



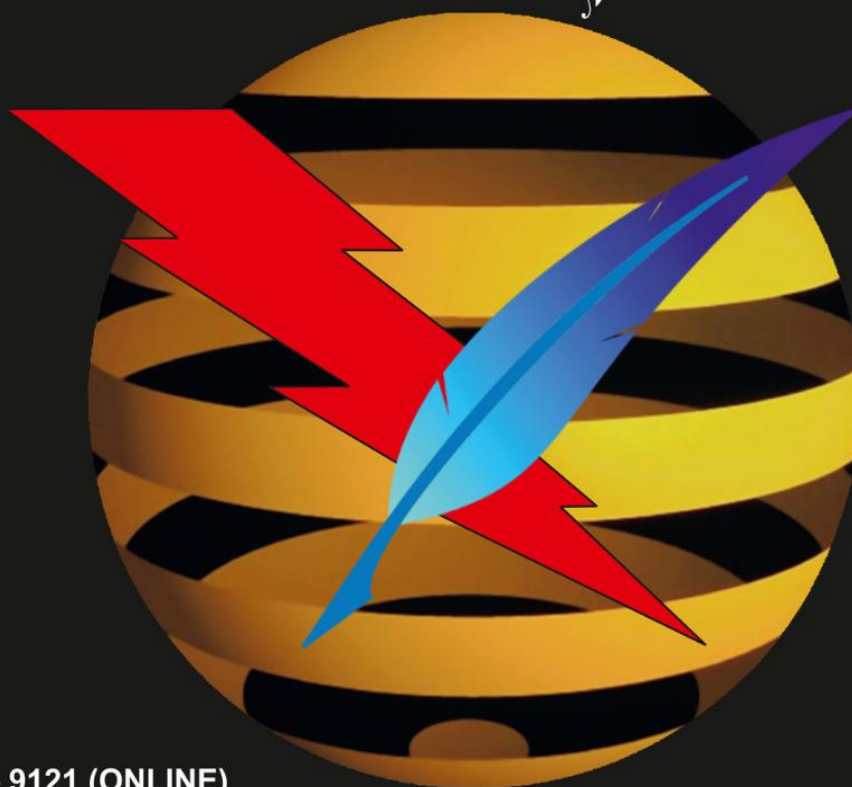
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THINKING BEYOND THE MORAL FOUNDATION OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION: KWAME GYEKYE IN PERSPECTIVE¹

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Abstract. *This paper examines the moral foundation of political corruption analysed by Kwame Gyekye with the goal of offering a pragmatic solution to the phenomenon. The aim is that, beyond the moral foundation, the pragmatic approach will aid the eradication, or considerably minimize the problem of political corruption in the human society. It posits that what most philosophers and social scientists write concerning the nature and extent of political corruption can be categorised as normative, which supports the view that political corruption is enshrined in morality. Looking beyond the realm of theory, the paper argues that there are practical ways to view the issue under consideration. The study submits that (i) the negative impacts which political corruption has on the society causes practical problems than moral, and (ii) that political corruption needs practical/pragmatic solutions than the moral/theoretical ones provided by Gyekye. The study adopts the method of conceptual analysis and clarification.*

Keywords: *Political Corruption, Moral Foundation, Practice, Human Society, Normative.*

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1. Introduction

The philosophical analysis of the subject of political corruption has checkered history. The history dates back, at least, to the era of Sophists, when the Committee of the Senate charged eight military generals that they were guilty of losing 25 ships and 400 men during the war of Athens with Sparta. The decision was that these generals who were charged with negligence should be brought to trial. When the persecutors threatened to add the name of Committee members to the list of generals, only Socrates stood his ground and the rest of the Committee capitulated. Apart from the fact that the history of political corruption can be traced to the era of the Sophists, it also has historical antecedent in some other cultures, particularly the African culture. That is, the historical analysis of political corruption is holistic. Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor, Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, Moses Mákindé, Claude Ake, Amilcar Cabral, Ngugi Wa 'Thiong 'o, Moses Òkè, Kwame Appiah, and Kwasi Wiredu discussed the nature of political corruption having Africa in mind. This means that political corruption is not limited to a particular culture or discourse.

There are two classical examples to show that political corruption cuts across cultures. One, scholars like Molefe, Ramose, Metz, Lougheed, Fámákinwá, Balogun, and Woldegiorgis have insisted that the way the African states have attributed the ultimate moral values which lies in the individual property or individualism to the community (i.e., communalism) shows a clear preference for the emergence of political corruption. Or, that the collapse of individualism into communitarianism by those supporting communitarian standards can only be achieved through political corruption. Thus, community-centred morality thrives at the expense of individual-centred morality (Balogun *et al.*, 2024, pp.1241-1242). And two, there was a time that the political corruption in Athens led by the Senate made sure Socrates was guilty by association, by being the teacher of traitors. By this time, "irritation had developed into distrust against Socrates, and that led to him being brought to trial on the charge that he was not worshipping the gods whom the State worships, and of corrupting the young" (Stumpf *et al.*, 2003, pp.44-45). This shows that political corruption has its basis in the kind of mindset which leaders have. The proof for the political corruption staged against Socrates prompted Plato to leave politics into philosophy. Plato saw the "inability of the Athenian democracy to produce great leaders, and saw also the way they treated one of its greatest citizens, Socrates" (Stumpf *et al.*, 2003, pp.47-48). Plato alludes to the existence of political corruption in Athens, especially, through the execution of Socrates. This made him disillusioned about politics, prompting him to divert



from an active life of public service, into teaching that “rigorous knowledge must be the proper training of the ruler” (Stumpf *et al.*, 2003, p.48). If the ruler fails to be properly trained, the society will be immersed into deep political corruption and could even corrupt the ruler.

Furthermore, the subject of political corruption also, has as traces, in the epochal movements from the middle or dark ages given the ways the Church governed the affairs of men and the State at that time, to the renaissance, and through the early modern to the contemporary era. Moreover, Plato had envisaged political corruption when he admits in his Political Philosophy, that “wars have their origin in desires which are the most fruitful source of evils both to individuals and the state” (Stumpf *et al.*, 2003, p.65). The implication of this is that those who control the state have developed desires which are strong enough to fuel political corruption to the extent of leading the people to unnecessary wars.

Political corruption has been a recurring theme for a very long time. In *The Republic*, Socrates discusses the knowledge of the political circumstances in which the conversation about the principles of politics took place. This, as Plato puts it, took place in the era of political decay (i.e., this decay was caused by corruption) of Athens, to the extent that Socrates and the chief interlocutors were greatly concerned with that decay and thinking of the restoration of political health (Strauss *et al.*, 1963, p.8). The conclusion seems disturbing: Socrates made radical proposals for reform, but the indications in the *Republic* is that the longed-for reformation is not likely to succeed on the political plane (i.e., that at the level of the State or community, reformation is no visible because of the level of political decay that has happened), meaning that the only possible reformation is that of individual man. One of the examples cited by Plato in the political decay that has engulfed the state is the way justice has been bastardized when it becomes the advantage of the stronger. He calls this the Savage Thesis of Justice. The other aspect of the decay or corruption is how “the rulers themselves need the art of persuasion in order to persuade their subjects that the laws, which are framed with exclusive regard to the benefits of the rulers, can also serve the benefits of the subjects” (Strauss *et al.*, 1963, p.13).

Apart from looking at the historical antecedent of the nature of political corruption, the objective of the study is to consider the level at which political corruption has gained prominence by considering the African part to it. This part is presented by Kwame Gyekye. His perspective or consideration takes political corruption to be so disturbing. He insists on tracing or identifying the moral aspect or foundation to the discourse on political corruption. The perspective from which he identified the problem of political corruption is that it is a moral pollution or problem.



This paper is divided into 4 main sections. While the first section considers Gyekye's account of political corruption, the second section focuses on political corruption in the politics of traditional African society. The third section discusses the moral circumstances of political corruption in connection with the substantive moral revolution, as well as commitment moral revolution. Meanwhile, the last section focuses on replacing the moral foundation of political corruption with pragmatic solutions from the African experience. This section discusses two specific arguments such as the external solution argument and the internal solution argument.

2. Kwame Gyekye on political corruption

At first, Gyekye sees political corruption as the kind of corruption that involves rulers and other public officials who run the affairs of a state or a political community (Gyekye, 1997, p.192). He believes the following: One, that the phenomenon of political corruption manifests itself more often in some societies than in others. Two, that political corruption is more widespread and pervasive in some societies than in others. And three, that it produces more devastating effects on some societies than on others. As much as these perspectives may be pointing towards a kind of truth, he streamlined them to a particular culture, the traditional setting of Africa. This leads to how he distinguishes between many themes as they concern or relate with limiting political corruption to Africa and morality.

In attempting to articulate what political corruption means, Gyekye says that political corruption refers to "the illegal, unethical, and unauthorized exploitation of one's political or official position for personal gain or advantage" (Gyekye, 1997, p.193). His reason is that political corruption is an act of corruption perpetrated against the state or its agencies by a person holding an official position in pursuit of his own private or personal profit. In another sense, he refers to the victim of political corruption as invariably the fortunes, resources, and interests of the state or the body politic. Political corruption, as he says, does not serve the ends of the state. This reiterates a kind of social virus. By this, he admits that political corruption serves the personal ends of individuals or group of individuals who involve themselves in it.

Gyekye highlights a number of things with which political corruption can be said to be associated with. One, it is associated with the acceptance of bribe. Two, it is associated with graft, fraud, nepotism, kickbacks, favoritism, and misappropriation of public funds. Four, public officials exploit their official positions for their own advantage. Five, public official like the head of state who stealthily and fraudulently takes huge sums of money from his state and



deposits them in foreign banks; the public official who receives a bribe would enjoin other public officials to be committing acts of political corruption.

Political corruption involves reciprocities between the public official and the other beneficiary of the corrupt act. In *The State as a Giant Person*, Plato posits that “our needs are not limited to our physical requirements, for our goal is not simply survival but a life higher than an animal’s” (Stumpf *et al.*, 2003, p.65). By this, Plato is asking those whom Gyekye seems to be referring to never to make political corruption a way of life. Gyekye warns that “the way a political system operates can give rise to political corruption” (Gyekye, 1997, p.194). The system of politics in which ascension to political office depends very much on the goodwill and financial contributions of some individuals to the electoral campaigns of a candidate for a political office, as Gyekye asserts, could help in creating some kind of understanding that the successful candidate will reciprocate those contributions with appropriate rewards of various kinds. (Gyekye, 1997, p.194). Plato believes that this kind of corruption can be removed from within the State “when the philosophic element in society could attain dominance” (Gyekye, 1997, p.194).

What is this philosophic element, espoused by Plato? It is a vantage-point from which we can discern in all cases what is just for a community or state and for individuals. (Stumpf *et al.*, 2003, p.67). This is described as follows: that, the human race will not be free of evils until either the stock of those who rightly and truly follow philosophy acquire political authority, or the class who have power in the cities be led by some dispensation of providence to become real philosophers (Stumpf *et al.*, 2003, p.67). This is the vantage-point; the point at which philosophy or philosophic element becomes what political leaders or rulers must adopt in their spirit, soul, body, and society to guide all human, social, rational, and political actions, activities, and/or endeavours. The issue which Gyekye has with Plato’s description is that the political system can corrupt an elected political official. When the public official decides to reward his electoral benefactors and others, he involves himself in political corruption.

The next question to ask is ‘under what social or political system can corruption thrive or flourish?’ The first response by Gyekye is that “political corruption can flourish under weak leadership”. This leads to the second point, with Gyekye seeing a social system as “an explanatory factor in the frequent incidence of political corruption” (Gyekye, 1997, p.194). The latter response prompted Gyekye’s attachment to how political corruption manifests itself in the traditional setting of Africa. The postcolonial Africa, he says, is undeniably among the worst



victims of political corruption (Gyekye, 1997, p.195). His reason can be seen in his perception of the postcolonial states. In the postcolonial states, he says that governments are generally perceived as distant or objective entities whose activities have little bearing on the welfare and the daily lives of the citizens, and to whose activities the citizens, in consequence, have very little ideological and emotional attachment (Gyekye, 1997, p.195).

If a social or political system can be a cause for political corruption, Gyekye is establishing another condition or factor, which he calls the poor economic circumstances. The poor economic circumstances of a country may also be noted as a causal factor in the incidence of political corruption. Such economic circumstances may lead to inflation and the erosion of salaries, which may in turn, depress the material or financial circumstances of public officials, making it impossible to make ends meet and to make ordinary life bearable (Gyekye, 1997, pp.196-197). This is the same perspective which John Jones admitted in his work *Multiculturalism and Welfare Reform*. His reason for instituting welfare reform is because political corruption causes poverty. This poverty disproportionately affects not only the people of colour but also women and children of all races and cultures (Jones, 1998, p.559). Moreover, Gyekye did not limit political corruption to poor nations and postcolonial African traditional societies or nations. It can also occur in wealthy nations. In rich nations, political corruption occurs throughout the various echelon of officialdom, infecting officials at all levels.

In spite of Gyekye's allusion to the fact that political corruption manifest itself in the traditional settings of Africa or that it is more peculiar to the postcolonial Africa, he connects this with what he later admits, that, "political corruption may be said to have insinuated itself into the culture of the people" (Gyekye, 1997, p.197). He posits that it would not be correct to speak of a culture of political corruption for several reasons: One, political corruption is not a purposively created cultural product having a value for the people of a society as a whole. And two, political corruption cannot be undertaken publicly; an act of political corruption is always a furtive act, a clandestine operation (Gyekye, 1997, p.198). The implication is that political corruption is not a culturally determined practice or norm, for not all the people, not even the public officials, who grow up in a culture come to internalize it, subsequently valuing and involving themselves in it.

Gyekye points out another causal factor for political corruption. As he says, this is not a culturally determined practice, which is as a result of the distinction he made between culture and society. The reason is premised on the prevalence and persistence of certain undesirable



acts, such as violence, that occur in frequently in human societies, which may prompt calling or speaking of the culture of violence. It is also puzzling that in most attempts to provide a causal explanation for the incidence of rampant political corruption, the moral circumstances are generally ignored or are mentioned only in passing, and are thus, regarded as peripheral to the phenomenon of political corruption. It is this moral circumstance that is up for discussion. But before the moral circumstance, he discussed political corruption in the politics of traditional Africa.

