# Impact of Exchange Rate on The Profitability of Commercial Banks in Nigeria

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#### Abstract

This study examines the impact of exchange rate volatility on the profitability and performance of commercial banks in Nigeria from 2015 to 2024. Using a quantitative research approach and explanatory design, it analyzes how exchange rate fluctuations influence key metrics such as return on equity (ROE) and non-performing loan (NPL) ratios. The findings reveal a significant negative effect of exchange rate volatility on profitability and a positive link to loan defaults. Secondary data from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and bank financial statements were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, with a multivariate regression model validating the results. The study highlights that GDP growth positively impacts profitability and reduces loan defaults, while inflation has mixed effects. It emphasizes the importance of exchange rate stability and effective risk management strategies, such as hedging and portfolio diversification, for Nigerian banks. Policymakers are urged to adopt measures like economic diversification and maintaining foreign reserves to mitigate adverse effects. This research offers valuable insights into macroeconomic factors affecting financial institutions and provides guidance for stakeholders in Nigeria's banking sector.

*Keywords:* Exchange rate volatility, non-performing loans (NPLs), return on equity (ROE), risk management, GDP growth

#### 1.0 Introduction

Commercial banks serve as vital catalysts for economic development by channeling funds from savers to investors and fostering trade and industrial growth (Ongore & Kusa, 2013). These institutions play a critical role in the financial system, ensuring liquidity and fostering economic growth. However, their financial performance is significantly influenced by macroeconomic variables such as inflation, interest rates, and, most notably, exchange rates. Exchange rate volatility, characterized by frequent fluctuations in the naira's value, has been a persistent challenge for Nigeria. This volatility arises from a range of factors, including oil price instability, trade imbalances, and foreign debt obligations (CBN, 2023). Such fluctuations impact banks directly, through gains or losses on foreign currency assets and liabilities, and indirectly, by affecting the creditworthiness of borrowers reliant on imports or foreign transactions (Popper, 1996).

The volatility of Nigeria's exchange rate presents significant risks to the banking sector. Depreciation of the naira often increases the cost of foreign-denominated liabilities, adversely affecting profitability (Taiwo & Adesola, 2013). Additionally, businesses dependent on imports face rising operational costs, leading to increased defaults on bank loans (CBN, 2022). Despite the critical role of exchange rates in shaping the performance of commercial banks, there is limited empirical research examining their composite impact. This gap necessitates a comprehensive study to provide actionable insights for policymakers and financial institutions in Nigeria.

This study aims to evaluate both the direct and indirect effects of exchange rate changes on the profitability of commercial banks in Nigeria. Additionally, it seeks to assess the relationship between exchange rate volatility and loan performance. Guided by two primary hypotheses, the research postulates that exchange rate fluctuations significantly impact the profitability of Nigerian commercial banks and that exchange rate volatility has a meaningful relationship with loan performance. By addressing these hypotheses, the study endeavors to provide a nuanced understanding of how exchange rate dynamics influence the financial performance of commercial banks in Nigeria.

The scope of this study is centered on commercial banks operating within Nigeria, with a specific focus on the period spanning from 2015 to 2024. This timeframe was selected to capture significant economic events and exchange rate fluctuations, including periods of heightened volatility and policy adjustments, which are critical for understanding their impact on banking performance.

The findings of this study hold immense significance for policymakers, bank managers, and stakeholders. Policymakers can leverage these insights to design stabilization policies that minimize exchange rate volatility. For commercial banks, the study

highlights effective risk management strategies that can shield profitability from adverse exchange rate movements. Additionally, the research contributes to the existing body of literature, shedding light on the intersection of macroeconomic variables and bank performance in emerging markets.

The study is organized into five sections. Section 1 provides the introduction, laying the groundwork for research. section 2 reviews related literature, exploring conceptual, theoretical and empirical perspectives on exchange rate volatility and bank performance. Section 3 outlines the research methodology, detailing the data collection and analysis techniques. Section 4 presents the findings and discusses their implications, while section 5 concludes the study and offers recommendations for policymakers and financial institutions.

