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Cultural Management Issues Facing the Sustainability of Development Projects in Anglican Church of Maseno North Diocese, Kenya

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Abstract

Management of development projects is influenced by the culture of a people in any given area. This study sought to assess cultural management issues facing the sustainability of development projects in Anglican Church of Kenya, Maseno North Diocese, Kenya. It draws on the theoretical perspectives of thinkers like Sen (1992), Spradley (1980), and Huntington (2000).

A descriptive study design was adopted where both qualitative and quantitative data was collected through semi structured questionnaires, key informants, and focus group discussion. Simple Random and cluster sampling were used to select 245 participants. Quantitative data was coded and analysed using SPSS while qualitative data was analysed using content analysis. The study findings revealed that values and belief systems and kinship relationships affected the sustainability of development projects of the church. The study recommended the implementation of culturally responsive strategies in projects management to enhance community ownership and long-term impact.

Keywords: culture, management issues, sustainability, development projects, cultural dynamics

1. Introduction

The study of interaction between culture and economic development is not new. However, economists often fail to notice the role of culture in the economic development of countries. Culture generates assets such as skills, products and insights that contribute to the social and economic welfare of a community. Both cultures and values shape economic development. According to Sen (1992), the values held by society will affect economic development efforts. The above sentiments brought out the significant role culture plays towards the performance of general institutions. There are certain decisions made arising from our culture. Sometimes, culture influences the decisions made in management practices. Our moral values, ethical issues and kinship systems influence the decisions arrived at by the management of the institutions. Though the sentiments are general, the study employed these ideas to evaluate the impact of peoples' culture and beliefs on the reception of projects in ACK Maseno north diocese. This study therefore sought to establish the cultural management issues affecting sustainability of development projects in ACK Maseno North Diocese.

1.1 Background Information

According to Spradley (1980, 6), culture is "the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior." This behavior consists of the socially transmitted "patterns, norms, beliefs and values of a given community" as observes Fellner (2008, p. 5). Quoting Faure and Sjostedt (1993), culture is a set of shared and enduring meanings, values and beliefs that characterize national, ethnic and other groups and orient their behaviour. According to Huntington (2000), culture is the values, attitudes, beliefs and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in society. Culture is dynamic, interactive and synergistic. It intermixes with all the elements of a society, especially economic development and the milieu of entrepreneurs.

The same views are held by Ndegwah (2007, p. 18) who states that culture determines the way people perceive, interpret, understand, and therefore, respond to new ideas, events, people and situations. For this reason, culture affects the ability of societies to create and properly manage institutions. Culture is a key element in the fight against poverty. The poor have their own values that are often all they have to assert. Equally, under-privileged groups have values, which are associated with them. If these values are disregarded, then, even the best productive proposals can be blocked. Preserving cultural values is very important for development (Fellner, 2008, pp. 6-9). Ndegwah (2007) asserts that culture affects the way people manage institutions. Amira (2008) equally observed that culture determines the way people embrace development projects. These ideas were very important to this study, as they helped to understand how people's values and beliefs affect the reception of development projects. The current study used the information to assess the extent to which people's values and beliefs influenced the performance of development projects in ACK Maseno North Diocese.

Concerning the cultural management issues, management and development are not absolute in themselves; they do not take place in a vacuum. They are affected by the culture of a people in any given area, cultural practice and management change in an organizational context. Mullins (2005) thinks that managing the culture of an organization is sometimes presented as an easy task. A review of his work shows that culture largely comprises habits, values, morals, ethics and norms which people identify themselves within an organizational setting. In the context of the Anglican Church, its tradition emphasizes collective responsibility of all members as well as team work (Njoka, 2010, p. 13). This is supported by evidence from Christian values established by St. Paul on the unity of believers. "Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together. There is one Spirit and one body, just as there is one hope to which God called you" (Ephesians 4:3 - 4).

Culture consists of artefacts including visible organizational features, such as the physical structures of buildings and interior design. This level of culture is easily observable within the Anglican Church, particularly Maseno North Diocese. A review of the work of Peter and Waterman (1998) indicates that there is a strong emphasis on the relationship between managerial practice and the concept of organizational culture as a unifying factor shared by everyone. In the context of the Anglican Church Maseno North Diocese, this research tries to establish the relationship between the Anglican Church and Maseno North Diocese. This research focuses on the following aspects: how things are done in ACK Maseno North Diocese, what is the acceptable behaviour in the context of Christianity and Anglicanism especially in the recruitment of project personnel, the norms of the Anglican Church and how they have been observed by the workers. Martin and Frost (1996) noted that cultural practices enable management to happen by building entities together and reducing friction. Management creates annexes of people, ideas, materials and technology that can act in a semi-autonomous way. Culture is the shorthand term that captures the ways in which people make sense of their management and of being managed. The above literature informed the current study, as it assisted in understanding how people's values and behaviours affect an organization's performance. Although the literature does not address the ACK Maseno North Diocese, it explains the fact that cultural beliefs and values have an impact on economic development efforts. The current study sought to establish the extent to which norms contributed to performance of the projects in ACK Maseno North Diocese.

Gordon and Di Tomaso (1992) argue that we can measure culture through its values. Strong cultures are associated with better performance of corporate organizations. These organizations are guided by laid down policies, which include organizational values. Hence, Ashkenasy (2003) argues that values are the key component of culture. In this regard, Hofstede (1980) underlines the four most common dimensions of culture as follows: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, and masculinity versus femininity.

Power distance refers to the extent to which weaker members of organizations and institutions anticipate and accept power distributions between themselves and the power holders that are unequal. Okullu (1997), in his analysis of power struggles in the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), provides a good example of this process. He argued that, although he was the most qualified applicant for the position of Archbishop of Kenya in 1980, entrenched ethnic allegiances particularly among the Abaluyia and Agikuyu communities, consolidated by political tribalism successfully barred his elevation. Okullu recounted that he was unable to secure even a third signature among the twenty-five electors required to confirm his nomination (Okullu, 1997, p. 103).

Equally relevant is the uncertainty avoidance of cultural dimension that explains the degree to which a culture has low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity (Hofstede & Peterson, 2000). This cultural dimension provides insights into how societal values and norms shape attitudes towards institutional leadership and influence the degree to which individuals engage with the governance and projects of their organizations. The current study employed these ideas to assess the extent to which people's involvement affected the performance of development projects.

In addition, there is individualism versus collectivism; the extent to which individuals are integrated into groups. Within Maseno North Diocese, people are integrated through people's fellowships and various conferences of various ministries. These include, Kenya Anglican Men Association (KAMA), Mothers' Union (MU), Kenya Anglican Youth Organization (KAYO) and many others. Finally, there is masculinity vis-a-vie femininity, that is, assertiveness and competitiveness, modesty and caring thereby creating cultural homogeneity for effective management of people (Hofstede & Peterson, 2000). The Early church in Jerusalem integrated house fellowship where all believers devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship and to sharing of meals including the Lords Supper as indicated in the Acts of Apostles 2:42.

Sapit (2016) discovers that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in offering room to women clergy to become leaders in church. He acknowledges that women clergy ordination is a matter that continues to be controversial, one that will not be taken care of within a short while and anticipates that the Anglican Church will eventually appoint a female bishop. The Jewish cultural practices prohibited women from participating in church matters nor take up church leadership positions. First Corinthians 14:34-35 says, "As in all the churches of the saints, women should keep silent in the church, for they are not permitted to speak, but they should be in submission, as the law also says." And they desire to learn of anything, let them ask their husbands at home for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. Kweyu (2017) notes that within the Anglican Church, the Maseno North Diocese, centuries-old tension over ideas of femininity and masculinity has fueled power struggles for decades. In response to these tensions, Bishop Simon Oketch in Maraba ACK Parish in Kakamega blessed ACK Maseno Diocese women lay leaders as a means of reducing gender related issues (EAT, 2017). This body of literature assisted in providing useful contextual information for the current study. Support from these texts guided comprehension of cultural perceptions and experiences of marginalization that have affected implementation and performance of development projects in ACK Maseno North Diocese.

Nguyen and Watanabe (2017) carried out a study to determine the impact of project culture on the performance of construction projects in Vietnam. The study revealed that cultural influence had received significant attention from academics due to its vital role in the success or failure of a project. Moreover, culture was viewed as an essential determinant of management practices. In addition, the construction project is operated by multiple individuals with diverse backgrounds causing different expectations for a project. Hence, individuals who come with various expectations significantly influence the success of a project. The above sentiments were shared with Tanner, (1997, p. 38) who also believed that cultural differences can generate conflicts within a project. Culture is a double-edged sword. It is the principle that creates order out of chaos, but it can also degenerate order into chaos. It could therefore be argued that culture plays a role in the success or failure of project management. Culture could be treated as a significant aspect in controlling conflicts, improving outcomes and encouraging innovations. Nguyen and Watanabe (2017) point at how diverse behaviours and expectations of project workers influence the success of a project. The above literature points out the importance of culture in the success or failure of development projects.

Barasa (2011) asserts that participatory development paradigm has increasingly been associated with people and their aspirations to make decisions affecting their lives. Central to these aspirations is their desire to plan and participate in the identification, planning and management of their needs without outside involvement. In Hebrew 10:24-25 Paul advice Christians to stir up people in their love and services for inclusivity. It reads in part. "Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works." Community participation in project planning and management is essential in enhancing inclusivity in development at the basic community level, a critical tool for sustainable development. It also promotes equity, legitimizes decision-making processes, and builds and strengthens self-determination. It also pre-disposes people to a more democratic behaviour and development. Barasa argues that participatory development by the community in project planning, management and evaluation have the potential to achieve better management practices, by achieving higher completion rates of projects and better prospects of ownership. It also has the propensity of achieving project sustainability and increased utilization rate of the project by members of the community and other benefits.

Gitau (2016) on his part argued that members' satisfaction played a major factor in church satisfaction, making people embrace the implementation of strategies, leading to loyalty among the church members. His emphasis was on a church culture that motivates its members. Paul's letter to the Ephesians talks of creating a culture that fosters intrinsic motivation in people. He reminds the Ephesians of working with enthusiasm as though they were working for the Lord rather than the people (Ephesions 6:5-9). Kanyuira (2016) asserted that culture has had a positive impact on the performance of church employees as it enhances the development of human resources in the community. These sentiments point to the view that members satisfaction and motivation are important in an institutional development.

Spurin (2000) recorded projects initiated by a missionary called Alexander in the 1970s, who wanted to plant experimental crops, including tobacco as well as cowpeas and the rearing of goats. The projects were rejected by the local community members on account of their culture and attitude. Tobacco was perceived as a drug. Cowpeas were plentiful in the villages, while goat meat was perceived as being set aside for ancestral worship. He attributes the failure of the projects to the project managers' reluctance to acknowledge people's culture. The sentiments of Spurin (2020) were shared with Ayiemba (2015) who noted that there were some taboos and customs that prevented women from engaging in some income-generating activities that could improve their standards of living, yet women headed the majority of homesteads after the death of their husbands. It was established that ignorance among the local people was a major challenge to the church. In addition, most people especially in rural areas, believe that government institutions can only provide the services they need for free. Hence, strong apathy is exhibited towards church health centres or dispensaries in some regions by the sick poor. Sometimes they would prefer travelling long distances to access government health centres to attending church health centres in the neighborhood. His work is in agreement with Ukertor (2011, p. 31), who argues that development depends on human attitudes, beliefs, practices and other behavioural patterns of community members.

Our value systems, beliefs and perceptions influence the way managers handle their finances. Ayiemba (2015) noted that there were ethical issues in the management of projects; greater efficiency in management; greater respect for social justice and the practice of solidarity (preventing corruption and defending the interest of all) which should be the guiding principle for church's development programmes, yet these principles were lacking. Although the church is generally expected to maintain a high degree of honesty, transparency and accountability in all levels of its operations, these ethical issues were found to be wanting thus putting the church's records on poverty alleviation at jeopardy. The absence of moral values and traditions in project management was a hindrance to effective prudent management of financial resources and asset disposal policies. Ayiemba (2015) further observed that the attitude and beliefs that local people cannot solve their own problem without the outside help was noted to be another overarching challenge facing the ACK in Maseno and Winam divisions in Kenya. He established that some projects started by the ACK collapsed immediately it pulls out either because of lack of funds or because of political interferences. When the church ceases to manage the project and hands them over to the community, the community members lack motivation and skills to continue with the work, repair and maintain the facility, for example a borehole.

Another issue addressed by scholars such as Walaba (2009) has to do with problems facing Christian work in Kenya, and they identify several dimensions. The most serious one is selfishness and non-involvement of the local people in the development agenda. These sentiments are in agreement with Kanyuira (2016) and Barasa (2011) about non-involvement and selfishness of community members in the affairs of the projects which sometimes is influenced by value systems. The value system in turn influences decision making, hence non-involvement of people in decision-making processes and the quality of leadership in an institution. However, none of the above writers discussed the pertinent cultural issues facing church development projects, which include nepotism and kinship ties which affect the human resource factor, financial management and leadership ties. The study assessed the extent to which nepotism, value systems and kinship ties influenced the sustenance of development projects in the ACK Maseno North Diocese that could be a factor that affected the management of development projects in ACK Maseno North Diocese.

1.2 Research Questions

The research question that guided the study was:

What are the cultural management issues affecting sustainability of development projects in ACK Maseno North Diocese?

2. Research Methodology

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods for purposes of complementarity. The locale of the study was the ACK Maseno North Diocese, which is part of the Anglican Communion with six archdeaconries, 13 deaneries, 42 parishes, 175 congregations, 45 priests, and a population of 12, 000 Anglican worshipers (http: www.Ackenya.org/diocese/maseno-north html). The Diocese also covers the Sub counties of Vihiga, Sabatia, Hamisi and Emuhaya in Vihiga County. The area of study was restricted to ACK Maseno North Diocese because the first development projects were located within its domain and received early Christian missionaries in Kenya (Walaba, 2009, p. 56).

Ten projects were selected for study. The researchers felt that the data from these ten projects could give the required information. The missionaries and later Christians who sought for donor funding founded the church projects. Though funded by various donor agencies such as the European Union, World Vision, Bread for Life and Action Aid, the projects received their funding from donors through the diocesan development office, which is their common denominator. The following projects were targeted: one theological institution, two nursery schools, one mission hospital, one mission station (Soy Farm) and five youth polytechnics. The projects traverse the two counties of Vihiga and Kakamega, which fall under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Maseno North Diocese.

2.1 Sampling Strategy

The study used cluster sampling to ensure that all projects were included in the sample. Random sampling was used to ensure that all people in the project had an equal opportunity to be selected into the sample. Questionnaires were administered to twenty respondents from each of the project centers. Six key informants were used. Three Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) of three people each totaling to nine people were administered and thirty interviews were carried out totaling to a sample of 245 respondents. The participants were selected purposely due to their active participation, knowledge and experience on the management of projects in the diocese.

2.2 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

Face validity was estimated by use of correlations between the objective and subjective items utilized in the scales. Content validity was assessed through review and verification of the literature for the items contained in the questionnaire. To ensure the reliability and validity of the research instruments, questionnaires and interview questions were first discussed with the expert in research methodology. Revisions were made on their comments and recommendations. A pilot study was conducted with managers of development projects and diocesan development officers in Eldoret Diocese in June 2023. The Diocese of Eldoret was ideal for this purpose as it had similar projects as those of Maseno North Diocese — initiated by the late Bishop Alexander Muge. During the pilot study, it was established that some projects had collapsed because of financial challenges mainly due to withholding of donor funds. The findings informed the study of challenges facing church projects. The research questions that were unclear were revised. The sequence of some questions was also revised. Access and acceptance were attained by the researcher obtaining authority from the relevant authorities, which was granted. These authorities included, the Ministry of Education (MOE), National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), as well as the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government (MICNG) in Vihiga and Kakamega Counties, in whose jurisdiction the Diocese of Maseno North falls.

2.3 Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured questionnaires, interviews and FGD guides. A questionnaire was used to gather data to allow measurement for or against a viewpoint given. Questionnaires were used to collect data from project workers, managers and ACK staff. Interview schedules were used to collect data from project workers, managers, ACK staff and BOM members. Other targeted respondents included community members, politicians, administrators as well as ACK partners. The interviews were done to gain in-depth information about management issues facing the development project in Maseno North Diocese, a key area of research focus for this study. The Participatory Approach was used in data collection. For the FGDs, the researcher noted down the frequent responses of the participants (Kombo & Tromp, 2006, p. 118). The researcher recorded key issues of the discussion, narrative report was written and enriched with quotations from key informants and other respondents. Recording using the phone was done with permission from the participants to record the discussions. The researcher played the taped discussion to note down the main themes. Background information was recorded to allow cross-referencing of information when needed.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data from the field was edited by checking completeness of the information. The information obtained was sorted out, classified and categorised into major themes. A summary of the themes was identified based on cultural issues affecting development projects in ACK Maseno North Diocese. The major themes were identified by the use of the Kwalitan computer program which helped to identify all key categories within the created codes, and then a tree structure was made to give a bird's eye view of how the categories are related to the codes and segments. Quantitative data was coded and analysed by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to obtain descriptive statistics and percentages. Data was presented through tables and percentages. Qualitative data focuses on cultural domains that shape people's worldview, which informs their behaviour, language and artefacts. It was analysed using content analysis, which helped in making valid, replicable and objective inferences about the message based on explicit rules.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues considered during the study were access, acceptance, and informed consent, privacy (anonymity and confidentiality) (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Informed consent was ascertained by informing the participants of the nature and purpose of the study, Smith and Quelch (1992) and assuring them that there were no risks involved in the study. At the beginning of the study, the participants were informed that their participation was voluntary. This ensured that the information given was correct and that the subjects were not influenced, eliminating undue pressure (real or perceived). Thereafter, upon the completion of the field work, research findings were given to some experienced researchers to assess the relevance and originality of the work.

3. Findings and Discussions

The study sought to answer the question on cultural management issues affecting sustainability of development projects in ACK Maseno North Diocese. Participants were asked to either agree or disagree on given indicators. A summary of the responses is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Issues of Culture in Management of Church Projects

Issues of Culture in the Management of church projects	**Gender**	**Response**				**Total %**
		Agree	%	Disagree	%	
Influence of kinship ties	**Male**	68	37.8	31	17.2	**100**
	Female	66	36.7	15	8.3	
Nepotism.	**Male**	70	38.9	29	16.1	**100**
	Female	52	28.9	29	16.1	
Decline of moral values	**Male**	71	39.4	28	15.6	**100**
	Female	67	37.2	14	7.8	
Belief systems	**Male**	66	36.7	33	18.3	**100**
	Female	65	36.1	16	8.9	

Source: Researcher 2016.

On the issue of culture and management of church projects, 37.8% men and 36.7% interviewed agreed that there was influence of kinship ties on project performance, while 17.2% of the men and 8.3% of the women disagreed respectively. While 38.9% of males and 28.9% of females acknowledged the existence of nepotism issues, an identical percentage (16.1%) of both genders expressed disagreement. Furthermore, 39.4% of males and 37.2% of females concurred that there had been a fall in moral standards, whilst 15.6% of males and 7.8% of females dissented. Additionally, 36.7% of males and 36.1% of females concurred that community members' belief systems significantly influenced the projects, whereas 18.3% of males and 8.9% of females expressed disagreement.

With regards to belief system, 36.7% of males and 36.1% of female agreed that there was a strong influence of belief systems of the community members on the projects while, 18.3% of male and 8.9% of female disagreed. From Table 1, the results revealed that cultural issues had a big influence on church projects as indicated by majority of the respondents.

