

**DECENTRALIZATION FOR GOOD
GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: INSIGHTS FROM
HANA RAWHITI'S ERUPTION**

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Abstract

Decentralization as a groundwork for governance has emerged in the capacity of a pivotal solution to address Nigeria's economic crisis, ethnic tensions, insecurity, historical marginalization, resolve conflicts alongside bad governance, promote regional autonomy, ensure inclusive governance, and accommodate the country's diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious composition. Drawing inspiration from Hana Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, the youngest Māori member of the Australian parliament, who resolutely opposed policies undermining the stability, cultural and economic

wellbeing of her indigenous tribe, this study explores the transformative potential of regional autonomy in Nigeria. Employing a qualitative methodology that incorporates both primary and secondary means of data collection, the research addresses the gap in scholarly discourse on how decentralized governance can harmonize Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups while bolstering development, cultural cum religious harmony alongside tolerance, peace, coalescence and security. Using phenomenological, hermeneutical, and content analysis approaches, the study examines the lived experiences of marginalized communities, interprets socio-political narratives, and analyzes policy documents to delineate the systemic issues of centralized governance, with the Ethno territorial Federalism Theory serving as the theoretical foundation to reinforce its arguments. The findings emphasize that, akin to Rawhiti's advocacy, decentralization can empower Nigeria's regions to self-determine culturally sensitive policies, mitigating marginalization and enhancing equitable development. Recommendations include the adoption of a robust decentralized framework that devolves significant fiscal and administrative powers to regional governments, the establishment of mechanisms for equitable resource sharing to reduce inter-ethnic grievances, and the institutionalization of culturally inclusive governance structures to ensure sustainable development. This study contributes to the discourse by offering an empirically grounded roadmap for sustainable governance through decentralization.

Key Words: Decentralization, Good Governance, Insights, Eruption, Hana Rawhiti, Nigeria.

Introduction

Pope John Paul II (2004) and Modise (2020) expound that in theological discourse, it is crystal clear that God, as the Creator, formed humanity in His image, imparting inherent dignity and value to all individuals regardless of their ethnic background. Scripture and doctrinal teachings emphasize that all people are equal in the eyes of God, and no ethnic group is deemed superior or inferior to another. Consequently, any form of marginalization, subjugation, or oppression, particularly where a majority group asserts dominance over a perceived minority, stands in direct opposition to God's design for equality and justice. Such actions undermine the fundamental Christian belief in the inherent worth and equality of every individual, irrespective of ethnicity, and violate the divine call for love, respect, and unity among all of humanity. It equally violates the principles of human dignity.

Consequently, Nesson (2017), Abdalian (2021) alongside Camp (2022) exposit that violations of God's mandate for the equality of races foster a detrimental superiority complex within perceived majority ethnic groups: Leading to the systematic devaluation of minority groups and the entrenchment of discriminatory practices. This breeds subjugation, perpetuating insecurity, ethnic marginalization, and societal crises, while stifling economic development and impeding national progress. The resultant rifts advance distrust and division, undermining social cohesion and hindering collaborative efforts toward sustainable growth. Eventually, such violations of divine equality erode the

very foundation of nationhood, fracturing the collective identity of a people and compromising their ability to thrive as a united, prosperous society.

Iduh (2023) and Ajala (2023) assert that the economic crisis, ethnic tensions, and marginalization in Nigeria are deeply intertwined with the pervasive influence of ethnicity in the country's governance. They insist that Ethnic dominance in the political sphere has led to the marginalization of certain groups, catalyzing an environment where political power is distributed based on ethnic affiliations rather than merit or competence. Agboola (2024) along with Adeyanju (2024) concur that this practice not only undermines the principles of inclusive governance but also perpetuates divisions among Nigeria's diverse ethnic communities. Thus as ethnic groups vie for power; political appointments often reflect ethnic loyalty over qualifications, resulting in the emergence of unqualified individuals in positions of power. The authors delineate that this lack of competent leadership has exacerbated the nation's economic struggles, with key institutions failing to perform effectively due to nepotism and favoritism rather than the selection of the most capable leaders.

