal of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development*, 7(1), 101–113. Available at <https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/268447/> (visited on the 10/08/2025)

⁵ Husmann, C., & Kubik, Z. (2019). Foreign direct investment in the African food and agriculture sector: Trends, determinants and impacts. *ZEF Discussion Papers on Development Policy*, 274. Available at <https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/287431/>

⁶ Anaciet, C. T. (2019). Modern trends in agricultural development in Cameroon and ways to ensure its sustainability. *Economika APK*, 1, 21–33. Available at https://econommeneg.btsau.edu.ua/sites/default/files/visnyky/economika/econ_apk_1-2019.pdf#page=21 (visited on the 10/08/2025)

⁷ Djomo *et al.* (2017), *Opcit.*

⁸ Ananti, M.O., Nwokike, C., & Ezeneme, E. (2025). Security Challenges and Foreign Direct Investment in Nigeria: Implications for Economic Growth (2010–2024). Available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5345577 (visited on the 11/08/2025)

When agricultural FDI manifests through long-term leases, concessions, or outright acquisitions, such transactions can, in the absence of due diligence and equitable negotiation, amount to de facto dispossession. This displacement may occur without adequate compensation aligned with the principles of just indemnification or without observing the free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) standard recognized in international law, particularly with respect to indigenous populations under instruments such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The result is often a forced migration of smallholder farmers from arable land, eroding their capacity to generate subsistence and marketable produce, and precipitating socio-economic marginalization.¹

Such displacement not only implicates civil and property rights under domestic laws but also contravene treaty obligations where the host state is a party to international covenants on economic, social, and cultural rights. Furthermore, the removal of communities from land with which they maintain deep cultural and spiritual connections constitutes not merely an economic injury but an infringement upon intangible heritage and identity. These outcomes can engender claims in tort for wrongful deprivation, breach of contract where prior agreements existed, and in extreme cases, allegations of unlawful expropriation which, under investor-state dispute settlement frameworks, could paradoxically enable the investor to sue the state if regulatory measures are later imposed to remediate the harm.²

Another significant risk is environmental degradation. Intensive farming practices introduced by foreign investors especially monoculture plantations can result in soil depletion.³ The risk extends beyond soil to encompass deforestation and associated habitat destruction, often as a preliminary step to the establishment of large-scale plantations. Such acts do precipitate irreversible biodiversity loss, contravening both domestic environmental statutes and international obligations under multilateral agreements such as the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity. The clearance of forested land not only extinguishes endemic flora and fauna but also disrupts ecological corridors leading to species migration. Under environmental jurisprudence, these actions may be viewed as breaches of the precautionary principle, which mandates proactive avoidance of harm where scientific uncertainty exists regarding the environmental impact of a project.⁴ The risk is amplified when investors prioritize short-term returns over environmental stewardship, which undermines the long-term viability of the agricultural sector.⁵

Compounding these effects is the over-extraction of water resources for irrigation, particularly acute in arid and semi-arid regions. The diversion of substantial water flows for commercial agriculture affects the rights of downstream users and compromise riparian and groundwater integrity, raising issues under both domestic water governance laws and transboundary water-sharing treaties. Excessive withdrawal from aquifers leads to saline intrusion, aquifer depletion, and the collapse of local hydrological systems, an outcome that may be actionable under the public trust doctrine, which positions certain natural resources as held by the state in fiduciary stewardship for the benefit of its people.⁶

An additional and structurally significant concern arises when Agricultural Foreign Direct Investment is disproportionately channelled into the cultivation of export-oriented cash crops such as cocoa, palm oil, sugarcane, or cut flowers at the expense of staple food production intended for domestic consumption.⁷ While such investments may augment foreign exchange earnings, they often reconfigure domestic agricultural priorities in a manner that affects national food sovereignty and food security, concepts recognized in both domestic policy frameworks and international instruments such as the November 2004 Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food endorsed by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)⁸.

By diverting fertile arable land, and agricultural labour away from subsistence and nutritional crops, this model risks creating structural dependence on food imports, exposing the host state to exogenous shocks in global commodity and food markets. Such outcomes may be construed as contravening the state's positive obligation to

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ Jiao, Y. (2025). *ATDC, A Chinese Model of Agricultural Technology Cooperation with Developing Countries*. IAIS., Available at <https://iais.uz/upload/outputdocument/18-07-2025/ATDC,%20A%20Chinese%20Model%20of%20Agricultural%20Technology%20Cooperation%20with%20Developing%20Countries.pdf> (visited on the 10/08/2025)

⁴ Piot-Lepetit, I. (2025). Strategies of Digitalization and Sustainability in Agrifood Value Chains. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Akinwalere, S., & Chang, K. (2025). Cooperative Economics in Africa: Applicability and Suggestions. *Global Economic Perspectives*.

