



RESEARCH ARTICLE

EVALUATING THE TRAJECTORY OF NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND NATION BUILDING (1960-2025)

CHIBUIKEM OHAERI, DONALD OLUCHUKWU OBI

Department of Public Administration, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study explores Nigeria's development programmes and their effect on Nation Building, following the pathways of national development programme from independence till 2025. The inability of Nigeria to improve vastly despite the several plans made has attracted concern about effectiveness of using the Nigeria plans and their implementation. This study aims to examine the effect of Nigeria's development plans on the nation-building process, highlighting some gaps and potentials that enhance the nation building. Literature review was done and the elements and theory of developmental state was taken as a theoretical approach. Likewise, the combined approach that is mixed method that includes historical analysis, content analysis of the development plans, and secondary analysis was explored and used in the investigation. Findings shows that Nigeria's development plans are often poorly implemented, do not have continuity and have poor stakeholders' engagement and fail to tackle structural problems as poverty, inequality and infrastructural deficiency, classifying what is happening as not a Nation Building approach. The study therefore suggests the need to strengthen institutionally for the planned implementation, stakeholder's participation and priority policy continuity & human capital development among others.

Keywords: Development plans, Nation Building, Policy Implementation, Stakeholder participation.

Corresponding Author

Chibuikem Ohaeri

Email Address: ohaerichibuikem@gmail.com

Telephone Number: +2349065729621

Received: 26/5/2026; **Revised:** 29/6/2026; **Accepted:** 16/7/2026; **Published:** 20/7/2026



1.0. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, has adopted several development plans since gaining independence in 1960. These plans were designed to stimulate economic growth, improve social welfare, develop infrastructure, and promote national unity. Despite Nigeria's abundant natural and human resources, the country has continued to experience persistent socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, weak infrastructure, inequality, and regional disparities. Development planning therefore became an essential strategy adopted by successive governments to guide national development and nation building. Through these plans, the Nigerian state attempted to mobilize resources, coordinate economic activities, and direct investments into key sectors such as agriculture, industry, education, and transportation.

As rightly put by (Udofa and Ekeuwei 2023, Ebiziem et al 2021), that development in any clime is not achieved in isolation. There must be strategic steps taken to achieve it in its proper sense. Development plans provide a framework for strategic resource allocation through economic growth, infrastructure development, employment creation, poverty reduction, a good education and healthcare system, improving the balance of payments, and enhancing the general standard of living of citizens. Therefore, development planning is necessary because since development is neither accidental nor does it take place naturally and quickly of its own accord, it is expedient to plan it deliberately (Aliyu et al, 2025). Nations cannot afford to be stagnant; the essentials of transformation therefore become the most critical element of basically attempting to shift from the deeper orientation of persons, organizations or society (Kwon-Ndung et al., 2022). However, the outcomes of many of these development plans have not fully matched their intended objectives. Several factors such as poor policy implementation, corruption, political instability, weak institutional capacity, and lack of continuity between successive governments have hindered their effectiveness.

The study thus explores the evolution of the development plan in Nigeria, 1960–2025 and how they have impacted on nation building. Drawing on Developmental State Theory, the study examines the role of the State in directing policy and development processes, the extent of achievements and the problems faced in Nigeria. The study also delves into the possibility of strengthening development planning for better national integration, economic transformation and sustainable development in Nigeria. For easy understanding of the paper, it is divided into the following: Introduction, Conceptual clarifications, historical evolution, theoretical framework, methodology, findings and recommendations.

Nigeria has been seeking structural economic transformation, leading to the formulation of numerous development plans since its independence. Despite the introduction of these plans, the problems that called for the formulation of these development plans still persists. The persistent gap between policy formulation and observable results indicates a recurring issue with policy implementation, resulting in these development documents being viewed by many as slogans rather than real structural transformation pursuit. Planning is too often regarded, even today, as little more than the act of preparing a multi-year document called a plan. When this approach is adopted, the plan becomes an end in itself rather than a means to achieving development; it is usually not operationally oriented, and little effort is made to implement it. The process of keeping the plan up to date while implementing it shows how indistinguishable plan preparation is from plan implementation and therefore how unrewarding it is to keep them in separate compartments.