3. Political corruption in the politics of traditional African society

Gyekye's position on the nature or extent and limits of political corruption in the politics of traditional Africa points to the fact that political corruption is a feature, not only of colonial and postcolonial, but also of traditional African polity. This leads Gyekye to say that: the growth or advancement of political corruption was undoubtedly fostered by the colonial and postcolonial political systems with their more elaborate bureaucracies and complicated ways of achieving their goals. This prompted how political corruption aided the rise of fresh opportunities for illegitimate and immoral political, economic, and social gains. The traditional polity which operated within a less complex society evolved simple bureaucracies. Even so, it cannot at all be denied that political corruption does exist in the traditional systems of politics and administration in Africa. There is a great deal of evidence to indicate that corruption was rife among the traditional officialdom (Gyekye, 1997, pp.201-202).

The traditional African society is not free from political corruption. In the traditional African society, the offer of gifts to people in authority or in some respectable position in society is a common feature. The existence of the institution of sanctions is not only the attempt that has been made to check the growth of political corruption, but as Olúfemi Táíwò interrogates, "the rejuvenation of African agency and to making Africa able, once again, to govern itself and move in tandem with the world in humanity's march of progress, but the template from which this great future was to be fashioned was forged" (Taiwo, 2021, p.55). This is what led Gyekye to introduce the institution of sanctions. This is because political corruption is a moral problem, prompting a new satisfactory approach in dealing with the nature of corruption, looking for profound changes in the moral beliefs and behaviour of both the leadership and followership of the society.



4. The moral circumstances of political corruption

What prompted Gyekye's assertion that "political corruption is essentially or fundamentally a moral problem; a moral pollution of officialdom as well as of the wider society" is because it is a kind of corruption that infects individuals holding public office, while the victims are the resources, interests, and/or public fortunes (Gyekye, 1997, p.203). But in order to make sure that the moral circumstances that may prompt political corruption are no longer there, Gyekye says that "the political system or process must be improved, its weaknesses removed, economic situations be improved, and salaries be improved" (Gyekye, 1997, p.203).

Gyekye later admits that "none of the attempts at dealing with the problem of political corruption will eradicate it or considerably minimize it" (Gyekye, 1997, p.203). The reason for this, as he opines, is "because moral circumstances do not come to the fore in the causal explanations of the incidence of political corruption, but that the factor of morality does not also feature prominently either, in the attempts to deal with the problem, how to deal with the moral character of offenders has not often formed part of the arsenal of techniques advocated for fighting political corruption" (Gyekye, 1997, p.204).

What appears disturbing regarding the root cause of the moral circumstances of political corruption are the morally unacceptable patterns of public behaviour like greed, avarice, and an inordinate desire for ostentatious living which has been allowed to run berserk which blunts the moral visions of the people inside and outside the government. Thus, political corruption is fundamentally a moral problem. To resolve the problem of political corruption, Gyekye introduced the concept of moral revolution. Moral revolution, he says, is a revolution in morals (Gyekye, 1997, p.205). This moral revolution, he posits, has two features which are substantive and commitmental. Moral revolution itself, Gyekye insists, is specie of the concept of revolution. It is a revolution of morals. Morals, here, is known to be distinguished between moral belief and moral commitment. The former involves moral facts, it is a basis for the latter and prior to it, but it does not determine it. Thus, substantive moral revolution got its cue from moral belief and moral commitment, because these two senses of morality logically lead to revolution to this substantive revolution (Gyekye, 1997, p.206).

5. The substantive moral revolution

This type of revolution, as Gyekye puts it, involves fundamental shifts in the existing moral paradigms or moral conceptual schemes and the adoption of new ones. This kind of revolution



insists that the old moral order or scheme radically change and yield place to a new order. The moral revolution of this kind is a fact of moral change. This does not mean that every kind of moral change constitutes moral revolution in the substantive sense. A moral change may be superficial, but profoundly affecting the existing basic moral structure, coming from a far-reaching moral change that affects the existing moral structure in a fundamental way which can appropriately be described as moral revolution (Gyekye, 1997, p.206). Substantive moral revolution may be enmeshed not only in radical changes in the religious, but even more markedly in radical changes in socio-political revolution, in the transformation of the existing socio-political structure.

Gyekye says that the reason for the basic transformation of the existing socio-political structure is that every socio-political is basically a moral issue. The ultimate impulse of this issue is that it leads to socio-political revolution, which can generally be said to be moral. The nature of this morality is the concern for human interests and welfare (Gyekye, 1997, p.207). The motivating factors of this socio-political revolution is what makes socio-political revolutionaries to stand against widespread official corruption, the self-aggrandizement of rulers and public officials, the glaring social injustices and economic inequalities, the concentration of wealth of the nation in the hands of the selected few to the detriment of the well-being of the broad masses of the population, and so on.

Substantive moral revolution, according to Gyekye, may be an unconscious process, which was not produced by an individual or a group of individuals at a specific time as such, but may result from far-reaching changes in socio-economic circumstances. This type of revolution may be a genuine response to the inadequacies of the existing moral beliefs and values. Such a response may be a conscious one, when it is authored or produced by an individual or a group of individuals disillusioned and disenchanted with the conventional morality produced by the socio-political system to which they belong because they consider it inadequate to new social realities (Gyekye, 1997, p.208). The existing moral beliefs and values, which substantive moral revolution describes, are explicitly held as inadequate to a particular social reality.

6. Commitmental moral revolution

This refers to the type of revolution which causes fundamental changes in the attitudes and responses of individual members of a society toward the moral beliefs, values, and principles of the society. It involves the adoption of new attitudinal or orientational paradigms with respect



to the existing morals. It involves making a new and positive commitment to known and accepted moral rules and principles. Gyekye makes it clear by admitting that this form of revolution can be affected either by augmenting the amount of moral knowledge we possess or by giving our moral knowledge a more precise and coherent formulation, or most probably, by both (Gyekye, 1997, p.210).

Gyekye's way of knowing or understanding the commitmental moral revolution is simple: a man may know and may even accept a universal moral rule such as that, it is wrong to collect bribes in the course of the performance of his official duties. But he may fail to apply this universal rule to a particular moral situation he is confronted with (Gyekye, 1997, p.210). One direct implication of this is that such a man is not able to transit from knowledge to action. However, a commitmental moral revolution, for Gyekye, can be affected neither by augmenting the compendium of our moral knowledge, nor by making most acute, our awareness of universal moral rules (Gyekye, 1997, p.211). In Gyekye's words, "it must be borne in mind that the successful operation of the socio-legal institutions of a society requires demonstration of very high moral standards in those men and women who run them. If those officials who are to run the affairs of our society and who are to enforce the prescriptions of the law are in themselves corrupt to the core, how can the law itself be enforced?" (Gyekye, 1997, p.213).

It is noteworthy that the combination of substantive and commitmental forms of revolution could have been influenced by or could have influenced a notable scholar like Andrew Carnegie. In his work *Wealth*, he admits that "the problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and the poor in harmonious relationship" (Carnegie, 1998, p.587). This first point of call for this bond is the total elimination of political corruption. Political corruption, he says, has created a clear-cut demarcation between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborers. For him, this measures the change which has come into civilization (Carnegie, 1998, p.587).

7. Replacing the moral foundation of political corruption with pragmatic solutions: the African experience

In the previous sections, we have pointed out the major claims of Gyekye's moral foundation of political corruption. We have also considered the moral/theoretical solution that Gyekye offered to the problem of political corruption and discovered that the problem still persists on a large scale. However, beyond the moral/theoretical solution, the pragmatic solutions to the



problem of political corruption should also be given a consideration in order to considerably reduce the problem.

Gyekye's submission remains theoretically relevant. As he says "little, if any stress, has been put on the moral circumstances of corruption, morality lies at the core of the phenomenon of political corruption. Thus, for me, political corruption is fundamentally a moral problem" (Gyekye, 1997, p.215). The question that easily comes to mind is, what aspect of morality did he tie the so-called moral problem to? The question is answered by the virtue of the fact that he tied morality/theoretical normative aspect. In our view, the pragmatic step to replacing Gyekye's theoretical solution (commitmental moral revolution) is to leave the realm of theory to practicalizing some steps for the eventual termination or considerable reduction in political corruption. Our submission in this paper is that practically relevant solutions to the problem of political corruption could be external or internal.

8. External solution argument

This argument involves the need for the ex-colonizers and international organizations to join the domestic civil societies in the fight against political corruption rather than aiding it. Essentially, this is about making sincere attempts to stop what makes political corruption thrive. Political corruption thrives more when most of the proceeds of the corruption are taken away from the country where the political leader leads the people. Examples abound. Former president Mobutu of Congo DR, General Sani Abacha of Nigeria, and host of others corrupt African leaders laundered money stolen from the treasuries of their various nations and stashed them away in foreign accounts with the help of some foreigners.

Gyekye appears to have limited the scope of his analysis to pointing out what the problems of political corruption are by citing instances in Africa. However, Gyekye's overconcentration on the postcolonial Africa is alarming. The fact is that, political corruption is neither peculiarly African, nor traditionally African way of life. Gyekye seems to have forgotten that many African nations have been handed over, at one point in time or the other, to European or Western lords, who superintend or provide hegemonic supervision over the political, economic, and psychological affairs of these African nations. Thus, political corruption may have been indirectly put into the political affairs of the postcolonial Africa as a virus, probably to stop Africa from becoming fully developed. That is why, for a scholar like D.A. Masolo, the postcolonial quest for many African nations may relate to the problem of political corruption,



but the long period of Western domination of Africa and the subsequent request for independence by many African nations could have prompted the sowing of the seed of corruption or discord whether political, economic, or mental into the African way of life.

According to Masolo, for quite good reasons, “one of the dominant themes of postcolonial theory is the issue of identity” (Masolo, 1997, p. 283). Masolo concentrated on this issue largely because he was able to understand that if the issue of identity is resolved, it is most likely that other issues or problems like political corruption will follow suit (i.e., be resolved). Masolo understands the nature of the task at hand by admonishing that “colonialism is judged overwhelmingly for the political, social, and cultural ills associated with it” (Masolo, 1997, p.285). This, indirectly, is the genesis of corruption sown into the minds of the Africa people especially the greedy ones. It started during colonial contact and when some of the colonizers were forcefully ejected or asked to leave. They had to leave that virus behind. Thus, the problem now became a social problem that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the African people. It is not surprising that Olanipekun Olusola argues that the antidote to this problem of political corruption is right social reorientation (Olanipekun, 2021, p.3). This could also be a pragmatic solution to the problem by unlearning borrowed corrupt practices and relearning the traditional value of integrity that Africa is known for. Similarly, the issue of political corruption became so obvious, as Masolo can be interpreted, when “the overthrow of colonialism was to be replaced with another, and there was a pull toward the objective African identity” (Masolo, 1997, p.285). The corruption became the virus to forestall this attempt.

In fact, if we can sincerely interpret or acknowledge Masolo’s stance that “because of the deeply political gist of the colonial/postcolonial discourse, we have come to think of our identities as natural rather than imagined and politically driven” (Masolo, 1997, p. 285). Consequently, it could be argued that political corruption was deliberately implanted into the African affairs in order to inhibit its development. Even as at today, the colonial powers, through agencies like IMF, World Bank, CIA, could influence some corrupt African personnel to remove governments from power, continue the allegiance to the West, and keep controlling the resources of many African nations. Thus, through alliance with some corrupt African leaders, political corruption has been a tool in the hand of the ex-colonizers to sustain their dominance or presence. Similarly, such corrupt activities also include serving as global or regional watchdog or castigating and arresting anyone who wants to stand against their control. In other



words, it pays the ex-colonial powers to allow or keep politically corrupt official or officials in government in order to perpetuate their continuous control or dominance.

9. Internal solution argument

The second argument is the internal solution argument. This argument focuses on the required internal steps that ought to be taken in order to address the problem of political corruption. One of the steps is to make sure that the political, economic, social, and personal antecedents or life of anyone who wants to become a public official be sincerely laid bare for total public scrutiny. Admittedly, one important problem that this perspective may face is the issue of the right to privacy. But if the individual who is interested in becoming a public official wants to keep his private life, he/she should be advised withdraw. Anyone willing to serve the public must be properly scrutinized for the people to know what they are choosing. Furthermore, anyone interested in serving the public should be made to sign an undertaking. The purpose is to enforce the practice of social responsibility, where the public official is held liable or responsible for all forms of corrupt practices under his/her watch. Part of the content of this responsibility is that such corrupt official should vacate the seat and be jailed for a considerable number of years. In essence, the pragmatic or practical step towards replacing Gyekye's moral solution to political corruption is to make sure that development becomes looking inward and not outward.

10. Conclusion

The paper admitted that a pragmatic or practical step can be taken to curb or terminate political corruption. The pragmatic step may appear overwhelming, but the love for one's society or State should propel embracing the practical step to remove political corruption. At least, looking at the history of political corruption suggests that the ancient Athenian polis had practiced it causing the conviction of both Socrates and Aristotle, and leading Plato from politics to philosophy. As a result, the paper replaced the moral basis for political corruption analysed by Kwame Gyekye in "Political Corruption: A Moral Pollution" with pragmatic solutions. The aim was that this will relegate the moral basis of corruption in the human society. It posited that what most social scientists write concerning the nature, extent, and limits of political corruption can be categorised as normative, which in turn supports the view that political corruption has moral basis for its course. And that most of the issues raised by Gyekye to support the moral basis of political corruption are not actually morally situated, but were unsolicited practical ways to view political corruption. The study submitted that the negative impacts which political



corruption has on the society including the future causes practical problems than moral. The study adopted the method of conceptual analysis and clarification.

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COMMUNITY POLICING AND SECURITY ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA¹

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Abstract. *This study examined the impact of community policing on security administration in Akwa Ibom State, focusing on how a problem-solving approach, police-community partnerships, and organizational transformation influenced security outcomes. The research was grounded in Social Resource Theory, which emphasized the importance of establishing a collaborative and supportive relationship between the police and the community. Using both documentary method and open-ended interview the data gathered provided a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between community policing and security issues in Nigeria with a focus on Akwa Ibom State. The objectives were to examine the effect of problem-solving approaches, the impact of police-community partnerships, and the influence of organizational transformation on the effectiveness of security administration. The findings indicated that community policing, when integrated with proactive problem-solving and active community engagement, significantly enhanced security outcomes. It was recommended that security agencies in Akwa Ibom State prioritize regular training on community relations, invest in building partnerships with local stakeholders, and support local vigilante groups in ways that aligned with legal standards and promoted mutual accountability.*

Keywords: *Community Policing, Security Administration, Police-Community Partnership, Problem-Solving, Organizational Transformation.*

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1. Introduction

Community policing has gained global recognition as a strategic approach to enhancing security administration by fostering collaboration between police forces and local communities (Whitaker, 1980). This model emphasizes proactive engagement, problem-solving, and decentralization of police operations, moving away from the traditional reactive policing methods that often fail to address underlying community safety issues (Goldstein, 1979; Kelling & Moore, 1988). The core idea of community policing is to build trust between law enforcement and the public, thereby improving public safety and preventing crime through active community involvement. In Nigeria, the concept of community policing was introduced to address the country's escalating security challenges, which include armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, and communal violence (Nwagboso, 2012; Ojo, 2016). The traditional policing model in Nigeria, characterized by a centralized command structure and limited community interaction, has been increasingly criticized for its ineffectiveness in managing these complex security issues. This has led to a growing consensus on the need for a community-oriented approach to improve security outcomes across the country.