⁸ *Ibid.*

ensure the availability, accessibility, and adequacy of food for its population, as articulated in Article 11 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

The macroeconomic architecture of such investments further exacerbates their asymmetrical benefit distribution. In many cases, profit repatriation mechanisms embedded in bilateral investment treaties or national investment codes allow foreign investors to expatriate the bulk of their earnings with minimal reinvestment obligations in the host economy. This phenomenon commonly referred to as capital flight in disguised form reduces local economic multipliers, curtailing the capacity of agricultural FDI to stimulate ancillary sectors such as agro-processing, and rural services. These structural vulnerabilities are compounded by governance and institutional capacity deficits in many host states. Regulatory capture wherein foreign investors exert disproportionate influence over policymaking through lobbying, political patronage, or opaque concession negotiations can further affect administrative impartiality and compromise the public interest.¹

5. Case Studies of Agricultural Fdi Projects and Food Security Outcomes in Cameroon

Here, the researcher examines a number of FDI related to SDG 2 in Cameroon.

• *Societe Codilait & Ministere der Finaces et du Budget v. Societe Nestle Cameroun & Others*²

The dispute between *Société Codilait*, a Cameroonian dairy processing company founded by entrepreneur Pius Bissek, and *Société Nestlé Cameroun* with its co-defendant *Établissement Cosmos*, arose from allegations of unfair competition, fraudulent import practices, and market distortion in Cameroon's dairy sector. Codilait, a domestic producer of sweetened condensed milk marketed under the "Super Milk" brand, accused Nestlé of importing dairy products most notably under the "Gloria" brand that were represented and labelled as milk-based, while in reality containing significant proportions of vegetable fats such as palm and coconut oil. According to Codilait, these products were not only misleadingly labelled but also wrongfully declared to Cameroonian customs as dairy products, thereby benefiting from lower import duties and avoiding the higher tariffs applicable to non-dairy fat products. Codilait maintained that this misclassification constituted a form of customs fraud and enabled Nestlé to sell its products at prices well below Codilait's, thereby affecting its market share and damaging its competitiveness.

The allegations were supported by several expert investigations conducted at the request of the Cameroonian authorities and during court proceedings. These reports confirmed that the contested Nestlé products contained vegetable fats, contradicting the imported product declarations. The customs revenue loss to the State was estimated at approximately 1,751,858,038 FCFA. Codilait argued that beyond the loss to public revenue, the practice amounted to unfair competition under Cameroonian commercial law because Nestlé could leverage artificially reduced import costs to price its "Gloria" condensed milk far below Codilait's "Super Milk." In the early 1990s, "Super Milk" was sold at 600 FCFA per can before the 1994 CFA franc devaluation, later rising to 1,200 FCFA, while "Gloria" was introduced at a highly competitive price of around 900 FCFA, a difference Codilait claimed was only possible through unlawful cost advantages.³

The matter was first adjudicated by the Tribunal de Grande Instance of Douala, which, on 14 July 2010, found in favour of Codilait. The court recognized that Nestlé's practices constituted acts of unfair competition and ordered Nestlé Cameroun and Établissement Cosmos to pay 740 million FCFA in damages to Codilait. The ruling relied on the expert evidence showing that the imported goods did not match their customs declarations and that this misrepresentation distorted market competition to Codilait's detriment.

Nestlé and its co-defendants appealed the decision to the court of Appeal. During the appeal, the State of Cameroon also sought to intervene, claiming over 26 billion FCFA in unpaid duties, fines, and penalties, including approximately 18.2 billion FCFA in direct fines. In 2012, however, the appellate reduced the amount demanded from Nestlé from 740 to 150 million CFA francs. Refusing to abandon the matter, Codilait pursued the case to the Supreme Court of Cameroon. After protracted proceedings, the Supreme Court issued its ruling in June 2017, partially reinstating Codilait's victory. While it did not restore the original 740 million FCFA award, the Court ordered Nestlé Cameroun and its co-defendant to pay 517 million FCFA in damages to Codilait. This final judgment recognized the substance of Codilait's grievances and marked the end of a long legal battle in which a local Cameroonian company ultimately prevailed against a multinational giant, albeit with a reduced award.