It is against this background that the study investigates Nigeria's development plan culture by looking at the disparity between rhetoric and actual implementation over the past two decades. Persistent underdevelopment in recent years prompts several critical questions regarding Nigeria's development trajectory: Have the objectives of these plans been achieved with persistent problems coming from different challenges? Are the set-up goals of these development plans unrealistic from the onset? Another area of inquiry is the compatibility of these development plans with national ambitions, and whether significant gaps exist between current policy design and optimal policy frameworks. If failures exist, how are they inhibiting the country's growth and development?

2.0. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS, THEORIES AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

2.1. Conceptual Clarifications

Development

Many scholars have conceptualized Development from different lenses based on their background and orientation. Some view it as a Goal to be attained, others see it as condition of life, yet majority see it as Capacity to grow, Change and improved living conditions of the people. In others, it is a Multi-dimensional process of human existence. However, we shall examine the concept the views which are encapsulating and interlocking. For many modernization Theorists, Development is considered as a complete and systematic transformation as societies move away from the traditional model of society towards the modern model of society (as per Huntington, (1996). It welcomes new forms of socio-economic organisation, cultural system changes, new political and institutional governance mechanisms. The analysis of Todora (1977) views Development as a multi-dimensional development that consists of economic growth; decrease of inequality; eradication of absolute Poverty; changes of structures, attitudes and institutions. A basic fact in this assumption is the improvement of the income of the people and as a result the increase in the Standard of Living of the people.

Equally, Rodney (1972), concedes to the above view when he underscores that Development is a many sided process. The reiterating position is that Development must demonstrate the full range of transformations with which the social system reacts to the variety of basic needs and desires of individual and social groups in the social system; and that it departs from an object of life which is viewed as unsatisfactory by this social system and moves towards an object of life viewed as better by material and spiritual aspects of the social system. Based on his study, Nwaodu (2011) views Development as a process, goal and condition of life that is mostly justifiably measured by a push towards or a closeness to the common goals of eradicating socio-economic inequality among the population. He posits indices aptly to his drive towards or towardsness to "Improved of living of the generality of the people", "Improved quality of health services available to the people in general and the improved security of life and safety of property of the people and the generally improved standard of governance in general (Nwaodu, 2011:6).

Understanding Planning

There's no single, accepted definition of planning. Buchacet (1970) however, considers planning as a system of community action which is carried out over a period of time. A plan is the decision of the national persons and corporations to attainment of mutually coordinated objective within a specific time frame. Friedmann (1967) in Ebiziem et al (2021), refers planning as the guidance of change within a social system or the reasons acting on network of ongoing activities though the intervention of certain decision structures and processes. Hence, it can be termed catalysts acting on policy as put by Jagun (1968). That is, it is a way of judging the future and making the preparations for it.



More elaborately, the planning of Wildasky 1971 describes planning “The ability to control the future consequences of present actions. The more consequences one controls, the more one has succeeded in planning. Planning is a form of causality its purpose is to make the future different from what it would have been without this intervention. Planning, therefore, requires an informal theory which is a prerequisite for planned activities and the desired result.

Development Plan

Amongst the different segments of the society like Development economist, Policy-makers, Public Administrators and academics there is no common opinion what it means by the words of Development plans. The interpretation of the term is far from unanimous since as Jhingan, 1992:487) pointed out, ‘the term has been used very ‘loosely in Political, Administrative and economics literature’. The attitude of view scholars shall suffice, however, here. It is also possible to distinguish three types of Development plans: They are short-, medium- and long-term plans, of course some of the short-term plans cover 1, 2, 3 years etc., some medium-term plans cover 4, 5, 6, 7 years etc. while the long term or perspective plans usually extend to a life span of 10, 20 years or more (Nnadozie, 2004, Ebiziem et al, 2021).

According to Todaro (1992:415) the concept of 'Development plan' can be defined as 'the conscious governmental efforts to influence, direct and even possibly control the changes over a period of time; in the principal economic variables of a country, in order to achieve a predetermined set of objectives'. According to toward some economic factors, which he mentions include investment, consumption, saving, exports and imports. He reduced the concept of Development plan into the following ideas – governmental influence, direction and control towards achieving the targets within a certain period of time and added on to it distinguishing what he called a ‘Comprehensive Development Plan’ and a ‘Partial Development Plan’. The former sets its targets to cover all major aspects of the National economy while the latter covers only a part of the National economy, for instance, agriculture or energy sector.