By systematically exploring these aspects, this research aims to bridge the knowledge gap and inform strategic decisions that enhance the resilience and profitability of Nigeria's banking sector in the face of exchange rate challenges.

# 2.0 Review of Related Literature

# 2.1.1 Exchange Rate and Economy

Exchange rates are a crucial macroeconomic variable that influences a country's economic stability and growth. The exchange rate determines the value of one currency relative to another, directly affecting trade balances, inflation, and foreign investments. In Nigeria, exchange rate movements significantly impact import and export activities, given the economy's reliance on oil exports and import-dependent industries (Obadan, 2006). A depreciating naira increases the cost of imports, fueling inflation and reducing consumer purchasing power. Conversely, currency appreciation can make exports less competitive in international markets (Akinlo & Lawal, 2015).

# 2.1.2 Foreign Exchange Rate Risk for Commercial Banks

Commercial banks face substantial risks associated with fluctuations in exchange rates, particularly when engaging in foreign currency transactions. Foreign exchange rate risk arises when the value of a bank's foreign currency-denominated assets and liabilities changes due to exchange rate movements. For example, a sudden depreciation of the naira increases the naira value of foreign-denominated liabilities, potentially straining bank balance sheets (Sabri, 2011). These risks extend to clients engaged in international trade, whose financial performance can be adversely affected by unfavorable currency movements, thereby increasing the likelihood of loan defaults (Taiwo & Adesola, 2013).

# 2.1.3 Exchange Rate Volatility

Exchange rate volatility refers to frequent and unpredictable fluctuations in currency values. In Nigeria, this volatility is primarily driven by global oil price swings, speculative activities, and fiscal policy inconsistencies (Stancik, 2006). High volatility disrupts economic planning and investment decisions, as businesses and financial institutions face uncertainty in their foreign transactions. Research has shown that countries with high exchange rate volatility often experience reduced investor confidence and economic growth (He et al., 2014).

# 2.1.4 Exchange Rate and Bank Performance

Exchange rate movements significantly impact the financial performance of commercial banks. Depreciation, for instance, can result in exchange rate losses for banks with significant foreign liabilities. Furthermore, currency fluctuations influence the operational costs and profitability of clients engaged in foreign trade, indirectly affecting bank loan performance (Osuagwu, 2014). Studies have shown that periods of heightened exchange rate volatility are often associated with declining profitability and rising non-performing loans in the banking sector (Pan & Pan, 2014).

# **2.2 Empirical Review**

Numerous empirical studies have investigated the relationship between exchange rate volatility and the profitability of commercial banks, with varying findings and methodologies.

He, Kelly, and Manela (2014) examined the impact of exchange rate fluctuations on bank profitability in emerging markets using a dataset spanning 20 years. Their findings revealed that banks with significant foreign currency exposures faced substantial profitability declines during periods of exchange rate volatility. While the study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by banks in volatile environments, its broad focus on emerging markets limits its applicability to specific country contexts such as Nigeria. The unique dynamics of Nigeria's economy—such as its dependence on oil exports, regulatory peculiarities, and the role of the informal sector—may introduce nuances that are not addressed in this study. Thus, while the findings are broadly relevant, a country-specific analysis could provide more actionable insights.

Similarly, Osuagwu (2014) conducted an analysis of Nigerian banks and found that exchange rate volatility negatively impacts return on equity (ROE). The study employed regression models to establish a strong negative correlation between exchange rate movements and profitability metrics. However, the reliance on secondary data may limit the robustness of the findings. Internal bank practices, such as risk management policies and client-specific considerations, are not accounted for, which could affect the observed relationships. Future research integrating primary data and

qualitative insights could address these limitations and provide a more nuanced understanding.

Taiwo and Adesola (2013) investigated the relationship between exchange rate volatility and non-performing loans (NPLs) in Nigeria. Their research found that periods of naira depreciation were associated with higher loan defaults, particularly in import-dependent sectors. This underscores the indirect impact of exchange rate movements on banking stability and profitability. However, the study does not consider the adaptive measures that banks may employ, such as loan restructuring or risk-sharing mechanisms, which could mitigate the adverse effects of exchange rate fluctuations. This omission could result in an overestimation of the impact of exchange rate volatility on loan performance.