Uyanwune (2023) highlights the pervasive and destructive effects of ethnic conflicts, particularly within the context of Nigeria's complex multicultural society. Drawing from personal experiences and historical references such as the Biafran War, Uyanwune emphasizes how tribalism stimulates schisms, distrust, and violence, undermining national unity and stalling

economic progress. His narrative also critiques the role of political leaders who exploit tribal divisions for political gain, further exacerbating the problem. While acknowledging the efforts of initiatives like the National Youth Service Corps and Unity Schools in promoting integration, the author advocates for a more inclusive societal shift, one that involves education, dialogue, and a collective commitment to peace and mutual respect. Uyanwune's call to action, stresses the importance of recognizing common humanity over ethnic differences, underscoring that national unity is vital for the country's advancement and future prosperity. Relatively, a 2019 public opinion poll conducted by NOI Polls (2019) revealed that at least, one in every two Nigerians has either personally experienced tribal discrimination or knows someone who has. The survey highlighted a significant divide in perceptions regarding tribal equality, with 44 percent of respondents believing that all tribes are equal, while 56 percent disagreed, attributing the inequality to factors such as a lack of unity among Nigerians. Furthermore, 43 percent of the population felt that inter-tribal relations have worsened over the past years, while 41 percent of Nigerians expressed concerns that insufficient attention is being paid to the issue of tribal discrimination in society. These findings underscore the growing perception of tribal divisions and the need for greater unity and focus on addressing this social challenge.

It is obvious that the consequences of this ethnic-driven political structure are evident in Nigeria's systemic issues such as insecurity, bad governance, and economic crisis. Unqualified figureheads, propelled into

leadership positions due to ethnic considerations, are ill-equipped to address the complex challenges facing the nation. Their inability to manage critical sectors of government and public institutions; weakens the state's capacity to nurture economic growth, maintain security, or implement policies that benefit the entire populace. Moreover, the persistence of ethnic dominance in government continues to perpetuate a cycle of disenfranchisement and unrest, with different ethnic groups feeling sidelined or oppressed. This atmosphere not only stifles national unity but also ensures that the issues of economic disparity, insecurity, and poor governance remain unresolved, as leadership is more focused on ethnic loyalty than on national development.

Stirred by the resolute opposition of Hana Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, the youngest Māori member of the Australian parliament, to policies that jeopardized the stability, cultural and economic well-being of her indigenous community, this study explores the transformative potential of regional autonomy in Nigeria. Adopting a qualitative research methodology that combines both primary and secondary data collection, the study employs phenomenological, hermeneutical, and content analysis approaches to examine the lived experiences of marginalized groups, interpret socio-political narratives, and assess policy documents. In doing so, it seeks to identify and clarify the systemic challenges embedded within centralized governance, with the Ethno territorial Federalism Theory providing the theoretical foundation for its analysis and argumentation.

Theoretical Framework

This work adopts the Ethno territorial Federalism Theory in sustaining its rationales. Aalen (2002) and Anderson (2012) delineate that Ethno territorial Federalism Theory describes a hybrid form of federal governance that incorporates elements of both ethnic and territorial federalism. It seeks to balance the demands of minority ethnic groups for autonomous homelands while also distributing power across multiple federal subunits to prevent domination by the largest ethnic group. Unlike purely ethnic federations, where boundaries align closely with ethnic identities, ethno territorial federations create additional subunits that dilute the influence of the majority group. For instance, in India's linguistic federalism, Hindi-speakers are distributed across nine subunits, ensuring no single linguistic group dominates. Similarly, in Spain, Castilian Spanish speakers are divided among fourteen autonomous communities, apart from the three historic nationalities of Galicia, Catalonia, and the Basque Country. In Canada, Anglophones form the majority in nine out of ten provinces, and in Russia, ethnic Russians are majorities in subunits not designated as ethnic regions. This approach integrates ethnic considerations without allowing them to fully define the federal structure, thereby creating a balance between diversity and unity.