In Nigeria, the conventional policing approach has proven inadequate in addressing the growing insecurity (Salawi, 2010). Traditional methods, characterized by their centralized nature and lack of community engagement, have struggled to curb rising crime rates effectively (Kpae and Adishi, 2017). This inefficacy is compounded by widespread mistrust between the police and the public, limited resources, and the overly centralized nature of law enforcement operations. The police force's reputation for being distant, corrupt, and unresponsive has further hindered its ability to forge essential community partnerships necessary for effective crime prevention and intervention (Nwaubani, 2014). Consequently, communities have often turned to self-help measures, including the formation of vigilante groups, which, while well-intentioned, sometimes exacerbate the problem by operating outside legal frameworks (Okeshola and Mudiare, 2013).

In response to these persistent challenges which is not peculiar to police administration, the concept of community policing has emerged as a potential remedy for enhancing security administration in Nigeria (Ordu and Nnam, 2017). Community policing promotes a localized and collaborative approach, advocating for closer cooperation between the police and community members to identify, prevent, and address security issues.



Despite the promising initiatives, the implementation of community policing in Akwa Ibom State is yet to create expected results. Akwa Ibom State just as Nigeria as a whole continues to grapple with a multifaceted and persistent security crisis that threatens the stability (Adagba *et al.*, 2012), economic development, and social cohesion of the nation. The country has witnessed a troubling escalation in violent crimes, including terrorism, banditry, armed robbery, kidnapping, and communal clashes. These escalating security challenges have underscored the limitations of traditional policing methods, which are often reactive, centralized, and detached from the communities they serve. This study seeks to explore the role of community policing in enhancing security administration in Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- a) To examine how organizational transformation affects security administration in Akwa Ibom State;
- b) To assess how community policing enhances police-community partnership in Akwa Ibom State;
- c) To examine the extent to which problem-solving approach affects security administration in Akwa Ibom State.

The work proposes that:

- (i) The success of community policing Akwa Ibom State is a function, organizational transformation.
- (ii) Police-community partnership is likely to enhance success of community policing in Akwa Ibom State.
- (iii) Problem solving approach tends to positively affect community policing in Akwa Ibom State.

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research method to gather comprehensive data and analyze the relationship between community policing, security challenges, and the role of local vigilante groups. A thorough review of existing literature on community policing, security issues, and local vigilante groups in Nigeria was conducted, drawing from scholarly articles, books, reports,



policy documents, and other relevant sources to identify key concepts, theories, and empirical studies related to the topic.

In addition, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including police officers, community members, local vigilante group leaders, and government officials. These interviews provided valuable insights into their experiences, perceptions, and roles in community policing and addressing security challenges (Sarantakos, 1998; Denscombe, 2011). Direct observations were also carried out in some State like Akwa Ibom, focusing on the activities and operations of local vigilante groups, their interactions with community members, and their collaboration with formal law enforcement agencies. The data collected were analyzed using content analysis techniques. This involved examining interview transcripts, field notes, official reports, media articles, and other qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the historical, legal, and operational aspects of community policing, security challenges, and the involvement of local vigilante groups (Ermann, 1977).

3. Conceptual framework

Community policing has emerged as a significant paradigm in modern policing strategies, focusing on the collaboration between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the understanding that security is not solely the responsibility of the police but requires the active participation of the community (Igbuzor, 2013). This framework considers the various definitions, principles, and practices of community policing, particularly as they relate to the Nigerian context.

Community policing is a philosophy and organizational strategy that promotes a partnership between the police and the community to proactively address the conditions that give rise to public safety issues, including crime, social disorder, and fear of crime (Bayley, 2005; Okiro, 2007; Oikhala, 2021). It is built on the premise that the police can improve public safety and community trust by working collaboratively with local residents and other stakeholders to identify and solve problems at the community level. One of the most widely accepted definitions of community policing is provided by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) in the United States (Oyakhire, 2010), which defines it as “a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime” (COPS, 2014). This definition



highlights the importance of problem-solving and partnership as key components of community policing.

According to Trojanowicz (1994) community policing is a philosophy of comprehensive and personalized policing, where the same officer is assigned to patrol and work within a specific area for an extended period. This officer operates from a decentralized location and collaborates proactively with citizens to identify and resolve issues. In essence, community policing involves both the police integrating themselves into the community and responding to its needs, as well as the community taking an active role in its own safety and supporting law enforcement efforts.

The concept of community policing is based on several core principles. First, it emphasizes the decentralization of police services, allowing officers to work more closely with the communities they serve (Goldstein, 1990). Decentralization enables the police to be more responsive to the specific needs and concerns of local communities, rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach to law enforcement. Second, community policing encourages proactive problem-solving, where the police and the community work together to identify the root causes of crime and disorder and develop strategies to address them before they escalate (Skogan, 2006). This proactive approach contrasts with the traditional reactive model of policing, which often focuses on responding to incidents after they have occurred.

Another critical aspect of community policing is the emphasis on building trust and legitimacy between the police and the public. According to Tyler (2004), trust in law enforcement is essential for effective policing, as it encourages community members to cooperate with the police, share information, and participate in joint problem-solving efforts. In the context of Nigeria, where there is often significant distrust between the police and the public due to issues of corruption, abuse of power, and inefficiency, building trust is particularly crucial for the success of community policing initiatives.

In addition to these principles, community policing also involves a shift in the role of the police from being primarily law enforcers to being community partners and problem solvers. This shift requires a change in the police organizational culture, training, and performance evaluation systems to support the new roles and responsibilities associated with community policing (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). For instance, officers are encouraged to engage in community outreach activities, participate in neighborhood meetings, and collaborate with other community-based organizations to address public safety issues.



The adoption of community policing has been recognized as a crucial step towards addressing the country's complex security challenges. The Nigerian government, through the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), has made several efforts to institutionalize community policing, including the establishment of community policing committees and the introduction of community policing initiatives in various states (Alemika, 2013). However, the implementation of community policing in Nigeria has faced several challenges, such as inadequate resources, lack of public awareness, resistance and corruption within the police force. Despite these challenges, community policing remains a viable strategy for improving security administration in Nigeria, particularly in fostering better relationships between the police and the public and in enhancing the overall effectiveness of policing efforts.

Security administration in Nigeria is a complex and multifaceted endeavor, shaped by the country's diverse socio-political landscape, historical legacies, and contemporary challenges. The Nigerian security apparatus is primarily composed of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the military, and various paramilitary organizations. Each of these institutions plays a distinct role in maintaining internal security, law and order, and safeguarding the nation against external threats.

The concept of security administration encompasses the systematic management and oversight of security measures, policies, and practices within an organization or governmental entity. It involves planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources and personnel to ensure the protection of assets, information, and individuals from various threats and risks. In the contemporary context, security administration has evolved to address a wide range of challenges, including cyber-security threats, terrorism, organized crime, and natural disasters. According to Schneier (2023), effective security administration requires a holistic approach that integrates physical, digital, and human elements to create a robust security ecosystem. This multi-faceted approach is crucial in an era where threats are increasingly complex and interconnected.

Security administration encompasses several key components. First, it involves risk assessment and management, which entails identifying potential threats, evaluating their likelihood and potential impact, and developing strategies to mitigate or eliminate these risks. A study by Johnson *et al.* (2022) emphasizes the importance of continuous risk assessment in security administration, noting that threat landscapes are dynamic and require constant vigilance and adaptation. Another critical aspect of security administration is policy development and



implementation. This includes creating comprehensive security policies, procedures, and guidelines that align with organizational goals and legal requirements. Albrechtsen and Hovden (2021) argue that effective security policies must be clear, enforceable, and regularly updated to address emerging threats and technological advancements. Training and awareness programme form an integral part of security administration. These initiatives aim to educate employees, stakeholders, and relevant parties about security risks, best practices, and their roles in maintaining a secure environment. Research by Zhang and Li (2024) demonstrates that organizations with robust security awareness programme experience fewer security incidents and recover more quickly from breaches when they do occur.

4. Components of community policing

Community policing is built on the principle that the closer and more connected the police are to the communities they serve, the more effective they will be in preventing crime rather than merely responding to it after it has occurred. To achieve this mission, community policing comprises three key components: Organizational Transformation, Police-Community Partnership, and Problem-Solving. These components work together to create a holistic approach to law enforcement that is proactive, collaborative, and responsive to the unique needs of each community.

4.1. Organizational transformation

Organizational transformation refers to the fundamental changes in the structure, management, and culture of a police force required in implementing community policing effectively. This transformation involves decentralizing decision-making processes, empowering officers to take initiative in their assigned communities, and restructuring the police organization to prioritize community engagement over traditional enforcement models. For example, in Lagos State, Nigeria, the Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Corps (LNSC) was established as part of the state's broader efforts to restructure its policing strategies towards a community-oriented approach. The LNSC operates under a decentralized model, allowing officers to work closely with local communities, gather intelligence, and provide a visible presence in neighborhoods. This shift has contributed to a more responsive and proactive policing system, tailored to the specific security needs of different communities within Lagos (CLEEN Foundation, 2014).

Furthermore, organizational transformation requires a shift in the internal culture of police forces, emphasizing the importance of building trust and legitimacy within the community.



Police departments across Nigeria, such as those in Anambra and Ekiti states, have started incorporating community policing principles into their training programmes, focusing on enhancing officers' communication skills, cultural sensitivity, and ethical standards. This transformation is crucial for fostering a police force that is more attuned to the needs and concerns of the communities it serves.

4.2. Police-community partnership

Another key component of community policing is the establishment of strong, collaborative partnerships between the police and the community. These partnerships are based on mutual trust, respect, and shared responsibility for public safety. The idea is that by working together, the police and community members can identify and address security issues more effectively than either could alone. One notable example of successful police-community partnerships in Nigeria is the involvement of traditional rulers and local vigilante groups in policing efforts. In many rural areas, such as those in the Northern and Southeastern regions of Nigeria, local vigilante groups have been integrated into the formal policing framework, working alongside the police to maintain security. These groups, often composed of respected community members, provide valuable local knowledge and have been instrumental in preventing crimes such as cattle rustling and communal clashes (Alemika, 2013).

In urban areas, initiatives such as the community policing committees in Lagos and Rivers states have provided platforms for regular dialogue between the police and community members. These committees involve representatives from various segments of the community, including religious leaders, business owners, and youth groups, who work together with the police to identify and address security concerns. These partnerships have been credited with reducing crime rates in areas like Ikorodu in Lagos, where community-police collaboration helped dismantle notorious criminal gangs (Nigerian Police Force, 2020).

4.3. Problem-solving

Problem-solving is one the essential component of community policing. This approach focuses on identifying and addressing the root causes of crime and disorder rather than simply responding to incidents as they occur. Problem-solving in community policing involves analyzing patterns of criminal activity, understanding the social conditions that contribute to crime, and developing targeted strategies to address these issues. For instance, in Enugu State, the police collaborated with community leaders to address the rising issue of drug abuse among



youths in certain neighborhoods. Through community meetings and workshops, the police and community members identified the underlying factors contributing to this problem, such as unemployment and lack of recreational facilities. The police then worked with local government authorities to implement programmes that provided job training and established youth centers, which helped reduce drug-related crimes in the area (CLEEN Foundation, 2014).

Another example of effective problem-solving in community policing is the “Safe School Initiative” launched in response to the spate of kidnappings in schools across Northern Nigeria. This initiative involved a collaborative effort between the police, school authorities, parents, and local communities to enhance security measures in and around schools. By addressing the specific vulnerabilities that made schools targets for kidnappers, such as inadequate fencing and poor lighting, the initiative has helped to reduce the incidence of school-related abductions (Amnesty International, 2020).

4.4. Theoretical underpinnings

Policing through the community is necessary to strengthen the security architecture of any society. Policing is generally seen as the process and intervention that ensures the maintenance of law and order in the society. However, contemporary thoughts in community policing are premised on three core areas: citizens’ involvement, problem solving and organizational transformation. Citizens’ involvement resonates with Normative Sponsorship Theory of Community Policing (Tiedke *et al.*, 1975). This theory posits that cooperation and the people’s goodwill are conditions precedent and necessary factor for a harmonious community or society. A more profound theory of community policing is the Social Resource theory by Wong (2008). The theory is premised on the functions of the police, the relationships between the police and the people and lastly, the reasons the people need the police. The social resource theory exempts and exonerates the State from the incidences of crime and criminality. Crimes and criminalities are acts of individuals that may have been challenged by lack and needs that are not met which may be occasioned by poverty or greed. The theory also posits that crimes and criminalities are aided by police inefficiency (Yero *et al.*, 2012). The social resonance theory sees the police as a social resource that ought to bridge some of the challenges of the people.

5. Community policing in security administration

Community policing has emerged as a critical strategy in modern security administration, particularly in societies facing complex and persistent security challenges. As a policing



philosophy, community policing emphasizes the importance of building strong relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. This approach seeks to shift the role of the police from being solely enforcers of the law to being partners in maintaining public safety and order. The role of community policing in security administration is multifaceted, involving crime prevention, fostering trust, enhancing information gathering, and promoting collaboration between the police and the public.

i. Crime Prevention and Reduction

One of the primary roles of community policing in security administration is crime prevention. Traditional policing models often focus on reacting to crimes after they occur. In contrast, community policing adopts a proactive stance, aiming to prevent crime through early intervention and addressing the underlying social conditions that contribute to criminal behavior (Goldstein, 1990). By engaging with community members, police officers can identify potential issues before they escalate into serious crimes. For instance, regular community patrols, neighborhood meetings, and collaboration with local organizations can help police officers understand specific community needs and develop tailored strategies to address them.