While writing about ‘Comprehensive Development Plan’ Jhingan (1992:520) feels that Development Plan is aimed at developing the whole economy by ‘considering the most important economic aggregates such as total savings, investments, government expenditure and foreign transactions. In the expositions of Jhingan, the private sector is viewed as partner in a development plan where government plans to provide incentives with monetary, fiscal and direct control measures in order to integrate the private sectors in the plan. He stated that development plan is mostly associated with development activities of the under-developed countries and they are facing numerous hurdles from economic, social and political aspect to make the development plan a complete success, but admitted that ‘even with the best policy, it is not possible to make development plan a complete success’. However, on economic development plan, But Okowa (1991:24) argues that development plan should be centered on issues usually known as economic problems.

The process of development plan according to Egonmwan and Ibodje (2001:53) involves the assessment of potential resources, their mobilization as well as the sorting of goals and targets to be attained through the pursuit of appropriate policies and programme. Here the role of the bureaucracy is said to be key to the preparation and implementation of development plans. Egonmwan and Ibodje insist that: To highlight the significance of development plan to enhance the standard of living of the people by good management.



Development plan is an instrument for the management of the economy. It is expected to give a course of direction in the government expenditure. In an ideal world it would enable the government to think about all options of the claims on the resources and so come up with an achievable and coherent investment package.

Nation Building

This is a multi-step concept and is used by different authors, researchers and practitioners differently. During the modern times (the era of nation building) it meant the valid attempts of the newly independent countries of Africa, especially a nation trying to redefine the population of a territory carved by a colonial power or an empire, for example, to make it viable and coherent. More fundamentally, national building requires the establishment of national paraphernalia like national flags, national anthem, national days, national stadium, national theatres, national airlines, national languages and national myths; the process of nation-building also requires the molding of various ethnic groups into a nation because in most cases, the creation of the modern states brought about by the process of nation-building left an ethnically mixed population as a result of the divide-and-rule policies practiced by the colonial powers before the creation of such modern states (Ebiziem et al, 2021).

Dinne (2006), explains Nation-building to refer to more abstract process or developing a shared sense of identity or commonly among the various groups making up the population of a particular State. Nation-building demands of its people the action of vision and resolve: a work of conscious Statecraft and of constant re-invention, Gambari (2008), asserts. He further elaborates that there are two big aspects of nation building, of which, the first is the notion of building a political entity, in keeping with the culture of the given territory and the second is of building institutions which symbolise the Political Entity of the given territory. Along similar lines, Alesina and Reich (2015), consider the concept of Nation-building as a process that results in the creation of Countries where citizens have enough commonality of Interest, Goals and preferences to prevent wish to separate from each other. Nation Building is the process of Collective Identity formation with a perspective to legitimising the public power within a specified territory. This process is essentially indigenous, often comes at the expense of traditions and Institutions and Customs which are thus defined as 'National characteristics' to assist a Nation in asserting its 'Sovereignty' and 'uniqueness' (Von Bogdandy and Wolfrum, 2005).

Extending the above definitions, Nation-building considers the issue of the stability and Security architecture of the integration of the ethnic nationalities in a multinational state; its success creates the benefit of democracy in culture which governs with a sense of unity and advanced political culture of strengthening national unity with disciplined leadership of high sense of responsibility, transparency and accountability in economic performance (Ohaeri, & Amadi, 2026).

Nigeria is in the trajectory of Development Plan

Ebiziem et al (2021) stated that after gaining Independence in 1960, Nigeria has initiated a series of development plans to revamp its economy and elevate the welfare of her citizens. Since the First National Development Plan (1962-1968), the country has been focusing on various developmental challenges including high levels of poverty, inequalities, and inadequate infrastructure in various plans and strategies including the current one, the National Development Plan (2021-2025). This



introduction paves the way for Nigeria's development plans to be examined in greater detail – marking key milestones, successes, challenges and the course of the nation's development journey.

But a quick look at the framework of the Nigeria Development plans reveals the existence of a Pre-Independence Plan (1946-1956) which enjoyed ten-year plan of Development and Welfare. Once more, during (1962-1968) the First National Development Plan had been developed and the President was Nnamdi Azikiwe. This Plan emphasized agriculture, industry and development of manpower and succeeded in getting a 5% growth of the GDP every year. Also, during this period (1970-1974), a Second National Development Plan was established under the Military Head of State Yakub Gowan. The plan had a thrust towards economic diversification, agriculture and industrialization and also had objective of achieving 8% year on year GDP growth rates.