Ethno territorial Federalism Theory was primarily propounded by Donald Horowitz, a political scientist known for his work on ethnic conflict and political systems. Horowitz (1985) explores how federalism can be used to manage ethnic diversity, advocating for a

system where ethnic groups are given territorial autonomy within a larger federal framework. This system aims to balance the needs for self-determination with the need for political unity in ethnically diverse societies. Ethno territorial Federalism Theory is particularly suitable for this study as it offers a framework that addresses Nigeria's ethnic crisis, insecurity, economic challenges, and governance issues through the decentralization of power and the recognition of ethnic diversity in the governance structure. Allocating political and administrative authority to distinct ethnic or regional groups, promotes self-governance, enabling local communities to better address their specific needs and aspirations. In the context of Nigeria's multifaceted crises, the theory encourages a system that forges political stability through ethnic autonomy while enhancing accountability, inclusivity, and resource management. This approach helps mitigate tensions arising from historical marginalization and socio-economic inequality. The adoption of Ethno territorial Federalism could, therefore, provide a more responsive and equitable governance framework, bridging divides and creating pathways for lasting peace and sustainable development.

Data-Driven Investigations

Salawu (2010) explores the pervasive and persistent nature of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, a phenomenon that has become a defining feature of the country's social fabric. With over 400 ethnic groups and a population evenly split between Christianity and Islam,

Nigeria has experienced numerous instances of such conflicts since gaining independence, resulting in an estimated loss of over three million lives and incalculable psychological and material damages. These conflicts, deeply rooted in the interplay of ethnic and religious identities, extend their impact beyond violence, contributing to the wrong choice of political leaders as identity politics often supersedes meritocracy in elections, thereby perpetuating governance inefficiencies. Furthermore, the marginalization of certain ethnic groups within the political and economic structures fuels insecurity, distrust, and resentment, exacerbating economic setbacks by discouraging national unity and equitable resource distribution. As such, Salawu submits that ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria not only tarnish the socio-political landscape but also hinder sustainable development, leaving the nation grappling with insecurity, economic instability, and stunted progress. Suberu (2016) argues that the Nigerian federal system, plagued by overcentralization and inadequate recognition of ethnic minorities, has led to their alienation and discontent. Overcentralization has eroded minority autonomy, concentrated resources in the hands of majority groups, and undermined subnational authorities. The territorial structure of the federation, often ignoring ethnic boundaries, has further marginalized minorities. While power-sharing mechanisms like "federal character" exist, they are often distorted or ineffective due to the dominance of majority groups. The absence of strong mediatory institutions like the judiciary and the press has also hindered the protection of minority rights.

Okolie et al (2019) and Ikonne (2024) encapsulate that bad governance in Nigeria has resulted in severe economic hardship, including poverty, unemployment, inflation, and systemic corruption, which have collectively deteriorated citizens' welfare. These conditions have driven the emigration of skilled and educated individuals, causing a damaging brain drain that hampers the country's socioeconomic development. Additionally, poor governance has fueled insecurity, as poverty creates a fertile ground for unrest and militia activities. The pervasive effects of bad governance have destabilized key sectors, diminished the value of the currency, and exacerbated the migration crisis, with citizens seeking better opportunities abroad. Olumuyiwa (2023) and Ogbu et al (2024) equally underscores that Nigeria's socio-economic stagnation is primarily driven by poor and visionless political leadership, systemic corruption, and pervasive insecurity. Despite the country's abundant natural and human resources, these challenges have hindered its development, exacerbated by a governance deficit characterized by ethnic jingoism, violent separatist movements, and widespread crimes such as kidnapping, terrorism, and banditry. The authors insist that the failure of successive governments, particularly from 2015 to 2023, to address these issues has intensified insecurity and undermined national cohesion.

The European Union (2024) enunciates that the 2020 Fragile States Index highlights Nigeria's precarious position as the 14th most fragile state out of 178 countries, underscoring its deep-rooted challenges of insecurity, political instability, and economic fragility.