In Nigeria, there have been notable instances where community policing has played a pivotal role in crime prevention. For example, in Lagos State, the Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Corps (LNSC), a community policing initiative, was established to assist the police in curbing crime in the state. The LNSC officers, who are often recruited from local communities, work closely with the police to gather intelligence and provide early warnings about criminal activities. This initiative has contributed to the reduction of crime rates in various neighborhoods, particularly in areas previously known for high levels of criminal activity, such as Mushin and Oshodi (Alemika, 2013).

In recent time, Akwa Ibom State government under the current administration launched a security outfit called “Ibom Community Watch on the 14th December, 2023. The Ibom Community Watch involves the establishment of local security networks in communities throughout Akwa Ibom State. These networks consist of trained community members who work closely with law enforcement agencies to monitor and report suspicious activities. The initiative also emphasizes collaboration between the government, traditional rulers, and residents to ensure a proactive and collective approach to community security. Another example is the community policing initiative in Enugu State, where the Enugu State Command launched a community policing advisory committee. This committee comprises traditional rulers, religious



leaders, youth leaders, and other stakeholders who work with the police to identify and address security challenges in their communities. The initiative has been credited with reducing incidents of kidnapping and armed robbery in the state by fostering greater cooperation between the police and the community (Nwaubani, 2020).

ii. Building trust and legitimacy

Trust and legitimacy are crucial elements in effective security administration. Without public trust, law enforcement agencies struggle to gain the cooperation necessary to maintain order and ensure justice. Community policing plays a vital role in building and sustaining this trust by fostering a sense of partnership between the police and the community (Tyler, 2004). When community members perceive the police as allies who are genuinely concerned about their well-being, they are more likely to report crimes, provide valuable information, and assist in crime prevention efforts.

In the Nigerian context, where public trust in the police is often low due to corruption, abuse of power, and inefficiency, community policing offers a pathway to rebuilding these fractured relationships. For instance, the introduction of the “Police Public Relations Committees” (PPRC) in various states, such as Kano and Rivers, has been instrumental in improving relations between the police and the public. These committees serve as a platform for dialogue between the police and the community, allowing residents to voice their concerns and grievances while providing the police with feedback on their performance. This engagement has helped to restore public confidence in the police force, particularly in areas where distrust was previously widespread (CLEEN Foundation, 2014). Additionally, in Ekiti State, the community policing initiative has been tailored to address the specific needs of rural communities. The “Farmers Protection Corps,” established by the state government in collaboration with local police, focuses on protecting farmers from herdsmen attacks, a significant security issue in the region. This initiative has not only enhanced the security of rural areas but also strengthened the relationship between the police and the farming community, leading to increased cooperation and trust (Oladunjoye, 2020).

iii. Enhancing information gathering

Effective security administration relies heavily on the ability of law enforcement agencies to gather accurate and timely information. Community policing enhances this aspect by creating open lines of communication between the police and the public. Community members are often



the first to notice suspicious activities or potential threats, and their willingness to share this information with the police can be crucial in preventing crime and ensuring public safety (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). In Nigeria, community policing has significantly improved the flow of information between the police and the public. For example, in Kaduna State, the establishment of the “Kaduna Vigilante Service” as part of the state’s community policing efforts has been instrumental in gathering intelligence on criminal activities. The vigilante members, who are often well-known in their communities, work closely with the police to identify and report potential security threats. This collaboration has been particularly effective in rural areas, where the formal police presence is limited, and has led to the arrest of several criminal gangs involved in cattle rustling and banditry (Murtala, 2019).

Similarly, in Edo State, the “Edo Security Network,” a community policing initiative launched by the state government, has improved information gathering and sharing between the police and local communities. The network comprises community volunteers who assist the police in monitoring their neighborhoods and reporting suspicious activities. This initiative has led to the apprehension of several criminals involved in armed robbery, kidnapping, and cult-related violence, demonstrating the critical role of community policing in enhancing security through effective information gathering (Okafor, 2021).

iv. Promoting collaboration and partnership

Community policing also plays a crucial role in promoting collaboration and partnership between the police, other government agencies, and community organizations. Security administration is a collective effort that extends beyond the police force, requiring the involvement of various stakeholders to address complex security issues effectively. Community policing fosters this collaborative approach by encouraging the police to work closely with local governments, schools, religious institutions, and non-governmental organizations to create comprehensive security strategies (Rosenbaum, 1994).

In Nigeria, the implementation of community policing has seen the formation of community policing committees, where members of the public, local leaders, and police officers come together to discuss and address security concerns. For example, in Oyo State, the “Oyo State Security Network Agency” (Amotekun Corps) was established as a collaborative effort between the state government, traditional rulers, and local communities to tackle insecurity in the state. The Amotekun Corps, which operates as a community policing outfit, works in partnership with the Nigeria Police Force to address various security challenges, including armed robbery,



kidnapping, and herdsmen attacks. This collaboration has been credited with improving the overall security environment in the state and has been hailed as a model for other states in the region (Oluwasegun, 2021). Another example is the “EbubeAgu Security Outfit” in the Southeast region of Nigeria, which was established as a regional community policing initiative by the governors of the five Southeast states. This security outfit works in collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies to combat crime in the region. The formation of Ebube Agu has led to increased cooperation between the police and local communities, resulting in a more coordinated approach to addressing security challenges in the region (Nwabueze, 2021).

Community policing plays a critical role in security administration by promoting crime prevention, building trust and legitimacy, enhancing information gathering, and fostering collaboration between the police and the public. The examples from various states across Nigeria demonstrate the effectiveness of community policing in addressing specific security challenges and improving the overall security environment.

6. Organizational transformation within the police force

The study found that organizational transformation within the police force is essential to support the principles of community policing. Government officials and stakeholders acknowledged that a shift toward a more transparent, accountable, and community-oriented police force is vital for community policing to succeed. According to Public Relations Theory, fostering strong relationships between police and community requires organizational support that prioritizes accountability and the community’s welfare (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). However, many officers noted resistance to change within certain ranks and the limited emphasis on community policing principles in existing training programmes. Officers interviewed expressed concerns that, although community policing has gained traction in Nigeria, the institutional structure of the police force does not yet fully support these principles. They highlighted the need for organizational reforms that would prioritize community engagement, integrate community feedback into policing strategies, and promote officers who demonstrate a commitment to community-centered values.

Some police officers suggested that periodic leadership training could help transform organizational culture to better align with community policing objectives. Research supports this approach, showing that when police officers are encouraged to engage with the community



and are rewarded for doing so, they are more likely to adopt practices that emphasize transparency and responsiveness (Goldstein, 1990). Implementing these reforms would promote a culture of accountability within the police force and ensure that officers prioritize community welfare in their operations.

The discussion and analysis underscore that community policing holds significant potential for enhancing security administration in Nigeria. While the community policing model faces challenges, such as resource constraints, lack of training, and existing mistrust, the collaboration between law enforcement, local communities, and vigilante groups demonstrated notable benefits for security outcomes. Effective community policing requires a sustained commitment to fostering police-community partnerships, implementing organizational reforms, and supporting local vigilance efforts within the bounds of legality and accountability. By addressing these areas, Nigeria could further develop a community-oriented security strategy that promotes mutual trust, efficiency, and safety.

7. Police-community partnerships and trust building

A central component of community policing is building trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve, as mutual trust is essential for collaboration and information sharing. Interviews with both police officers and community members underscored that such partnerships are critical to successful community policing efforts in Akwa Ibom. Through joint initiatives and the support of local vigilante groups, communities have been empowered to participate in their security, providing valuable insights to law enforcement about local issues. Community leader Mr. Akpan described the evolving relationship between the police and the community as follows:

“The relationship has improved over the years, especially with community policing initiatives. People are more willing to report incidents and work with the police to maintain peace. However, there’s still a bit of mistrust because of past incidents of misconduct. Some people still feel hesitant to fully open up to the police.”

He suggested that steps like increased dialogue, transparency, and collaborative decision-making could further bridge this trust gap. Moreover, involving community members in the planning and execution of crime prevention strategies, such as neighborhood watch programmes, could solidify police-community relationships and encourage active public



participation. This aligns with research that emphasizes transparency and community involvement as key factors in building and maintaining trust in community policing efforts (Tyler, 2005). In Urban and Rural policing model in Algeria, the goal is to ensure the establishment of close co-operation between the rural communities and the police, the creation of opportunities for rural areas to solve their problem as well as the establishment of structured procedure for problem solving between the rural areas and the policing among others (Kwaja, 2019, p.431).

However, lingering mistrust due to past incidents of police misconduct remains a barrier to full collaboration. While local vigilante groups help bridge some communication gaps, tensions occasionally arise between these groups and formal law enforcement agencies. Research indicates that establishing clear guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of vigilante groups can prevent misunderstandings and help integrate these groups into formal security frameworks (Brogden, 2004). Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring that police-community partnerships operate effectively and respectfully.

8. Problem-solving approach in community policing

The problem-solving approach in community policing also aims to proactively address the root causes of crime rather than merely reacting to incidents as they arise. According to Eck and Spelman's SARA model (Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment), problem-solving in community policing requires systematic steps to assess issues and implement targeted interventions (Eck and Spelman, 1987). For example, Akwa Ibom State exemplifies the challenges faced in implementing effective policing strategies. The state, like many others in Nigeria, has struggled with security issues due to the limitations of traditional policing methods. The conventional approach has often been marked by a reactive stance, insufficient community engagement, and a lack of local ownership in security matters. This led to establishment of the Ibom Community Watch by Akwa Ibom State Government which represents a significant step towards addressing these issues. This new security outfit aims to strengthen community policing initiatives by fostering closer ties between law enforcement and local communities. Launched as part of the state's efforts to enhance security, the Ibom Community Watch aims to integrate community involvement with policing practices, reflecting a commitment to the principles of community policing (The whistler, 2023).



In Nigeria, it was observed that the use of community-based crime prevention programmes and neighborhood watch initiatives has been positively received. Interviews and direct observations indicated that these programmes encouraged a proactive approach to security, whereby both community members and police officers could identify and mitigate potential threats before they escalate. For instance, a Police Officer emphasized that this approach helped address underlying social issues like unemployment among youth and conflicts between farmers and herders. As he explained:

"The problem-solving approach has allowed us to be more proactive in identifying issues before they escalate. For example, rather than just responding to crimes after they occur, we work with community leaders to address underlying problems, like unemployment among youth or conflicts between farmers and herders. This way, we can help prevent some incidents from happening in the first place."

This resembles the outcome of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) in Rwanda which is anchored on the principle of partnership between the Police and Community inviting crime. Due to success of COPS, the World Economic Forum-Global Competitiveness Report for 2014/2015 ranked Rwanda as the first country in Africa and the twenty-first globally where citizens trust and rely on police services to enforce law and order. Similar reports of partnership between police and communities are made about Botswana and South Africa (Stihole, 2017).

Despite its effectiveness, a significant challenge remains in the form of limited resources and inadequate training for police officers. Many officers lack the tools and knowledge needed to thoroughly investigate and address community-specific concerns, a gap that underscores the necessity for enhanced capacity-building initiatives. Some police officers stated that additional training in problem-solving methods specific to community policing would improve their ability to collaborate with the public and address issues before they escalate. Studies have confirmed that adequately resourced and well-trained police officers are more likely to achieve successful outcomes in problem-solving community policing models (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997).



9. Conclusion and recommendations

This study has provided a comprehensive examination of community policing and its impact on security administration in Nigeria. The findings indicate that problem-solving approaches, police-community partnerships, and organizational transformation within community policing all play significant roles in enhancing security outcomes. The results demonstrate that a problem-solving approach within community policing leads to more effective management of security issues, as evidenced by the substantial impact of this strategy on crime prevention and resolution. The establishment of strong police-community partnerships has proven to be vital in improving the effectiveness of security measures, fostering better cooperation, and building trust between law enforcement and local communities. Furthermore, organizational transformation within community policing has shown a significant effect on security administration, highlighting the importance of continuous reforms and improvements in the organizational structure of policing.

Overall, these findings underscore the effectiveness of community policing strategies in addressing security challenges in Nigeria. By emphasizing problem-solving, fostering partnerships, and implementing organizational changes, community policing can lead to enhanced public safety, greater community engagement, and improved trust in law enforcement agencies. The study, however, did not intend to introduce a new conceptual framework. There is also need for further study to expand theoretical literature. Nevertheless, the study's results support the ongoing development and implementation of community policing initiatives as crucial components of effective security administration with empirical applications to Awa Ibom State in Nigeria. Based on the above findings, the study recommended among others:

- a. Community policing strategies should prioritize problem-solving approaches that address the root causes of crime and security issues. Law enforcement agencies should invest in training programmes that equip officers with the skills to identify and address underlying problems within communities. Regular community meetings and collaborative workshops should be held to gather input from residents and develop tailored strategies for crime prevention and resolution.
- b. To improve security administration, it is essential to strengthen partnerships between police officers and community members. Establishing and maintaining open channels of communication, promoting mutual trust, and fostering active collaboration are critical. Community policing committees and neighborhood watch programmes should be supported



and expanded to enhance community involvement in security efforts. Efforts should be made to include diverse community representatives in these partnerships to ensure broad-based support and cooperation.

c. Organizational changes within community policing should be actively pursued to improve security administration. This includes decentralizing decision-making processes, enhancing training programmes, and ensuring better resource allocation.