Likewise, the third National Development Plan was introduced during the Murtala Muhammed/Obasanjo era (1975-1980) which likewise had general education and industrialization and economic diversification as its goals. Furthermore, Fourth National Development Plan of (1981-1985) was activated when President Shehu Shagari and Muhammadu Buhari was in charge of the country. The plan focusing on export promotion and economic growth, struggled with implementation challenges among others. Similarly, during the period (1986-1989), the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) emerged under the leadership of Babangida and it was directed towards re-structuring and diversifying the economy. Ibrahim Babaginda (1985-1993), Ernest Shonekaa 1993 and Abacha 1993-1998, three-year rolling Plans were born that emphasized employment, agriculture and infrastructure. Remarkably Vision 2010 a plan of 1998-2010 became envisaged under the leaderships of Abdulsalam Abubakar (1998-1999), Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007) & Musa Yar'adua (2007-2010) which projected Nigeria as becoming a developed economy by 2020.

However, between the year (2003-2007) the advent of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) under the stewardship of Obasanjo has a focus on Poverty alleviation, Economic growth and Wealth creation. Similarly, the leadership of the former presidential candidate, who was rescued by the All-Progressives Party (APC), in 2007 and sworn in as president in 2020, intended to make Nigeria one of the top 20 economies by 2020. During the same period (2017 to 2020), another plan was born – the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), which was initiated by the incumbent administration of President Muhammadu Buhari; the priority of the plan was to recover the economy, build infrastructure, and create jobs. In the interim, Tinubu was leading the National Development Plan (ND, 2021-2025) which was centered on sustainable development, industrialization and economic diversification.

That's how the NDP 2021-2025 did it – they know that sustainable development has many different aspects – and they believed there's a need to have an integrated approach towards the implementation of development programmes. The document says that the average level of economic growth by 2025 is expected to be 4.6 per cent on the basis of effective implementation of the Plan. Cumulatively it would have lifted 35 million people out of poverty and created 21 million full-time jobs which will set the stage for achieving the government's target of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in 10 years under the National Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (NPRGS). It would also have increased the ratio of revenue to GDP to 15 per cent, and enhanced health and education of the population (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021).



2.2. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts The Developmental State theory which is attributed to Chalmers Johnson, an American political scientist, particularly in his 1982 book MITI and the Japanese Miracle. Johnson's work on Japan's economic development led to the concept of the "developmental state," emphasizing the state's active role in economic development. Other notable scholars that contributed to this theory were Alice Amsden (work on East Asian economies), Robert Wade (on Taiwan's development experience).

Key assumptions of the Developmental State theory:

- ❖ The state plays a crucial role in guiding economic development.
- ❖ The state collaborates with the private sector to achieve development goals.
- ❖ A strong, autonomous bureaucracy drives policy implementation.
- ❖ Development priorities are set by the state, focusing on strategic sectors.
- ❖ The state's legitimacy depends on delivering economic growth and development.

Applications of the Theory

The Developmental State theory can be applied in appraising Nigeria's plan of development and nation building in a variety of ways:

- State-led development: The theory highlighted the role of the state in driving development, making it relevant to examine the Nigeria development plans, which are mostly State led.
- Policy implementation: It focuses on the effective policy implementation – a challenge Nigeria faced in linking up with development.
- Institutional capacity: The theory puts emphasis on powerful and independent bureaucracies, which resonates with Nigeria's experience of poor institutional capacity and corruption.
- Industrialization and growth: The theory's focus on industrialization and economic growth is consistent with the development goal of Nigeria, which enables the assessment of how well the plan is effective.

2.3. Empirical Review

Aliyu, Nuruudeen & Dandi (2025) carried an empirical study on Rhetoric vs. Reality: A Critical Assessment of Nigeria's Development Planning Culture. This study explores development plans and how they have been implemented in relation to that development plans set goals in Nigeria. The study facilitates an overview of development plans that were launched during 2003 – 2007 (National Economic Empowerment Program (NEEDS)), 2011 – 2015 (The Transformation Agenda (TA)), 2017 – 2020 (Economic Recovery Growth Program (ERGP)) and 2021 – 2025 (The National Development (ND)). The quantitative data was used as well as the qualitative data. The analysis of quantitative data secondary data was conducted by trend analysis and analysis of qualitative data secondary data was conducted by content analysis. This research shows that the development plans failed to fulfil their purpose because they were conceived of in isolation without relating to wider aims. Further explanations for failures were unrealistic target setting, institutional weaknesses, pervasive corruption and focusing on economic growth as opposed to overall development which actually led to an increase in destitution.