Central to these crises is the persistent issue of ethnicity, which exacerbates bad governance, fosters the selection of unqualified political leaders, and entrenches ethnic marginalization. The Union conveys that the resulting exclusion of certain groups fuels grievances and heightens insecurity, subjugation, and economic disparity, particularly in regions such as the North Central, South-South, and Southeast. Agitations like the IPOB secessionist movement and the Oduduwa Republic campaign reflect the polarization driven by identity politics, political favoritism, and structural inequities. These dynamics are further compounded by weak state institutions, governance failures, and economic mismanagement, creating a cycle of poverty, unemployment, and unrest that threatens national cohesion.

Adeodu et al (2024) assert that insecurity in Nigeria, marked by high rates of crime and banditry, is deeply rooted in systemic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, as evidenced by findings with mean scores of 4.26, 4.24, and 4.31, respectively, alongside significant standard deviations. This unwavering insecurity is a stark consequence of bad governance, where the failure of leadership to address structural inequalities and provide equitable opportunities perpetuates ethnic divisions and marginalization. The authors delineate that ethnicism, often exploited for political gain, aggravates disenfranchisement and fuels youth disillusionment, thereby fostering environments conducive to crime and insurgency. They argue that persistent ethnicism in Nigeria has deeply undermined the principles of

federalism, rendering the system ineffective and counterproductive. Ethnic bias in governance often results in the selection of unqualified individuals to lead public institutions, not on merit but on ethnic affiliations. This has created a culture of mediocrity in public service delivery, eroding trust in government institutions. Additionally, ethnic favoritism perpetuates economic inequality, as resource allocation is often skewed to favor certain regions while marginalizing others. These pervasive issues have escalated insecurity, as marginalized groups resort to violent agitation to demand inclusion and equity. Adeodu et al decry that federalism, which ideally should promote unity in diversity, has instead become a framework for institutionalizing ethnic divisions and perpetuating economic and political instability. Consequently, the system has failed to address Nigeria's foundational challenges, prompting a need for a transformative approach.

Against these backdrops, decentralization emerges as a viable alternative to salvage Nigeria's governance system. Via devolving power and resources to smaller, autonomous regional or state governments, decentralization ensures that governance is brought closer to the people. This model allows for greater accountability, as local leaders are directly answerable to their constituents. Moreover, decentralization minimizes the influence of ethnic bias in national decision-making, as each region manages its affairs within an ampler national framework. This arrangement can expedite healthy competition among regions, spur economic development, and address local needs more efficiently.

Decentralization also promotes inclusivity, as it empowers regions to contribute to national development while preserving their unique identities. In a country as diverse as Nigeria, decentralization could bridge the gaps created by federalism's failures, ensuring equitable development and sustainable peace.

Exploring Decentralization as a Path to Balanced Governance in Nigeria

Dick-Sagoe and Di Bona et al (2023) intimate that decentralization is a system of governance where authority and decision-making responsibilities are distributed from the central government to lower levels of government, such as states, regions, or local councils. Cheema et al (2007) enlighten that during the 19th and 20th centuries, ideas of liberty and decentralization reached their apex through the efforts of anti-state political activists who identified as anarchists, libertarians, and decentralists. Alexis de Tocqueville, an advocate of these principles, emphasized the dual administrative and civic value of decentralization, asserting that it enables citizens' engagement in public affairs and accustoms them to exercising freedom. According to the authors, he argues that local freedoms collectively limit central government power. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon 1809-1865 (cited by Woodcock, 1962) prioritizes local collaboration and balance: Emphasizing on integrating agriculture and industry for economic growth and decentralizing political power to empower regional governance. These perspectives reveal an enduring tension between centralized authority and

localized, participatory governance that shaped political discourse across these centuries.