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF 'JAPA' SYNDROME: THE EMERGENT PLIGHT AND FLIGHT OF THE PRODUCTIVE NIGERIAN YOUTH¹

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Abstract. *The current youth migration in Nigeria, often colloquially referred to as "Japa Syndrome" in Nigeria, has become a significant socio-economic phenomenon with far-reaching implications for both individuals and society. This study investigates determining factors driving Japa syndrome type of migration among Nigerian youths. The study adopted an exploratory research design and a qualitative method. The study utilized that convenience sampling method to select 40 people whose ages were between 18 and 35 years. The data were gathered through in-depth interviews and thematically analyzed. The findings reveal a complex interplay of economic, social, political, and transnational factors shaping migration decisions among Nigerian youths. Economic factors, including high unemployment rates, stagnant wages, and limited job opportunities, emerged as primary push factors prompting migration, while social factors such as educational attainment, family background, and peer influence also played crucial roles. Moreover, political instability and governance failures were identified as contributing factors driving youths to seek opportunities abroad. Base on the findings, the study proposes a series of policy recommendations to address the socioeconomic determinants of Japa Syndrome migration among Nigerian youths.*

Keywords: *Youth Migration, Japa Syndrome, Socioeconomic Determinants, Political Instability, Governance and Policy Implementation.*

JEL CODE: F22; J61; H11

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1. Introduction

The concept of “Japa Syndrome” has emerged as a notable migration phenomenon among Nigerian youths. This concept refers to the trend where young Nigerians opt to leave their homeland in search of better economic prospects abroad (Adewuyi, 2019; Odeyemi, 2020). Nigeria, as Africa’s most populous nation, faces significant socio-economic challenges. These include high unemployment rates, widespread poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and political instability (Okunola, 2020; Olasupo, 2021; Oyeboode, 2017). These challenges contribute to a sense of disillusionment among Nigerian youths, many of whom perceive limited opportunities for personal and professional growth within their homeland. Japa Syndrome is driven by a complex interplay of socioeconomic factors (Ajani and Fakunle, 2018; Oluwatobi *et al.*, 2018; Oyeboode, 2017). Economic disparities, limited job opportunities, income inequality, and perceived lack of social mobility prompt Nigerian youths to consider migration as a means of escaping economic hardships and pursuing a better quality of life elsewhere (Ajayi and Adebayo, 2018; Faist, 2018; Amole and Ayoade, 2019). Additionally, political instability, corruption, and insecurity further contribute to the allure of migration among young Nigerians (Uwazie and Umejiesi, 2019).

While previous research has explored migration trends among Nigerian youths, there remains a gap in understanding the specific socioeconomic determinants of Japa Syndrome (Afolabi and Oni, 2020). Most existing studies focus on broader migration patterns or general youth demographics, overlooking the motivations driving the phenomenon (Bankole, 2016). Thus, there is a pressing need for empirical research that examines the socioeconomic dynamics underpinning Japa Syndrome. The purpose of this study is to investigate the socioeconomic determinants of Japa Syndrome among Nigerian youths. By examining the intersecting influences of economic, social, and political factors, the study aims to shed light on why and how young Nigerians decide to embark on this migratory journey. Through a comprehensive analysis of these determinants, the study seeks to inform policy interventions and youth empowerment initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of Japa Syndrome (Adeyemi and Oladipo, 2022).

2. Statement of problem

The phenomenon of Japa Syndrome among Nigerian youths is influenced by a myriad of socioeconomic factors that intertwine to shape migration decisions (Adepoju, 2017; Bakewell,



2018). These factors encompass economic, social, and political dimensions, each playing a crucial role in driving the migration trend and its implications (Fakunle *et al.*, 2023). Nigerian youths are confronted with stark disparities in opportunities and living standards (Aderinto, 2018). Despite Nigeria's status as an oil-rich nation and possessing abundant natural resources, economic development remains unevenly distributed, leading to high levels of unemployment, especially among the youth demographic. Many young Nigerians face limited job prospects, stagnant wages, and inadequate access to essential services such as healthcare and education (Adeyemi and Oladipo, 2022; Alkali, 2019). In this context, the allure of better economic opportunities abroad becomes compelling, prompting individuals to seek avenues for upward mobility beyond the confines of their homeland. Also, Nigerian youths grapple with pervasive societal challenges that impact their quality of life and sense of belonging (Ojo-Ebenezer and Fakunle, 2024). Corruption, nepotism, and inequality contribute to a sense of disillusionment and mistrust in the country's institutions (Ojo-Ebenezer and Fakunle, 2023). Moreover, cultural norms and expectations place considerable pressure on young people to achieve success and provide for their families, creating a sense of obligation to seek opportunities wherever they may be found (Afolayan, 2015).

The desire to escape societal constraints and pursue personal aspirations motivates many youths to embark on the journey of migration, seeking a fresh start in foreign lands (Agunbiade, 2020). Nigeria's volatile political landscape adds another layer of complexity to the migration equation (Adewuyi, 2019). Political instability, governance failures, and security concerns exacerbate the challenges faced by young Nigerians (Ajayi and Adebayo, 2018). These situations erode confidence in the country's future prospects. In regions plagued by conflict and insecurity, migration may be perceived as a means of escaping violence and securing a safer environment for oneself and one's family. Additionally, disillusionment with the political system may drive individuals to seek refuge in countries with more stable and transparent governance structures. The implications of Japa Syndrome extend beyond the individual level to encompass broader societal dynamics.

The departure of skilled and ambitious youths contributes to a brain drain phenomenon, depriving Nigeria of valuable human capital and impeding socio-economic development (Akande, 2020; Omilola, 2019). Furthermore, the loss of young, productive members of society exacerbates demographic challenges, potentially leading to an aging population and labor shortages (Bakewell, 2018; Osaghae, 2016). Addressing the root causes of Japa Syndrome



requires a multifaceted approach that tackles the underlying socioeconomic disparities and fosters an environment conducive to youth empowerment and economic prosperity (Black *et al.*, 2020; Oluyemi and Atanda, 2020; Uwazie and Umejiesi, 2019). Policymakers must prioritize investments in education, job creation, and infrastructure development to provide young Nigerians with viable alternatives to migration. Additionally, efforts to combat corruption, improve governance, and enhance security are essential for restoring confidence in Nigeria's future and stemming the tide of youth emigration. There is a need to conduct empirical studies on the factors that promote this syndrome among Nigerian youth as one of the ways to contribute to finding solutions to the syndrome.

3. Objective of the study

The sole objective of this was to examine the factors that promote Japa syndrome among Nigerian youth.

4. Literature review

Youth migration patterns in Nigeria constitute a complex phenomenon shaped by various social, economic, and political factors. Adepoju (2004) provides comprehensive insights into the prevalence and dynamics of internal migration among Nigerian youths, highlighting the significant role of rural-urban migration in search of educational and employment opportunities. Similarly, Afolayan (2015) examines the motivations behind youth migration within Nigeria, emphasizing factors such as economic disparities, educational aspirations, and family dynamics. Moreover, Black *et al.* (2020) offer valuable perspectives on international migration among Nigerian youths, exploring migration routes to destinations in Europe, North America, and the Middle East. These studies collectively underscore the diverse trajectories and motivations underlying youth migration in Nigeria, contributing to an understanding of migration patterns and trends.

The economic impacts of youth migration are a crucial aspect to consider when analyzing the phenomenon of Japa Syndrome among Nigerian youths. Aderinto (2018) investigated the role of remittances sent by migrant youths to their families in Nigeria, highlighting their contributions to household income and poverty alleviation. Additionally, Alkali (2019) examines the broader economic implications of migration, including its effects on labor markets, entrepreneurship, and local economies. Understanding the economic motivations and



outcomes of youth migration is essential for assessing the opportunities and challenges associated with migrating for employment and economic advancement. Exploring the social and cultural dimensions of migration offers valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by Nigerian youths as they navigate the migration process. Bankole (2016) and Falola (2018) investigate issues such as identity formation, social networks, and cultural integration among young migrants, highlighting the complex interplay between individual experiences and broader societal dynamics.

Additionally, Odeyemi (2020) examines the impact of migration on family dynamics and social relationships within Nigerian communities, shedding light on the complexities of migration as a social phenomenon. By exploring these dimensions, researchers gain a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural factors influencing migration decisions and outcomes among Nigerian youths. The political economy of migration in Nigeria is shaped by a myriad of factors, including political instability, governance failures, and policy frameworks. Omilola (2019) and Osaghae (2016) explore the role of political instability and governance challenges in driving migration patterns, highlighting how issues such as corruption, conflict, and weak institutions contribute to migration pressures. Moreover, Adepoju (2017) and Bakewell (2018) analyze the intersection of politics, economics, and migration governance in Nigeria, emphasizing systemic barriers and opportunities for intervention. Understanding the political economy of migration is crucial for contextualizing migration decisions and developing effective policy responses to address migration challenges.

Youth empowerment and development initiatives play a vital role in addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by young people in Nigeria. Oluwatobi *et al.* (2018) and Oluyemi and Atanda (2020) evaluate programs focused on education, skills training, entrepreneurship, and employment generation, highlighting their potential to empower young people and create sustainable alternatives to migration. Additionally, Amole and Ayoade (2019) examine the effectiveness of youth-focused policies and interventions in promoting socio-economic development and reducing migration pressures. By assessing the impact of these initiatives, researchers can identify best practices and inform policy decisions aimed at promoting youth empowerment and socio-economic development.

Trans-nationalism and diaspora engagement offer unique insights into the links between migration, development, and social change in Nigeria. Faist (2018) and Levitt and Jaworsky (2017) explore the impact of diaspora remittances on economic development and poverty



reduction, highlighting the significant contributions of migrant youths to their home communities. Furthermore, Agunbiade (2020) analyzes diaspora-led development initiatives and the role of migrant youths in contributing to development efforts, emphasizing the importance of harnessing diaspora resources and expertise for sustainable development. By examining transnational dynamics, researchers gain a deeper understanding of the inter-connectivity of migration and development processes and their implications for Nigerian youths.

5. Theoretical framework

The current study adopted several theories to explain several factors that promote Japa syndrome. One of them is neoclassical economics theory. This perspective posits that individuals make rational decisions based on cost-benefit analyses to maximize their utility. In the context of youth migration, neoclassical economics suggests that individuals migrate in search of better economic opportunities, such as higher wages, improved living standards, and increased employment prospects. This perspective highlights the role of economic factors, such as income differentials, labor market conditions, and economic development disparities, in shaping migration decisions among Nigerian youths. This study also adopted social network theory, which focuses on the role of social relationships and networks in shaping individuals' behaviors and decisions. In the context of youth migration, social network theory posits that migrants are influenced by the social connections and information networks available to them, including family ties, peer relationships, and community networks. Migrants may rely on these social networks for practical support, emotional assistance, and access to migration opportunities, thereby shaping their migration decisions and experiences.

Structural violence theory is another perspective that this study utilized. This theory examines how social structures, institutions, and power dynamics perpetuate inequalities and injustices, leading to the marginalization and disenfranchisement of certain groups in society. In the context of youth migration, structural violence theory posits that the systemic barriers and inequalities, such as poverty, unemployment, political instability, and social exclusion, that push young Nigerians to migrate in search of better opportunities. This perspective pinpoints the need to address the root causes of migration by challenging structural inequalities and promoting social justice and equity. Also, this study adopted trans-nationalism theory emphasizes the inter-connectivity of social, economic, and cultural processes across national



borders. From this perspective, youth migration is viewed not only as a one-time event but as part of broader transnational social fields characterized by flows of people, ideas, and resources between sending and receiving countries. Trans-nationalism theory harps on the importance of understanding the transnational ties, identities, and practices of migrant youths, as well as their contributions to both origin and destination societies. In line with this perspective. This study set to examine the factors that promote Japa syndrome among Nigerian youth.

6. Methods

The study adopted an exploratory research design. The purposive sampling method was adopted to select Lagos State. The rationale for this selection was the presence of youth from different Nigerian tribes in the study location. Also, Lagos State harbors several sea ports and one international airport, which makes the State one of the major exit and entry points in Nigeria. The State has 20 Local Government Areas namely, Agege, Ajeromi-Ifelodun, Alimosho, Amuwo-Odofin, Apapa, Badagry, Epe, Eti-Osa, Ibeju-Lekki, Ifako-Ijaye, Ikeja, Ikorodu, Kosofe, Lagos Island, Lagos Mainland, Mushin, Ojo, Oshodi-Isolo, Shomolu, and Surulere. The study utilized that convenience sampling method to select 1 young male and 1 young female, whose ages were between 18 and 35 years, from each of these 20 Local Government Areas, making a total of 40 participants for this study. The study employed qualitative data. The data were gathered through in-depth interviews. A semi-structured interview guide that contained questions on reasons for their preference for being desperate to leave the Nigeria for foreign land was employed to explore the study objective. The thematic analysis was utilized for the gathered data. Various in the analysis included thematic coding to identify patterns and sorting into themes. Ethical principles were adhered to throughout the research process. An informed consent was obtained from each of the participant while their confidentiality, anonymity, and protecting their rights were ensured. Attention was also paid to the credibility, transferability and dependability of the study findings.

Table 1. Participants' socio-economic features

Socio-economic status	Frequency	Percentages
Sex		
Man	20	50.0
Woman	20	50.0



Total	40	100.0
Age		
18-23 years	13	32.5
24-29 years	16	40.0
30-35 years	11	27.5
Total	40	100.0
Education		
No formal education	3	7.5
Primary	7	17.5
Secondary	10	25.0
Post secondary	20	50.0
Total	40	100.0
Occupation		
Public servant	2	5.0
Private worker	11	27.5
Sole proprietor	10	25.0
No job	17	42.5
Total	40	100.0
Religion		
Christians	9	22.5
Muslims	28	70.0
Traditional religion practitioners	3	7.5
Total	40	100.0

Source: *Author's filed survey (2024)*

7. Implication of the sample table

1. That the plight and flight of the youth is no gender bias



2. The syndrome is not religion, ethics or culturally bias.
3. The type of plight and flight is mostly encouraged by both disguised and real unemployment, failed government policies, education, awareness and fear of suffering and poverty. However, this factor where discusses under findings.

8. Hypothesis

The study is more of qualitative than quantitative in the sense that the syndrome is physically felt in all facets of Nigeria socio-economic, education and political space. The only relevant hypothesis is that great percentage at the educated and active Nigeria were within the web of Japa syndrome QED.

9. Findings

9.1. Socio-economic feature of the study participants

Data on the socioeconomic characteristics of the study participants as presented in Table 1 revealed that 50 percent were young males and 50 percent were young females. Regarding age distribution at the time of the study, 32.5 percent were aged 18–23 years, 40 percent were aged 24–29 years, and 27.5 percent were aged 30–35 years. In terms of highest educational attainment, 7.5 percent had no formal education, 17.5 percent had primary education, 25 percent had secondary education, and 50 percent had tertiary education. Occupational distribution showed that 5 percent were government workers, 27.5 percent worked for private organizations, 25 percent were self-employed, and 42.5 percent were unemployed. On religious affiliation, 22.5 percent were Christians, 70 percent were Muslims, and 7.5 percent practiced traditional religion.

9.2. Factors influencing Japa syndrome

The study, drawing on qualitative data, identified several factors that drive Nigerian youth to develop a desperate desire to emigrate by any means. These factors are presented thematically below, supported by excerpts from the data.