Researchers indicate that it would be advisable for governments to put maximum efforts on certain critical areas including corruption, security, energy and manufacturing. They will also have to upkeep the bottom-up development approach and to lay human resource development as the bedrock for sustained and inclusive development. Demonstrates commitment to industrialization and SME support rather than short-term relief to provide relief from poverty. Make sure that those who prosper at the ditch of development will be held accountable.

Adeniji, et al. (2016) carried out an Empirical Study on Development Planning in Nigeria: A Road towards Sustainable Development. It is evident that for a country to achieve substantial development, operational approach is a must that has to be developed. Every so often, governments begin to look for all-purpose plans that will impact the lives of their citizens in all aspects to ensure the desired change is achieved. Successive Government has been articulating development plans in Nigeria with the view of contributing to solve development problems and challenges in the nation, and further strengthen the process of socio-economic development of the Nigeria populace. Every nation's growth and development hinges on their national development plan, development strategies, vision and initiatives.

In this regard Socio-political and economic stability among others are some of the requirements for developing any nation. Nigeria is classified as the developing countries due to some indices which are prevalent in the country such as poverty, ill infrastructure, high unemployment rate, rural-urban migration, urbanization of population, rural stagnation, growing inequalities, etc. This paper will attempt to exhaustively review the national development plans undertaken by Nigeria, their prospects and problems with a view of making appropriate recommendations on how Nigeria can achieve a sustainable development through appropriate implementations of the plans.

Equally, Asabe Shehu Yar'adua Foundation (2020) relying on valuable secondary sources of data found that development planning in Nigeria has over the years been constrained by the failure of the Nigerian leadership to properly envision true development and place same on the agenda, further argued that sundry factors like misplacement of priorities, poor plan discipline, lack of supervision, ineffective executive capacity and public sector inefficiency, technology transfer syndrome, system corruption and inefficacious public/private partnership have made a genuine development path somewhat illusory.

Yunusa (2023) again used a desk research approach, the data sources will only be secondary sources. The study on the major literatures in Nigeria shows that there are eleven (11) thematic issues which are identified as the constraint and challenges of development planning in Nigeria. The study revealed that while other constraints and challenges were observed in planning in Nigeria the challenge with the greatest impact is 'Dictatorship of Planning' but which the previous studies did not identify as a challenge to planning. The study made the recommendation of 'Decentralization and Democratization of Planning' in Nigeria therefore among others.

Furthermore, in education sector, Aderemi (2013) evaluated the implementation of NEEDS by a before and after approach. He made comparisons between the educational performance indicators in the pre programme phase and during the programme phase. Improved performance of educational indicators related to the NEEDS programme was found including female enrolment in primary schools, adult literacy rate, primary school completion rate and attainment of Senior secondary



school certificate examinations was found, though the level of performance was quite low. The percentage of the sector in the overall budget was less than 10 per cent and below the recommendations of UNESCO of 25 per cent. Financial resources in this area should be augmented and checked regularly for sustainable improvement of education outcomes.

The paper thus recommends the extension of universal basic education to senior secondary level with a view to lessen the incidence of drop-out rate. In conclusion, there are positive effects of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy which has been felt to some extent in some rural areas in Nigeria as concluded by Unongo et al. (2019) but the question is yet again, why there is still no significant improvement and poverty prevalence rate remains impervious with people in rural areas still trapped in vicious circle of poverty? It said that majority of the rural people should be given education and be "enlightened" to receive the developmental programmes and that leadership at all levels should be fully committed to the agricultural and economic reform programme to avoid shock of financial and human resources withdrawal experienced from foreign donor agencies, without excluding the rural people in the programmes, it said they should be generated and designed within the country.

Similarly, the empirical study by Alao and Alao-Owunna (2013) have concluded their study to indicate that although, the Transformation Agenda has had an impact in each of the sectors of the agenda, the impact has not been enough to address the problems of poverty, unemployment, security and industrialization. However, the study revealed that such as well as others are setbacks to the successful realization of the objectives of the Transformation Agenda namely: corruption, poor governance, inconsistencies in policy-formulation and implementation. The study concludes that with good leadership and genuine commitment to the goals, the target could be attained as Nigeria is blessed with ample natural and human resources.

On a related front, Nwogbaga (2017) results indicated problems like the rising rates of unemployment, low success rate of poverty alleviation measures, which necessitates a fresh look into poverty alleviation approaches on how to achieve developmental goals.