Nigeria's multi-ethnic composition, encompassing diverse religious and cultural practices, underscores the necessity of adopting a decentralized governance structure. The existing federal system, rooted in the 1914 amalgamation, disregarded the intrinsic needs and distinct identities of the host tribes, thereby creating a foundation for conflict. This historical oversight forced disparate ethnic groups into a unified nation-state without addressing their divergent worldviews, akin to coercing strangers into an untenable union. The interplay between culture and religion, where cultural practices often dictate religious observances, has exacerbated issues of marginalization and ethnic subjugation, creating tensions that undermine national cohesion. Decentralization offers a pragmatic substructure to empower regional autonomy, accommodate diversity, and mitigate systemic inequalities, pristinely resulting in a more inclusive and harmonious governance model for Nigeria's pluralistic society.

Decentralization propels inclusivity and responsiveness, addressing the diverse needs of a heterogeneous society like Nigeria: It provides the framework for autonomy, allowing subnational governments to manage resources, enact policies, and implement programs tailored to the unique characteristics of their populations. Through this localized governance, ethnic groups and marginalized communities gain a stronger voice, mitigating the centralization-induced tensions that often result from

perceived exclusion or dominance by any single ethnic group. Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape demands a governance model capable of reducing marginalization and insecurity, both of which are inflamed by centralization. Decentralization enables equitable resource distribution and fosters localized conflict resolution mechanisms that are culturally informed and effective. For instance, the implementation of regional security initiatives such as Amotekun in the southwest and the Hisbah in the north demonstrates the potential of decentralized systems to address insecurity. A decentralized Nigeria would promote cooperation among states while empowering them to craft context-specific solutions to issues such as unemployment, infrastructure deficits, and education, thereby reducing the burden on the central government and enhancing efficiency.

Balanced governance through decentralization also curtails ethnicism by emphasizing regional self-determination and shared responsibilities rather than ethnic superiority or subjugation. States or regions with greater autonomy are incentivized to harness their resources for development, reducing dependency on federal allocations and the inter-ethnic rivalries they often ignite. Furthermore, decentralization accelerates political inclusion, ensuring that no ethnic group is left unrepresented in decision-making processes. In a country like Nigeria, where the quest for fairness remains a critical challenge, decentralization provides a pathway to governance that upholds equity, promotes security, and strengthens national unity by aligning

governmental structures with the pluralistic reality of its citizens.

Hana Maipi-Clarke's Sovereignty Struggle as a Framework for Nigeria's Decentralization

Campbell (2024) elucidates that Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, born in September 2002 and educated at Te Wharekura o Rākaumangamanga, is a trailblazing Māori politician who has become a defining voice for indigenous rights in New Zealand. Rising to prominence at just 21, she unseated Labour MP Nanaia Mahuta in the 2023 general election to become the youngest MP in over 170 years and joined Te Pāti Māori. Renowned for her advocacy, she serves as the party's spokesperson across a wide range of issues, including Māori language, youth, conservation, and biosecurity. Maipi-Clarke's protest against the controversial Treaty Principles Bill, including a powerful haka and the symbolic tearing of the bill, highlighted her commitment to protecting Māori rights. This act earned both public admiration and a one-day parliamentary suspension. Recognized globally, she received the 2024 One Young World Politician of the Year Award for amplifying the voices of young Māori within New Zealand's democracy. Her activism underscores the disparities facing Māori communities, including gaps in income, education, life expectancy, and incarceration rates, and has positioned her as a key figure in the ongoing fight against systemic inequality in New Zealand.

Armstrong (2024) and Singh (2024) reports the opposition led by Māori MP Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke

against New Zealand's Treaty Principles Bill, which seeks to legally redefine the principles of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi: Maipi-Clarke disrupted parliamentary proceedings by performing a haka, reflecting Māori cultural resistance to the bill, which critics argue undermines indigenous rights and partnerships enshrined in the treaty. The Columnist's posit that the Act Party, a minor coalition partner proposing the bill, contends that it aims to ensure equal rights by limiting judicial interpretations of the treaty's principles, which they claim have promoted racial division. However, opponents, including the Waitangi Tribunal, argue that the bill breaches Māori-Crown partnership obligations, excludes Māori consultation, and exacerbates systemic inequities already evident in health, education, and economic outcomes. The controversy has sparked nationwide protests, including a large-scale hīkoi, emphasizing the enduring significance of Te Tiriti to New Zealand's bicultural identity and the tensions surrounding indigenous rights in a modern legislative context.