(i) Inability to find a suitable job

The study established that the persistent inability of Nigerian youth to secure desired employment opportunities fuels their desperate urge to emigrate in pursuit of better prospects abroad, often referred to as “greener pastures”. This frustration stems from high unemployment



rates, mismatched skills in the local job market, and limited economic mobility, which collectively erode hope and intensify migration aspirations. A male participant vividly captured this sentiment, explaining how the pervasive belief that foreign lands would offer him greater opportunities and fairness cultivated an overwhelming desperation to leave Nigeria at any cost. The finding that unemployment drives desperate emigration among Nigerian youth carries profound sociological implications. These finding signals deeper structural failures in social integration and national development. The excerpt below illustrates this finding.

You see, after NYSC, I sent CV to several organisation for work but nothing. My mates that travel to Canada or UK have been sending money, but here I am, managing one bag of rice per month. I believe going abroad will give me chances that Nigeria cannot give. I will Japa by all means - trek, swim, anything (IDI participant 10).

(ii) Poor remuneration

The study revealed that inadequate salaries and wages received by Nigerian youth - often insufficient to cover basic living expenses amid rising inflation and economic hardship - intensify their desperate yearning to emigrate in pursuit of “greener pastures” abroad. This dissatisfaction arises from stagnant real incomes, exploitative labor conditions, and a glaring disparity between local remuneration and global standards, which undermine financial stability and future prospects. Participants articulated how the widespread hope that foreign employment would deliver fair, competitive pay and professional respect fueled an urgent compulsion to depart Nigeria at any cost. The finding that low salaries drive desperate emigration among Nigerian youth underscores systemic economic inequities, exacerbating social stratification and undermining national human capital development. The excerpt below captures this sentiment.

Every month I get my salary, but after paying rent, transport, and food, nothing is left. Inflation takes everything, and my boss still demands overtime without extra pay. My sister who works as a nurse in the US sends 500,000 naira monthly to our family, buys land, and travels. Me? I survive on an 80,000-naira salary like a beggar. I know abroad will pay me well-fair money to properly care for me and my family. I will sell everything and borrow if needed to leave Nigeria, because this suffering is not a life (IDI participant 25).



(iii) Limited job opportunities

The study revealed that scarce job opportunities in Nigeria - stemming from structural economic constraints, rapid population growth, and insufficient industrial expansion - intensify the desperate impulse among youth to emigrate in pursuit of “greener pastures” abroad. This scarcity manifests in fierce competition for limited positions, chronic underemployment even among graduates, and a mismatch between workforce skills and available roles, which collectively shatter aspirations and breed profound disillusionment. Participants conveyed how the entrenched belief that foreign destinations offer plentiful, stable employment opportunities cultivated an unrelenting urgency to depart Nigeria, regardless of the risks involved. The primary sociological implication of limited job opportunities driving desperate youth emigration from Nigeria is the acceleration of brain drain, which depletes human capital and perpetuates inter-generational inequality. The excerpt below illustrates this finding.

After university, I applied to over 50 companies, but no job. I believe too many graduates chasing few positions, and they want five years’ experience for entry-level work. My skills from school do not match what is available here. Friends who went to Europe now have stable jobs and send money home. I believe abroad offers real opportunities, not promises. I will leave Nigeria no matter the danger, because staying means no future for me or my family (IDI participant 13).

(iv) Educational purpose

The study identified the pursuit of superior educational opportunities as a key driver propelling Nigerian youth toward desperate emigration to foreign destinations. This motivation arises from systemic deficiencies in the domestic higher education system, including overcrowded institutions, outdated curricula, inadequate funding, and limited access to quality postgraduate programs or specialized training, which stifle academic and professional growth. Participants articulated a firm belief that countries like those in Europe and the United States offer abundant, high-caliber educational prospects - such as scholarships, modern facilities, and flexible learning environments - that would unlock their potential far beyond local constraints. For instance, one participant highlighted how reports of students combining part-time work with studies in Western nations ignited an intense urgency to depart Nigeria at any cost. The primary sociological implication of Nigerian youth’s desperate pursuit of foreign educational opportunities is the intensification of brain drain in academia and skilled professions, which



erodes national intellectual capital and perpetuates educational inequalities. The excerpt below captures this aspiration.

In my opinion. Nigerian universities are overcrowded with old books and no equipment. Lecturers go on strike every year, and there are no scholarships for master's programs here. I heard students in Europe and America get modern labs, work part-time while studying, and finish with good jobs. That is what I want - to learn properly and build my career. Nigeria cannot give me that chance. I will find any way to leave, even if it means selling my possessions, because staying means wasting my potential (IDI participant 23).

(v) Familial influence

The study established that familial pressures significantly propel Nigerian youth toward desperate emigration in pursuit of “greener pastures” abroad. This influence stems from cultural expectations of financial provision, where young adults bear the burden of supporting extended families amid economic strain, escalating living costs, and parental reliance on remittances for survival. Participants described how the optimistic belief that foreign employment would yield lucrative remuneration - enabling them to adequately care for siblings, aging parents, and household needs - intensified their urgent compulsion to depart Nigeria, often overriding personal risks or sacrifices. However, family pressure as a driver of desperate youth emigration from Nigeria reinforces inter-generational dependency cycles and alters traditional family structures, straining social solidarity. The excerpt below illustrates this familial obligation.

My parents and five younger siblings depend on me completely. With rising food prices and no steady income from them, I must provide everything - school fees, medical bills, even daily food. They keep saying neighbors' children abroad send money to build houses and help families. I believe working overseas will give me enough salary to care for everyone properly. Staying in Nigeria means watching my family suffer, so I will leave by any means, even if it risks my own safety (IDI participant 32).

(vi) Peer influence

The study data revealed that peer influence significantly fuels the desperate emigration aspirations of Nigerian youth in pursuit of “greener pastures” abroad. This stems from intense social comparisons, where visible displays of wealth - such as luxury items, remittances, or



success stories from peers who have migrated - create envy and pressure among those left behind, amplifying a collective obsession with rapid riches. Participants highlighted how the pervasive belief that foreign opportunities deliver superior remuneration and financial breakthroughs intensifies this competitive mindset, compelling them to seek departure from Nigeria at any cost, often fueled by social media portrayals of emigrants' lavish lifestyles. Peer influence driving desperate emigration among Nigerian youth fosters a culture of social comparison and materialism. This undermines collective solidarity and promotes individualistic escapism. The excerpt below illustrates this peer-driven phenomenon.

My friends who traveled to Dubai and the UK post pictures of new cars, houses, and vacations on Instagram. They send money home and live large, while I struggle here with the same salary. Everyone talks about how abroad pays well and gives quick success. Seeing them succeed makes me feel left behind and desperate. I must leave Nigeria too, no matter what it takes, because staying means missing out on that life (IDI participant 37).

(vii) Insurgency in Nigeria

The study data indicated that pervasive insecurity - manifesting through insurgency, banditry, and Boko Haram activities across Nigeria - propels youth toward desperate emigration in search of safer, more stable environments abroad. This existential threat is compounded by the government's perceived failure to safeguard citizens, resulting in widespread abductions, violence, and disrupted daily life that shatter any sense of security or normalcy. Participants emphasized how the urgent yearning for freedom from unrest, political instability, and constant peril, coupled with the conviction that foreign nations provide peaceful, enabling conditions for thriving, intensifies their compulsion to flee Nigeria at any cost. Insecurity from insurgency driving desperate youth emigration in Nigeria signals a profound breakdown in social contract theory, where state failure to ensure safety erodes citizen loyalty and trust in institutions. The excerpt below captures this security-driven motivation.

I ran away from the North to escape being a victim of insurgencies. Boko Haram and bandits attack our village every month, kidnapping people, killing farmers, burning houses. I cannot farm safely or send my children to school without fear. The government promises protection but does nothing while we suffer. Abroad offers peace where I can work, live normally, and raise my family without



constant danger. I will escape Nigeria by any route, even though the desert, because staying here means death or endless fear (IDI participant 17).

(viii) Kidnapping

The study data revealed that rampant kidnapping - perpetrated by bandits and Fulani herdsmen through heinous acts of abduction and ransom demands - propels Nigerian youth toward desperate emigration in pursuit of “greener pastures” and safer havens abroad. This pervasive terror disrupts livelihoods, instills chronic fear, and renders everyday activities like farming, schooling, or travel life-threatening, with victims often facing torture, exploitation, or death if demands go unmet. Participants underscored how the fervent longing to escape unrest, political instability, and such existential dangers, alongside the conviction that foreign lands offer secure, enabling environments free from violence, heightens their unrelenting drive to depart Nigeria at any cost. Kidnapping by bandits and Fulani herdsmen driving desperate youth emigration from Nigeria signifies a collapse in collective security and social trust. This situation fosters a refugee-like mindset among the population. The excerpt below captures this fear-driven impetus.

I am from Nassarawa. State in the North-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Bandits and Fulani herdsmen kidnap people daily on our roads and farms - they demand millions in ransom, torture families, and kill if payment fails. I cannot go to school or market without fear of being taken. My cousin was abducted last year and never returned. The government does nothing to stop them. Abroad means safety where I can study, work, and live without this terror. I will leave Nigeria through any means, even risking my life on dangerous routes, because here every day feels like waiting to die (IDI participant 19).

10. Discussion of findings

The study meticulously identified and analyzed the multifaceted socio-economic determinants driving “Japa” Syndrome migration among Nigerian youths. Economic factors, such as high unemployment rates, stagnant wages, and limited job opportunities, emerged as primary push factors prompting migration. These findings resonate with previous research by Ajayi and Adebayo (2018), who emphasized the pivotal role of economic disparities in driving youth migration in Nigeria. Furthermore, Olasupo (2021) emphasized the intertwined relationship between political instability and migration decisions, underscoring how governance failures and



corruption contribute to a sense of disillusionment among young people in the country, motivating them to seek opportunities abroad.

Moreover, social factors influenced migration decisions among Nigerian youths. The study revealed that educational attainment, family background, and peer influence played crucial roles in shaping individuals' perceptions of migration and their willingness to embark on the journey. This aligns with findings from previous studies by Afolabi and Oni (2020), who emphasized the influence of social networks and cultural norms on migration behavior. Additionally, the study identified political instability and governance failures as contributing factors driving youths to seek opportunities abroad, corroborating research by Oyeboade (2017), which underscored the detrimental effects of political instability on migration patterns in Nigeria.

In exploring the individual impacts of Japa Syndrome migration, the study unearthed a complex array of outcomes for Nigerian youths. Conversely, Uwazie and Umejiesi (2019) highlighted the psychological and social challenges faced by young people. Furthermore, the study shed light on the nuanced experiences of Nigerian youths navigating the migration process, highlighting the need for comprehensive support systems to address their diverse needs and challenges. This resonates with research by Oyeboade (2017), who emphasized the importance of holistic approaches to migration management that address not only economic factors but also social and psychological well-being.

11. Conclusion

This study and the position of the author on the socioeconomic determinants of Japa Syndrome among Nigerian youths provide explanations the complex phenomenon of youth migration in Nigeria. Through a comprehensive analysis of economic, social, political, and transnational factors, the study has elucidated the multifaceted drivers and implications of Japa syndrome among Nigerian youths. The findings pinpoints the significant role of economic disparities, limited job opportunities, and educational aspirations in shaping migration decisions, as well as the influence of social networks, cultural norms, and political instability on migration experiences.

12. Recommendations

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



1. Policy-makers should prioritize investment in education and skills training programs to equip Nigerian youths with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to thrive in the local job market. By enhancing educational opportunities and vocational training initiatives, young Nigerians can develop the capabilities required to access meaningful employment opportunities and contribute to economic development.
2. Efforts should be made to stimulate job creation and entrepreneurship initiatives, particularly in sectors with high potential for growth and innovation. Policymakers should implement policies that support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), attract foreign investment, and promote sectors such as technology, agriculture, and renewable energy. By creating a conducive environment for business growth and innovation, Nigeria can generate employment opportunities and reduce the incentives for youth migration.
3. Addressing governance failures and political instability is essential for creating an enabling environment for economic growth and social development.
4. Efforts should be made to promote social inclusion and community development initiatives that address the root-causes of social inequality, marginalization, and exclusion. Therefore, policymakers should implement programs that empower marginalized groups.

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CAN INSTITUTIONALISM EXPLAIN CONSTRAINTS THAT ARE SLOWING DOWN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION?¹



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Abstract. *The undergoing process of digitalizing public services all around the world is probably the biggest challenge the public sector has encountered this century and at the same time facing serious setbacks and problems in all the countries going through it. No matter if we talk about simple data digitization or actual digital transformation of entire systems and organizations, the digital change comes as a major threat to existing institutions that have been part of the public system for decades and should be addressed not only as a matter of resources and access to digital tools, but also as a phenomena that affects most of the rules and norms that public servants have been following so far, causing organizational change. This article wishes to address the topic of digitalization in the public sector from an institutional point of view, trying to understand if the already existing norms might pose as a setback for organizational change and if taking them into consideration might contribute to a faster, easier and more efficient process, explain and prevent certain possible setbacks. The first chapters will present a small theoretical introduction regarding digitalization, institutionalism and organizational change as main concepts, along with examples relevant for the present discussion, followed by a short description of interviews conducted with public servants in Romania, in an attempt to understand what main difficulties are they experiencing in the process of digitalizing public services and how much of their reluctancy comes from the existing sets of norms and habits, or from actual educational or resource related problems.*

Keywords: *Institutionalism, Digital Transformation, Digitalization, Organizational Transformation, Public Administration, Normative Institutionalism.*

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1. Introduction

Public services and the entire activity of public administration are one of the most important pillars of a democratic society and they represent the most direct interaction a citizen can have with the government and the state itself. During the last century, the way public administration has been organized changed dramatically throughout a number of different reform streams, from Weber's bureaucracy with the classical hierarchy in the public sector to the era of privatization and New Public Management as a response to the acknowledged problems and a way to improve public management by implementing principles from the private sector, all the way to the New Digital Era we are currently still experiencing.

Even if different countries and sides of the world experience different stages of change in the public administration and not all of them were part of the first two types of the reform, I strongly consider that the digitalization process and the existence of Internet and digital technology started affecting all types of administration around the world, making it almost impossible for the public system not to start adapting to the needs of the citizens and the society.

In terms of actually applying digital change, the private sector took it as an opportunity to extend the types of services they are offering, to make them faster, more efficient and easier to manage (Schildt, 2022). At the same time, the public sector, especially in the Eastern European countries, like the ones I have been studying, faced severe adversities when it came to adapting and including digital tools in their daily activity, and not only because of the lack of resources, but also because of the reluctance of the public servants themselves.