The study findings revealed there were value systems, belief systems and kinship relationships that affected church development projects. The findings further showed that there was minimal involvement of community members in the projects. The communities believed that the projects belonged to the foreigners and that a few project workers benefited. There was indeed lack of ownership of the development projects. Eventually, the projects were looted, many projects stalled while others collapsed. In areas where people were used to receiving free services and free food, they were unwilling to undertake certain development projects. In addition, the culture of a people influenced their acceptance or rejection of the projects, for example, in some areas people were used to relieving themselves in the bushes with a belief that if they use the toilet, then they could be bewitched.

Participants reported that projects within their jurisdiction often received financial support from foreign donors. However, the study revealed that prevailing value systems influenced perceptions about these funds, with many stakeholders regarding the resources as communal and freely accessible. Consequently, parish administrators frequently utilized project funds without accountability, as few individuals were willing to sign imprest forms or acknowledge financial responsibility for borrowed funds. When questioned further, a project manager explained that members perceived the funds as "our money," thereby fostering a culture in which unearned resources were misused. This attitude, as Gasper (2004) similarly observed, reflects a tendency for individuals to value resources they have not worked for, aspiring to personal enrichment at the expense of collective goals. Gasper emphasized the importance of discipline and hard work as prerequisites for a meaningful life.

These sentiments were echoed by a community member at Soy Farm, who noted the absence of disciplinary measures to deter financial mismanagement. She rhetorically asked, "After all, how do you take your own brother or sister to court?" highlighting the cultural and relational barriers to enforcing accountability. Without strict sanctions, leaders and managers exploited project resources with impunity, particularly when protected by connections to senior church leadership. Instead of being held accountable, indisciplined managers were discreetly transferred to other parishes. This pattern was confirmed by an instructor at Nzoia Polytechnic, who observed that managers and Board of Management (BOM) members were often linked through kinship ties. Similarly, a retired chief recounted that efforts to discipline errant workers or managers were frequently dismissed as "witch-hunting" against relatives, leaving Boards unable to enforce accountability. In such contexts, kinship obligations undermined transparency and reinforced a culture of impunity in project management.

It was noted from the current study that kinship ties adversely affected the project workers and managers. Employment was based on relationships rather than skills and competences. Some workers and managers knew that they were protected by those who employed them than being guided by institutional rules and regulations. They plundered project resources with impunity, knowing that they could not be taken to court over the same. The above findings were shared by Ndegwa (2007) who argued that culture determines the way people perceive, interpret, understand, and therefore respond to new ideas, events, people and situations. For this reason, culture affected the ability of societies to create and properly manage institutions. Protection of workers and managers was against the tenets of the SMT on staffing which stipulates that leaders are trained and equipped for ministry as they become accountable to the establishments. This is supported by Nguyein and Watanabe (2017) who note that individuals who misbehave knowing that they will be protected by the management significantly influence the success of a project in a negative way.

Culture was viewed as an essential determinant of management practices where organizations are operated by multiple individuals with different backgrounds. This brought about different human behaviours and expectations from the project. In this regard, such impunity affected the financial base of the projects as well. A clergy at Maseno cited the issue of nepotism as an example of fragrant impunity in the institutions. His view was that: "Our own sons and daughters'' must become managers. Competence was thus compromised to pave way for the employment of their own sons and daughters, who were inexperienced. It was further noted that nepotism arising from kinship ties influenced the human resource factor in the recruitment of project workers. There was a notion that our own sons and daughters must be first recruited as managers, workers and even instructors irrespective of their academic qualifications. The current study established that some of the workers were not equipped with skills and knowledge as stipulated by the scientific management principle of staffing: the principle emphasizing on training leaders and equipping them for ministry. The above findings were confirmed by Sen (1997) who pointed out that the values held by society affected the economic development efforts. The above sentiments are in agreement with Mullins (2005) who observed that management and development are affected by the culture of people in any given area. A review of his work further shows that culture largely comprises habits, values, morals, ethics and norms which people identify themselves with in an organization. Therefore, the recruitment of sons and daughters who were incompetent compromised the efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services. This accounted for the failure of many projects.

An ACK partner at Maseno decried the erosion of moral values such as sacrifice in society. Projects under missionary control survived partly because missionaries emphasized certain values to their employees such as honesty, sacrifice and hard work. There was constant supervision of their work and togetherness. The unity of the Christians was held through fellowships and vibrant church services. Maseno Mission Hospital in the diocese for example, was staffed with many committed workers. Majority were volunteers and other medical personnel that never relied so much on the hospital management for their upkeep.

However, when the hospital was handed over to the local church leadership, African personnel were not ready to offer free services. Laughing, one clergy remarked, "Once you absorb me as your employee you must pay me. I have gone to school, paid fees and I have a family to feed." As a result of this attitude, the diocese and her hospitals had lost most of the highly trained and competent workers. An ACK partner observed that the Africans assumed that leaders were picked from the corporate world. As a result, Christian values started to diminish. Those posted to the project by the government had no interest in church projects where there were no salaries.

A clergy at Maseno reported that the values, attitudes and belief systems of the community members towards any project played a great role towards its operations, and eventual success or failure. He remarked, "The goodwill of members from outside the community determine whether we move as a group or not. Each community holds its own value system. Thus, the way the institution operates should reflect the community's moral values".

In the traditional African society, Africans upheld moral values and hard work. Interference with moral values had grave consequences. However, with the introduction of the money economy, any task assigned to a person has a monetary implication. Equally, hard economic times have driven most people to seek employment to meet their basic needs. The worst part is that some individuals perceive certain projects as belonging to certain people within the community. They tend to detach themselves from the affairs of the project.

Spurin (2000) concurred with the above findings and reported on a sheep and goats rearing project at Khasoko being rejected on account of religious beliefs held by the surrounding community members. Goats and sheep were regarded as animals set aside for religious purposes. The good projects with good intentions to improve on nutrition of people were rejected. The project failed to take off. Barasa (2011) shared the same sentiments and stressed on community participation. People have the desire to plan and participate in identification, planning and management of their needs without prescription. On the same note, Ukertor (2011) makes similar sentiments and explained that failure in many development projects stemmed from inadequate recognition of cultural and ethnic complexities, and lack of involvement with concerned communities. This is not in tandem with the principles of the SMT on planning. Indeed, planning helps managers in making informed decisions. In the same manner, PET stresses on building on peoples' capacity so that development rolls down to society for sustainable development. This can be achieved through all-inclusive decision making. PET further emphasizes on empowering people to take up economic development as well as involvement of the people so that they share the vision of the organization. Paul in his letter to the Philippians 4:4-5, he reminds them to be full of joy in the Lord. "Let everyone see that you are considerate in that you do." Inclusivity in the decision-making process will make people to have a sense of ownership of the project. Eventually, projects failed to take off following resistance from local community members based on their beliefs and practices.

3.1 Summary of Major Findings

The study established that values and belief systems influenced the running of projects. In addition, kinship ties influenced the human resource recruitment of project personnel. It also affected the leadership of the projects and was a hindrance to the discipline of project staff as well as recovery of the assets. The findings were in agreement with Ayiemba (2015) who noted that cases of projects being taken to some areas because the leaders happen to come from there were noted to be too common in Maseno and Winam divisions of Kisumu. He further stated that nepotism in employment, conflict of interest and sabotage in addition to other malpractices, collectively impeded on the ACK performance on poverty alleviation. Despite the expectation for the church to uphold a significant level of honesty, transparency, and accountability in all operational facets, these ethical concerns were found lacking, hence jeopardizing the church's developmental records. People's culture, values and perceptions influenced the reception or rejection of projects in the diocese. Project managers and BOMs on behalf of the church leadership failed to acknowledge people's values and belief systems. Consequently, projects failed due to resistance from the local community members based on their beliefs and practices.

Culture had a strong impact on the management of development projects. Culture through kinship and nepotism influenced the HR recruitment and staff discipline. It also influenced the employer-employee relations and the acceptance or rejection of projects. Workers recruited through kinship ties cannot hold the church and project leadership accountable for the resources. Unless people's values, norms and habits are taken into consideration, projects, however valuable they may be, will be rejected.

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Institutional Care Policy and Operation in Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine Institutional care policy and operation in Nigeria. Qualitative research method was employed in the study. Information was obtained using textbooks, published and non-published Journals, libraries etc. Based on the literature review, the findings revealed that the development, appreciation and application of children's rights have become an integral part of child protection philosophy and practice in many countries around the world. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has significant impact on child welfare policy development, standards of care, and programming related to institutional care. This framework has had and will continue to have a significant impact on the way that child protection and child welfare is practiced around the world. It has especially influenced how institutional care is implemented and the role it serves within the child welfare continuum. The study concluded that Institutions can be improved to be comparable to family living. The study recommended that Institutional care should not be the preferred option but rather the last resort. However, when it is provided as an option, there are components to that care, which should be included within the organizational and programmatic structure.

Keywords: institutional care policy, operations, application of children's rights, child protection philosophy, child welfare policy development

1. Introduction

Institutions have been one of the main placement options for orphaned, abandoned or vulnerable children (OAVC) for centuries; today, most institutionalized children live in low resource countries (Rosas & McCall, 2019). In industrialized countries, alternative care options are usually family-based (children are in some type of alternative family) and not institutional-based (children are in some type of group care); foster care, subsidized or unsubsidized kinship care, and adoption are more readily utilized. In many low resource countries in Africa, Asia and several countries in the region of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, foster care and adoption are not the main alternatives due to cultural beliefs, lack of child welfare systems, limited resources for child welfare funding, or lack of political will (Rosas & McCall, 2019; Dickens & Groza, 2014).

The term institutionalization used in this paper refers to short-term or long-term placement of a child into any non family-based care situation. Similar terms referring to institutionalization are residential care, group care, congregate care, or orphanage care. Common elements of institutionalization include care by paid, unrelated personnel living with other non-related children, children clustered by age group (i.e., homogenously), periodic transitions to new caregivers and age mates, a high child-to-caregiver ratio and lack of or limited stimulating and responsive interactions between child and caregiver (Rosas & McCall, 2019). One of the most common characteristics of institutional life is the lack of stable, long-term relationships between a child and a caregiver (Rosas & McCall, 2019).

Yet the reality is that institutional care is and for the foreseeable future will be the one of the main alternative care options for many children, particularly in low resource countries. A 2003 UNICEF report found that 143 million single orphans (only one parent died) and double orphans (both parents died) were living in 93 countries in the world (Rosas, & McCall, 2019), and eight million children are in residential care (United Nations, 2016). Many children in low resource countries with little or no child protection system are living in institutions and there is ample evidence on the proliferation of group care facilities throughout Africa (Howard, 2018). This increase in institutional care could be the result of various issues including cultural and economic barriers (Rosas & McCall, 2019), as well as the devastation caused by HIV and AIDS, chronic poverty, conflict and a myriad of other political, cultural and economic factors (Tolfree, 2015).

Based on the considerable research documenting the numerous negative effects of institutionalization, one is led to believe that components of "good institutions" must be an oxymoron. Rosenthal, Bauer, Hyden and Holley (2019) caution that the danger of improving institutional care may inadvertently strengthen an outdated and less than ideal system. Critics of institutionalization assert that children "thrive better in bad homes than in good institutions". The other side of the spectrum includes those who argue that in certain countries institutions can be a better physical environment than those provided by families. Yet it is imperative to have a pragmatist view that recognizes that institutional care, although not the ideal option for children without parental care, must be acknowledged as a reality and therefore be improved upon in the short-term. The long-term goal should absolutely be a system built on family- and community-based services where institutionalization does not have to exist but, until that occurs concurrent work to improve the conditions of institutional care using evidence-based guidance on the essential components of a "good institution," is a must, especially for children for whom it is the only option. Many high resource countries took several decades to develop functioning family-based care systems, and it will most likely take low-resource countries a significant amount of time as well. This study, while using a pragmatic framework to discuss improving institutional care, leads us down a precarious path. There is a real danger that attempts to modernize child welfare systems to be family-based will be ignored or cast aside as efforts and resources are allocated toward improving group care. From a systemic perspective, the longer an institution runs in a community, the less likely it is to close or change. It becomes a major employer; it removes from the public eye the plight of OAVC, and takes on a culture and life of its own. It is perpetuated by foreigners who are willing to donate for bricks and mortar but not sponsor a child or a family to live in the community.

2. Literature Review

The development, appreciation and application of children's rights have become an integral part of child protection philosophy and practice in many countries around the world. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has had significant impact on child welfare policy development, standards of care, and programming related to institutional care. Many of the standards related to institutional care that have been developed in the past two decades have been based on the UNCRC and the articles therein (Browne & Mulheir, 2017). The Convention was designed to protect children's rights by setting standards in the areas of health, education, protection, and legal services. This framework has had and will continue to have a significant impact on the way that child protection and child welfare is practiced around the world. It has especially influenced how institutional care is implemented and the role it serves within the child welfare continuum.

An essential component of quality institutional care is public policy that establishes professional standards for both services and personnel. Professional standards or guidelines set the type and quality of services to be delivered to the child by the social service agency, in a child-centered/child rights framework. Standards should exist for all alternative care placements within a continuum of care; including family preservation and support, kinship care, temporary foster care, domestic adoption, intercountry adoption and institutionalization. Personnel standards establish professional employment requirements (knowledge, values and skills) necessary to perform the duties with the highest level of expertise. Standards reflect and promote evidence-based child development strategies and child care practices. Standards provide goals for the continuing improvement of services to children and their families. Standards promote nationwide consistency. They serve as a resource for people in other fields who are concerned with the care and protection of children — legislators, judges, attorneys, educators, health and mental health professionals, law enforcement personnel, opinion shapers in the media, child advocates, faith leaders, and the general public. Standards provide the basis for licensing and accreditation nationwide. From a rights-based perspective, children living outside of parental care have the right to be cared for by qualified personnel who adhere to standards that are based on ensuring quality and conditions of care are conducive to maximize a child's development (United Nations, 2016).

A best practice model for developing standards is to work at the Ministry or central authority level that is responsibility for the group care of children. This is not as simple as it appears. Typically, children of certain ages or children with different disabilities are under the care and management of different authorities, as was the case in Romania in the early 1990s and in the Ukraine. In order to develop standards, it is better for all the children in institutions to be under one government authority. When this is not possible, and standards are developed for children only under one authority, it creates strife and competition between authorities. This derail attempts to improve quality care. Such a situation currently exists in Ethiopia where accreditation of institutions, supervision and oversight of those institutions are divided among three different government bodies (Ministry of Justice, Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs), making it difficult for effective monitoring and evaluation of institutional care and challenging the development of comprehensive standards (Family Health International, et al, 2019).

3. Accreditation and Licensing

Developing standards is only the first step. Concurrent with developing standards must be a national study of institutions. The country must know how many institutions they have, where they are located, and how many children are in each institution. A recent example of this type of study is the work of Perez (2018) in Guatemala. Up until this study, there were estimations but no specifics. Even in the former communist countries of Romania and Ukraine, getting the specifics about children in institutional care was a moving target because not all locations were known and numbers were manipulated based on who was asking and how the information was to be used. If it was the government in order to allocate funding, numbers were higher. If it was an investigation, the numbers were lower. In Romania when the country moved to foster care, court orders were required in some locations to remove children from institutions and only with the authority of the police were the exact number of children discovered.

Once a country has standards, they must move toward accrediting and licensing institutions to care for children. Accreditation requires that the institution document, in writing, how they meet or exceed the standard with the evidence to support their claim. Once a written report is received, a review panel of professionals with no ties to institutional staff or political decision-makers should review the report and schedule a visit. The visit is designed to provide further evidence of compliance with stated standards, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. For example, if the audit of compliance asserts that staff is trained every month, records of the topic of training, who was trained, who attended the training, and evaluations of the training must be on file. Cases should be randomly pulled to ascertain that all the assessment and planning documents are in place, signed and dated. A predetermined threshold or minimum set of requirements must be met in order to accredit and license an institution. If they don't meet the threshold, they are not accredited. A second review can be scheduled in 30 or 60 days to see if the institution can meet standards; if it cannot, it should be closed. If it can meet standards, then routine re-accreditation and licensing should be established on a yearly or bi-annual basis, utilizing established standards and both unannounced and announced inspections and monitoring of the quality of care.

4. Inspections and Monitoring Quality of Care

Setting up a system which is able to monitor implementation and adherence to national standards is just as important as developing standards. Ethiopia is a good case in point. The National Guidelines for Alternative Childcare were developed in 2002. The standards were based on the UNCRC and the development of those standards was viewed as a positive step towards unifying good practice, especially within child residential institutions. Unfortunately, the standards have not been formally approved by the Government, and an accompanying monitoring system is not in based to ensure that standards are adhered to. A recent study conducted by Family Health International and UNICEF found that the majority of child care institutions were not even aware of the existence of the standards. What may be perceived as a positive step forward in developing standards was severely limited by lack of approval, dissemination and inexistence of necessary monitoring and evaluation systems (Family Health International et al, 2019).

One of the major concerns that should be dealt with in the creation of standards and monitoring processes is child abuse within institutional care. Children in care are already in a vulnerable state when they enter the institution. Children have been abandoned, neglected, spent years in institutional care, or in some cases have been living on the streets or in child-headed households. Children in institutional care are especially vulnerable to physical punishment from staff, bullying from other residents, and sexual exploitation (Gavrilovici & Groza, 2017). Any mistreatment negatively shapes the environment for all residents whether or not they are a victim of abuse or neglect (Groze, 2020). If the mistreatment is a pattern, it undermines the ability of institution to carry out its mission and goals (Sundrum, 2016). One problem in determining the incidence and prevalence of mistreatment in institutional settings is the lack of uniform definitions of what constitutes abuse or neglect. A second problem is even if maltreatment occurs there is no reporting or investigation system in most countries. Fear of reprisal is a major deterrent for staff to report problems, and most governments lack an adequate system for child maltreatment within the family, so a system for documenting, investigating and remedying maltreatment within institutions is even less likely to exist. If there is no adequate system to respond to the problem, there can never be an accurate assessment of scope and depth of the problem. There can also never be a solution to the problem. So, the most vulnerable OAVC are made even more vulnerable.

It is for this reason that any country using group care as a major child welfare intervention needs to develop definitions of mistreatment. Sexual abuse means any sexual activity prohibited by law, including sexual exploitation—the use of a child by a person responsible for her or his health or welfare for personal gratification—or procuring or knowingly causing or permitting any person to sexually abuse or exploit the child, including other children. Neglect means the willful act of omission which directly results in the child suffering or being exposed to risk of suffering physical or emotional injury. This includes but is not limited to the failure to provide food, clothing, appropriate shelter, bedding, or medical care to the child. Inappropriate treatment means harm or threatened harm to a child's safety, health or welfare which is caused by violating state, local or program rules, laws, policies, procedures or statues. It includes the failure to provide care for the child in manner consistent with universal professional standards and practices, including anything that violates the right of a child that is not classified as abuse or neglect, that injures a child or puts a child at-risk for harm (Groze, 2020). Inappropriate treatment is unique to the institutional setting, adding the additional level of expectation for those working in these settings.

5. Structural Characteristics

A common trait of institutions is homogenous groups, specifically children clustered together based on age (Rosas & McCall, 2019). In Russia and Romania, institutions were divided into age groups. Children aged 0-3 were in one orphanage; ages 4-7 were in another orphanage; and finally from age 7-18 were in another institution (Groza, 2020). This homogeneity is detrimental to children and their development for several reasons. The first is that the grouping together of children by age groups and then transferring them to another institution creates a scenario whereby children have to leave familiar caregivers and surroundings. Secondly, grouping homogenously frequently results in little to no individualized attention from caregivers (Rosas & McCall, 2019). As indicated above, institutions across the globe have common characteristics (Rosas & McCall, 2019) including large group sizes, high child: caregiver ratios, homogeneous age and disability groupings, many and frequently changing caregivers, caregiver work schedules in which individuals work long hours and then are off for 2-3 days, and transitioning children from one ward or institution to another when they reach certain milestones of development (e.g., crawling, walking, social play). The research literature on non-residential early care and education suggests that each of these characteristics is associated with poorer development in young children. In addition, there is often an "institutional mentality" in which caregivers do not get close to children and carry out their caregiving duties in a rather perfunctory, businesslike manner with little in the way of warm, caring, sensitive, and contingently responsive interaction with children. This set of characteristics means that children have little consistency in their caregivers or in the way adults respond to them and have little opportunity to experience typical adult-child interactions and certainly not relationships with caregivers. Some have speculated that these characteristics may be among the most corrosive aspects of institutional care for children's development.