The New Zealand Herald (2024) expresses that the recent parliamentary haka led by Te Pāti Māori's youngest MP, Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, during the Treaty Principles Bill's first reading has sparked a global discourse on indigenous activism, highlighting the intersection of cultural expression and political resistance. This act, accompanied by Maipi-Clarke tearing and discarding the bill, underscored indigenous opposition to the legislation, drawing support from politicians, public gallery attendees, and global commentators, including Kiwi singer Lorde, who

described the display as performed with "utmost grace" while criticizing the bill with an expletive. According to the Media team, despite Speaker Gerry Brownlee's condemnation and the subsequent suspension and salary deduction for Maipi-Clarke, her actions have resonated as a powerful symbol of indigenous defiance, inspiring young Māori and global indigenous communities. Empirical responses, such as an Anglican school's tribute labeling her a "wahine toa," illustrate her impact on cultural identity and youth empowerment, emphasizing the role of indigenous leaders in galvanizing grassroots movements through symbolic resistance.

Sullivan et al (2024) document that Hana-Rāwhiti Maipi-Clarke's bold opposition to the Treaty Principles Bill, marked by her tearing up the bill in parliament and leading a powerful haka, drew immense support as over 35,000 people marched to New Zealand's parliament in solidarity. They reason that this massive turnout reflected a united resistance to the proposed changes, seen as undermining the spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi, a cornerstone of Māori sovereignty and cultural identity. Her actions and the overwhelming public backing vividly demonstrated the deep-seated frustration over policies that threaten to erode Māori rights, fuel division, and weaken the critical relationship between the Crown and Māori.

Hana Maipi-Clarke's Sovereignty Struggle, marked by her eruption in the parliament, highlights a powerful example of political activism aimed at challenging pervasive governance structures. Her

struggle emphasizes the need for decentralization, where power is shared more equitably across different regions and communities, promoting a governance model responsive to local needs. For Nigeria, adopting a similar framework of decentralization could significantly enhance the country's ability to address its diverse challenges, from security to economic prosperity. A decentralized system would allow for local governments to better understand and act on the specific needs of their people, ultimately leading to more effective and efficient governance. Furthermore, decentralization could serve as a tool to promote unity by empowering various ethnic groups, ensuring that each group has a voice in the political process, and encouraging a collective national identity that transcends tribal divisions.

In this context, the eruption of Maipi-Clarke can be seen as an expression of the frustrations that arise when centralized governance ignores the unique needs and aspirations of different communities. For Nigeria, implementing a decentralization strategy could dismantle long-standing issues of tribalism and ethnicism that undermine national unity and progress. Pertinent to restructuring governance to ensure that power is not concentrated in one place, the country could advance a more inclusive and cohesive society. Decentralization would also improve security by allowing regional authorities to implement localized solutions, responding swiftly to threats that are unique to specific areas. Moreover, it could stimulate economic growth by enabling local economies to thrive independently, while still contributing to the overall national framework. Decisively, such reforms would pave the way for a

stronger sense of nationhood, where every Nigerian, regardless of ethnic origin, feels invested in the country's success.