¹ Zheng, Q., Gu, H., & Su, Y. (2025). Agricultural OFDI Empowers the Construction of Agricultural Powerhouse under the Background of RCEP. *Journal of Yunnan Agricultural University*, 19(4), 50–58.

² Judgement No: 597 of 14th July 2010.

³ Olivier, M. (2017). Cameroon: How Pius Bissek forced the giant Nestlé to bow. *Jeune Afrique*. Retrieved August 12, 2025, from <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/446529/societe/cameroun-pius-bissek-a-plier-geant-nestle/> (visited on the 12/08/2025)

This case aligns with Sustainable SDG 2 which aims to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. At its core, the dispute portrays how multinational corporate practices, when driven primarily by profit maximization, can affect both domestic food security and the integrity of local agro-industrial sectors. By importing products labeled as dairy but containing significant proportions of cheaper vegetable fats, Nestlé was able to position itself at a competitive price point that a local producer who relied on authentic dairy inputs could not match without compromising quality. This cost advantage, tied to mislabeling and customs misclassification, did not only jeopardized Codilait's market survival but also reduced consumer access to genuine, nutrient-rich dairy products, indirectly affecting nutritional quality in the population. In a country where malnutrition and undernourishment remain public health concerns, the substitution of milk fats with vegetable fats in staple products lowers dietary value and affects SDG 2's nutritional targets.

The case further illustrates a recurring pattern in which multinationals strategically maneuver to reduce operational costs in host countries, often by introducing cheaper raw materials or substitutes that may not align with local health and quality standards. While FDI can introduce capital, technology, and market access, it can also distort local competition when the laws are weak or inconsistently enforced. In this instance, the use of vegetable fats rather than milk not only reduced production costs but also sidestepped higher import tariffs, depriving the state of substantial customs revenue estimated at over 1.75 billion FCFA. Such revenue losses have a secondary effect on food security because they limit government capacity to invest in agricultural development programs, rural infrastructure, and nutritional initiatives which are all levers for achieving SDG 2 in Cameroon.

Moreover, when domestic producers exit the market or scale down production due to unfair competition, the result is increased dependency on imported products, which heightens vulnerability to global price shocks and supply disruptions. This dependency runs counter to SDG 2's emphasis on resilient, locally grounded food systems. The Codilait case also highlights how multinationals exploit weaknesses such as ambiguous product classification or limited customs capacity to pursue market dominance, sometimes at the expense of long-term sustainability, food sovereignty, and public health. Without such stringent measures, the influx of multinational investments risks displacing local producers, lowering product quality, and diverting public revenues. These outcomes invariably hinder the realization of zero hunger and improved nutrition in countries like Cameroon.

• The Case of Herakles Farms

Cameroon's development trajectory has been consistently hampered by a pervasive and deeply entrenched history of abusive practices by foreign agro-industrial corporations. These entities have routinely capitalized on their considerable economic leverage to occupy vast tracts of indigenous land, exploit local labor, and employ hazardous chemicals that pose direct and severe threats to both human health and the ecological integrity of the environment. Such actions undermine Cameroon's earnest efforts to achieve sustainable development, particularly when relying on Foreign Direct Investments as a catalyst for growth.

For example, in *SEFE v. SG-SOC, Herakles Farms and Timti Isidore*¹, involved Herakles Farms, a U.S.-based palm oil company operating in Cameroon, and a local non-governmental organization that sought a judicial injunction to halt the defendant's activities. The NGO's plea was rooted in the company's flagrant disrespect for due process and established legal frameworks. Investigations revealed that SG-SOC, acting on behalf of Herakles Farms, had engaged in egregious and unauthorized tree felling within a community area, demonstrably exceeding permissible limits and proceeding without the prerequisite permits mandated by relevant Cameroonian Forestry law. This audacious act constituted a direct and unmistakable violation of Section 36 of the 1994 forestry legislation, which explicitly stipulates that any further felling of timber requires an "Autorisation d'enlèvement de bois abattus" a highly specific permit exclusively issued by the Minister himself and granted solely to accredited logging companies, emphatically not to oil palm producers.