In order to be able to analyze the challenges digitalization is facing, the first part of the paper will be describing the main stages of this process, the specific elements they imply and explain which elements of them can also be influenced by the human factor.

Trying to understand what drives people to stand in the way of change and refuse policies that can actually be useful for their daily activity and transform their working environment according to the present available technologies and digital tools, I studied different theories that are used in researching and understanding human behavior. Starting with the institutionalism theory and its work on how institutions as a set of norms and regulations can seriously influence the way people make certain decision or adapt to different situations all the way to organizational change, the following parts will be explaining main theoretical ideas that have been part of this study.



The second part of the paper will be describing the normative institutionalism, based on the work of B. Guy Peters (Peters, 2019), starting with a short history of institutionalism itself and then defining institutions and the role they play in political science analysis, the formation of institutions, institutional change and the way they interact with individuals, then continuing with analyzing the work of Kwangseon Hwang on organizational change from a neo-institutional point of view (Hwang, 2023).

Last but not least, I will be describing an empirical study I implemented, based on interviews with members of the public sector in Romania, in order to test if some of the reasons they consider themselves reluctant to digitalization can be linked to the norms they have been used to for a long time or the institutions they are still believing in and are not at all willing to give up in order to accept change. Therefore, the main hypothesis of the paper will be if digitalization reforms contradict existing organizational norms, then public servants will be reluctant to them.

When it comes to the research questions, the main ones will be:

- What does digitalization mean to public servants?
- To what extent do the existing organizational norms contradict the principles of digitalization?
- To what extent do public servants consider themselves open to change?
- How dedicated are public servants to the existing norms?

If the research hypothesis will be confirmed, then the current paper will be able to bring valuable information regarding the main reasons public servants tend to be reluctant to change, especially when it comes to the digitalization reforms. On the contrary, if the hypothesis will not be confirmed, the study will still offer insights to the topic by answering the main research questions and bringing to attention future possible research directions.

No matter how many resources it needs or how expensive it might be, the process of transforming public services from face-to-face interaction to digital platforms is still strongly influenced by the existing public servants and their leaders. Therefore, understanding the reasons they are slowing the process down and the problems they are facing, we could be able to make digitalization faster, easier, more efficient and better adapted to the needs of the people, both as citizens and public servants.



2. Digital transformation and its previous phases

Along with the mass usage of Internet of Things (IOT), Personal Computers (PC) and smartphones that were able to access momentarily what could have taken months if working in an archive full of printed documents, the public administration faced some serious changes and encountered its third massive reform phenomena, under the changes of the New Digital Era (DEG), but of course, not everything happened at once and was for sure not uniform all around the world, given the fact that systems adapted to the needs and evolution of their citizen, their form of government and priorities of the people in power.

Considering the fact that up until the 21st century, public administration was based entirely on documents that were written by hand or, in the best-case scenarios, typewriters, the appearance of computers and printers and the ability to text information and create digital archives caused the first main type of digital intervention in public administration, which was the stage of **digitization**.

At first sight, the process of digitization represents the first basic step of entering the Digital Era, without relevant changes in the way an organization is working or its internal norms, but more likely a process through which already existing data on paper are transferred to a digital format, so that they can be universally, easily accessed not only by the people in the same building at the same time, but actually all over the system, no matter where the users are. According to MarryAnne Gobble, the digitization represents the main process through which you can transform turning pages into bytes (Gobble, 2018), or better said the moment when one is scanning written documents, transforming recordings and entering data in a specific digital database, so that anyone can access them digitally and why not even online.

The second very important change brought by technology to public administration is the **digitalization** itself, which describes all the phases during which the public services and organizations start involving digital tools or means of communication in order to deliver what otherwise could have happened just in person or by printed communication.

For example, the fact that a public organization starts having an online presence, like a website or a public profile on different online platforms means that even if its internal activities are just the same, the citizens are also able to access online information without having to travel all the way to the physical offices and can at the same time interact with public servants through e-mail, online chats or other digital channels. This step is definitely more complex than the



digitization process, but more importantly, it starts implying the will of public servants and their abilities to use digital tools in order to communicate with people and offer services in an online environment, not only face to face, while at the same time, it adds a list of more tasks to their daily activity (Nygren *et. al*, 2013).

Last but not least, the most important and usually final phase of digitalizing public services is the **digital transformation**. If the previous two phases were based mostly on starting to use digital technology and tools along with online presence in order to improve public services, this one comes at a point where technology is already so well included in the daily activity of a public organization, that it starts affecting change in the way the system is working, in the way employees are organized in departments and especially the type of services they can offer. For example, digital transformation might imply launching an online platform where a person can register for all the public services they might need online, from scheduling a doctor's appointment to announcing that they are getting married or having a new-born, like the case of northern European countries, reducing the actual human interaction to zero.

Having described the main three phases that the public administration could go through in the process of involving digital tools and technology as a part of the New Digital Era reforms, it is clear that the digitalization and the digital transformation reforms are the most complex ones and do involve the support and will of the public employees, including the leaders of public organizations. But what if the people are not willing to be part of the digital change? Can the idea of adding new tasks and transforming the way public services looked like for over a century be a reason for public servants to fear and refuse digitalization? Can the old norms they have been respecting for so long stay in the way of the reform? I will be addressing possible answers to these questions in the following chapters, by discussing the institutional perspective on how individuals make decisions and adapt to real life changes, and also analyzing answers to actual interviews with public servants of Romania, currently facing the challenges of digitalization and organizational change.

3. The institutionalist perspective on organizational change

Institutionalism is one of the most important theories in political science, having been suffered a series of changes from what we now call the old institutionalism, to the new institutionalism which is a response to the main critics of the old one, and all the way to the neo-institutionalism, as a mix of the previous two, better adapted to the needs of science for current research and also



divided into multiple subtypes, according to the type of social sciences that might be using it, like historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, empirical institutionalism, and so on and so forth. In political science, institutionalism started as a response to the already existing theories that were based mostly on the study of individualistic assumptions, like the behavioralism and rational choice theory. If these two particular approaches were based on the assumption that no matter the environment or the situation they are in, individuals act according to their own needs and wishes in order to maximize their utility, the institutionalist approach was developed in order to respond to a theoretical gap and started with the subject of formal and informal institutions, bringing into attention the fact that even if individuals are concerned with their own well-being, in some cases they might also act according to the norms or rules they are used to, even if they might not always be in their best interest (Peters, 2019).

In the current paper, I will be discussing the theory on which the normative institutionalism is based. As the title itself reflects, in this approach the norms and values that exist as part of an organization have a very important role when it comes to explaining the behavior of individuals (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). According to Granovetter and the normative institutionalism, individuals should not be seen as atomistic entities, but rather as a constant part of a set of connections and complex series of relationships with collectivities (Granovetter, 1985). In other words, it can be said that one individual might be loyal to a series of different institutions at the same time, which means that in the choices he or she makes, there will always be a battle between which institution is more important or valid at the moment of a certain choice and they will be affecting the way one reacts to events such as major changes in society or their daily activities.

At the same time, it is important to take into consideration the fact that individuals can be rational even if they act according to certain institutions, a concept very well defined by the idea of bounded rationality. Therefore, even if they intend to be rational, most of the times they cannot be perfectly rational but rather they react in the limit of the procedures that bound them, their personal cognitive limitations and the values of the institutions within which they are making decisions (Simon, 1947; Peters, 2019). Given the situation, their choices can be considered rational in that specific moment but should also be seen as temporary, as if a change in institutions might mean a change for their choices too.



3.1. Defining institutions

Going further with the study of the institutionalism perspective, there is a subsequent need to clarify what should be understood from the concept of institutions themselves. Even if the term institution is used for a variety of meanings in political science, it can define a range of elements from formal structures like the government or the parliament all the way to ideas like social class, education or even the set of laws in a country (Teubner, 1986).

In order to be able to use it properly in the current paper, there is a need for a clearer, well-defined explanation, like the one from March and Olsen. According to their paper, an institution is not necessarily a formal structure, but rather is better understood as a collection of norms, rules, understandings, and perhaps most importantly routines (March and Olsen, 1989). They also later on define institutions in terms of characteristics they display, along with their members (Peters, 2019), clarifying the fact that the political institutions are collections of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate actions in terms of relations between roles and situations. Also, in their view, institutions are defined by their durability and their capacity to influence behavior of individuals for generations (March and Olsen, 1989). All in all, I will be using the term institution in this article as defining a collection of values and rules that are most of the time normative, rather than cognitive, when they impact individuals and at the same time routines developed in order to assure the implementation of those values (Peters, 2019).

According to Macdonald, whenever an institution is effective in influencing the behavior of its members, they will constantly consider the norms already implemented when making a choice, and take them into consideration before they even think about the consequences they might face themselves. To make this statement even clearer, Macdonald presents the example of the soldiers, who after joining the military service are trained to internalize certain rules and regulations, ways to react in specific situations, which later on influence the way they act in combat, making them choose actions extremely dangerous for themselves, or even lethal, for the sole reason of respecting the institutions they are part of (Macdonald, 1983).

Even if at first sight it might look like a stretch and an entirely different field, it is, in my opinion, relevant to consider if members of public administration could also face the same problem in the face of reform – the entirety of norms and routines already strong enough to guide their everyday work activity which are not necessarily functional when it comes to the digital reform.



Along with this idea, it is also important to mention the principle of “appropriate behavior”, which tends to connect very well with the effect of institutions of individuals’ choices, which for March and Olsen comes from the idea that human behavior is generally intentional but not willful (March and Olsen, 1989). In other words, even if the individuals will be making conscious choices, they will most likely remain within the limits of the institutions they are part of, and they have been used to. When it comes to public institutions, the logic of appropriateness can be manifested just as well as in other extreme fields like the one previously mentioned, by considering what is the normal and expected thing to do on the job, as in serving citizens as good as possible and not engaging in any acts of corruption (Quah, 2016). According to Peters, these are routine standards for proper behavior, but in this normative conception of institutions the routine itself seems to appear as the most important (Peters, 2019). Going even further, Helms conceptualizes the logic of appropriateness as a version of role theory, considering that an institution defines a set of behavioral expectations regarding the individuals who occupy positions within the organization, based on what is considered appropriate (Helms, 2004), and therefore are most likely to reward conformity while at the same time sanction the lack of it in several ways.

Taking this into consideration, role theory can be seen as a general way of linking individuals and their institutions (Beyers, 2005) and responds to the need of institutionalism to find a way to link the macro-level constraints and values of an institution to the micro-level behavior of the occupants, and the roles they perform. Nevertheless, it is important to analyze how much uniformity is required before we can say an institution actually exists, even more as the question may differ for different social situations, depending on the formality of rules required, and the degree of variation among the raw material, in this case, individuals among the institution (Peters, 2019).

Given the fact that this article’s topic refers mainly to the process of digitalization and digital transformation, we can use the premises offered by the normative institutionalism to consider that no matter the change the state wants to implement regarding public administration, it will face the presence of already existing norms and routines of the public servants, the roles they’ve already internalized, along with the resistance of institutions that might be broken or seriously transformed along with the reform itself.



3.2. Types of organizational change

No matter how vast and diverse the concept of public administration is, in order to analyze it and its actual transformations along with the different currents of reform, it is more efficient to look at the organizations itself, as the actual core of the administration. In other words, if one wants to observe the differences digital tools bring to the public administration, its organizational activities and processes, the best way to start is to choose certain organizations and study them along with their transformation, no matter what form they take.

Regardless of the reform we are talking about, any major change has to bring organizational change and the New Digital Era makes no exception. In order to include new types of tools, active digital presence or even transform a wide range of services from face-to-face interaction to digital platforms, a considerable amount of organizational changes should take place, certain norms need to be changed or even left behind and, more importantly, the members of the organization need to be willing and able to adapt to them.

According to Kraatz and Moore, organizational change can be defined as the abandonment of old institutionalized practices, structures, and goals and the adoption of institutional contradictory practices, structures and goals by individual organization or field of organizations (Kraatz and Moore, 2002). When talking about organizational change, it is considered that it can be caused by two major typed of elements, the endogenous and the exogenous forces. According to Calvert, organizational change can be caused by endogenous forces such as shifts in organizational culture from within the organization and the change of internal norms (Calvert, 2017), while at the same time Greenwood stresses the fact that endogenous forces are just as important, in the form of change of political power and institutional environment (Greenwood, 2011).

In comparison to private entities, public organizations do not have to luxury of changing easily or adapting to any types of technologies that appear along the society, given the fact that they carry much bigger responsibilities and they are not able to just fail or bankrupt and start over any time. When we talk about reforms in the public administration, we need to take into consideration that public services can never be suspended for a while in order to be improved, experiments cannot be made without seriously affecting the needs of the population and change is not something one can “try” and later on take back because maybe it did not work as good as expected. Considering all of the above, I believe that organizational change in the public sector needs to be analyzed thoroughly and studied from several different points of view before even



considering making assumptions about the way these work, adapt to change and why they occasionally don't do it.

Greenwood and Hinings consider that there is an important distinction between the ways in which change occurs, given the fact that it might be a gradual or a radical one. They say gradual change, also called convergent change can occur in within the parameters of an existing archetype, while on the other hand, radical change occurs when an organization moves from to pattern currently in use to another one, therefore causing a distinct break (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996). In my view, the digital reforms can be considered both radical and gradual changes, depending on the way they appear and the complexity of the change that is being implemented. For example, the step of digitizing public data can be easily seen as a gradual change, as public servants slowly start to save data in a different type of format than before, while on the other hand digital transformation implies changing the entire flow of a public organization, from services to employee's role, which can be seen as a radical change.

As previously explained by Hwang, the impact changes have in an organization, no matter if they are radical or gradual, plays a crucial role in determining the organization's overall health and well-being. More specifically, gradual changes tend to facilitate smoother transitions, like for example choosing to publish official forms from a public organization on a digital online platform, along with still offering them in a printed format at the local address of the organization, a change which employees can easily adapt to and one that do not deviate from their current practice. On the other hand, radical changes like implementing digital transformation, changing an entire area of services or the way an organization works has the potential to be disruptive and might be met with resistance, while coming as a response to either a crisis or very ineffective practices.

One of the main differences between the two types of organizational change are the actual results they might bring, considering the fact that gradual change would be promoting stability and continuity, which are both valuable for the organization legitimacy, but at the same type come with small changes on a general level, while the radical one tend to be the engine of real change, driving innovation and redefining an organization's mission or even goals (Hwang, 2023).