Promoting Decentralization in Nigeria through Ethno territorial Federalism Principles

Decentralization, through the principles of Ethno territorial Federalism, offers a strategic blueprint to address the multifaceted challenges facing Nigeria today. Ethno territorial Federalism emphasizes the recognition of ethnic groups' territorial boundaries and governance structures within the federal configuration, allowing greater autonomy to various ethnic groups to manage their affairs. This model ensures that ethnic identities and aspirations are acknowledged and incorporated into the political structure, potentially easing long-standing grievances of ethnic marginalization. Apposite to allocating power more equitably among ethnic groups, decentralization can foster a sense of belonging and ownership, reducing the friction that often leads to ethnic conflicts. From an economic perspective, decentralization under Ethno territorial Federalism can empower local governments to make decisions that best suit the unique needs of their communities. Nigeria's economic crisis is partly driven by a centralized structure where decisions made in Abuja often overlook the specific needs of regions like the South-South, North-East, or South-East. Localizing economic decision-making can enable targeted developmental policies that cater to the strengths and needs of each ethnic group, whether it's agriculture in the North or oil in the Niger Delta. This local control can stimulate regional

economies, attract investment, and create jobs, thus contributing to national economic recovery.

Moreover, decentralization can significantly reduce insecurity in Nigeria by strengthening local governance structures and promoting community participation in security matters. In a centralized system, security forces may be poorly coordinated or disconnected from the real concerns of local populations, resulting in inefficacy and distrust. With Ethno territorial Federalism, local governments can better align their security strategies with the specific challenges they face, enhancing collaboration with regional security forces and creating more effective crime prevention programs. This localized approach also elevates the responsiveness of security agencies, allowing them to address insurgency and ethnic conflicts more effectively, with less reliance on distant federal interventions. Decentralization can enhance governance by promoting transparency and accountability. In a system where power is shared between the federal and regional governments, the closer proximity of leaders to their constituents ensures that they are more attuned to local issues. Ethno territorial Federalism can thus facilitate a system of checks and balances where local leaders are held accountable by their communities, reducing the pervasive culture of impunity in Nigeria. The principle of localized self-governance ensures that the diverse ethnic groups have a voice in national decision-making processes, thereby promoting more inclusive and participatory governance that could eventually lead to a more stable, prosperous, and united Nigeria.

Reflecting further on the potential benefits of decentralization through Ethno territorial Federalism in Nigeria, one crucial aspect is the empowerment of marginalized ethnic groups, particularly in addressing historical issues of political and social exclusion. In Nigeria's current centralized system, smaller ethnic groups often find themselves sidelined in national discourse, with larger ethnic groups dominating political power. Ethno territorial Federalism, by allowing ethnic groups to manage their own regions, can rectify this imbalance, ensuring that minority ethnic groups are given the autonomy to govern their affairs and preserve their cultural identities. This inclusivity not only strengthens national unity but also creates a more equitable political environment, where every ethnic group has a voice and a stake in the country's future. Ethno territorial Federalism can play a critical role in addressing the challenge of national integration. Nigeria is a diverse country, and the lack of cohesion between different ethnic groups often fuels divisiveness. Decentralization provides a platform for these groups to collaborate in a more equitable environment, facilitating inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation. Local autonomy allows ethnic groups to protect their cultural heritage while interacting with other groups, promoting cultural exchanges and peaceful coexistence. Over time, this can reduce ethnic tension and build a sense of shared nationhood, where the uniqueness of each ethnic group is celebrated within the complex landscape of a unified nation.

Another significant advantage of decentralization in Nigeria is the potential for more effective delivery of

public services. Currently, many federal government policies and programs fail to meet local needs due to poor implementation at the state and local levels. With Ethno territorial Federalism, each ethnic group would have a stronger capacity to identify and prioritize their unique needs, ensuring that resources are allocated where they are most needed. Local governments could establish more efficient public service systems, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development, fashioned to the specific conditions and aspirations of their communities. This could result in more responsive and targeted development policies that benefit all regions, helping to alleviate the more extensive issues of inequality and underdevelopment. Fundamentally, decentralization under the principles of Ethno territorial Federalism can serve as a catalyst for democratic deepening in Nigeria. A more decentralized system ensures that power is not concentrated in the hands of a few elites but is instead spread out to local authorities who are more accountable to the people they serve. This can encourage better governance practices, reduce the prevalence of corrupt practices, and strengthen the rule of law. In turn, the greater political autonomy of ethnic regions propels political competition, leading to a more vibrant democratic system. This democratization process can ensure that governance becomes more responsive, transparent, and ultimately more effective in addressing Nigeria's complex political, economic, and social challenges.