This disregard for national law, environmental safeguards, and community rights by a foreign investor is precisely how such FDIs, intended to foster progress, instead undermine Cameroon's commitment to sustainable development. When a prominent foreign entity operates with such impunity, it erodes trust, deters responsible investment, and sends a chilling message that short-term economic gains may supersede long-term environmental protection and social equity. This creates a perception that the nation's natural capital and its citizens' well-being are expendable in the pursuit of foreign-backed economic growth, directly contradicting the holistic principles of sustainability.

In its considered judgment on the matter, the court not only imposed a temporary suspension on the defendant's contentious activities but also issued significant and forward-looking recommendations. It strongly urged Herakles Farms to enter into a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding with the local communities

¹ *Struggle to Economize Future Environment (SEFE) v. SG-SOC, Herakles Farms and Dr. Timti Isidore*, Suit No. HNC/003/05/2011/4m/2012.

whose ancestral rights, traditional livelihoods, and cultural heritage had been severely infringed. Furthermore, the court mandated that the company provide appropriate compensation to these communities for the extensive destruction of their timber resources and irreplaceable forest ecosystems, directly attributable to the company's unauthorized and reckless operations. This ruling, while a victory for local communities, highlighted the systemic challenges Cameroon faces in ensuring that FDIs genuinely contribute to equitable and sustainable development rather than merely extracting resources at the expense of its people and environment.

- **Forest Exploitation in the East Region of Cameroon and the Impact on Food Security**

The persistent conflict of interest observed between forest-dependent communities in Cameroon's South-East, large-scale logging companies (often propelled by Foreign Direct Investments), and the state itself, stands as yet another illustration of the tensions inherent between FDI and genuine sustainable development. These deep-seated tensions emanate primarily from the state's singular desire to maximize revenue by issuing extensive logging concessions to foreign-backed companies. These corporations, driven by profit motives, then proceed to exploit the local forest resources with conspicuously little, if any, regard for the indigenous communities situated within these areas and whose livelihoods are linked to the forest's continued viability. While the state perceives these concessions as a straightforward pathway to economic growth and increased national coffers, the reality on the ground is a relentless extraction that profoundly impacts the delicate socio-ecological balance.

The exploitation of certain timber species such as the maobi (*Baillonella toxisperma*), bubinga (*Guibourtia tessmannii*) and sapelli (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*) in the South-East Cameroon compete with local interests. These timber species has high cultural, social and economic value to the local people, especially to the Baka in the region.¹ During hunting, the Baka also use the moabi tree as markers to guide them through the forest. The bark of the tree is used to produce a concoction by the Baka, with which they cover their bodies during hunting so that they can go undetected through the forest.²

Above all, the moabi is well known and appreciated by the local people for the oil produced from the seeds, which is the most popular cooking oil in the region. The sapelli tree is a good breeding ground for caterpillars that serve the Baka women with protein during low season of hunting. On the other hand, the Pallisco Company is interested in the exploitation of moabi as the quality of its wood is highly regarded in Europe. According to the local people, the moabi tree is very scarce around their villages as they must trek for about 15-30 km to find the closest moabi tree. The felling of trees impair on the availability of nontimber forest products. This is particularly felt by the Baka, as their livelihood depends solely on the forests. In the focus group discussions, we noticed moreover differences between how the Baka men and women saw the conflict, illustrating variations concerning which resources each utilize. The men noted issues around hunting as the main challenge. They complained that the noise made by the logging machinery had repercussions for the availability of large game. Furthermore, pathways and points of orientation were destroyed as well as areas where honey bees were found and localities where wildlife used to hide. Only a few Baka men managed to get a job from the logging company and their employment has usually been short-lived and underpaid as compared to the Nzime employed. The Baka women, on the other hand, emphasized the damage done to valuable NTFPs, especially fruit trees, kernels, caterpillars and medicinal barks and leaves. The logging activity had also greatly affected their opportunities to maintain traditional and cultural values. The life of every Baka is linked to the forest, with their sacred places rich in valuable timber species being intruded upon or even destroyed by the logging companies.

Unsurprisingly, these logging companies routinely encounter vigorous resistance from the local indigenes, who are gravely concerned about the devastating impact of overexploitation on the forest as it serves as habitat for countless species, and an irreplaceable means of subsistence and cultural heritage for generations of these communities. However, armed with the government's official imprimatur, these foreign-backed logging enterprises forge ahead with their extractive activities, leading to an increasingly tense and often volatile atmosphere between the local populations and the state.