There is some evidence that these characteristics can be changed to provide more consistent care and better social-emotional caregiver-child interactions, and such changes can be maintained on the institution's original budget in some cases. For example, the St. Petersburg-USA Orphanage Research Team (2018) changed essentially all of these characteristics in an institution for children birth to four years and produced very substantial improvements in children's physical and behavioral development. Specifically, group sizes were reduced from 10-14 to 5-7 by physically dividing each living room in half (the 10-14 children still all slept in one room). Two primary caregivers and a substitute were assigned to a subgroup who worked five days a week in staggered shifts so that one was present during nearly all of the children's waking hours. Groups were made heterogeneous by age, and transitions to new wards were stopped. Groups were also integrated with respect to the disability status of children. A family hour in the morning and in the afternoon was established in which no visitors (including specialists) were allowed, and children and caregivers were to be together. In addition, caregivers were trained to provide sensitive, responsive care, especially during routine caregiving duties. The results showed that typically developing children increased in Battelle total DQs from an average of 57 to 92 = 45 DQ points, perhaps the largest increase reported for any intervention in the literature. Children also increased in height, weight, and chest circumference, more children showed organized attachments to their caregiver, and children displayed more mature social and emotional behaviors with caregivers. In Eritrea, Wolff & Fesseha (2019) designed an intervention to restructure an institution so that children were mixed by age and group size was reduced. A consistent primary caregiver was assigned to live in each room, and two assistants were permanently assigned to each group: similar to the model utilized by SOS Kinderdorf. Results were mixed. On the one hand, the number of behavioral symptoms decreased. On the other hand, mood disturbances such as depression and anxiety were more prevalent. The problem in interpreting this study is to know whether the effect was due to changing the mix of ages or changing a caregiver. Still, the combination of age differences and a consistent caregiver did have some positive effects.

6. Personnel Standards

Consistent caregivers should be evaluated, trained and monitored by appropriate regulating authorities with a special focus on positive care-giving, provision of individualized attention, and early cognitive stimulation of children. Article 73 of the UN Guidelines for the Appropriate Use and Conditions of Alternative Care for Children states that special attention should be paid to the quality of alternative care provision; both in residential and family-based care, particularly in regard to the professional skills, selection, training and supervision of carers. Their role and functions should be clearly defined and clarified with respect to those of the child's parents or legal guardians.

For optimal developmental outcomes, children need consistent caregivers that are trained and monitored by appropriate regulating authorities. There are challenges to ensuring professional, well-trained staff in low-resource countries. This was the case in Guatemala where Perez (2018) found that 80% of children's shelters operate in accordance with available resources and do not guarantee that ideal, qualified personnel will be present to provide services to institutionalized children. For infants and toddlers, staff training resulting in changed behavior for as little as 5 minutes a day for 5 days a week from 1 to 6 weeks has a significant positive impact immediately on children's development, cognition or health, staff training and changes in behavior may also have advantages at least up to 6 months after the intervention. The aforementioned Rosas & McCall study showed that if these minimal improvements in staff interaction are stopped, the positive effects displayed by children will not continue, emphasizing the need for consistency and continuity of positive caregiver interactions (Rosas & McCall, 2019). Even if staff training does not improve child health and developmental outcomes, it might prevent children from getting worse.

7. Programming Standards

Any child welfare service must begin with a good child assessment; any ongoing service must have continuous, regular child assessment in multiple domains of functioning. Regardless of the reason for a child to enter the child protection system, before any long-term decisions can be made, assessments must be completed and recorded in the case file. Of course, this assumes that every child has a file. At a minimum, there should be a medical evaluation (physical exam) by licensed medical staff, developmental assessment by child development specialists, social history by trained and accredited social workers, and if the child is school-age, an educational evaluation by a professionally credentialed educator. Photos should be taken of the child and if any relative is available, a comprehensive family history should be obtained with the names, addresses, and phone of all relatives recorded. Assessments should be updated monthly for infants, quarterly for toddlers, and every six months to a year for older children. The reassessment should include the child's health, development, behavior patterns, social functioning, psychological/psychiatric screening and educational performance (if appropriate). These assessments and re-assessments allow for more appropriate placement, better monitoring of children and for the early identification of problems. A report from each assessment, summarizing strengths as well as child's needs, must be written.

Due to the high risk for attachment disorders and disturbances in children from institutions, attachment assessments and early care and intervention to promote attachment are critical. Attachment may be a pivotal developmental foundation on which many aspects of emotional and behavioral functioning are based. Children raised in institutions have fewer opportunities to develop selective attachments. Of most concern are indications that children in institutions are at greater risk for disorganized attachment, and disorganized attachment is a serious risk factor for later problems. Programming must be altered to allow children to develop and maintain a selective attachment with at least one primary caregiver.

8. Case Management

Case management or case planning should begin at the earliest possible time and be comprised of meeting both long-term and short-term needs based on the child assessment and congruent with the best interest of the individual child. Case management has the main objective of getting a child into family-like, safe and permanent care in the least amount of time. Article 25 of the UNCRC states that children placed outside their own family are entitled to periodic review of all aspects of their placement. This is vital to ensure that the child's best interest is being pursued. Good case planning is a critical component of keeping institutionalization temporary; without it, children are much more likely to remain institutionalized long-term (Perez, 2018). Determining the eligibility and appropriateness of alternative care options for an individual child should be addressed within the case plan which is updated a minimum of every six months. Including alternative care options within an institution either as part of the institution's own programming or in collaboration with other government and nongovernmental organizations is essential.

9. Cost of Institutionalization

Community-based orphan support programs are cost-effective as they enable large numbers of orphans to be supported within their own communities. In the CEE/CIS region, institutional care is twice as expensive as the most costlier community residential/small group homes; three to five times as expensive as foster care (depending on whether it is provided professionally or voluntarily), and around eight times more expensive than providing social services-type support to vulnerable families. In Africa, Perez (2018) found that institutional care is nearly nine times more expensive than community-based care (Desmond & Gow, 2021). The cost per visit of a child is US$1.55, much lower than the US$14 to $38 per visit reported in some Zambian home care programs (Chela *et al*., 1994). This is largely because visits are carried out by volunteers who live in the same communities as the beneficiaries. Skeels (2016) compared 13 children removed from group care (age 7-30 month; IQ ranged from 35 to 89) into foster care to a matched group of 12 children (age 12 to 22 months; IQ ranged from 50 to 103) who remained in an orphanage for the mentally handicapped. Two year later, those in foster care gained 28.5 IQ points while those who remained in orphanage care lost 26.2 IQ points. After 21 years, all cases were located. Those raised in family care completed a median grade of 12 while those in group care had a median grade of three. The cost of care for children in group care was five times the cost for children in family care.

10. Research Methodology

Qualitative research method was employed in the study. Information was obtained using textbooks, published and non-published Journals, libraries etc.

11. Findings

The development, appreciation and application of children's rights have become an integral part of child protection philosophy and practice in many countries around the world. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has had significant impact on child welfare policy development, standards of care, and programming related to institutional care. The Convention was designed to protect children's rights by setting standards in the areas of health, education, protection, and legal services. This framework has had and will continue to have a significant impact on the way that child protection and child welfare is practiced around the world. It has especially influenced how institutional care is implemented and the role it serves within the child welfare continuum. From a rights-based perspective, children living outside of parental care have the right to be cared for by qualified personnel who adhere to standards that are based on ensuring quality and conditions of care are conducive to maximize a child's development.

12. Conclusion

Institutions can be improved to be comparable to family living. There is growing global consensus on the need to promote family-based alternatives to institutional care for children and adolescents. Yet, in the interim, institutional care will be a reality for many low resource countries still working within inadequate or antiquated legal frameworks related to alternative care, cultural attitudes which at times promulgate only the benefits of institutional care and not the negative effects, and a donor community which has been slow to recognize that providing funds for family and community-based care is more cost effective and beneficial to the majority of OVAC than institutional care. Recognizing these factors does not justify institutionalization; rather, it is acknowledgement of a current dynamic which must be dealt with in the longer-term goal of promoting family-based care as priority within the continuum of care. Therefore, a pragmatist approach includes the development of a child welfare strategy with both short-term and long-term plans that include a continuum of care approach with the bulk of care options being family-based. Institutional care should be considered only in exceptional and emergency circumstances and until a system of family-based alternative care can be established.

13. Recommendations

Institutional care should not be the preferred option but rather the last resort. However, when it is provided as an option, there are components to that care, which should be included within the organizational and programmatic structure. The components are vital to children's physical, psychosocial and intellectual development and wellbeing. Institutional care without them is irreparably harmful.

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The Origin, Objectives, and Challenges of the European Union's Concept of Digital Sovereignty

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of intense strategic competition between China and the United States and the profound restructuring of global digital governance, the European Union (EU) has proposed the concept of "digital sovereignty" to seize strategic initiative and safeguard its core interests. The EU's digital sovereignty emerged from a position of relative digital incapacity, manifesting strategic anxiety under the dual pressure of two technological superpowers, as well as internal digital fragmentation. At its core, it emphasizes a trinity of technological autonomy, data autonomy, and institutional autonomy. Guided by this vision, the EU has developed a multi-layered strategy that integrates internal and external policies across multiple institutional circles. This includes a "digital single market" strategy as the inner core, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Gaia-X project as pioneering regulatory instruments in the middle circle, and the European Chips Act and Artificial Intelligence Act as specialized initiatives on the outer edge. However, the construction of EU digital sovereignty faces severe domestic coordination hurdles due to the internal "digital divide" among member states, alongside a strategic dilemma of "de-dependence vs. re-dependence" under US-China competition. Ultimately, the EU's endeavors represent a novel attempt at building sovereignty in the digital era by a regional integration organization, offering critical insights and points of reference for global digital governance and China's own digital sovereignty strategies.

Keywords: European Union, digital sovereignty, global digital governance, US-China-EU competition

1. Introduction

In 2017, French President Emmanuel Macron delivered a speech at the Sorbonne University titled "Initiative for Europe: A Sovereign, United, and Democratic Europe," where he first put forward the concept of a "Sovereign Europe." One of the critical paths to achieving "European Sovereignty" was identified as leading the global digital transformation and promoting a governance model that combines digital innovation with strict regulation worldwide. Following the institutional transition of the European Commission in 2019, "digital transformation" became one of the two core policy pillars initiated by the new Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen, alongside the "green transition" which itself heavily relies on digital infrastructure. In the official documents of previous Commissions, the term "sovereignty" was rarely mentioned due to its inherent logical tension with the process of European regional integration. However, since the von der Leyen Commission took office, this landscape has changed significantly. The word "sovereignty" has witnessed an exponential increase in frequency across various policy texts, and derivative concepts such as "technological sovereignty," "data sovereignty," and "digital sovereignty" have emerged sequentially, becoming central keywords in the EU's governance discourse. As the core hallmark of the modern nation-state since the Westphalian system in 1648, the sudden resurgence of "sovereignty" as the EU's new policy favorite is by no means accidental. It represents both a deep strategic reassessment of the EU's self-positioning and development path in its integration process, and a proactive choice to pursue strategic autonomy and defend its core interests amid the prominent backdrop of US-China strategic competition. Therefore, a systematic examination of the theoretical core, practical trajectories, and development dilemmas of EU digital sovereignty can not only accurately grasp its essence and evolutionary logic, but also provide critical reference and insights for strategic alignment, risk management, and international cooperation in China's own digitalization process.

2. The Context and Origin of EU Digital Sovereignty

In 1996, John Perry Barlow, a famous American hacker and digital rights advocate, published his monumental "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace" at the Davos Forum, stating: "Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather." At that time, cyberspace, as an emerging sphere of human activity, was highly anticipated to shake off physical constraints and fulfill the ideal of absolute liberty. Network sovereignty was deemed impossible because the internet could directly bypass traditional mechanisms of state control. However, much like the broader transition from idealism to realism within international relations theory, cyberspace gradually revealed its darker facets. Proliferating issues such as cyber fraud, online harassment, and massive data breaches made people in the 21st century realize that digital space is not a detached utopia, but a domain deeply rooted in physical infrastructure. Without robust normative guidelines, catastrophic events threatening human survival and societal order are inevitable. The three-dimensional characteristics of digital space—namely the immediacy of virtual interaction, the boundlessness of data flows, and the transnational nature of infrastructure—confront states not only with the challenge of maintaining exclusive jurisdiction, but also with the necessity to re-establish their authority and positioning in a highly interconnected, blurry-bounded ecosystem.

The EU recognized as early as the mid-1990s that cyberspace was not a lawless terra nullius, but a novel public sphere requiring public authority and regulatory governance. It proactively categorized cyberspace within the scope of public governance under state jurisdiction and drafted matching regulatory instruments. In 1995, the EU enacted the Data Protection Directive (Directive 95/46/EC), marking the first regional consolidation of basic principles for personal data protection, effectively extending the right to privacy into the digital domain. It unified rules across member states regarding data collection, processing, and cross-border transfers. However, because digital infrastructure and regulatory capacities were still in their infancy and distinct national "digital borders" had not fully materialized, regulations during this period remained largely framework-oriented and principled. Specifically, early EU cyberspace governance focused on rights recognition and risk prevention rather than structured institutional layouts for cross-border data routing, platform liabilities, or comprehensive cybersecurity, leaving concrete legislative execution to individual member states. The Directive utilized a harmonized legislative model and advocated independent data protection authorities, which offered strong advantages in safeguarding data subjects' rights but occasionally compromised data liquidity and market efficiency. Nevertheless, against the backdrop of rapid technological iterations and an expanding digital economy, the normative digital philosophies pioneered by the EU in privacy and data protection inevitably generated global ripples, a phenomenon deeply structurally rooted in the EU's geopolitical configuration.

2.1 Inadequacy of Domestic Digital Capacities

The exposure of the NSA's "PRISM" program revealed that the United States government had been systematically wiretapping European political leaders, followed by WikiLeaks disclosures that the US had monitored French presidents over extended periods. In 2021, Danish media exposed that the NSA utilized Denmark's defense intelligence pipelines to access domestic networks between 2012 and 2014, intercepting text messages and call logs of senior officials from Germany, France, Norway, and Sweden. Leaked US military intelligence in 2022 further confirmed ongoing surveillance targeting global leaders and allies, including UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the South Korean President, the Israeli Prime Minister, and the Ukrainian President. This persistent series of wiretapping scandals underscored a sobering reality for the EU: its critical communication nodes and data infrastructures had long been dependent on American tech conglomerates. Concurrently, the EU faced the continuous intrusion of US extraterritorial "long-arm jurisdiction" and structural inconsistencies between US and European privacy frameworks. This double pressure squeezed the EU out of competitive spaces in cross-border data flows and digital security, rendering its sovereign digital walls fragile. This vulnerability in political, economic, and security terms serves as the primary realistic imperative driving the EU to accelerate its digital sovereignty strategies.

2.2 Strategic Anxiety Intensified by US-China Competition

Amidst the global restructuring of the digital economy and technological governance systems, the digital order anchored by the United States and the meteoric rise of China's digital economy have formed a double-squeeze scenario, trapping the EU in a profound fear of marginalization. Backed by first-mover technical advantages and transnational platform monopolies, the US has long dictated global digital rules. Currently, American tech giants like Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and Apple command the apex of the global internet value chain, possessing the richest data assets, most expansive consumer markets, and most potent digital capabilities. Conversely, China has leveraged its late-mover advantages to cultivate domestic internet titans, seizing vanguard status in specific advanced technology segments. In sharp contrast, the EU finds itself a “toddler” in digital market capitalization but a “giant” in data regulation. Positioned on the periphery of the commercial digital economy, the EU hosts virtually no massive proprietary digital platforms, accounting for a meager 4% of the market value of the world’s 70 largest digital platforms (while the US and China command 90%). However, it excels at defining legislative boundaries. The EU continuously projects the “Brussels Effect” in digital regulation, whereby its unilateral market rules become de facto global standards through compliance by multinational entities seeking market access. By establishing digital sovereignty, the EU aims to forge an independent path between the US and China, asserting itself as the third pole in global tech governance to avoid subjection in the digital age.

2.3 Fragmentation of the Internal Digital Market

As the world’s most sophisticated regional integration organization, the EU suffers from severe systemic fragmentation within its internal digital domain, which severely hampers its collective digital economy and sovereign cohesion. Articulating digital rules has historically been fragmented: member states enacted disparate data protection, platform regulation, and digital tax laws tailored to localized interests and asymmetric developmental stages. Even following the execution of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which harmonized data protection rules, pronounced national variations persist regarding digital service oversight, ethical AI frameworks, and cross-border data flow mechanisms. Furthermore, owing to lagging digital infrastructure investments in certain member states that fall below vanguard international benchmarks, the EU has struggled to solidify an integrated, open, and massive unified digital market, prompting an urgent demand for centralized harmonization.

3. The Conceptual Triad of Digital Sovereignty

Although digital sovereignty has risen to become the cornerstone of the EU’s contemporary policy agenda, it has lacked a singular, universally codified official definition. In September 2020, Thierry Breton, the EU Commissioner for Internal Market, observed that “European digital sovereignty is based on three inseparable pillars: computing power, control over data, and secure connectivity,” emphasizing that “Europe must now take its strategic destiny into its own hands to protect its sovereignty. In an increasingly competitive world, the battle for autonomy is in full swing. Faced with the ‘tech war’ waged by the US and China, Europe must lay the foundations for its sovereignty for the next 20 years.” Synthesizing the EU’s institutional practice and governance logic, the concept of digital sovereignty can be deconstructed into three interconnected, progressive dimensions that collectively form its sovereign architecture:

First, Technological Autonomy. This demands that the EU possesses the capabilities to independently develop, deploy, and utilize critical digital technologies, thereby mitigating the monopolistic dominance of American and Chinese tech conglomerates. This requires escalating R&D investments, incubating domestic technological innovation ecosystems, and commanding the discourse on technical standards, ensuring that the EU retains control over its developmental path rather than suffering strategic bottlenecks caused by external supply dependencies.

Second, Data Autonomy. The core objective is to master data, the fundamental production factor of the digital economy. This entails dictating who determines how data flows, how it is processed and commercialized, and how security architectures are configured. Through legislative frameworks, the restriction of cross-border data transfers, and the creation of localized European data spaces, the EU seeks to shield internal data assets from leakages, illegal commercial exploitation, or unauthorized foreign state access, thereby protecting its economic and security interests.

Third, Institutional Autonomy. This reflects the EU’s capability to independently formulate digital governance rules and construct regional regulatory architectures rooted in its normative values. The EU seeks to align internal digital rules, dissolve fragmented institutional barriers, and export its regulatory models globally, carving out global digital rules aligned with its interests and securing dominant discourse power in international standard-setting bodies.

4. Policies and Implementation Pathways of EU Digital Sovereignty

To translate these conceptual goals into practice, the EU has engineered a multi-layered, comprehensive policy framework spanning macro strategic roadmaps to micro legislative acts, covering internal market integration and local technical cultivation. The underlying policy logic is to “dismantle before building, while cultivating internal strength and external reach.” On one hand, it seeks to eliminate internal fragmentation and external technological dependencies; on the other, it aims to construct digital governance rules and technological systems that serve its own strategic interests.

4.1 The Digital Single Market Strategy

Launched in 2015, the Digital Single Market (DSM) strategy constitutes the foundational architecture of EU digital sovereignty. By facilitating the free movement of data and services and dismantling technical standard barriers among member states, the strategy aims to establish a unified, open internal digital market. On this basis, consolidating resources to amplify the overall competitiveness of the European digital economy serves as the primary task, laying the economic foundation for digital sovereignty.