3.3. Deinstitutionalization

The process of deinstitutionalization appears in an organization when a set of accepted, institutional norms or beliefs slowly become more fragile, they weaken or actually disappear and is considered by Oliver (1992) to be caused by three possible sources of pressure: functional, political and social.

The functional pressure arises from perceived problems in performance levels of the utility associated with institutionalized practices (Hwang, 2023). For example, we see a lot of cases of public transportation systems that have to adapt to a very dynamic environment and set of needs of the citizens and tend to reach a point where their performance level decreases and the public satisfaction lower as well. Sometimes, one of the reasons for these kinds of situations stands in the old management practices or norms that are not efficient anymore, but at the same time very difficult to adapt to the current needs or situations.

The political pressure, on the other hand, results from the shifts of interests and underlying power distribution that support and legitimize existing institutional arrangements (Dacin *et al*, 2002). For example, at the point where the political power in a country puts a lot of pressure on transparency in the public sector, as a result of the will of the people, the public sector might be forced to give up on the secrecy they have been considering normal in a non-democratic system for example and adapt to publicly sharing their statement of wealth, their salaries or any other type of information that might have been considered to be sensitive up to that point.

Last but not least, social pressure might also influence deinstitutionalization and institutional change, as long as elements like cultural diversity, changes in the workforce and different types of beliefs might force certain norms to change, like the fact that a person can not have anything covering his or her hair while taking pictures for an ID Card, up to the point where a growing population of muslim women or Indian men could argue that this kind of norm is against their culture and might be considered discriminatory.

4. Predictors of organizational change

As economic analysts might be able to identify signs that the economy would thrive or hit a critical moment in the near future, political scientists have been able to identify a number of elements that can predict the occurrence of organizational change and when should we expect for it to be happening. Oliver (1991) identifies predictors of organizational change in terms of



different factors that affect how public organizations deal with various type of institutional pressure, and they are called “the five Cs”, explaining an organization’s response to institutional pressure: *cause, constituents, contents, control* and *context*.

As the name does already describe, the *cause* concerns the reasons why the organization is pressed to adapt to institutional rules or expectations, including rational motives such as efficiency or economic benefits, as well as motives, such as legitimacy or social convenience of conforming to institutional rules (Fernandez-Alles & Llamas Sanchez, 2008).

The constituents refer to stakeholders, including the state, or other actors that can exert institutional pressure on the organization. For example, these stakeholders can comprise relevant professional, occupational, and other interest groups, users of services, the media and the public. Even if public organizations usually exert institutional pressure on others, they also have to tackle pressures in order to gain external support from multiple and divergent stakeholders in order to achieve legitimacy (Fernandez-Alles & Llamas Sanchez, 2004). In many cases, any particular public organization will have multiple well-defined stakeholders, and the organization will show a higher degree of dependence on these stakeholders because the legitimacy they grant (Feldman, 2005).

The contents refer to the nature of the rules or requirements derived from institutional pressures. The institutional pressure of contents can be classified as regulatory, normative and mimetic (Meyer and Rowan).

When it comes to the *control factors*, they describe the means and mechanisms through which pressure is exercised. In most public services, pressure primarily includes regulations whose influence is difficult to avoid. However, public institutions are also subject to pressures from various other stakeholders besides those with governmental or legal authority (Fernandez-Alles & Llamas Sanchez, 2008).

Last but not least, *the context* refers to the environment within which institutional pressures are exerted. When environmental changes happen, institutions may either respond, endure and flourish or be weakened and give way to new ones, creating a process of deinstitutionalization (Oliver, 1992).



5. Methodology

In order to understand and study further the process of digital transformation and the way digital tools affect how the public sector works in our current day, I decided to try to understand what makes public servants, for example, be so reluctant to digitalizing public services, in an era during which even them, as regular people, use online communication platforms, electronic shopping and even websites with news or other useful data.

Therefore, I decided to conduct a series of interviews with people working in public administration in order to understand how they stand towards change and what it is that makes it so hard for some of them to accept it, if that is really the case, or if it is just a matter of education and resources, as in they do not adapt to change because they do not possess a certain set of skills or tools.

My hypothesis was that be if digitalization reforms contradict existing organizational norms, then public servants will be reluctant to them. In other words, I considered that if a person is used to delivering a service in a certain way, it might be difficult for him or her to adapt to doing it completely differently or using different channels, like changing from face to face to online interaction for example.

It was clear for me that the type of research I need in order to be able to broaden this topic is a qualitative research, which offers the opportunity to question less participants, but at the same time offers more time to discuss with them and obtain valuable data for an exploratory study like I consider this one to be.

In order to conduct this type of research, I had to establish the research method and decide which one best applies to the situation in question, and then decide what types of questions will be included in order to both respect confidentiality and the comfort of the interviewed individuals, while at the same time obtain the necessary data for the research topic.

I also had to decide how to find a specific sample, representative for both men and women, no matter the religion, culture, skin color or political preferences they might identify with, followed by deciding how to contact them in order to make sure they are honest and feel safe to answer to my questions without other colleagues hearing or being able to judge them in any way.

Therefore, I decided that the best method I could be using in this particular situation was the semi-structured interview, considering the fact that it is a direct method that allows the



researcher to start with a particular range of questions but also adapt them to the ongoing discussions on the spot, while at the same time making sure that the person will be answering without any distractions and also go all the way to the end of the session. The time frame of the analysis had to be tight, as in the interviews needed to be conducted in less than one month apart one from the other, in order to make sure legal regulations have not changed and the political situation in the country was the same, so that it could not influence the responders in ways that could interfere with the study itself and their answers.

After the background questions regarding basic data like age, gender, studies, marital status or cultural and political preferences some of the main questions that were addressed were:

- How does change at the workplace make you feel?
- How important is for you to preserve the norms you have been following for a long time at your work place?
- Do you feel like digitalizing public services might change the way that you have been working so far?
- Do you feel the need to protect old regulations in the moment new ones appear?
- Would you be willing to work in a completely digitalized environment starting tomorrow?
- Is it easier to adapt to changes in the workplace if they happen slowly and one by one?
- Does it help you when someone clearly explains the changes that are about to take place?

All the questions were addressed in this particular order, but in between the discussion started by each and every one of them continued, so that the respondents could have the time and possibility to express their very own opinions and talk about their personal experiences, in order for me to better understand the subject of study.

6. Results and conclusion

After conducting interviews with ten of total members of a Romanian public organization which is currently going through an entire process of digitalizing public services and changing its day by day practices, I had the opportunity to see the view of both men and women aged between 30 and 65 years old, with more or less experience in the public sector but similar regarding the work place and the experiences they are currently going through regarding the digitalization



reform. At the point where I stopped the interviews because of the data saturation, I had reached the conclusion that even if the study could be extended to way more participants, most of the information would repeat itself and lead to the same main conclusion.

In other words, 8 out of 10 public servants that participated in the interview mentioned that norms are very important in their field of work and actually explained with confidence that any possible changes that could affect or change them is very dangerous and could destabilize the way the organization currently functions.

Moreover, half of them also answered that the idea of digitalizing public administration consists of a lot of changes in the internal rules they already respect and institutions like the public office, registration numbers of even the paper file could be destroyed along with the appearance of digitalized public services, which is not something they are comfortable with for starter.

What surprised me the most during the interviews was that, even during the first part they kept saying that evolution is important and digital tools have the potential to change the way they work in a positive manner and they would like to use them for certain practices but the moment they were questioned about specific reforms such as online forms, transparency through digital information, answering to online letters and complaints instead of postal ones or accepting digital certified signatures, the way they saw digital solutions was completely different, in a negative way. Most of the time, they could not even explain with objective reasons or practical examples why the reforms mentioned above could be a bad practice instead of a good one, but the only repetitive reason was that they were not what has been used so far or “they are not the same with a written form, a hand-written signature, a face to face interaction” and so on and so forth, meaning that the carry way less value.

Along with the results regarding the way individuals feel about change and the deinstitutionalization of certain norms, another find was that if I am to compare the stages of applying digital reform to public administration and services to the classification Greenwood and Hinings did regarding gradual and radical change, there is a very clear and strong connection that can help explain organizational transformation. More exactly, according to the definitions previously explained in this paper, the three stages of digitising, digitalizing and digital transformation do imply different types of organizational change. For example, it is clear that digital transformation, as a reform during which public organizations change not only the way they deliver services but also their entire system, type of employees and the way they



function, can be considered a radical change, which makes it harder to accept by the individuals implied and can be faced with resistance. During the interviews I have conducted, two of the participants offered examples of the way public administration was forcefully digitalized during the COVID- 19 pandemic, in order to explain how difficult it was for them to adapt and moreover accept the change of norms during such a radical type of change, whilst admitting that slower processes like digitising data or simply combining the use of written forms or signatures with digital ones were still challenging, but at the same time easier to accept because they did not imply giving up older norms or regulations entirely.

Moreover, it was clearly stated by more than half of the participants that one of the main reasons they sometimes fear such reforms is the fact that they do not come with a previous warning or explanation, like a session during which a leader of the organization can explain everybody what is about to change, how will it affect them and what they should definitely not worry about.

In other words, it can be said that the main hypothesis of the study itself and of this paper was partially confirmed by the fact that the process of digital reform in public administration and the challenges it faces should also be analyzed through the lens of neo-institutionalist normative perspective, especially the way it explains how norms have the power to influence the individuals' behavior in certain situations. Moreover, the results of the interview showed how important it is to take into consideration the fact that the more radical a change is, the more likely it is for the public servants or even the beneficiaries to be reluctant to it or find it hard to replace certain old regulations with new ones just because of the institutional pressure.

The applicability of this study is, in my opinion, important for the developing countries that are still experiencing the first two stages of digital change in public administration. This part of the research raises important questions regarding possible challenges not necessarily in reforming systems, services or resources, but more likely in reforming the way people that are implementing them actually think and work towards or against them. By studying organizational change through neo- institutionalism, we might find a way to understand how norms and regulations can influence the process of digitalizing public services and how should they be treated and taken into consideration in order for employees to support change, not resist it simply because it is not linear with their previous habits.



Last but not least, it is important to mention that the study discussed in this current paper has been organized by interviewing a limited number of participants from a single type of public organizations, for reasons that concern financial resources and the fact that it was meant to be tested on a small representative number of individuals in order to understand if the method is well-suited for the study and if the pre-established questions should be reduced or multiplied, in order to obtain the most complex and relevant answers. In order to be able to support my theory I will be extending the study to individuals from several public organizations, even from different cities if the possibility will be available, in order to obtain a more general, clearer and wholesome perspective on the way norms and regulations, according to the normative neo-institutionalist perspective, can actually manage to stay in the way of reforming and digitalizing public services, or simply slow them down.

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**REVIEW OF THE BOOK “AN ALTERNATIVE
GUIDE TO THE EFFECTIVE
PARLIAMENTARIAN” BY VALERIU
ANTONOVICI¹**

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1. Introduction

In the current context of Romanian society, marked by a political dynamic often perceived as media spectacle rather than effective governance, Valeriu Antonovici's *An ALTERNATIVE Guide to the Effective Parliamentarian* stands out as a lucid and in-depth analysis of the role and functions of Parliament. The book constitutes a valuable tool not only for those aspiring to a political career, but also for citizens interested in understanding democratic mechanisms and the complex realities behind the political stage.

2. I had been waiting for such a book

From the perspective of a lecturer preparing future civil servants, advisers, or even parliamentarians, I consider this book to be compulsory reading. It offers a realistic perspective on the limitations and responsibilities inherent in the parliamentary role, dismantling the myth of absolute power and highlighting the importance of understanding legislative mechanisms, political negotiation, and communication skills.

Valeriu Antonovici approaches parliamentary democracy with remarkable honesty, avoiding idealisation and presenting a pragmatic picture of reality. The book highlights the gap between democratic theory and its manifestation in practice, emphasising the importance of transparency and accountability in parliamentary activity. The author demonstrates that a parliamentarian is not a simple decision-maker, but an actor constrained by a series of factors, including political parties, negotiations, and the existing legislative framework.

Beyond its theoretical dimensions, the book provides an anthropological analysis of the parliamentary role, exploring status, rituals, and the unwritten codes that govern this political elite. The author depicts Parliament as a closed group with its own hierarchies, rules, and mechanisms of socialisation, offering a fascinating insight into the institution's internal dynamics.

One of the book's major strengths lies in clarifying the parliamentarian's real role, clearly distinguishing it from that of a mayor or a benefactor. Valeriu Antonovici stresses that a parliamentarian's work consists of representation, debate, and law-making, not the resolution of local issues or the provision of individual favours. Consequently, the book encourages citizens to move beyond clichés and to understand democratic mechanisms beyond electoral promises.



3. Realism and good practice: how to be effective in Parliament

The book combines realism with practical advice, offering a useful guide for aspiring parliamentarians. The chapter on “how to look smarter in a meeting” is a telling example of this approach, highlighting the importance of appearances, timing, and the management of interpersonal relationships in politics.

4. Parliament: an open space or an exclusive club?

Valeriu Antonovici insists on the need for Parliament to function as a transparent and accessible institution, rather than an exclusive club. The author argues that transparency is essential to the functioning of democracy, enabling citizens to understand what their representatives do and to hold them accountable.

5. Conclusion: an essential book for strengthening democracy

An ALTERNATIVE Guide to the Effective Parliamentarian is a valuable book that deserves to be read not only by those aspiring to a political career, but also by all citizens interested in understanding democratic mechanisms and contributing to the consolidation of democracy. It offers a realistic, honest, and pragmatic perspective on the role of Parliament, dismantling myths and providing practical advice for effective civic participation.

In conclusion, I warmly recommend this book to my students and to anyone interested in a profound and realistic analysis of parliamentary democracy in Romania. It is essential reading for the formation of future leaders and for the consolidation of a democratic society.



CANONICAL AUTONOMY AND POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY: ROMANIAN ORTHODOXY BETWEEN ECCLESIASTICAL LAW AND MODERN PUBLIC LAW IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY¹

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Abstract. *The article analyzes the process through which the Romanian Orthodox Church acquired autocephaly from both the perspective of canon law and that of modern public law, highlighting the convergence between the affirmation of state sovereignty and ecclesiastical reorganization in the nineteenth century. The study demonstrates that autocephaly functioned simultaneously as an ecclesiastical canonical institution and as a legal-political expression of the Romanian nation-state.*

Keywords: *Autocephaly, State Sovereignty, Constitutional Law, Canon Law, Nineteenth Century, Nation-State.*

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