Their secondary data, analyzed using content analysis, were done by Anam et al. (2023). The findings found the challenges are a lack of policy continuity, low level of institutional capacity and corporate governance, low level of funding of the policy objectives etc. Thereby the role played by the polices in national development is not seen as significant. The paper advocates the need for the present administration to support the goals of the National Development Plan, by funding the policy goals and strengthening the administrative framework of the bureaucracy for effective performance and sustainability.

Experts in some areas have noted that even if these plans can be reasonably carried out and implemented, it may not yield the desired outcome, especially when considering the contributions of Bello and Neba (2022). It showed that the ERGP has been implemented correctly, however, the level of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth, inflation reduction and unemployment reduction is not satisfactory based on data produced from the secondary sources. Diversification changes in Nigeria's economy thus, have to be taken seriously.



Udofa and Ekeuwei (2023), found unorganized vision and plans, corruption, poor funding, ineffective tax administration system and poor plan implementation, and evaluation limit the success of development strategies in African countries. Special funds for development plans were recommended to be non-budgeted funds and agencies of implementation and evaluation should be established for any development plan or programme.

According to Abasilim et al. (2025) in an all-encompassing study, the National Development Plans (NDPs) of Nigeria have always suffered numerous setbacks including corruption, poor institutional capacity, political instability, underresourced private sector, less inclusivity, etc. The study proposes the development of an anti-corruption system, strengthening the plan-making systems, continuity of plans, more space for the private sector, and broader plan-making inclusivity as key measures to further the implementation and impact of Nigerian NDPs.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research design to critically examine the trajectory of Nigeria's development plan and Nation Building. The qualitative approach is well suited for uncovering the deeper structural and Institutional factors that shaped the Nigeria development plans. It allows for a nuanced understanding of how planning and its implementation has affected the Nation Building of Nigeria. The study relies entirely on secondary data drawn from credible and verifiable sources such as government documents which include economic and financial review, Nigeria Vision, 2020, National Bureau of Statistics, (NBS), policy report which includes World Bank reports on Nigeria Development, IMF country report UNDP, Human Development report on Nigeria, Academic Literature which include peer reviewed Journals of African economies, African Journal and Journal of Economic National Development among others.

The materials were judiciously selected to capture their relevance, analytical dimensions, and up-to-date insights, with a strict focus on materials with a direct connection to Nigeria Development Plan and Nation Building. Data were examined through qualitative content analysis which helped identify key themes, patterns that were relevant to the study. It was therefore a sound and methodologically sound approach that contributed towards achieving the objective of the study and in-depth insight analysis and rigor in studying the subject.

The Connection between Development Plans and Nation Building (Part 2)

Development Plan is an integral aspect of Nation Building. The concept of development plans in Nigeria is one of a strategic framework for fostering economic development, social welfare and political stability.

Firstly, the development plans help economic growth and national economic diversity, the key for national stability and success. Governments invest in priority areas such as agriculture, industry and infrastructure to generate job and enhance lives.

Secondly, development plans foster the creation of infrastructure facilities such as power, road-building, educational and health. All of these infrastructures have not only economic functions but they also play a vital role in enhancing the lives of citizens to boost the integration of the country.



Thirdly, development plans work with the social development by investing in education, health and poverty reduction programmes. Such efforts work towards narrowing the social gap and inclusive development.

In addition, development planning aids with institutional strengthening because capability in government institutions along with transparency and accountability is necessary to ensure implementation of the plan.

In this topic they will examine some of the challenges that affect the nation building and the development plan of Nigeria.

□ **Corruption and Mismanagement:** Corruption and mismanagement of resources is common, which affects development progress.

□ **Insecurity/Terrorism:** Development and economic activities are hindered by Boko Haram insurgency, banditry and kidnapping.

□ **Oil Dependency:** The economy is heavily reliant on oil exports, leaving issues of vulnerability to oil price shocks.

□ **Poverty and Inequality:** Poverty rates remain high, with a high income inequality, despite growth.

□ **Infrastructure Deficit:** lack of infrastructure such as power, roads, healthcare etc., limits the process of development.

Unemployment and Youth Restiveness: Unemployment (especially youth not employed) contributes to social disruptions.

□ **Ethnic Commercial and Regional Tensions:** Ethnic and regional rivalries in this case pose a threat to the cohesion of the country and also undercut its development.

□ **Weak Institutions:** Poor institutions and governance limit good policy implementation.