The DSM strategy rests on three primary pillars: first, ensuring the free movement of digital services by harmonizing e-commerce rules, copyright protections, and consumer safety standards, enabling digital enterprises to operate seamlessly across all member states; second, ensuring the free flow of non-personal data by removing localized data localization barriers while implementing unified data protection rules to balance commercial flows with individual privacy; third, accelerating digital technology innovation and deployment by standardizing network criteria, investing heavily in digital infrastructure, and fostering a region-wide innovation ecosystem.

4.2 The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Entering into force in 2016, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) represents a crowning achievement in the EU's pursuit of data autonomy, standing as the world's most stringent and influential data protection framework. Its central tenet dictates that personal data is strictly prohibited from arbitrary cross-border export. Beyond saddling data controllers with rigorous obligations and introducing astronomical fines for non-compliance, the regulation features expansive extraterritorial jurisdiction. Through this architecture, the EU created a comprehensive codification of data privacy, effectively exporting its normative privacy values globally to serve as the baseline compliance architecture for global data governance.

The implementation of GDPR has triggered profound global ripples. By January 2023, out of 194 countries globally, more than 130 had enacted dedicated data and privacy protection legislation. Approximately 57% of Asian nations and 61% of African nations passed data protection acts modeled on or influenced by GDPR, including South Korea's Personal Information Protection Act (Amendment), Japan's Act on the Protection of Personal Information (Amendment), and Singapore's Personal Data Protection Act (Amendment). To retain access to the lucrative EU market, multinational corporations have been compelled to overhaul their data architectures, setting up globally unified compliance systems. An estimated 78% of US corporations conducted GDPR gap assessments and revised their privacy policies, with 27% spending over $500,000 to achieve full compliance and avert prohibitive penalties. This manifestation of the "Brussels Effect" demonstrates that the EU, without relying on military or economic coercion, successfully exported its data governance rules globally using its massive market scale and stringent regulations, establishing preliminary institutional autonomy over data.

4.3 The Gaia-X Project: Building Autonomous Digital Infrastructure

Initiated in 2021 under the leadership of Germany and France, the Gaia-X project represents a focal point in the EU's quest for technological autonomy. Operating under the core philosophy of "controlled data sharing," its objective is to engineer a federated European cloud architecture based on open standards, secure trust, unified identity authentication, and transparent data spaces. By interconnecting decentralized data centers across the continent into a trusted, integrated European cloud network, Gaia-X aims to dismantle the monopolistic grip of American hyperscalers and ensure that digital infrastructure remains structurally autonomous and controllable. Utilizing a federated development model, Gaia-X aggregates participation from EU governments, private enterprises, and scientific research institutes. Currently boasting over 300 members, the project has realized its initial milestone targets up to 2025, mapping out the core architecture, connecting cross-border data centers, and launching foundational tools for identity management and secure data exchange pipelines.

4.4 Intensive Legislative Proliferation: Perfecting the Sovereign Legal Architecture

Between 2023 and 2024, the EU sequentially introduced the European Chips Act and the Artificial Intelligence Act, signaling that its digital sovereignty architecture has advanced into a phase of precise execution and comprehensive mobilization. These specialized legislative frameworks target two frontier technological domains—semiconductors and artificial intelligence—using statutory mechanisms to define developmental benchmarks, allocate state subsidies, and outline regulatory boundaries, thereby reinforcing the legal fabric of digital sovereignty.

The core objective of the European Chips Act is to bolster the EU's domestic supply security and technical competitiveness in semiconductor ecosystems. The act mobilizes over €43 billion in public and private capital to fund chip R&D, manufacturing facilities, and supply chain diversification, aiming to elevate the EU's share of global semiconductor production to 20% by 2030 while breaking technological ceilings in advanced node processing and chip design architectures. Funding is directed into three strategic avenues: first, driving R&D through the creation of the "Chips for Europe Initiative," which subsidizes universities and research labs; second, scaling up domestic manufacturing by providing investment subsidies of up to 20% for building or expanding fabrication plants to attract global foundries; third, strengthening supply chain resilience by engineering a semiconductor monitoring mechanism and establishing strategic stockpiles to buffer against external disruptions.

The Artificial Intelligence Act stands as the world's first comprehensive, omnibus regulatory code for AI, embodying the EU's dual logic of balancing market development with strict normative oversight. The act institutes a tiered, risk-based regulatory matrix: high-risk AI applications (such as deployments in healthcare, education, critical infrastructure, and financial scoring) face rigorous market entry compliance, requiring exhaustive pre-deployment risk assessments, strict data governance, guaranteed algorithmic traceability, clear explainability, and continuous human oversight; medium-risk AI systems (such as facial recognition or emotion analysis) are subject to strict transparency obligations, mandating clear disclosure to end-users; low-risk AI systems (such as entertainment or administrative tools) enjoy light-touch regulation to stimulate market innovation. Crucially, the act enforces absolute prohibitions on AI systems that engage in cognitive behavioral manipulation, untargeted biometric mass surveillance, or predictive policing, firmly defending the normative red lines of European values.

5. Contemporary Challenges to EU Digital Sovereignty

Despite rolling out a robust suite of policy instruments and achieving notable preliminary outcomes, the EU's quest for digital sovereignty faces formidable domestic and external obstacles. Externally, it is subjected to intense competitive pressures from the US and China; internally, deep structural "digital divides" among member states hamper collective synergy, frequently forcing the EU into positions of re-dependence. The road to genuine digital sovereignty remains long and arduous.

5.1 The Internal Digital Divide

The EU comprises 27 sovereign member states with vastly divergent economic and technological capacities. Despite deepening regional integration, internal "digital divides" remain acute, acting as a primary domestic check on the synchronized execution of digital sovereignty strategies. This gap spans digital infrastructure, industrial scale, innovation capabilities, and societal digital literacy, causing uneven policy implementation and diluting collective strategic efficiency. Regarding infrastructure, the EU's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2022 report highlighted that corporate adoption of advanced technologies like AI and Big Data across the EU remains low, with systemic shortages in advanced digital skills capping future growth prospects and widening regional disparities. Nations like Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden rank as digital frontrunners. In 2021, while 54% of the aggregate EU population possessed basic digital skills, this figure dropped to 29% in Romania, compared to 80% in Finland. Similarly, while 55% of EU small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) achieved baseline digital intensity, Sweden recorded 86%, whereas Romania and Bulgaria registered the lowest metrics. Furthermore, stark divides persist between urban hubs and rural zones within individual member states. In 2021, the urban-rural broadband disparity reached nearly 30% across the union; rural broadband coverage exceeded 90% in the Netherlands but hovered around 20% in Greece. This infrastructural asymmetry leads to uneven regional economic development, preventing the Digital Single Market from fully materializing—enterprises in lagging zones struggle to digitize, and unified regulatory rules face friction during local enforcement.

In terms of human capital, citizens' digital literacy varies significantly. According to official Eurostat indicators up to 2023, a massive 46-percentage-point gap in basic digital skills exists between individuals with higher education (80%) and those with low or no formal qualifications (34%). This gap is most pronounced in Portugal (66 points), Greece (63 points), and Malta (59 points), contrasting sharply with minimal gaps in Estonia (12 points), Finland (14 points), and Lithuania (22 points). This disparity caps the consumption potential of the digital market and weakens societal support for digital sovereignty policies—in low-literacy regions, citizens show limited comprehension of or interest in data privacy or algorithmic transparency, occasionally resisting regulatory compliance. Moreover, cultural differences and conflicting national priorities generate political friction when unifying governance rules. This internal divide breeds a Matthew Effect: digitally advanced member states possess the capital and political will to rapidly advance sovereignty goals, while lagging nations fall further behind, fracturing policy outcomes and undercutting the EU's collective global competitiveness. Rectifying this requires massive internal resource rebalancing and delicate interest-compromise mechanisms.

5.2 Strategic Dilemmas Amidst US-China Bipolar Competition

In the global digital landscape, the US and China have formed a powerful bipolar competitive dynamic. Caught in the middle, the EU faces severe external compression, falling into a complex dilemma of "de-dependence vs. re-dependence" that represents its most severe external challenge.

The EU-US relationship embodies a complex, dual-character dynamic of "allies and competitors," which complicates the EU's pursuit of digital sovereignty. Ideologically and normatively, the US and EU share a Western value system, maintaining close arrangements in intelligence sharing and technical standards. The

US-led NATO framework provides the bedrock of European security, and European regulators frequently draw on US market experiences. However, in commercial digital sectors, the US exerts a dominant, monopolistic squeeze on Europe. As of September 2022, Android and iOS commanded a combined 99.24% of the mobile operating system market in the EU. Google held a 91.96% market share in European search, and an estimated 92% of the Western world's data—including Europe's—is stored by US-based corporations. Revelations from the PRISM scandal and subsequent wiretapping leaks highlighted the acute security risks of this lopsided dependence, driving the EU to launch defensive initiatives like Gaia-X and the European Chips Act to "de-Americanize" its digital dependencies. Nonetheless, "de-dependence" faces immense friction: the US leverages frameworks like the "EU-US Data Privacy Framework" and its massive market leverage to extract concessions from the EU, bounding its regulatory freedom. Furthermore, to develop advanced nodes or frontier AI models, the EU remains dependent on US intellectual property, hardware tools, and talent pipelines. The €43 billion mobilized by the European Chips Act, while substantial, is unlikely to disrupt the US semiconductor hegemony in the short term, ensuring that the EU's "de-dependence" remains partial and localized.

Concurrently, the EU's relationship with China features a mix of "cooperation potential and competitive anxiety," which intensifies its strategic dilemma. As the world's second-largest digital economy, China's breakthroughs in 5G, e-commerce, and AI offer the EU valuable alternative pathways. Member states like Germany and Spain initially selected Huawei pipelines to deploy 5G networks, reducing single-source dependencies on US tech; Sino-EU cooperation in logistical networks and cross-border e-commerce oversight has injected vitality into the European market. China's massive market and technological complementarities provide the EU with a useful counterweight against American tech hegemony. However, deep competitive anxieties and external systemic pressures make the EU highly vigilant toward China. The rapid expansion of Chinese tech firms in European markets has triggered domestic protectionist measures—TikTok's dominance in short-video sectors and platforms like AliExpress squeezing local e-commerce led the EU to tighten scrutiny using regulations like the Digital Markets Act. More critically, Washington exerts heavy diplomatic pressure on Brussels to align against Beijing. Categorizing Chinese firms like Huawei as national security threats, the US threatened to restrict intelligence sharing with allies that integrate Chinese 5G kits, forcing countries like Germany and the Czech Republic to restrict cooperation. This geopolitical pressure prevents the EU from deepening its cooperation with China, leaving it oscillating between cooperating to check the US and distancing itself to avoid Washington's pressure, fearing that over-cooperation could result in a "re-dependence" on China.

6. Conclusion and Strategic Insights

The construction of EU digital sovereignty represents a strategic response to accelerating global technology competition and internal governance demands, aimed at protecting its normative values and economic future. By encoding core rights—such as data privacy, democratic oversight, and market fairness—into statutory frameworks like the Digital Single Market strategy, GDPR, Gaia-X, and specialized acts, the EU has charted a distinct path toward achieving a triad of technological, data, and institutional autonomy, offering a valuable blueprint for regional organizations in the digital age.

However, this journey remains fraught with severe internal structural inconsistencies and external systemic pressures. Internally, the persistent digital divide prevents member states from forging a unified force, retarding the growth of an integrated digital market and an autonomous European tech base. Externally, the intense competition between the US and China traps the EU in a "de-dependence vs. re-dependence" bind. Consequently, realizing true digital sovereignty will require prolonged internal resource balancing and complex international norm-negotiation. For China, the EU's trajectory offers vital lessons: establishing robust digital sovereignty must remain a top national priority. While safeguarding its unique digital development path, China should actively engage in global dialogues on digital governance, helping forge a more equitable, balanced, and multilateral global digital order.

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Determinants of Multidimensional Poverty in Nigeria: Using OLS Regression

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Abstract

The study investigated the determinants of poverty in Nigeria using annual time for twenty-six years (2000-2025). The study sought to specifically evaluate the impact of corruption, unemployment, economic instability, and population growth rate on poverty in Nigeria. Secondary data were collated from the CBN statistical bulletin and the World Bank indicator for the period used in the study. Employing the ordinary least square (OLS) regression technique and ex-post facto research design for the statistical computations. The findings of the correlation test carried out, discovered that the all the selected determinants (corruption, unemployment, economic instability and population growth) have a significant positive correlation on poverty levels in Nigeria. The findings indicated the other factors not included in the model might also influence poverty. The OLS regression model employed in this study shows that the regression model concludes that corruption, economic instability, unemployment rate and population growth rate are positively associated with poverty level. Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that efforts should be made to reduce corruption and manage population growth rates to curb poverty levels. This could be-achieved through implementing strict anti-corruption measures and promoting good governance practices.

Keywords: poverty, corruption, unemployment, economic instability, population growth rate

1. Introduction

Poverty, in its broadest sense, refers to a state of deprivation characterized by a lack of access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, clean water, education, and healthcare. However, poverty is not solely an economic issue. It also encompasses social, political, and cultural dimensions, perpetuated by systemic inequalities, discrimination, and exclusion. Poverty is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon (United Nations, 2014; Deinne & Ajayi, 2018; Fonta et al., 2018; Ozughalu & Ogwumike, 2018; Chen, Leu & Wang 2019; Oyekale, Aboaba, Adewuyi & Dada, 2019; Gallardo, 2019; Khan, Saboor, Rizwan & Ahmad, 2020). This attribute has over time created difficulty in reaching a definition that is bereft of biasedness and universally accepted. More specifically, there exist little agreement among researchers and policy makers on the definition of poverty (Laderchi, Saith & Stewart, 2023).

Although generally accepted definition is lacking, narrow and broader perspectives of poverty exist in the literature with variations linked to diverse perceptions of well-being (Rohwerder, 2016). From a narrow perspective, Watts (1964) viewed poverty as the relative shortage of goods and services resulting from extreme income constraints. Similarly, Gavillion (1992) defined poverty as the inability to meet minimum needs that are deemed reasonable by the standard of the society. From a broader perspective, Chen et al. (2019), perceived poverty as a set of interrelated forces which are limited resources, need, pattern of deprivation, lack of entitlement and basic security, exclusion, dependency, social class, inequality, economic position and unacceptable hardship. To Alkire et al. (2015), poverty is powerlessness, insecurity, low self-confidence, malnutrition, inadequate health facilities and low social relations. Broadly speaking, poverty has been conceptualized into four categories: lack of access to basic needs; lack of access to productive resources; inability to use common resources and as well as a result of exclusion mechanism (Olayemi, 2012).

Poverty is a difficult cycle to break and often passes from one generation to the next. It is often determined by socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, and geography. Many people are born into poverty and have little hope of overcoming it. Others may fall into poverty because of negative economic conditions, natural disasters, or surging living costs, as well as drug addiction, depression, and mental health issues (Chen, 2022). Access to good schools, healthcare, electricity, clean drinking water, and other critical services remains elusive for many and is often determined by socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, and geography. Other root causes of poverty include: Limited to no job growth, Poor infrastructure, Conflict and war, High cost of living, Social barriers and Lack of government support (Chen, 2022). However, understanding the root causes of poverty is essential in developing effective strategies for eradication. While the factors contributing to poverty are complex and multifaceted, they can be broadly categorized into structural, systemic, and individual determinants. Structural determinants include policies, economic structures, and societal norms that perpetuate inequality. Lack of access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities are all structural barriers that hinder individuals and communities from breaking free from the cycle of poverty whereas the systemic determinants encompass issues like discrimination, corruption, and political instability.

Discrimination based on race, gender, or social class can lead to unequal distribution of resources and opportunities, exacerbating poverty. In the same vein, individual determinants include those factors that relate to personal circumstances and choices, but they are often influenced by the larger social and economic environment. Factors such as health, education level, and family structure can significantly impact an individual's ability to escape poverty (Vo, 2020). The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) views sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"(Oyeshola, 2008). Emphasis in this perspective is on sustainable development. There is the need to preserve both finite and non-finite resources in the pursuit of development. Therefore, it behooves on all to engage in socio-economic activities which are compatible with the preservation of the environment.

Relatedly, development can be seen as a process in which the natural resource base is not allowed to deteriorate. In recent times, concerns over the feverish search and exploitation of both finite and non-finite resources have been expressed alongside the crisis and conflict they generate between oil bearing communities and merchants of these resources (Olojede et al, 2000; PEFS 2004; Onimode, 2007). These developments particularly in the 80s and 90s intensified underdevelopment and poverty in less developed areas of the World. This is why radical scholars see under-development as part of the process that produced development. Development and underdevelopment therefore, become two sides of the same coin (Nigeria Economic Society, 1980). The development of the North is part of the dialectic process in which the South is underdeveloped. Development is often assumedly socio-economic, political, science and technology biased. Arguably, the concept of development is a complex one. Its difficulty is not only in terms of definition/description but also in terms of measurement. Is development to be measured by Gross National Product per capital (GNP), by the GDP, or the Physical Quality of Life Index (POLI)? If GDP were to be the measurement as a mean average, it does not say anything about the distribution of total income of its country. Literally it may be affirmed that poverty and development are two sides to a coin; one presupposes and challenges the other. Generally, in the West, it is the manifestation of poverty, constraints, disease or accidents that propels it for progress. This is the story behind inventions and technology.

2. Theoretical Framework

Structural theories have a long history, and may be the most subscribed to theory in sociology (O'Connor, 2001, 2016). This theory attributes poverty to individual deficiencies propounded by Gwartney & McCaleb (1985). Proponents of this theory do not view individuals as the source of poverty but economic, political and social distortions as well as discrimination, which limit opportunities and resources to create wealth and overcome poverty. This theory focuses on poverty in geographical perspective e.g. rural poverty, ghetto poverty, southern poverty, third world poverty etc. The concept of poverty has been redefined and broadened in recent years to cover other spheres of human existence.

3. Literature Review

A concise and universally accepted definition of poverty is elusive largely because it affects many aspects of the human conditions, including physical, moral and psychological. Different criteria have, consequently, been used to conceptualize poverty. Maximum analyses follow the traditional view of poverty as a result of insufficient profits for securing basic goods and services. Others view poverty, in element, as a characteristic of training, fitness, life expectancy, baby mortality etc. Blackwood and Lynch (1994), become aware of the bad, using the criteria of the tiers of intake and expenditure. As this empirical assessment ambitions to bring forth a clean perception of the understudied topic, firstly, findings via Sinnathurai and Brezinova (2011) help the empirical proof that access to market and infrastructure substantially and negatively affect poverty in the actual estate area of Sri Lanka. Fantastically, Adeyemi et al. (2009) in their evaluation of determinants of poverty in Sub-Sahara Africa discovered that lack of get right of entry to to fitness care service is not essential as a determinant of poverty. At the affect of place variable (rural or aurban) and of zone of employment on poverty prevalence, Geda et al. (2005) found proof that poverty status is strongly related to engagement in agricultural hobby. This is just like the findings of Dawood et al. (2008) with the recommendation of productivity stimulating funding in Pakistan agricultural region. Rodriguez (2011) also determined similar proof that being an agricultural, home, transportation, manufacturing (casual labour) or income employee is definitely linked with the probability of being negative. Sinnathurai and Brezinova (2011) noted that agricultural employment has a terrible however insignificant effect on poverty prevalence in Sri Lanka and this finding was corroborated via Ojimba (2012) who observed that poverty prevalence spreads greater with agricultural employment.

4. Methodology

The study utilized a research design known as ex-post research design and time series data.