These activities by multinationals have direct and far-reaching implications for food security and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals that center on eradicating hunger and ensuring sustainable resource use. The indiscriminate logging of culturally and nutritionally significant tree species such as moabi, sapelli, and bubinga hampers the availability of non-timber forest products that constitute the primary source of food and nutrition for indigenous forest-dependent communities like the Baka. Moabi seeds, for instance, produce the most popular cooking oil in the region, while sapelli trees provide caterpillars rich in protein, especially during hunting

¹ Betti, J. L., (2004). Impact of forest logging in the Dja Biosphere Reserve, Cameroon (Unpublished context study report). Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Cameroon.

² Samdong, R. A., & Vatn, A., (2012). Forest related conflicts in South-East Cameroon: Causes and policy options. *International Forestry Review*, 14(2), 213–226.

off-seasons. The destruction of these species disrupts traditional food systems, diminishes dietary diversity, and exacerbates protein and micronutrient deficiencies. Furthermore, logging activities reduce hunting opportunities by disturbing wildlife habitats and displacing game species through noise and habitat destruction. This deprivation affects SDG 2 by limiting access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food sources, and SDG 15 (Life on Land) by accelerating biodiversity loss and forest degradation.

Beyond food availability, these FDI's weaken the socio-economic resilience of indigenous populations. Short-lived and underpaid employment opportunities offered by logging companies do little to offset the loss of forest-based livelihoods, while the destruction of sacred sites and traditional pathways to intergenerational knowledge transfer. Women, who rely heavily on forest fruits, kernels, medicinal plants, and caterpillars for both nutrition and income, face disproportionate hardship, thereby exacerbating gendered inequalities in food security. The cumulative effect is a deterioration of both household and community-level food sovereignty, placing local populations at greater risk of malnutrition and poverty.

- **Olam International**

Olam originated in 1989 when the Kewalram Chanrai Group set up Olam Nigeria Plc to export agricultural products; the business scaled rapidly across Africa and Asia and later established its corporate headquarters in Singapore, where Olam Group is listed. This evolution matters because the firm's governance, disclosure and sustainability targets now reflect Singapore-listed company standards, while its operational DNA is still strongly African.¹

In Cameroon, the export of cocoa beans and the importation of grains and rice are the foundations of Olam's relationship with Cameroon over the past 25 years which has contributed to ensuring food security in the country by providing two of the most important food staples in the country's diet. Olam supplies in excess of 140,000 metric tonnes of rice per annum to the local market, as one of the top three rice importers in the country. Similarly, its annual supply of over 130,000 metric tonnes of wheat flour make Olam one of the top three sellers of that essential commodity.² On the ingredients side, Ofi operates one of Cameroon's largest primary processing sites USICAM where cocoa and coffee beans are dried, graded and exported; the scale of this operation makes Ofi a significant regional employer within the cocoa-coffee belt.³

On the staples side, Olam Agri imports and distributes well-known rice brands such as Riz Mémé and Riz Bijou (including Riz Bijou Fortifié, positioned as the country's only fortified rice line), and the company has repeatedly been recognized by local authorities and consumer groups for the quality and scale of these imports. Olam Cameroon's commitment to the country's grains requirement saw a 2012 investment of CFA30 billion in a state-of-the-art modern wheat milling facility with a capacity of 500 metric tonnes per day on the outskirts of Douala. The highly automated plant was commissioned in March 2015 and produces wheat flour products that caters to market requirements ranging from beignet, standard baguette and premium baguette or toast bread. The investment has benefited allied industries and service providers and generated both direct and indirect employment. It has also provided Olam with a platform for further community engagement and social welfare activities.⁴

Olam Cameroon's rice division has become one of the most important contributors to the food security effort of the country. As one of the nation's top importers and distributors of rice, it has established an extensive network that helps meet the nutrition needs of communities across all 10 regions. Olam ensures value and availability of rice to 22 million Cameroonian consumers by sourcing from its own South East African counterparts and by meeting the demands of the local consumer premium, medium, parboiled and mass segments.