□ **Environmental Degradation:** Loss of environment, oil spills, deforestation are all threats to livelihoods.

□ **Lack of Continuity in Policies:** Due to the frequent changes in government, there is a lot of discontinuity of policies resulting in a lack of efforts in development.

4.0. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Presentation of Findings

Key Findings:

- **Inconsistent Policy Implementation** - inconsistent policy implementation has been a feature of the development plans of Nigeria and hence the poor results of the implementation process (National Planning Commission, 2010).



- Dependence on Oil – The economy is very reliant on oil which is sensitive to oil price shocks (World Bank, 2020).
- Poverty and Inequality: Poverty and inequality are still considerable issues with more than 40% of the population living below the poverty level (UNDP, 2020).
- Infrastructure Deficit: Nigeria is grappling with a high level of infrastructure deficits, such as power supply inadequacies, poor road networks as well as poor healthcare and education facilities (African Development Bank, 2020).

4.2. Discussion

- Lack of Continuity: There have been sporadic changes of government with attendant lack of continuity in policy implementation and this has put a further dent on the development process (Adebayo, 2015).
- Corruption and Mismanagement: Corruption and mismanagement also have been big challenges as billions of dollars have been lost through corruption (Transparency International, 2020).
- Economic diversification from its limited diversification, IMF (2020) has pointed out that the country lacks economic diversification as evidenced in the economy being affected by the price shocks of these oil slumps.
- Human Capital Development (HCD): Nigeria's long-term development requires investment in Human Capital such as education, and health care (World Bank, 2020).

5.0. CONCLUSION

5.1. Conclusion

This study concludes that Nigeria development plans have been marked by ambitious goals, but implementation challenges have hindered progress. Since Independence in 1960, Nigeria has launched several National Development plan as captured in the study but has been challenged by poor implementation culture and endemic corruption, inadequate leadership, policy inconsistency, lack of continuity by successive government, inadequate resource allocation and mismanagement of funds among others. Equally, despite effort of economic recovery and growth plan, Nigeria still faces significant development challenges including poverty, inequality and insecurity. To achieve sustainable development, Nigeria needs to address these underlying issues and prioritize effective implementation, transparency and accountability.

5.2. Recommendations

In consideration of the findings and conclusion, this study recommends as following.

- ❖ Strengthen Institutions: Strengthen institutions and improve governance to reduce corruption and improve policy implementation.
- ❖ Diversify the Economy: Diversify the economy to reduce dependence on oil and promote sustainable growth.
- ❖ Invest in Human Capital: Invest in human capital development, including education and healthcare, to promote long-term development.
- ❖ Policy Continuity: Ensure consistency in policy across government.

**Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exist in this manuscript.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Statement

The authors declare that the article is original with minimal use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which was deployed only in the area of plagiarism and grammar checks.

REFERENCES

- Abasilim, U., Adelusi, O., & Mudau, T. (2025). Evaluating Nigeria's National Development Plans: Addressing Contemporary Challenges and Seizing Strategic Opportunities. *Journal Administration Public Administration Journal*. 15. 141-152. 10.31289/jap.v15i1.14538.
- Action Against Hunger. (2015). Corruption & Poverty in Nigeria Finding the Linkages. https://nigeria.actionaid.org/sites/nigeria/files/pc_report_content.pdf
- Agarwala, R.; CPD. (1983). Planning in developing countries: lessons of experience (English). Staff working paper|no. SWP 576 Washington, D.C.: The World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/722521468741359076>
- Alao, D., & Alao-Owunna, I. (2013). A Mid- Term Evaluation of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Transformation Agenda (MAY 2011 – MAY 2013). <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346545711>.
- Anam, B. E., Ijim, U. A., Ironbar, V. E., Otu, A. P., Duke, O. O., & Achuk Eba, M. B. (2023). Economic recovery and growth plan, economic sustainability plan and national development plan (2021-2025): The Nigerian experience under President Muhammadu Buhari. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2289600>
- Asabe Shehu Yar'adua Foundation. (2020). A Case Study of the Problematic Nature of Development Plan in Nigeria.
- Bello, M. F., & Neba, A. A. (2022). An Examination of the Effectiveness of Economic Recovery and Growth Plan in Nigeria. *International Journal of Governance and Public Policy Analysis (IJGPPA)* 2022 Volume 04 bIssue 01
- Cacho C.R. (1975). The road to plan implementation: Planning is not an end in itself. A look at the stage beyond. IMF eLibrary, eISBN: 9781616353230, <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/022/0012/004/article-A013-en.xml>
- Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). (2004). NIGERIA: National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy. <https://www.cbn.gov.ng/out/publications/communique/guidelines/rd/2004/needs.pdf>