The ex-post facto research plan is commonly utilized in instances wherein it's far critical to analyze occasion which have already befell and to research historical data that is often secondary information the studies diagram used is suitable for this subject matter. This type of sketch is non-experimental, that means that the researcher can't control the variable being studied. due to the nature of the concern be counted, secondary assets have been consulted.

Model Specification

The theoretical framework for analyzing the determinant of poverty in Nigeria is given with the aid of

$$POV = f(COR, UEMP, EISTB, POGROW)$$

$$POV = 0 + \alpha 1COR + \alpha 2UEMP + \alpha 3EISTB + \alpha 4POGROW$$

where

POV = Poverty

COR = Corruption

UEMP = stage of unemployment

EISTB = economic instability

POGROW = population boom

In econometric structure, the version is particular as follows

$$POV = \alpha zero + \alpha 1COR + \alpha 2UEMP + \alpha 3EISTB + \alpha 4POGROW$$

Introducing the error time period, we have

$$POV = 0 + \alpha 1COR + \alpha 2UEMP + \alpha 3EISTB + \alpha 4POGROW + Eo$$

in which

POV = Dependence variable

COR, UEMP, EISTB, POGROW = Independence variable

$\alpha 0$, = Regression regular

$\alpha 1$-$\alpha 4$ = Efficiencies of independent variable

E0 =blunders term

Descriptive records had been utilized for reading the data, whilst the number one method of information analysis worried using normal least squares (OLS) and a couple of regression techniques.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

The result the descriptive information is supplied in desk 1. The evaluation depicted that, poverty level stood at a mean price of 19 percent for the twenty 3 years period. This cost is a sign that poverty level in Nigeria was fine. the standard deviation stood at 6 percentage. The descriptive value for corruption indicates its minimal as 12 percent and maximum as 23 percent; with a median price and widespread deviation of 15 percent and 2 percent respectively. This tested that the corruption deviate an excessive amount of from the suggest. In addition the descriptive records revealed that the imply cost of unemployment charge, monetary instability and populace growth) was 54 percentage, 72419 billion naira and 26 percent for the period with their fashionable deviation of 23.eight percent, 53374 billion naira and 12.12 percentage respectively. As observed from the desk, COR has the bottom imply fee and poverty (POV) has the very best imply fee.

Similarly end result of the descriptive evaluation found out that each one the values without population boom (POGROW) are positively skewed to the proper displaying the symmetry of the histogram even as the kurtosis for all the T values barring corruption (COR) had been and had been observed to be below three. Relative to the ordinary distribution this means that that the distribution is platykurtic. The Jarque-Bera price or corruption with its corresponding probability of much less than or equals to 0S percentage confirms the normality of the collection and suitability for generalization.

Table 1. Summary Statistics of the variables used in the study

	POV	COR	UEMP	EISTB	POGROW
Mean	19.00978	0.153079	6.408130	72419.84	2.617492
Median	18.456000	0.146847	3.899000	63713.86	2.682890
Maximum	30.400000	0.234204	9.864000	170960.3	2.764062
Minimum	11.87100	0.123045	3.700000	7062.751	2.380007
Std. Dev.	5.589043	0.029172	2.381723	53374.42	0.121261
Skewness	0.653517	1.538216	0.982117	0.436810	-0.629968
Kurtosis	2.294127	4.626072	2.159229	1.898906	1.973845
Jarque-Bera	2.114651	11.60402	4.374898	1.893301	2.530416
Probability	0.347384	0.003021	0.012203	0.388038	0.282181
Observations	23	23	23	23	23

Source: E-views 12.0 statistical software.

5.2 Correlation of the Study Variables

The data were subjected to correlation analysis to test for highly correlated variables to avoid the problem of multi-collinearity in the model. This is summarized in the correlation result presented in Table below.

Table 2. Correlation Results

	POV	COR	UEMP	EISTB	POGROW
POV	1.00000				
COR	0.454619	1.00000			
UEMP	0.41702	0.43386	1.00000		
EISTB	0.54839	0.70234	0.89147	1.00000	
POGROW	0.26997	0.30245	0.92947	-0.82832	1.0000

Source: E-views 12.0 statistical software.

As observed in Table 2, the table shows the correlation between all explanatory variables individually and the dependent variable. The results show that the correlation coefficient of incorruption was 0.4546. Thus, as the former increases, poverty decreases. The correlation coefficients between unemployment rates is 0.4170. This is an indication that an increase in unemployment leads to a corresponding increase in poverty in Nigeria. As regard to economic instability, the result showed a correlation of 0.5483 on poverty in Nigeria. Thus, increase in economic instability will result in an increase poverty level. Finally, the result for population growth has a positive correlation on poverty levels. Conclusively, all the results revealed that all the selected explanatory variables indicate no multicollinearity problem.

5.3 Residual and Stability Diagnostic Test

The results of the residual diagnostic tests for Jarque-Bera normality test and CUSUM stability test are presented on Table.

5.4 Normality Test

A Jarque-Bera normality test was conducted to identify whether the data set is well modelled by a normal distribution or to figure out how likely a related random variable is to be normally distributed.

Table 3. VAR lag order selection criteria

Lag formation	AIC	SC	HQ
0	17.68416	17.88312	17.72734
1	8.674766*	9.669548*	8.890658*
2	9.124169	10.91478	9.512777

* indicates lag order selected by the criterion (tested at 5% level each).

Source: E-views 12.0 statistical software.

5.5 Analysis of OLS Regression

From the result presented in Table 4, the coefficient of the constant term (139.73) revealed that poverty level in Nigeria will experience an insignificant decrease when all other variables are held constant. The result further revealed that, the estimated coefficient for corruption (COR) was 64.0616 which was positive, signifying that as corruption increases, poverty level tend to increase by 64%. However, the result does not hold water, as the probability values is greater than 5%, making it statistically insignificant. Further analysis showed that unemployment (UEMP) has an estimated positive coefficient of 0.8665 and a corresponding probability value of 0.0389. This result provides sufficient evidence and support empirical literatures that accretion in unemployment will lead to an increase in poverty. Thus, a unit increase in unemployment will lead to a corresponding increase of 0.86% in poverty. Also, the coefficient of economic instability (EISTB) was (0.00014) and the probability value shows a significant impact on poverty at 5% level of significance. Thus, economic instability would have an increase of poverty in Nigeria. Finally, population growth shows a positive and significant impact on poverty level. The regression coefficient of 51.133 revealed that a unit increase in population growth will cause a corresponding percent increase to poverty in Nigeria.

Table 4. Analysis of OLS regression result

Variable	Coeficient	Std, Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	139.7376	76.38081	1.829485	0.0839
COR	64.06169	66.30916	0.966106	0.3468
UEMP	0.866544	1.383229	0.626465	0.0389
EISTB	0.000144	6.87E-05	2.093498	0.0507
POGROW	51.13389	24.71465	2.068971	0.0532
R-squared	0.455411	Mean dependent var		19.00978
Adjusted R-squared	0.334392	S.D. dependent var		5.589043
S.E. of regression	4.559811	Akaike info criterion		6.062100
Sum squared resid.	374.2538	Schwarz criterion		6.3089446
Log likelihood	-64.71415	Hannan-Quinn criter.		6.124181
F-statistic	3.763116	Durbin-Watson stat		1.479606
Prob(F-statistic)	0.021482			

Dependent Variable: POV

Sample: 2002 2024

Included observations: 23

Source: E-views 12.0 statistical software.

From the regression results in Table 4, the R (R-Squared} which measures the overall goodness of fit of the entire regression, had a value of 0.4554 which showed that the selected determinants explained the changes in poverty level by approximately 46%. The adjusted R-Squared was 0.3343 which has a difference of 12% from the R-Squared which is within the acceptable range for a stable model. This showed that the model was stable. The test for the existence of autocorrelation was performed using the Durbin-Watson statistic. The Durbin-Watson result indicates 1.48 and since this value lies between 0 and 2, it can be deduced that there is an absent of autocorrelation among the successive values of the variables in the model.

6. Discussion of Findings

The research work investigated the determinant of poverty in Nigeria. Specifically, the study assessed the impact of corruption, unemployment, economic instability and population growth on poverty levels in Nigeria. In order to achieve the stated specific objectives and hypotheses, the study employed several empirical tests and submitted the following findings. The overall result of the descriptive analysis showed that the JB value for corruption affirms that the series is normal and is appropriate for our study. The correlation result shows all the selected determinants have a significant positive and negative correlation on poverty levels in Nigeria. This finding agrees with the expected results of the study except for economic instability. The outcome of the ordinary least square regression technique revealed that for corruption, the positive coefficient (64.061) indicates that higher levels of corruption are associated with an increase in the poverty level. This finding aligns with previous research that has shown a link between corruption and increased poverty (Dreher, 2006; Méon & Sekkat, 2005). Corruption can divert resources away from public goods and services, leading to poorer living conditions for the population. Although the insignificance of the result suggest that corruption is triggered by other factor which may have an indirect influence on poverty. Furthermore, the regression result for unemployment with the positive coefficient (0.866), suggests that higher unemployment rates are associated with higher poverty levels. This finding is consistent with the notion that unemployment can lead to a lack of income and economic insecurity, which ultimately contribute to poverty (Kang & Kim, 2021; Ozturk & Acaravci, 2010). Policies and interventions aimed at reducing unemployment rates could therefore have positive effects in combating poverty.

Additionally, the coefficient (0.0014) for economic instability implies that higher levels economic instability are associated with higher poverty levels. This finding contradicts the expectation of the study and the concept of the poverty reduction effect of economic growth, as suggested by various studies (Dollar & Kraay, 2003; Ravallion, 2004). Lastly, the positive coefficient (51.13) suggests that higher population growth rates are associated with higher poverty levels. This finding is consistent with the literature indicating that rapid population growth can put strain on resources, infrastructure, and services, leading to increased poverty (Bongaarts & Bulatao, 2000; Ezeh et al., 2012). Effective population management policies could be necessary to mitigate the impact of population growth on poverty rates.

7. Conclusion

The study investigated the determinants of poverty in Nigeria using annual time series data for twenty-three years. From the statistical computation, analyses and findings of the test carried out, it was discovered that the all the selected determinants (corruption, unemployment, economic instability and population growth) have a significant positive correlation on poverty levels in Nigeria. The findings however highlight the other factors not included in the model might also influence poverty.

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Historical Legacies and Political Stability: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of 27 Former Soviet and Eastern Bloc Countries

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Abstract

This article examines why post-communist countries in Eastern Europe and Eurasia experienced markedly different levels of political stability after the collapse of communist rule. Existing scholarship has largely focused on democratic transition, institutional design, or external democratizing pressure, while paying less attention to the historically embedded conditions that shaped political order after regime change. From the perspective of historical legacies, this article conducts an empirical study of 27 post-communist countries. The correlation results indicate that post-communist political stability is closely associated with cross-national differences in historical legacies. Qualitative Comparative Analysis further shows how specific legacies and their combinations are associated with political stability. The findings suggest that four conditions are particularly robust: the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background, a predominantly Western Christian religious background, a relatively high economic reform index before transition, and a relatively strong communist bureaucratic institutional legacy. These results do not imply that religion or any single legacy mechanically determines political order. Rather, they suggest that post-communist political stability is embedded in longer historical configurations that conditioned state capacity, social integration, reform adaptability, and the institutional resources available during transition. The article therefore argues that post-communist stability cannot be explained only by immediate institutional choices or short-term political strategies; it must also be understood through the interaction of cultural, economic, and institutional legacies.

Keywords: historical legacies, political stability, post-communist countries, former soviet and eastern bloc countries, qualitative comparative analysis

1. Introduction

The collapse of Soviet and Eastern European communist regimes between 1989 and 1991 has long been a central subject in comparative politics and post-communist studies. Yet the trajectories of post-communist states in the first decade of the twenty-first century were far from uniform. Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Georgia experienced regime overthrow; Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan faced pressures associated with color revolutions; while countries such as Turkmenistan maintained regime continuity despite not necessarily ranking highly on broader governance-based measures of political stability. These divergent experiences raise a basic question: what explains the striking variation in political stability across post-communist states?

To answer this question, this article turns to the historical differences that existed at the beginning of transition. The central claim is that the political stability of post-communist regimes was not produced only by the institutional choices, leadership strategies, or external pressures of the post-1989 period. It was also shaped by overlapping social, economic, cultural, and institutional legacies inherited from earlier historical periods. These legacies affected the capacity of new states to manage reform, absorb political contention, maintain social cohesion, and build stable patterns of rule.

The article examines 27 post-communist countries located in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. It first reviews the literature on political stability and historical legacies in post-communist studies. It then constructs a set of legacy variables covering geography, religion and culture, economic structure, social modernization, and political institutions. On the basis of correlation tests, the article employs Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to identify the necessary conditions and configurational patterns associated with high political stability. The results show that the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background and a high level of pre-transition economic reform are necessary conditions in the sample, while Western Christianity, low energy intensity, and communist bureaucratic legacies form important overlapping configurations associated with political stability.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Research on Political Stability

Western scholarship has examined political stability in former Soviet and Eastern European countries from several major perspectives. The first line of research focuses on forms of government and institutional design. Stykow (2019), for instance, compares the effects of constitutional regime types, especially president-parliamentary arrangements, on regime performance and stability in post-Soviet Eurasia. Anceschi (2021) examines power transfers in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan by focusing on the degree of personalism in ruling structures. Other studies examine specific domestic institutions or policy arrangements. Tsygankov (1998) analyzes local gubernatorial elections in Russia and discusses how institutional arrangements combined democratic and authoritarian features to stabilize political rule, while Pikulik and Bedford (2019) analyze the paradoxical effect of democracy-promotion assistance on the persistence of Belarusian non-democracy.

A second line of research stresses political culture. Leshchenko (2008) argues that Belarusian national ideology, especially its egalitarian nationalist discourse, provided an important basis for the resilience of the Lukashenka regime. Richter (2020) studies divergent collective memories of famine and collectivization in Ukraine and Kazakhstan and explores how memory politics shapes regime cohesion. Renz (2019) similarly shows how Russian discourse on external threats and the changing character of war has served domestic centralization and internal order since the 1990s.

A third perspective explains regime stability through legitimacy. For many late-developing states, economic performance and the living standards of the population are closely connected to political stability. Makarkin and Oppenheimer (2011) view Russia’s social contract as a stabilizer after the disorder of the 1990s. Hopf (2002) further distinguishes between legitimization and naturalization as different processes through which transitions become politically stabilized. Within this perspective, Way and Levitsky (2006) analyze coercive capacity in post-Soviet Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, and Ukraine and show that the capacity of the state to coerce opposition actors had important implications for autocratic stability.

A fourth body of scholarship highlights the impact of the third wave of democratization and external actors. Pikulik and Bedford (2019) examine how international democracy assistance shaped Belarusian stability, electoral turnout, and economic indicators. Pridham (2009) studies Latvia and shows how European Union political conditionality interacted with domestic trajectories of democratic consolidation and political stability.

2.2 Historical Legacies

Beyond these approaches, scholars have increasingly examined the impact of historical legacies on political outcomes in post-communist countries. Unlike explanations that emphasize immediate institutions, elite choices, or short-term external pressures, the historical-legacy perspective stresses durable mechanisms of continuity. Wittenberg (2015) conceptualizes historical legacies by distinguishing three elements: an outcome, an antecedent, and a candidate mechanism linking the antecedent to the outcome. This logic is consistent with Stinchcombe’s argument that present outcomes may have historical causes rooted in earlier moments of social formation.

In early research on post-communist democratization, Jowitt (1992) argued that Leninist legacies would shape the path of democratic transition. Political forms and socioeconomic structures produced during the communist period could therefore impose lasting constraints on transition. With respect to political stability, some studies also noticed the importance of historical legacies. Pridham (2009), for example, identifies historical ethnic cleavages and party development in Latvia as factors affecting political stability in a new democracy. Nevertheless, early studies tended to focus on isolated legacies and did not systematically examine the broader causal mechanisms through which different legacies interacted to shape political stability.

2.3 Attribution Analysis in Historical-Legacy Research

As the literature developed, the analysis of historical legacies moved from single factors to the comparison of multiple causal conditions. Quantitative techniques were gradually introduced to test the relationship between different legacies and post-communist outcomes. Horowitz (2003) divides historical legacies into economic structure, political culture, war, presidential power, and party systems. De Melo et al. (2001) disaggregate initial economic conditions into indicators such as GDP and urbanization in order to evaluate their impact on political and economic reform. Katchanovski (2000) examines how civil society, economic ethics, social capital, religion, and history affected economic performance after transition. Ekiert (2003) emphasizes institutional legacies and explores how the interaction between communist institutions and earlier historical legacies shaped divergent transformations in Central and Eastern Europe.

A series of regression analyses has identified a broad set of factors that may influence political stability in post-communist countries. The existing literature has generally reached a consensus that political, cultural, material, and institutional legacies, as well as combinations of these legacies, may either facilitate or obstruct regime stability. Pop-Eleches (2007) made an especially important contribution by incorporating a wide range of legacy variables from previous scholarship into a multivariate regression model. He classified historical legacies into five categories and operationalized them as 17 variables. His analysis identified several influential factors, including Christianity, Islam, urbanization in 1989, previous independent statehood, pre-war Soviet republic status, minority population share, and energy consumption per unit of GDP.

Although Pop-Eleches's regression analysis offers a valuable foundation, it also reveals the limits of traditional statistical approaches. Regression models may misestimate the effects of legacy variables, average causal effects may have limited power in explaining particular outcomes, and the interaction of multiple conditions may be overlooked. This article therefore builds on the historical-legacy literature but uses QCA to examine how different legacies combine to generate political stability.

3. Research Design

This article examines the impact of historical legacies on political stability and the channels through which such influence operates. The dependent variable is derived from the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), specifically the political stability indicator. The WGI dataset provides a set of indicators measuring political stability since 1996. In the early years of transition, post-communist countries generally experienced considerable instability, making pre-2000 data too volatile to capture stable political outcomes. Political stability is also a slow-moving variable, requiring a longer and more stable time-series window. Considering the prevalence of color revolutions in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the article uses WGI political stability data from 2001 to 2010 as the basis for constructing the dependent variable. This period provides a suitable basis for understanding which historical legacies were associated with regime stability during a politically turbulent decade.

The outcome variable, WGIR, is calibrated on the basis of the average WGI political stability ranking between 2001 and 2010. Countries whose average global ranking falls within the top 40% are coded as 1, and all others are coded as 0. For robustness testing, the threshold is raised to the top 30% worldwide. Table 2 reports selected biennial correlations between historical legacies and WGI political stability scores in order to show the stability of bivariate relationships over time.

Historical legacies are defined here as the structural, cultural, and institutional starting points of 27 former communist countries at the beginning of transition. The sample includes Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Mongolia, Romania, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan. The German Democratic Republic is excluded because of reunification with the Federal Republic of Germany. Serbia and Montenegro are excluded because their separation in 2006 creates substantial data limitations.

Given the broad scope of the concept of historical legacies, this article distinguishes five major legacy dimensions: geography, religion and culture, economic structure, social and modernization conditions, and political institutions. Table 1 summarizes the variables used in the analysis.