These operations aligns with SDG 2 in several concrete ways. SDG 2.1 (end hunger; access to safe, nutritious food) is supported by Olam Agri's bulk importation and nationwide distribution of rice, a staple that supplements domestic production and helps moderate seasonal supply shortfalls. The firm's consumer-recognized status and scale suggest reliability of supply, which is a non-trivial buffer against price spikes in urban centers like Douala and Yaoundé. The fortified rice line also targets SDG 2.2 (end all forms of malnutrition) by addressing micronutrient deficiencies a recognized driver of "hidden hunger" through commercially distributed, nutritionally enhanced staples. While fortification is not a silver bullet, country-level availability of fortified rice

¹ Olam International: The Formative Years: 1989 To 1992. Available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/60785460/Olam-International> (visited on the 11/08/2025)

² Olam celebrates its place in Cameroon history. (2020). Available at <https://www.olamgroup.com/news/all-news/blog/olam-celebrates-its-place-in-cameroon-history.html> (visited on the 11/08/2025)

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

through mainstream retail channels is a meaningful systems lever for malnutrition reduction.

On the producer side aligned with SDG 2.3 (double the productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers) Ofi's cocoa/coffee supply in Cameroon integrate primary processing (USICAM) with farmer procurement, quality grading and traceability programs. Ofi has reported 100% traceability for directly sourced cocoa globally, and in Cameroon specifically it has been part of the national push to geo-reference cocoa farms to meet the EU's deforestation-free product rules. Traceability and geolocation data are not just compliance checkboxes: they enable targeted extension support, help segregate higher-quality or certified beans (potential price premia), and can de-risk financing for cooperatives. As the EU regulation bites, exporters like Ofi (Ofi Cam) collaborating with government platforms can help preserve market access for Cameroonian cocoa.

That said, the SDG 2 trade-offs deserve a sober read. First, Cameroon's dietary dependence on imported rice creates exposure to external price shocks (global freight, export bans). Even when imports stabilize urban food availability, they disincentivize local rice investment if not paired with policies that also lift domestic productivity (irrigation, seed systems, milling quality). Fortified imported rice addresses micronutrient shortcomings but does not, by itself, build sovereign production resilience, a core SDG 2 concern. Second, cocoa/coffee are export-oriented; they improve rural incomes when prices are favorable but do not directly raise availability of local staples. The net SDG 2 impact therefore turns on complementary public policies: using reliable imports to smooth consumption in the short run while crowding-in investment for local cereals; and leveraging traceability/compliance work in cocoa to more value back to smallholders through price premia, credit and climate-smart agronomy. (Inference based on the cited operational facts and the SDG 2 target architecture.)

6. Conclusion & Recommendations

Cameroon's agricultural transformation fueled inter-alia by Foreign Direct Investment, has emerged as both as an opportunity and a challenge in the pursuit of national food security. While FDI has undeniably introduced modern agricultural technologies, enhanced infrastructure, and bolstered the export economy, it has also exacerbated deep-rooted structural issues including land tenure insecurity, environmental degradation, smallholder displacement, and growing dependence on food imports. The paradox of persistent hunger in an agriculturally endowed country underscores the reality that capital inflows alone cannot resolve systemic vulnerabilities in food systems. As demonstrated in multiple case studies from Herakles Farms' deforestation and community dispossession to Codilait's battle for fair competition, the misalignment between FDI objectives and national development goals threatens to widen inequality, destabilize rural livelihoods, and compromise food sovereignty.

A sustainable path forward must be guided by a rights-based, inclusive, and ecologically responsible model of agricultural investment. This requires the urgent institutionalization of transparent land governance systems that recognize and formalize customary land rights, alongside measures to enforce environmental, labor, and health standards. Policymakers must anchor FDI within integrated food security strategies that prioritize domestic staple production, strengthen smallholder participation through inclusive value chains, and ensure gender-responsive outcomes. Public-private partnerships should mandate out-grower schemes, enforce grievance redress mechanisms, and co-finance feeder road and irrigation infrastructure that improve both physical access to food and agricultural resilience. Investments that fail to meet these criteria should be screened out to avoid undermining national food security objectives.

To reconcile foreign capital with the right to food, Cameroon must adopt a dual-track strategy: in the short term, leverage FDI to stabilize market supplies and enhance nutritional access through fortified imports and improved distribution systems; in the long term, prioritize agroecological transition, climate-smart agriculture, and domestic cereal productivity to build sovereign food systems. Strengthening the institutional capacity of agencies tasked with monitoring and regulating FDI in agriculture is indispensable to this process. Only a governance framework rooted in accountability, equity, and sustainability can ensure that foreign investment contributes not merely to economic growth but to a just and hunger-free Cameroon.

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