- Country economy. (2025). Nigeria – Human Development Index – HDI. <https://countryeconomy.com/hdi/nigeria>.
- Ebiziem, J.E, Obi U.F, & Izim D.O (2021). Contemporary development administration: a multi-dimensional paradigm approach, ISBN: 978-978-59328-0-5
- Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). (2019). Adoke Now with EFCC. <https://www.efcc.gov.ng/efcc/news-and-information/news-release/5316-adoke-now-with-efcc>. EDA (2025). Key Definitions. Economic Development Association, A Bureau of US Department of Commerce, <https://www.eda.gov/performance/key-definitions>.
- Egonmwan, J. A & Ibodje, S.W.E (2001). Development administration: Theory and practice. Benin City: Resyin (Nig.) Company Limited.
- Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, (2021). National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2025 Volume I. <https://nigeriareposit.nln.gov.ng/items/1e1972> a6-84c2-4465-949d-7ce24834e0b2.
- Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning. (2017). Economic Recovery Growth Program (ERGP).
- Gambari, I.A (2008). The challenges of nations building: the case of Nigeria. Being a presentation made at the first year Anniversary lecture, Mustapha Akanbi Foundation, Sheraton Hotel Abuja, Nigeria, 7 February, 2008
- Ikeanyibe, O. M. (2009). Development planning in Nigeria: Reflections on the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (Needs) 2003 – 2007. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 20, 3.
- Jhigan, M. (1992). The economics of Development and planning (38th Edition) Delhi: Virinda Publications Limited.
- Jhingan, M.L. (2007). The economics of development and planning. Delhi: Vrinda Publications (P) Ltd.
- Kwon-Ndung, L., Canice, E., Amina, B. & Salehe. (2022). Transformation Agenda of the Jonathan Administration: Re- Assessing Implementation Strategies. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360977700>.
- Maketho, M. J. (2020) Understanding Development Planning: is the Blueprint Model Still Relevant?<https://medium.com/@mikemaketho/understanding-development-planning-is-the-blueprint-model-still-relevant-to-development-planning-a953a2e4334b> National Planning Commission. The Transformation Agenda (TA).
- Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2022). Nigeria Launches its Most Extensive National Measure of Multidimensional Poverty. Press Release 17 November 2022 – Abuja. <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/news/7>
- Nnadozie, U. (2005). The State, Civil service and policy-making process in a neo-colonial society.
- Nwogbaga, D. (2017) Transformation Agenda of Goodluck Administration: An Assessment. https://www.academia.edu/32048618/Transformation_Agenda_of_Goodluck_Administration_An_Assessment



- Obikeze, O. S & Obi, E. A. (2004). Public administration in Nigeria: A development approach. Onitsha: Book point Limited.
- Ohaeri, C.S & Amadi, J.C (2026). Nation building and administration: a comprehensive guide to effective governance. Ambix publishers.
- Okigbo, P. (1989). National development plan in Nigeria 1900 – 1907. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers Limited
- Todaro, M. (1992). Economics for a developing world: An introduction to principles, problems and policies for development. London: Longman Groups Limited.
- Udofa, S. I., & Ekeuwei, T. A. (2023). Development Strategies for Africa: Lessons from Asia, Europe, USA and Canada. *AKSU Journal of Administration and Corporate Governance* (AKSUJACOG). 3(2), 101- 119 10.61090/aksujacog.2023.009
- Ugwu, C. E. (2009). The imperatives of national development programmes harmonization in Nigeria: Vision 2020. Millennium Development Goals and Seven point Agenda, in *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration and Local Government* (UNN) Vol. XIV, No. 2, Page 200 – 216.
- United Nations Development Programme. (1991). Human development report. New York: Oxford University Press.
- World Bank. (2025). GDP Per Capita (Current US\$)– Nigeria [Data set]. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=NG>
- World Bank. (2025). Inflation, Consumer Prices (annual %) – Nigeria [Data set]. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG?locations=NG>
- World Bank. (2025). Official Exchange rate (LCU per US\$, period average) – Nigeria[Data set]. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/PA.NUS.FCRF?locations=NG>
- Yunusa, A. (2020). Constraints and Challenges of Development Planning in Nigeria. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies* (JHSSS), 2(1), 69–76.