Table 1. Overview of Variables

Type	Variable	Code	Measurement	Source
Dependent variable	Political stability	WGI	Range from -2.5 to 2.5; higher values indicate greater stability	World Bank WGI
Geographic legacy	Border with the EU	euborder	Yes = 1; No = 0	Author coded
Geographic	Distance to	lndsteur	Log distance to the nearest EU	Pop-Eleches

Type	Variable	Code	Measurement	Source
legacy	Western Europe		capital	(2007)
Religious and cultural legacy	Predominantly Western Christian	wrelig	Yes = 1; No = 0; mainly Catholic and Protestant traditions	Author coded
Religious and cultural legacy	Predominantly Muslim	muslim	Yes = 1; No = 0	Author coded
Religious and cultural legacy	Imperial legacy	impleg	Western legacy = 2; mixed = 1; Russian/Ottoman legacy = 0	Pop-Eleches (2007)
Economic legacy	Exports to non-CMEA countries	ncmeaexp	Non-CMEA exports / total exports	De Melo et al. (2001)
Economic legacy	Energy intensity	engdpind	(Energy use per unit of GDP)^-1 / (industry/GDP percentage)	World Bank WDI (2001)
Economic legacy	Natural resources	natres	Resource rich = 2; medium = 1; resource poor = 0	De Melo et al. (2001)
Economic legacy	1989 economic reform index	EBRD	Scale from 1 to 4; 1 = none, 4 = highest	EBRD Transition Report (2001)
Social and modernization legacy	1989 GDP per capita	gdpcap89	GDP per capita in 1989, purchasing power parity	De Melo et al. (2001)
Social and modernization legacy	1989 urbanization	urban89	Urban population / total population	World Bank WDI (2001)
Social and modernization legacy	1989 education level	hiedu89	Higher education enrollment rate, ages 19-24	UNICEF (2001)
Political institutional legacy	Independent statehood experience	intwar	Yes = 1; No = 0	Author coded
Political institutional legacy	Soviet republic before World War II	fsuold	Yes = 1; No = 0	Author coded
Political institutional legacy	Democratic experience	predemoc	Yes = 1; No = 0	Pop-Eleches (2007)
Political institutional legacy	Communist bureaucratic legacy	commleg	Bureaucratic-authoritarian = 3; national-accommodative = 2; mixed = 1.5; patrimonial = 1; colonial = 0	Kitschelt (2001); cited in Pop-Eleches (2007)
Political institutional legacy	Minority population share	lnminng	Log percentage of ethnic minorities	CIA World Factbook (1992)

Geographic variables have been widely used to explain political development. In the East European context, the most important geographic dimension is proximity to Western Europe. This article measures proximity through the presence of a border with an EU member state and the distance to the nearest EU capital. Western proximity is expected to facilitate the diffusion of Western values and political institutions and thereby contribute to social progress and political stability.

Religious and cultural legacies have also played an important role in explaining political development in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Previous scholarship debates whether religious traditions facilitate or hinder political development. To better capture the influence of historical legacies on political stability, this article includes religious variables. The variable wrelig is defined as a predominantly Western Christian religious background, mainly referring to Catholic and Protestant traditions. The variable muslim refers to a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background. The analysis also includes imperial legacy, since the influence of different empires over several centuries shaped not only religion but also institutions, civic values, and conceptions of the state. Areas shaped by Western imperial rule may therefore differ from those historically shaped by Russian or Ottoman rule.

Economic legacies are equally important. Given the difficult process of economic adjustment after communism, inherited economic structures may impose constraints on both reform and political stability. Energy intensity is used to capture the inherited economic structure at the end of the communist period. Trade dependence is measured by exports to non-CMEA countries, since excessive reliance on intra-CMEA trade may have generated instability after the collapse of the communist bloc. Natural-resource endowments are included to capture the political effects of resource wealth. Finally, the 1989 EBRD economic reform index is used to capture variation in reform starting points before transition.

Social conditions and modernization levels are measured through GDP per capita, urbanization, and education. Although communist regimes attempted to reduce socioeconomic differences through planned economic systems, large gaps remained among Central Europe, Eastern Europe, parts of the Balkans, and the former Soviet Union. These differences may have become antecedent conditions for divergent levels of political stability.

Finally, although the countries in the sample shared a common history of de facto one-party rule, they differed significantly in political institutional legacies. Pre-war Soviet republic status captures the durability of communist institutional experience. Previous democratic experience may also have an independent effect on stability. Independent statehood and minority population share capture more basic state-building challenges: limited statehood experience may weaken governing capacity, while ethnic fragmentation may complicate social integration and political order.

Table 2. Correlations Between Historical Legacies and Political Stability

Variable	**2002**	**2004**	**2006**	**2008**	**2010**
euborder	0.40*	0.27	0.36	0.38*	0.37
lndsteur	-0.37	-0.44*	-0.47*	-0.34	-0.35
wrelig	0.55*	0.55*	0.59*	0.50*	0.58*
muslim	-0.49*	-0.50*	-0.61*	-0.44*	-0.47*
impleg	0.54*	0.54*	0.57*	0.52*	0.54*
ncmeaexp	0.50*	0.46*	0.42*	0.35	0.31
engdpind	-0.53*	-0.55*	-0.54*	-0.49*	-0.38
natres	-0.19	-0.27	-0.21	-0.07	-0.01
ebrd	0.50*	0.52*	0.54*	0.44*	0.50*
gdpcap89	0.34	0.37	0.48*	0.37	0.40*
urban89	0.32	0.33	0.46*	0.29	0.37
hiedu89	-0.03	0.04	0.09	-0.13	-0.08
intwar	0.30	0.20	0.28	0.18	0.22
fsuold	-0.47*	-0.54*	-0.49*	-0.37	-0.36
predemoc	0.27	0.30	0.34	0.26	0.30
commleg	0.64*	0.63*	0.68*	0.50*	0.56*

Note: The table has been transposed for readability in the submission format. It reports selected biennial correlations between historical legacy variables and WGI political stability scores. An asterisk indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

The correlations between historical legacies and political stability in Table 2 confirm that post-communist stability is deeply rooted in historically formed cross-national differences. Religious and cultural legacies constitute the most coherent group of explanatory factors. The 1989 economic reform index, communist bureaucratic legacy, and minority population share also demonstrate long-lasting influence. Energy intensity and pre-war Soviet republic status have somewhat weaker but still notable explanatory power, while exports to non-CMEA countries also show some relevance. By contrast, geographic legacy, natural resources, education, urbanization, independent statehood, and prior democratic experience do not display a consistently significant effect on political stability.

This article uses Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). QCA is a case-oriented method designed for medium-N research. It identifies the factors or combinations of conditions that are associated with a particular outcome. The decision to use QCA after correlation analysis is based on two considerations. First, the sample contains 27 post-communist countries. This number is larger than the range suitable for traditional small-N comparative methods, but still too limited for conventional large-N statistical analysis. QCA is therefore appropriate for this medium-N research design. Second, QCA complements regression analysis. Regression is powerful for estimating average effects in large samples, but its results are sensitive to model specification and indicator selection. QCA, by contrast, focuses on necessary and sufficient conditions and is less vulnerable to the problems of autocorrelation and multicollinearity. It is especially useful for identifying multiple causal configurations associated with the same outcome.

Table 3. Outcome and Condition Variables

Variable type	**Variable name**	**Calibration**
Outcome variable	Political stability ranking (WGIR)	Average WGI political stability ranking in 2001-2010: ranked in the top 40% worldwide = 1; otherwise = 0
Condition variable	Predominantly Western Christian (wrelig)	Yes = 1; No = 0
Condition variable	Predominantly Muslim (muslim)	Yes = 1; No = 0
Condition variable	Western imperial legacy (wim)	Yes = 1; No = 0
Condition variable	Russian or Ottoman imperial legacy (eim)	Yes = 1; No = 0
Condition variable	Exports to non-CMEA countries (ncmeaexp)	Above the mean value of 0.34 = 1; below the mean = 0
Condition variable	Energy intensity (engdpind)	Above the mean value of 3.19 = 1; below the mean = 0
Condition variable	1989 economic reform index (ebrd)	Above the mean value of 2.49 = 1; below the mean = 0
Condition variable	Soviet republic before World War II (fsuold)	Yes = 1; No = 0
Condition variable	Communist bureaucratic legacy (commleg)	Bureaucratic, national, and mixed legacies = 1; patrimonial and colonial legacies = 0
Condition variable	Log minority population share (lnminng)	Above the mean value of 2.89 = 1; below the mean = 0

4. Results

The QCA procedure follows two steps. First, each condition is tested to determine whether it constitutes a necessary condition for the outcome. Second, the analysis examines the coverage of combinations of conditions, thereby estimating the explanatory power of different configurations. The calculations were conducted with fsQCA software. Table 4 reports the results of the necessity analysis.

Table 4. Necessity Test

Condition	**Consistency**	**Coverage**
wrelig	0.800000	0.888889
~wrelig	0.200000	0.111111
muslim	0.000000	0.000000
~muslim	1.000000	0.526316

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
wim	0.700000	0.636364
~wim	0.300000	0.187500
eim	0.500000	0.227273
~eim	0.500000	1.000000
ncmeaexp	0.700000	0.538462
~ncmeaexp	0.300000	0.214286
engdpind	0.100000	0.100000
~engdpind	0.900000	0.529412
ebrd	1.000000	0.769231
~ebrd	0.000000	0.000000
fsuold	0.100000	0.090909
~fsuold	0.900000	0.562500
commleg	0.800000	0.888889
~commleg	0.200000	0.111111
lnminng	0.400000	0.250000
~lnminng	0.600000	0.545455

Note: The symbol ~ denotes the absence of a condition.

All condition variables in Table 4 are calibrated as binary variables. A value of 1 denotes the presence of the condition, while a value of 0 denotes its absence. The symbol ~ before a variable indicates that the condition is absent. Consistency measures the degree to which a condition is associated with the outcome. A consistency score above 0.90 is commonly treated as a strong threshold for necessity, while a score of 0.90 can be read as a borderline or near-necessary condition.

Among the ten condition variables, two clearly reach the threshold of necessity: the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background and a high level of the 1989 economic reform index. Both conditions reach a consistency score of 1. In other words, among the countries ranked in the top 40% worldwide in political stability, none has a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background, and all had a relatively high 1989 EBRD economic reform index. The six predominantly Muslim countries in the sample — Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan — did not maintain high political stability as measured by the WGI ranking in the period examined. Conversely, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Mongolia, Estonia, Poland, Latvia, and Croatia all had high economic reform index scores and maintained relatively high levels of political stability.

Several other conditions approach the necessity threshold. Western Christianity, low energy intensity, the absence of pre-war Soviet republic status, and communist bureaucratic legacy have consistency scores of 0.8, 0.9, 0.9, and 0.8 respectively. They are therefore treated as important but secondary conditions rather than core necessary conditions. In the 27 cases, all Western Christian countries except Estonia maintained high political stability. Similarly, most countries with a strong communist bureaucratic legacy maintained a high level of stability. Regarding energy intensity, Lithuania was the only case that failed to meet the low-energy-intensity condition while still maintaining high political stability.

Table 5. Robustness Test of Necessity Analysis

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
wrelig	0.800000	0.888889
~wrelig	0.200000	0.111111
muslim	0.000000	0.000000
~muslim	1.000000	0.526316
wim	0.700000	0.636364

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
~wim	0.300000	0.187500
eim	0.500000	0.227273
~eim	0.500000	1.000000
ncmeaexp	0.700000	0.538462
~ncmeaexp	0.300000	0.214286
engdpind	0.100000	0.100000
~engdpind	0.900000	0.529412
ebrd	1.000000	0.769231
~ebrd	0.000000	0.000000
fsuold	0.100000	0.090909
~fsuold	0.900000	0.562500
commleg	0.800000	0.888889
~commleg	0.200000	0.111111
lnminng	0.400000	0.250000
~lnminng	0.600000	0.545455

Note: The robustness test raises the threshold for political stability from the top 40% to the top 30% worldwide. Under this stricter calibration, the principal results of the necessity analysis remain unchanged.

To test the robustness of these results, the definition of political stability is made more stringent: countries are treated as politically stable only if their WGI political stability ranking reaches the top 30% worldwide. As shown in Table 5, the principal findings of the necessity analysis remain unchanged under the stricter threshold. In particular, the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background and a high level of the 1989 economic reform index continue to meet the threshold for necessity. The other variables identified as relevant in the correlation analysis do not clearly reach the strong threshold for necessity and therefore require further configurational analysis.

Table 6. Configurational Analysis: Parsimonious Solution for Outcome = 1

Configuration	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
wrelig*~engdpind	0.7	0	1
wrelig*~wim	0.1	0	1
~engdpind*commleg	0.7	0	1
~wim*commleg	0.1	0	1
~wim*engdpind*~fsuold	0.1	0	1
Solution coverage	0.8		
Solution consistency	1		

*Note: In QCA notation, * denotes conjunction, and ~ denotes the absence of a condition.*

Configurational analysis examines how different combinations of conditions are associated with the outcome when individual conditions do not constitute core necessary conditions. Because the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background and a high economic reform index were identified as necessary conditions and confirmed in the robustness test, they are not included in the configurational analysis. Therefore, the configurations reported below should be understood as patterns operating under the shared background conditions of a non-predominantly Muslim religious-cultural setting and a relatively high pre-transition economic reform index.

The fsQCA software identifies five parsimonious solution terms, with a total solution coverage of 0.8 and a solution consistency of 1. Because the unique coverage of each term is 0, these results should be interpreted as overlapping solution terms rather than fully independent routes. The first pattern combines Western Christianity with low energy intensity. The second combines Western Christianity with the absence of Western imperial legacy. The third combines low energy intensity with a strong communist bureaucratic legacy. The fourth combines the absence of Western imperial legacy with a strong communist bureaucratic legacy. The fifth combines the absence of Western imperial legacy, high energy intensity, and the absence of pre-war Soviet republic status.

These results indicate that, beyond the necessary conditions of a non-predominantly Muslim religious-cultural setting and a high economic reform index, Western Christianity, the absence of Western imperial legacy, and communist bureaucratic legacy are important contributors to the configurational explanation of political stability. A strong communist bureaucratic legacy is especially relevant because it enabled certain states to complete state-building more quickly, establish relatively stable political order, improve administrative efficiency, and preserve relatively high state capacity. Post-communist states faced the dual task of state-building and regime transformation. Where governance capacity was weak, this dual task increased the risk of instability; where bureaucratic-institutional resources were stronger, political order proved easier to maintain.

Table 7. Robustness Test of Configurational Analysis: Parsimonious Solution for Outcome = 1

Configuration	**Raw coverage**	**Unique coverage**	**Consistency**
~eim	0.714286	0.571429	1
wrelig*~ncmeaexp*~engdpind	0.142857	0	1
wim*~ncmeaexp*~engdpind	0.142857	0	1
~ncmeaexp*~engdpind*commleg	0.142857	0	1
wrelig*~engdpind*lnminng	0.285714	0	1
wim*~engdpind*lnminng	0.285714	0	1
~engdpind*commleg*lnminng	0.285714	0	1
Solution coverage	0.857143		
Solution consistency	1		

Note: The robustness test defines political stability as ranking in the top 30% worldwide. The term ~eim denotes the absence of Russian or Ottoman imperial legacy.

Table 7 reports the robustness test for the configurational analysis. The treatment is the same as in the necessity robustness test: only countries whose political stability index reaches the top 30% worldwide are treated as politically stable. In the robustness test, the condition with the highest coverage is the absence of Russian or Ottoman imperial legacy, with unique coverage rising to 0.571429 and total solution coverage rising to 0.857143. Western Christianity and communist bureaucratic legacy remain highly explanatory. Compared with the original results, however, Western imperial legacy, a high minority population share, and a high level of intra-CMEA export dependence also become more relevant in some configurations. Taken together, the robustness tests confirm that the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background, Western Christianity, a high economic reform index, and a high level of communist bureaucratic legacy are the most stable factors associated with political stability. Other factors may still matter, but their mechanisms are more contingent and require further investigation.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This article has examined the relationship between historical legacies and political stability in 27 post-communist countries in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. The findings demonstrate that post-communist stability cannot be adequately explained by focusing only on immediate regime design, leadership strategy, or external democratic pressure. These factors matter, but their effects are mediated by deeper historical conditions. Religious-cultural background, economic reform starting points, and inherited bureaucratic capacity shaped the room for maneuver available to post-communist states during the politically turbulent first decade of the twenty-first century.

The first major finding is that the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background and a high pre-transition economic reform index operate as necessary conditions for high political stability in the sample. This does not imply that religion mechanically determines political order. Rather, it suggests that the social and institutional environments associated with different religious-cultural zones created different constraints for state-building, social integration, and regime consolidation. Similarly, a higher economic reform index before transition indicates that some countries entered the post-communist period with more favorable reform capacity and institutional adaptability.

The second major finding is configurational. Political stability does not follow from a single historical cause; it emerges from combinations of legacies. Western Christianity, low energy intensity, and communist bureaucratic institutional legacy constitute several overlapping patterns associated with stability. This result highlights the analytical value of QCA. Instead of treating legacy variables as isolated independent causes, QCA shows how different historical conditions can compensate for or reinforce one another.

The third finding concerns state capacity. A relatively strong communist bureaucratic legacy contributed to political stability by providing administrative resources for order maintenance and policy implementation. In the post-communist transition, many states had to manage both political transformation and state-building. Where inherited bureaucratic capacity was more robust, governments had greater ability to respond to social disruption and institutional uncertainty. Where such capacity was weaker, political instability was more likely to emerge.

This article has two limitations. First, the analysis focuses on a medium-N sample and uses dichotomized conditions, which helps identify configurational patterns but inevitably simplifies internal variation within each country. Second, the mechanisms through which some factors operate, especially imperial legacy, minority population share, and trade dependence, require more detailed case-based investigation. Future research can combine QCA with process tracing in selected cases to identify more precise causal mechanisms connecting historical legacies to political stability.

Overall, the article shows that the political stability of post-communist states is embedded in long-term historical configurations. The collapse of communist rule created a common historical rupture, but it did not erase the effects of earlier religious, economic, social, and institutional legacies. Understanding these legacies helps explain why some post-communist states maintained stable political orders while others experienced recurring instability.

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Surviving on UGX 93,000: Exploring Student Welfare Challenges and Experiences at Makerere University

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Abstract

This study explored the welfare challenges and experiences of government-sponsored students living on a UGX 93,000 non-residential stipend per semester for food and other costs at Makerere University, Kampala. Guided by Scitovsky's Consumer Choice Theory and Sen's Capability Approach, the study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods case study design. Quantitative data were collected through surveys from 370 undergraduate students; qualitative insights were concurrently gathered through 15 key informant interviews and four focus group discussions. The findings suggest severe structural vulnerabilities, including systemic food insecurity (74% of respondents skipping meals), substandard and unsafe off-campus housing, and acute psychological distress stemming from financial exclusion. The UGX 93,000 allowance appears insufficient to cover the actual cost of living in Kampala. Consequently, students may resort to high-risk coping mechanisms, including transactional relationships, frequent academic absences, and predatory micro-loans, which severely compromise their academic performance and personal safety. The study suggests that the current allowance framework may violate basic human dignity and consequently undermine the equity objectives of public higher education. The recommendations include the immediate inflationary adjustment of the student welfare fund by the Ministry of Education and Sports, the establishment of subsidized university-managed food hubs, and the standardization of conditions for private off-campus student accommodation through the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE).

Keywords: student welfare, food insecurity, makerere university, higher education, financial exclusion, cost of living

1. Introduction & Background of the Study

The historical trajectory of student welfare and state-funded subsidies at Makerere University is deeply intertwined with the political economy of higher education in post-colonial Uganda. Established in 1922 as a technical school, Makerere transitioned into the premier university college of East Africa, long celebrated as a beacon of academic excellence and intellectual leadership (Nabaho et al., 2017). In the immediate post-independence era of the 1960s and 1970s, the Government of Uganda afforded higher education the designation of an unalloyed public good. Under this paternalistic welfare model, the state fully underwrote the cost of tuition, textbooks, medical care, accommodation, and high-quality catering services, for all admitted students. Students during this "golden era" were provided with fully catered meals in residential dining halls, laundry services, and pocket allowances, reflecting a developmental state philosophy that prioritized elite human capital formation for the newly independent civil service (System, 2009).