Conclusion

This study's value lies in its ability to chart a multidimensional pathway toward sustainable governance in Nigeria by integrating decentralization, equitable resource management, cultural inclusivity, and environmental stewardship. Its blueprint prioritizes national cohesion and economic resilience while emphasizing justice and accountability as pillars for development. While ambitious in its scope, the work acknowledges the need for localized adaptations and actionable insights, encouraging Nigerian policymakers to refine its proposals within specific socio-political contexts.

This research serves as a foundational guide for addressing Nigeria's governance challenges, although it highlights the importance of grounding theory in empirical evidence. Future scholarship should build on this by examining uniquely on the adverse effects of federalism in disintegrating core cultural values alongside heritages and the indispensability of decentralization to that end; piloting proposed strategies; and investigating the role of technology in enhancing participation and accountability. Such focused efforts will ensure that the proposed solutions evolve into practical tools for governance reform fashioned to Nigeria's unique dynamics.

Bridging theoretical innovation with context-sensitive approaches, the study underscores the urgency of adopting holistic and inclusive governance strategies in Nigeria. It invites stakeholders to consider how

diverse systems and traditions across the country can be harmonized to reinforce long-term societal harmony and resilience in an increasingly interconnected world.

Recommendations

Pertinent to the submissions of this work, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

1. Sustainable governance and development can be enhanced through the adoption of robust decentralized bedrock. A well-structured decentralized system would devolve substantial fiscal and administrative powers to regional governments, empowering them to manage local resources, deliver public services, and make decisions apposite to their communities' unique needs. To ensure decentralization produces effective governance and avoids elite capture, accountability mechanisms must be established.
2. Equitable resource-sharing mechanisms are essential for national cohesion. Implementing a transparent resource-sharing formula based on population size, resource contribution, and developmental needs can promote fairness. Independent monitoring bodies should oversee resource allocation and utilization, while reinforcing inter-regional dialogue to address historical grievances and build trust among stakeholders.
3. Culturally inclusive governance must be institutionalized to reflect the diversity of the

governed populations. Governance structures should integrate diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic perspectives, ensuring fair representation of all groups in decision-making processes. Policymaking should strike a balance between modernization and traditional values, minimizing marginalization while reflecting the aspirations of various communities.

4. Strengthening the rule of law and justice systems is critical for sustainable development. Judicial reforms must guarantee impartiality and fairness, particularly in inter-ethnic and resource-related disputes. Complementing formal justice systems with alternative dispute resolution mechanisms rooted in local customs can further enhance trust. Additionally, inclusivity and professionalism in law enforcement are necessary to build public confidence.
5. Economic diversification is a cornerstone of sustainable governance. Governments should prioritize investment in non-resource sectors, such as agriculture, technology, and manufacturing, to reduce dependence on finite resources. Regional governments should be incentivized to innovate and develop sustainable economic initiatives, supported by robust skills development and vocational training programs to equip the workforce for diverse opportunities.
6. Strengthening civic participation and engagement can significantly improve governance outcomes.

Platforms for citizen involvement in policymaking and monitoring should be established to foster an active civil society. Public education on rights and responsibilities is crucial for cultivating a culture of accountability, alongside promoting youth and women's participation in governance to harness diverse perspectives.

7. Conflict-prevention strategies are vital for long-term stability. Early warning systems must be developed to detect and address potential conflicts proactively. Promoting inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue can build bridges and reduce tensions, while national peace education frameworks should instill values of tolerance and coexistence.
8. Finally, integrating environmental sustainability into governance is imperative. Policies that prioritize environmental protection should be embedded in governance frameworks, encouraging sustainable resource exploitation practices. Investments in renewable energy and climate-resilient infrastructure will ensure long-term economic benefits and mitigate the impacts of environmental degradation.

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