Nevertheless, the macroeconomic crises of the late 1970s and 1980s, compounded by structural adjustment programs (SAPs), which were spearheaded by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), necessitated a radical paradigm shift. The state was compelled to retrench public spending on social sectors, culminating in the commercialization and privatization of higher education at Makerere through the introduction of the private student scheme in 1992 (Mamdani, 2007). To alleviate the escalating costs of municipal services, the university progressively decentralized and defunded its centralized catering and accommodation systems. By the early 2000s, the university completely outsourced student catering to private vendors and shifted from an in-house residential model to a dual structure where the majority of government-sponsored students were designated as “non-residential.” This policy shift gave rise to the contemporary non-residential food and residual allowance system, freezing the living stipend at a nominal rate of UGX 93,000 per semester—a figure that appears to have remained structurally stagnant for over two decades despite massive macroeconomic transformations in the country.

In the contemporary context, Makerere University operates within a highly competitive, commercialized urban landscape in Kampala, where the cost of living has escalated exponentially. The current framework for public higher education funding in Uganda entails a division of state-sponsored students into residential (living within university halls) and non-residential categories. Historically, the abolition of all allowances, including those for personal expenditure and welfare, occurred in 2007, with government scholarships primarily covering tuition, accommodation, and meals (Bagonza et al., 2021).

This fiscal framework appears to neglect the shifting socio-economic demographics of the student body. While public scholarships were historically predominantly allocated to affluent students originating from elite secondary institutions, a significant cohort of underprivileged students from rural, low-income backgrounds continually secure government sponsorship through affirmative action and district quota schemes (Ahikire, 2014; Bagonza et al., 2021). For these vulnerable populations, the state allowance is not a supplement; it frequently constitutes their primary, and occasionally sole, economic safety net. When viewed against the macroeconomic reality of Kampala, characterized by double-digit rental inflation, soaring food prices, and expensive transport costs, the UGX 93,000 allowance translates to less than UGX 1,000 per day over a standard 120-day academic semester. This budget falls far below the international extreme poverty line of $2.15 per day (in 2017 purchasing power-adjusted prices), potentially precipitating structural destitution for thousands of government scholars within the borders of Uganda’s capital city (Leogrande, 2023).

The crisis of student welfare at Makerere University has manifested in severe structural vulnerabilities that threaten the foundational goals of the higher education sector. Chief among these issues appears to be systemic food insecurity and nutritional deprivation. As itemized by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2024), urban food inflation in Kampala has experienced an increase exceeding 45% over the past decade, driven by supply-chain disruptions and climate-induced agricultural shocks (UBOS, 2024). Consequently, the purchasing power of the student stipend may have contracted to a point of virtual obsolescence. Students consequently appear to confront an acute survival crisis, compelling them to navigate a challenging urban market with an ostensibly non-viable budget.

This financial strain may compromise the safety and equity of student accommodation. In these zones, students trade safety and hygiene for affordability, renting squalid, overcrowded single-room units devoid of fundamental sanitation provisions, reliable electrical supply, and robust security frameworks. This spatial marginalization may consequently expose students to elevated incidences of urban crime, including burglaries and physical assaults.

Furthermore, the psychological and academic toll of this welfare crisis appears profound. Financial exclusion and the daily anxiety regarding the procurement of sustenance may induce chronic stress, clinical depression, and cognitive fatigue among students, which could detrimentally affect their academic retention and performance (Ahmad et al., 2021; Kenneth & Turyamureeba, 2026). To mitigate these circumstances, numerous students may resort to potentially deleterious coping mechanisms. These include transactional relationships, engaging in informal labor that compromises lecture attendance, and succumbing to the influence of exploitative digital micro-lending applications that perpetuate cycles of indebtedness.

This study may be deemed empirically significant, as it challenges the institutional narrative positing that public scholarship inherently equates to educational equity. By providing an assessment of the lived realities experienced by government scholars, this paper elucidates the disconnect between national human capital development agendas, such as the Uganda National Development Plan IV (NDP IV), and the micro-level socio-economic realities prevalent within higher education institutions. Through the delineation of core concepts such as “student welfare” (the holistic physical, mental, and material well-being of scholars), “food insecurity” (the structural lack of access to safe, sufficient, and nutritious food), and “financial exclusion” (the systemic denial of adequate fiscal resources), this study furnishes the empirical evidence necessary for advocating immediate structural policy reforms pertaining to university governance and state-directed student financing.

1.1 Problem Statement

The Government of Uganda purportedly allocates billions of shillings annually to fund tuition and institutional overheads for top-tier scholars at Makerere University, ostensibly to foster equitable human capital development. However, a critical structural disconnect appears to exist: while tuition fees are covered, the living and welfare subsidy allocated to non-residential government students has been frozen at a nominal rate of UGX 93,000 per semester for over two decades.

What is fundamentally missing from past studies is a focused examination of the hidden socio-economic costs of this structural neglect. Existing higher education research in East Africa has concentrated heavily on institutional governance, curriculum reform, and funding models for private students (Kasozi, 2009; Mamdani, 2007), while completely ignoring the micro-level survival strategies and vulnerabilities of government-sponsored scholars.

This research gap creates a dangerous policy blind spot: institutions assume these students are fully provided for, while they actually experience acute food insecurity, live in unsafe slum tenements, and suffer severe psychological distress. If left unaddressed, this welfare crisis will continue to drive high dropout rates, fuel academic degradation, and force vulnerable students into high-risk survival behaviors like transactional sex and predatory debt cycles. This study directly addresses this crisis by documenting these lived experiences and presenting an empirical framework to restructure student welfare funding in Uganda.

1.2 Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of this study is to investigate the student welfare challenges, material vulnerabilities, and lived survival experiences of non-residential government-sponsored undergraduate students adapting to the nominal UGX 93,000 semester allowance at Makerere University, in order to provide an empirical basis for institutional and national policy reforms.

1.3 Research Objectives

1) To examine the effect of the UGX 93,000 semester allowance on the nutritional wellbeing and food security of non-residential government-sponsored students at Makerere University.
2) To explore the housing conditions, safety vulnerabilities, and spatial challenges experienced by non-residential government-sponsored students residing in off-campus accommodations.
3) To investigate the psychological, social, and academic effects of financial exclusion and the coping strategies adopted by vulnerable students at Makerere University.

1.4 Research Questions

1) How does the UGX 93,000 semester allowance influence the nutritional wellbeing and food security of non-residential government-sponsored students at Makerere University?
2) What housing conditions, security risks, and spatial challenges are faced by non-residential government-sponsored students living in off-campus residences?
3) What psychological, social, and academic effects arise from financial exclusion, and what coping strategies are adopted by vulnerable students at Makerere University?

1.5 Significance of the Study

- **Academics:** This study contributes to the expansion of the higher education literature in Sub-Saharan Africa by introducing empirical data on poverty impacting student welfare within public scholarship frameworks. It may proffer a novel conceptual foundation, delineating a linkage between macroeconomic inflation and student retention, which could subsequently widen the scope for future research into institutional sociology and equity in African universities.
- **Practitioners/Industry:** For university administrators, student affairs practitioners, and deans of students across East Africa, this study provides an analytical toolkit to identify early indicators of financial distress among students. It offers a blueprint for designing proactive, non-monetary student support programs, including subsidized campus food pantries and vetted private-public hostel partnerships.
- **Policy Makers:** This research may serve as a critical evidence base for the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). It provides empirical evidence that may justify an overhaul of the public scholarship funding framework and the resultant creation of an inflation-indexed student living stipend.
- **Society:** Through the elucidation of the severe hardships encountered by underprivileged government scholars, this study deepens public awareness concerning the socio-economic impediments to upward social mobility. This elucidation may empower civil society organizations, student guilds, and parental associations to advocate for educational equity, thereby enabling the assurance that public university admissions predominantly benefit low-income families, rather than potentially exacerbating urban inequality.

1.6 Scope of the Study

- **Location:** The study was confined to Makerere University Main Campus in Kampala, Uganda, including its immediate peripheral residential suburbs: Kikoni, Kasubi, Wandegeya, Makerere West, and Bwaise.
- **Population:** The target population comprised all actively enrolled, non-residential, government-sponsored undergraduate students across all colleges of Makerere University who are eligible for the UGX 93,000 food and residual allowance.
- **Variables:** The independent variable was conceptualized as *Financial Sufficiency/Allowance Structure* (operationalized through the UGX 93,000 living stipend). The dependent variables were *Student Welfare Dimensions*, comprising three key elements: food security/nutritional status, housing quality/safety, and psychological-academic stability.
- **Timeframe:** The study was conducted over a single academic year, tracking data from August 2025 to May 2026, capturing seasonal changes in urban food prices and rental inflation across two semesters.
- **Limitations:** The study relied partly on self-reported data regarding personal financial allocation and coping strategies, which can introduce social desirability bias. To address this, the researchers used a mixed-methods approach to cross-verify survey responses against institutional academic records and focus group findings.

1.7 Theory of the Study

This study is theoretically grounded in a dual conceptual framework integrating Scitovsky's Consumer Choice Theory and Behavioral Economics of Scarcity (S., Tibor, 1976) and Sen's Capability Approach (Waterloo & Sen, 1999). Tibor Scitovsky's theory challenges neoclassical economics by arguing that consumer choice under severe income constraints is not a rational optimization process, but rather a stressful struggle to manage psychological discomfort and satisfy basic physiological needs. When individuals encounter extreme economic scarcity, their cognitive bandwidth is consumed by immediate survival concerns, producing "scarcity mindsets" that favor short-term mitigation over long-term human capital investments (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013).

Complementing this, Amartya Sen's Capability Approach focuses on human well-being, positing that the assessment of poverty ought not be predicated solely upon indicators of low income, but by the systemic deprivation of core capabilities, the freedom to achieve elementary functioning, such as being well-nourished, adequately sheltered, healthy, and safe from harm (Burchi et al., 2017). Sen distinguishes between commodities (goods possessed), capabilities (what a person can do or be), and functionings (the actual choices made) (Dean, 2009). In this framework, educational success is not solely a function of tuition payments; rather, it necessitates the substantive capability of the student to participate fully in the learning process, unimpeded by material destitution.

The choice of this dual theoretical framework may be justified by the inherent complexity concerning the material and psychological dimensions of student poverty at Makerere University. Neoclassical economic models may prove inadequate in this context, given their assumption that consumers inherently possess perfect rationality in decision-making and rational expectations (Dubois, 2022). In contrast, Scitovsky's framework delineates the influence of trade-offs upon consumer behavior between comfort and pleasure, which may, in turn, impinge upon individual well-being (Edwards & Pellé, 2011).

Sen's Capability Approach furnishes an analytical framework that facilitates scrutiny extending beyond tuition fee coverage. It delineates how the failure to provide an adequate living allowance may divest government-sponsored scholars of their fundamental capabilities. Without food security and safe housing, the freedom to engage in learning may prove largely nugatory.

The integration of these theories directly illuminates the study's core variables:

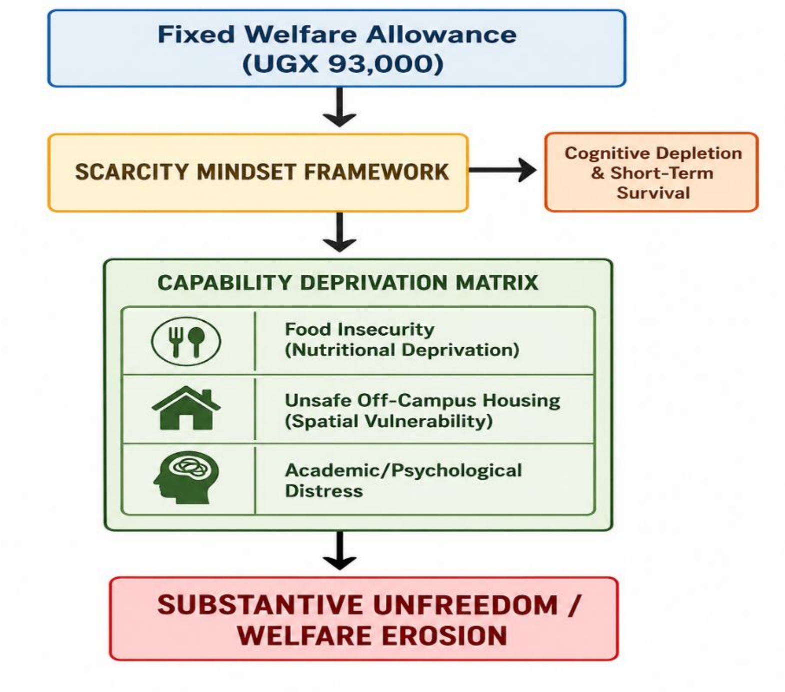

Figure 1.

As the diagram illustrates, the fixed welfare allowance acts as an absolute resource deficit. Through the lens of Scitovsky's theory, this deficit triggers a scarcity mindset that depletes cognitive energy, forcing students to prioritize short-term survival over long-term academic engagement. This leads directly to what Sen terms capability deprivation: students lose the foundational functionings of health, safety, and psychological stability. Ultimately, this structural resource constraint converts a valuable public scholarship into a state of substantive unfreedom, undermining the university's human capital goals.

2. Literature Review

Variable 1: Financial Allocation Frameworks and Food Insecurity in Higher Education

Global and regional literature demonstrates that financial allocation frameworks are foundational determinants of student nutritional outcomes in higher education institutions. The phenomenon of student food insecurity has emerged as a major institutional challenge. In the United States, Goldrick-Rab et al. (2018) established that despite extensive federal financial aid systems, approximately 36% of university students experienced food insecurity, which directly correlated with lower GPA outcomes and elevated dropout rates. This reality highlights that tuition support alone cannot guarantee academic retention if living subsidies fail to match local price realities. In continental Europe, despite heavily subsidized welfare states, students increasingly depend on food banks due to rising urban food costs, demonstrating that rigid institutional stipends struggle to absorb market volatility (Sackl-Sharif et al., 2021).

In the Sub-Saharan African context, the disconnect between state educational subsidies and living costs is even more pronounced. Research across public universities in South Africa reveals that despite the presence of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), structural food insecurity remains high among historically disadvantaged and low-income demographics (Berg & Raubenheimer, 2015). Munave et al. (2020) discovered that rigid cash-transfer designs often leave students vulnerable to urban inflation, as the real purchasing power of their stipends regularly erodes within months of budget approval. In East Africa, studies at the University of Nairobi confirm that shifting from a fully catered residential model to cash allowances worsened nutritional vulnerability among underprivileged students, pushing them toward calorie-dense, nutrient-poor diets due to budget constraints (Mbuthia et al., 2018).

What past studies have largely overlooked, however, is the extreme case of absolute stipend stagnation. Most regional literature evaluates systems where allowances are adjusted every few years to account for inflation. There is a clear gap in empirical research tracking the survival strategies of students operating within a fixed stipend that has remained unchanged for over 20 years in a highly inflationary urban center. This study addresses this gap by detailing how Makerere students navigate a severe resource deficit through extreme dietary compromises.

Variable 2: Off-Campus Student Accommodation, Safety Vulnerabilities, and Spatial Realities

The privatization of student housing across global higher education systems has fundamentally changed the spatial and security realities of university students. Globally, the reliance on private developers to house students has created a polarized market. In the United Kingdom, Hubbard (2008) highlighted that the clustering of students in private rental sectors often leads to poor housing quality and strained relations with local communities. This trend leaves low-income students highly vulnerable to exploitative landlords and substandard living conditions. In Latin American urban centers, the lack of institutional housing options forces marginalized students into peripheral informal settlements, exposing them to long commutes and high rates of urban crime (Fernández & Pérez, 2019).

Regionally, African public universities face an acute accommodation crisis driven by rapid enrollment expansion that has vastly outpaced institutional housing capacity. At the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, Aluko (2011) observed that the shortage of campus beds forced over 70% of students into informal off-campus settlements. These informal spaces are characterized by severe overcrowding, poor sanitation, and non-existent security infrastructure, which directly correlates with increased student victimization and trauma. In East Africa, research by Onyango (2017) on universities in western Kenya showed that off-campus private student hostels are often built without proper adherence to urban planning and safety regulations, creating major hazards regarding fires, poor hygiene, and burglaries.

The missing element in existing literature is an analysis of how extreme income deficits interact with spatial vulnerability in specific urban centers like Kampala. Existing research typically treats student housing choice as an independent variable driven by personal preferences or market supply. This study bridges this gap by demonstrating how an absolute budget constraint, such as the UGX 93,000 allowance, forces students to compromise on safety and hygiene, showing that substandard housing is a direct outcome of structural financial exclusion.

Variable 3: Financial Distress, Psychological Health, and Student Coping Mechanisms

The link between financial distress and mental health challenges among university students is well-documented in international psychiatric and educational research. Globally, Andrews & Wilding (2004) demonstrated that financial strain in British universities predicted a significant increase in depression and anxiety symptoms, which subsequently led to decreased academic performance. Richardson et al. (2017) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis confirming that financial difficulties are longitudinally linked to poorer student mental health, creating a destructive feedback loop where financial stress causes psychological distress, and both combine to degrade academic outcomes.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the psychological burden of financial exclusion is amplified by high family expectations and the absence of broad social safety nets. Research in Ghanaian public universities indicates that students from poor households face intense anxiety regarding basic survival, which triggers cognitive fatigue and lowers self-esteem (Agyei & Gyimah, 2021). To manage this chronic stress, students deploy various coping mechanisms. While some strategies are positive—such as peer-support networks and budgeting cooperatives, many are highly maladaptive. Studies in Zimbabwe reveal that severe financial deprivation drives students toward risky survival strategies, including transactional relationships, sports betting, and substance abuse, which often result in long-term personal and academic harm (Chimanikire et al., 2017).

However, current regional literature often treats these coping mechanisms as isolated behavioral issues or personal choices. It frequently fails to trace them back to specific structural failures in state funding policies. This study addresses this gap by directly linking student coping behaviors to the state's frozen allowance framework, showing how systemic underfunding drives the adoption of high-risk survival strategies.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Pragmatic Philosophical Orientation

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods case study design, grounded in a pragmatic research philosophy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Pragmatism justifies using both quantitative and qualitative methods to address a research problem thoroughly (Dawadi et al., 2021). The mixed-methods design allowed researchers to capture the broad socio-economic trends of student poverty quantitatively, while using qualitative data to explore the lived experiences of students navigating financial hardship.

3.2 Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Framework

The target population encompassed approximately 6,000 active, non-residential, government-sponsored undergraduate students at Makerere University Main Campus. The quantitative sample size was determined using the (Yamane, 1973) formula:

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

Where:

- n= sample size
- N= target population
- e= margin of error

Given that the target population was $N = 6{,}000$ and the margin of error was set at $e = 0.05$, the sample size was calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{6000}{1 + 6000(0.05)^2} = \frac{6000}{1 + 15} = \frac{6000}{16} = 375$$

Therefore, the study adopted a sample size of 375 respondents.

Following data cleanup, a final quantitative sample of 370 respondents was achieved. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents across ten colleges at Makerere University, ensuring proportional representation across genders and academic disciplines.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select participants who could provide deep insights into the issue. This resulted in 15 key informant interviews (KIIs) including wardens, guild officials, student counselors, and local community leaders; and 4 focus group discussions (FGDs), with each group consisting of 8 government-sponsored students.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments, Analysis, and Presentation Strategy

Quantitative data were gathered using structured, self-administered questionnaires designed to capture demographic profiles, income allocation choices, food security metrics, and housing variables. Qualitative insights were collected using semi-structured interview guides and focus group protocols focused on students' lived survival experiences and coping mechanisms.

Quantitative analysis was performed using SPSS v.27, employing descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential analysis (Chi-square tests) to evaluate relationships between income levels and welfare outcomes. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis using NVivo v.12, following (Braun & Clarke, 2006) six-step thematic framework to identify, analyze, and report key patterns in the data.

3.4 Methodological Overview and Respondent Profile

To ensure full transparency regarding the empirical data, the structural breakdown of the study participants appears below.

Table 1.

Category of Respondents	**Target Population**	**Sample Size**	**Sampling Technique Employed**	**Primary Data Collection Instrument**
Undergraduate Government Students	6,000	370	Stratified Random Sampling	Structured Survey Questionnaire
Participants in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	32	Four Groups	Purposive Stratification	Semi-Structured Discussion Guide
Wardens and Staff of University Halls	10	five	Purposive Selection	Key Informant Interview Schedule
Officials of Student Guild Leadership	15	four	Purposive Selection	Key Informant Interview Schedule
Leaders of Off-Campus Hostels and Community	12	Six	Purposive Selection	Key Informant Interview Schedule
Total Sample	6,069	389	Mixed-Methods Design	Suite of Triangulated Instruments

The table above delineates the structural distribution of the 390 participants who provided data for this study. The largest component comprises 370 undergraduate students who completed quantitative surveys, thereby establishing a statistically representative foundation across the university's colleges. This quantitative foundation is balanced by the qualitative sub-sample, which encompasses 32 focus group participants across four distinct sessions, in addition to 15 key informants selected from university administration, student leadership, and local communities. This structured distribution largely ensures that the findings are underpinned by reliable quantitative metrics and substantively enriched by profound qualitative insights derived from key stakeholders.

4. Interview Findings per Variable/Objective

Objective 1: Nutritional Status and Food Security Realities Under Hyper-Scarcity

The qualitative and quantitative data suggest the existence of a severe food security crisis among non-residential government-sponsored students at Makerere University. Survey responses indicate that approximately 74 percent of surveyed students report the omission of at least one daily meal; furthermore, 42 percent delineate occurrences of full-day nutritional deprivation on a recurring monthly basis.

The findings from focus group discussions suggest the traditional "three-meal day" has arguably been supplanted by a survival strategy known as "brunching" or "combining", wherein students consume a singular, high-carbohydrate meal at approximately 15:00 to sustain themselves until the subsequent day. Students primarily rely on cheap, nutrient-poor street food, such as *Kikomando* (a combination of chapati and fried beans), with beans providing a good source of protein, dietary fiber, and various vitamins and minerals (Hayat et al., 2013; TC, 2018).

This reality is further elucidated by the testimony of a third-year female student affiliated with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS):

"Operating on 93,000 shillings means you cannot think about nutrition; you only think about stomach volume. I buy Kikomando of 1,500 shillings at 4 PM. That is my only meal for the day. When prices go up, I drink tap water and sleep. It is humiliating to survive like an animal when the state says they are taking care of you."

Key informants within the university's counseling department corroborate the observation that this pronounced nutritional deprivation primarily culminates in widespread physical fatigue, frequent fainting spells in lecture rooms, and compromised immune systems among the student populace. This constellation of factors, therefore, strongly suggests that the frozen allowance framework might thus compromise the students' fundamental health and dignity.

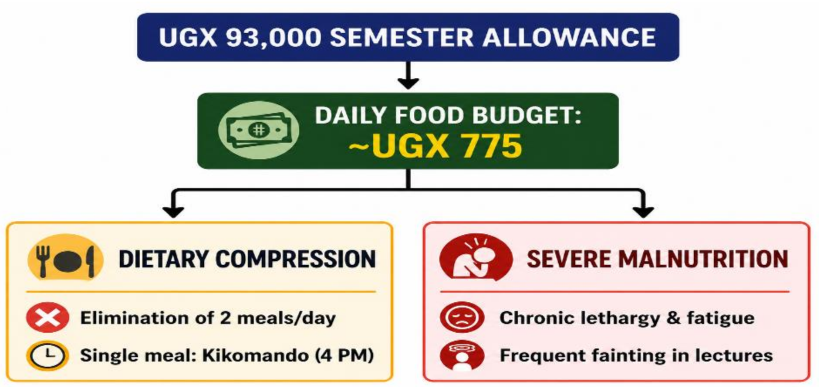

Figure 2.

The diagram describes the progression from an absolute income deficit to a state of systemic physiological vulnerability. A nominal allowance of UGX 93,000 constitutes, on average, less than UGX 800 per diem over a standard academic semester. In Kampala's retail market, this budget appears to compel students toward dietary compression, with nearly half of university graduates the consumption of only two meals daily (Fichtmüller, 2018). Consequently, this chronic nutritional insufficiency contributes to the emergence of fatigue and diminished concentration, potentially leading to the impairment of academic performance and indicating that the frozen stipend likely constitutes a principal determinant of physical vulnerability and educational disadvantage among public scholars (Henry et al., 2022).

Objective 2: Housing Conditions, Security Vulnerabilities, and Spatial Challenges

Because the UGX 93,000 stipend does not cover the costs of modern student hostels in Kampala, students may frequently be compelled to reside within informal slum settlements around the university campus, particularly in Kikoni and Kasubi, where basic accommodation can exceed the monthly stipend (Fichtmüller, 2018). Consequently, a substantial proportion of students may resort to the sharing of single rented rooms to mitigate housing expenses.

Qualitative data from focus groups elucidate the challenging nature of these living conditions; specifically, reports indicate that residential units may be characterized by insufficient ventilation, an absence of private indoor sanitation, and inconsistent access to potable water (Kayiwa et al., 2020; Rahayu et al., 2021; Rutaro et al., 2022). Furthermore, security may represent a significant vulnerability. These low-cost slum tenements appear to be frequently targeted by criminal networks, thereby exposing students to elevated incidences of burglaries and physical assaults (Barbara, 2023; Gregory, 2021; Ravhuhali et al., 2022).

A second-year student from the College of Computing and Information Sciences (College of Computing and Information Sciences (CoCIS)) described the challenges of his housing situation during a focus group:

"Four of us share a tiny room in a slum zone in Kikoni. We sleep on the floor on thin mats. The room has no lock on the window, and last month thieves broke in and stole our old laptops and books. The landlord does not care about security; he only wants rent. We cannot afford anything safer because our allowance cannot even cover the cost of electricity for two months."

Community leaders and local police records from Wandegeya suggest the prevalence of elevated rates of petty crime and burglaries in student-occupied slum zones (Ismail, 2020; Barbará, 2023). Furthermore, because these peripheral rentals are far from campus, students must walk long distances late at night after evening lectures, potentially rendering them acutely susceptible to assault and robbery on unlit pathways (Gregory, 2021; Kiyohara & Mondri, 2025; Lekganyane et al., 2023).

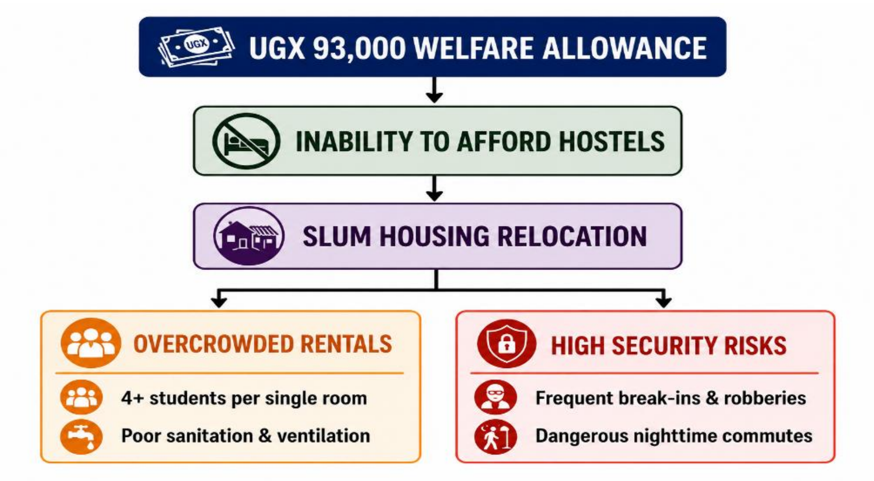

Figure 3.

- four or more students per single room (Iyekolo, 2021; Kagoya et al., 2024)
- Frequent break-ins and robberies (IKOGHO & EFERAKORHO, 2025; Jobi et al., 2022)
- Poor sanitation and ventilation (Kajjoba et al., 2024; Wachukwu-Chikodi & Onoriode, 2026)
- Dangerous nighttime commutes (Kiyohara & Mondri, 2025; Lekganyane et al., 2023)

The visual model delineates the nexus between financial exclusion and dangerous housing conditions for students. The inability to secure standard student housing may compel government scholars into informal slum settlements (Chiwaya & Liwago, 2026; Kibuuka, 2022). This exigency frequently precipitates recourse to extreme room-sharing arrangements (Iyekolo, 2021), which degrades their living conditions and exposes them to poor sanitation (Kajjoba et al., 2024; Wachukwu-Chikodi & Onoriode, 2026). These informal settlements lack basic security, creating environments where students face frequent break-ins (IKOGHO & EFERAKORHO, 2025) and dangerous nighttime commutes (Kiyohara & Mondri, 2025). This pattern, therefore, appears to suggest that inadequate welfare funding directly compromises student safety.

Objective 3: Psychological Distress, Academic Performance, and Coping Networks

The combination of food insecurity and unsafe housing appears to engender significant psychological distress and academic impediments for government scholars (Brownfield et al., 2026; URIEN, 2026). Analysis of survey data indicates that 82% of respondents report experiencing regular anxiety concerning financial survival, whereas 56% affirm that financial stress has contributed to their absenteeism from lectures or continuous assessment tests (Mulligan & Bhaird, 2026).

Qualitative findings suggest that the perpetual pressure stemming from survival exigencies may precipitate a degradation of students' cognitive focus and, subsequently, their academic performance (Chakraborty et al., 2025). To stay enrolled, a notable proportion of students may resort to precarious coping mechanisms, such as unregulated digital micro-loans (Ebong & Babu, 2020), sports betting (Avenyo et al., 2023; Nsereko et al., 2023), and transactional relationships (Choudhry et al., 2022).

An official from the Makerere University Student Guild described these survival dynamics during an interview:

"The absolute stagnation of this allowance may contribute to the proliferation of an unacknowledged mental health crisis on campus. This financial precarity, in turn, often engenders states of depression and desperation among the student population. Consequently, one may observe instances wherein academically meritorious students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds experience academic underperformance or complete withdrawal from studies, purportedly due to an inability to sustain concentration amidst persistent nutritional deficiency. Furthermore, a subset of students may be compelled to engage with exploitative financial applications, thereby incurring cycles of indebtedness, whilst others might resort to transactional interpersonal dynamics as a means of subsistence. Evidently, the present systemic framework appears demonstrably inadequate."

These findings tentatively indicate that student financial precarity may constitute a significant determinant of academic inequality (Gair & Baglow, 2018; Mallidi & Devashree, 2025). Rather than serving as a purported engine of social mobility, the prevailing public scholarship framework appears capable of entrenching vulnerable student cohorts within milieux characterized by persistent academic underperformance and psychological duress, primarily attributable to an insufficient provision of living support. (Mallidi & Devashree, 2025; Negash et al., 2024)

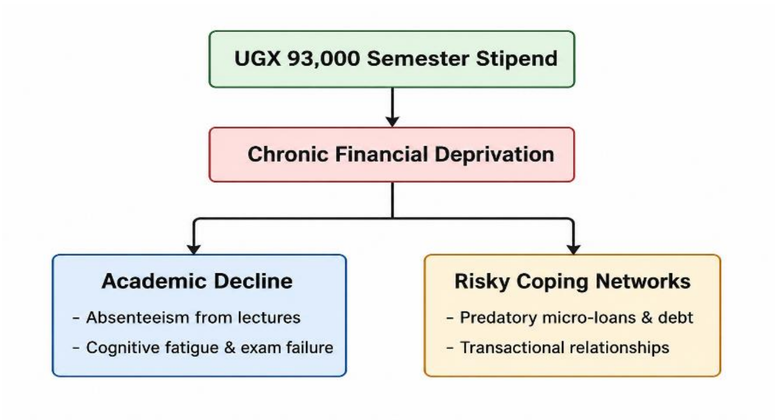

Figure 4.

The accompanying flow diagram delineates the manner in which chronic financial deprivation adversely impacts both academic progression and individual well-being. The insufficiency of adequate living support thereby generates a high-stress milieu, which consequently disrupts consistent lecture attendance and induces cognitive fatigue, factors that directly contribute to diminished academic performance. Consequently, for the purpose of sustenance, students frequently resort to high-risk coping mechanisms, such as predatory micro-lending schemes and transactional interpersonal engagements. This observed phenomenon appears to indicate that the existing frozen allowance framework may ultimately undermine the core educational objectives inherent to public university scholarships.

5. Discussion

Objective 1: Nutritional Deprivation and Food Insecurity

The finding that 74% of non-residential government-sponsored students at Makerere University suffer from systemic food insecurity and regular meal skipping aligns with Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (Waterloo & Sen, 1999). Sen argues that real well-being is determined by an individual's capability to achieve basic functionings, such as being adequately nourished. At Makerere, the state's frozen allowance framework operates as a major barrier, stripping students of this foundational capability.

This severe food insecurity matches findings by Goldrick-Rab et al. (2018) in the United States and Van den Berg and Raubenheimer (2015) in South Africa, which demonstrated that financial aid packages frequently fail to protect low-income students from nutritional crises. However, while international students often have access to secondary safety nets like institutional food pantries or emergency welfare funds, Makerere students face an absolute institutional void, leaving them entirely vulnerable to Kampala's high food inflation (UBOS, 2024).

Furthermore, the widespread reliance on cheap, nutrient-poor street foods like *Kikomando* confirms Mbuthia et al.'s (2018) observations at the University of Nairobi, where cash-stipend models pushed students toward high-calorie, low-nutrient diets due to budget constraints. Transposed onto Scitovsky's Consumer Choice Theory (S., Tibor, 1976), this behavior reflects a survival-driven shift where long-term health considerations are set aside to satisfy immediate hunger.

This chronic nutritional deprivation causes widespread physical fatigue and reduced cognitive function, directly harming students' academic potential. The findings prove that providing tuition support without ensuring access to basic nutrition undermines the state's human capital goals. This reality underscores the need for an urgent policy overhaul to tie student welfare funding directly to real macroeconomic living standards.

Objective 2: Substandard Housing and Spatial Vulnerability

The concentration of non-residential government scholars within informal slum settlements like Kikoni and Kasubi reflects a pattern of structural privatization and spatial marginalization seen across public universities in Sub-Saharan Africa. This trend matches observations by Aluko (2011) at the University of Ibadan, where inadequate campus housing pushed the student population into unregulated, high-risk peripheral neighborhoods.

At Makerere, the absolute stagnation of the living stipend worsens this spatial vulnerability of the living stipend. While the private rental market in Kampala has experienced significant inflation over the past two decades (Tusiime et al., 2021), the student welfare allowance has remained unchanged, forcing students to accept poor housing quality and high security risks to avoid homelessness.

This reliance on overcrowded slum housing exposes students to frequent burglaries, property loss, and physical safety threats, validating Hubbard's (2008) arguments regarding the vulnerabilities of low-income students in unregulated private housing markets. In line with Sen's Capability Approach (Waterloo & Sen, 1999), living in unsafe environments represents a severe deprivation of basic security, creating constant anxiety that disrupts students' personal development and focus.

Additionally, long commutes from distant peripheral slums after evening lectures expose students to regular street crime and assaults, confirming Onyango's (2017) findings on the safety risks of off-campus student life in East Africa. These insights demonstrate that the student housing crisis is a direct structural consequence of state funding failures, which continue to push public scholars into dangerous living environments.

Objective 3: Psychological Distress and High-Risk Coping Mechanisms

The high rate of psychological distress among Makerere students, with 82% reporting regular anxiety regarding financial survival, validates Richardson et al.'s (2017) findings that persistent financial stress predicts poor student mental health. Through the lens of Scitovsky's theory (S., Tibor, 1976), the daily pressure of navigating extreme resource scarcity consumes students' cognitive bandwidth, creating a scarcity mindset that disrupts long-term academic focus and planning.

This psychological burden is intensified by the social reality of studying at an elite national institution while living in absolute material poverty, a dynamic that Nyanzi (2012) noted can cause deep feelings of isolation and low self-esteem among marginalized students.

The adoption of high-risk coping mechanisms, such as predatory digital micro-loans, sports betting, and transactional relationships, mirrors the survival strategies identified by Chimanikire et al. (2017) in public universities across Zimbabwe. These risky behaviors are not isolated personal choices; they are structural adaptations driven by an absolute deficit in state support.

As shown by Agyei and Gyimah (2021) in Ghana, when formal institutional safety nets are absent, students are forced to trade their personal safety and long-term well-being for immediate survival resources. Such a trade-off often precipitates high rates of academic absenteeism and a decline in performance; this phenomenon, in turn, suggests how financial exclusion may undermine the social mobility objectives of public higher education. This reality, therefore, appears to underscore a pressing imperative for comprehensive institutional reforms that integrate financial aid with mental health support systems.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest that the current student welfare allowance framework for non-residential government scholars at Makerere University exhibits severe structural deficiencies. The nominal stipend of UGX 93,000 per semester, unchanged for over two decades, has been rendered obsolete by urban inflation and the rising cost of living in Kampala. This resource deficit may precipitate a severe welfare crisis, potentially compelling vulnerable public scholars into profound food insecurity, substandard housing, and chronic psychological distress.

Viewed through the integrated frameworks of Scitovsky's Consumer Choice Theory and Sen's Capability Approach, the study suggests that the provision of tuition fees alone may not adequately ensure educational equity. The maintenance of frozen living subsidies by the state may expose underprivileged students to severe material deprivation, thereby potentially divesting them of the foundational capabilities, specifically, health, safety, and psychological stability, deemed requisite for academic success. Consequently, students may find themselves compelled to adopt high-risk coping mechanisms, which could compromise their safety, mental health, and academic persistence.

Ultimately, this sustained funding neglect appears to transform public scholarships from instruments of social mobility into milieus characterized by stress and exclusion. The contemporary welfare framework at Makerere University thus seems to inadequately protect basic human dignity. Without systematic interventions to adjust student living subsidies to real macroeconomic conditions, higher education in Uganda may, regrettably, perpetuate socio-economic inequality rather than effectuate its reduction.

6.2 Policy Recommendations

Addressed to the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Finance:

- **Stipend Indexing:** Immediately reform the student welfare funding framework by indexing the living allowance to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and current urban inflation trends. The stipend should be increased to adequately cover basic nutrition, housing, and domestic costs in Kampala, reflecting that current funding is often limited and insufficient for scholars (Nanvuma et al., 2025).
- **Direct Welfare Ring-Fencing:** The establishment of a dedicated, ring-fenced Higher Education Student Welfare Fund within the national budget appears crucial to safeguard living stipends from general institutional budgetary reductions and to ensure the timely disbursement of funds at the commencement of each academic semester.

To the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)

- **Off-Campus Housing Standardization:** The establishment and enforcement of a stringent Private Student Accommodation Code of Practice may be imperative for the regulation of off-campus student housing. The NCHE **could mandate** that all private facilities accommodating university students adhere to minimum standards concerning sanitation, fire safety, perimeter security, and equitable rental pricing.
- **Hostel Inspection Mandates:** Collaboration with municipal authorities is recommended to facilitate the conduct of annual safety and hygiene inspections within areas characterized by high student residential density, a process that **could consequently lead to** the cessation of operations for sub-standard tenements perceived to exploit vulnerable student populations.

To the Makerere University Administration

- **Subsidized Dining Hubs:** The establishment of university-managed, subsidized food hubs across campus could provide low-cost, nutritious meals to non-residential students, potentially reducing reliance upon street vendors, the offerings of which may occasionally present food safety challenges (Hairuddin, 2024; Rutaro et al., 2022).
- **Expanded Mental Health Networks:** The reinforcement of the university's counseling and guidance department, through the embedding of dedicated mental health officers within each college, may facilitate the provision of targeted psychological support, stress management, and financial counseling for students experiencing financial precarity.

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