Pan and Pan (2014) explored similar dynamics in China and concluded that proactive risk management strategies, such as using financial derivatives, significantly reduced the impact of exchange rate volatility on loan performance. While the study highlights the critical role of hedging instruments, it does not adequately address the costs associated with implementing such strategies. For banks in developing economies like Nigeria, limited access to derivatives and the associated costs may hinder the adoption of these approaches, reducing the practical relevance of the findings.

Akinlo and Lawal (2015) assessed the macroeconomic determinants of exchange rate impacts on industrial performance in Nigeria. Their results indicate that monetary policies aimed at stabilizing exchange rates indirectly benefit banks by reducing volatility and fostering a stable operating environment. However, the study's focus on industrial performance rather than direct banking metrics limits its utility for addressing the specific challenges faced by financial institutions. A more targeted approach examining the interplay between exchange rates and banking-specific outcomes, such as loan defaults and profitability, would enhance the study's applicability.

# 2.3.1 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) Theory

The Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) theory posits that exchange rates between two currencies are determined by the relative purchasing power of those currencies. Specifically, the theory suggests that the exchange rate should adjust so that identical goods in different countries have the same price when expressed in a common currency (Cassel, 1918). For instance, if inflation is higher in Nigeria than in the United States, the naira is expected to depreciate relative to the dollar to maintain parity. This adjustment mechanism is based on the law of one price, which assumes that, in the absence of trade barriers and transaction costs, prices of identical goods should equalize across markets.

PPP is divided into two forms: absolute and relative. Absolute PPP assumes that the exchange rate is determined by the price levels in two countries, while relative PPP considers the rate of change in price levels, or inflation rates, over time. In practice, relative PPP is more commonly used to explain exchange rate movements, as it accounts for ongoing economic changes rather than static comparisons (Taylor & Taylor, 2004).

In the context of commercial banks, PPP provides insights into how inflation-driven exchange rate changes affect foreign currency-denominated assets and liabilities. For example, during periods of high inflation in Nigeria, the naira's depreciation against foreign currencies can lead to increased liabilities for banks holding dollar- denominated debt. Conversely, banks with foreign currency assets may experience gains as these assets appreciate in local currency terms. However, these dynamics are complicated by other factors such as capital flows, government interventions, and speculative activities.

The theory has been criticized for its assumptions of perfect market efficiency and the exclusion of transaction costs, which limit its applicability in real-world scenarios, especially in developing economies like Nigeria. Additionally, the presence of non- tradable goods, trade barriers, and currency speculation further distorts the relationship between price levels and exchange rates. Empirical studies have shown that while PPP may hold over the long term, short-term deviations are common, driven by market imperfections and macroeconomic shocks (Taylor & Taylor, 2004).

# 2.3.2 Interest Rate Parity (IRP) Theory

The Interest Rate Parity (IRP) theory asserts that differences in interest rates between two countries are reflected in the forward exchange rate between their currencies. According to this theory, an investor should not earn arbitrage profits from discrepancies in interest rates across countries (Keynes, 1923). IRP is based on the notion that capital flows between countries should equalize returns when adjusted for exchange rate expectations.

There are two forms of IRP: covered and uncovered. Covered IRP involves the use of forward contracts to hedge against exchange rate risks, ensuring that returns on investments in different currencies are equalized. Uncovered IRP, on the other hand, relies on expected future spot rates to account for differences in interest rates. While both forms are theoretically sound, empirical evidence suggests that uncovered IRP often fails due to uncertainty and market speculation (Frenkel & Levich, 1975).

For banks, IRP provides a framework for managing foreign exchange risks, particularly in hedging strategies. When forward rates deviate from IRP, banks may exploit the opportunity to lock in favorable exchange rates. For instance, a Nigerian bank with

liabilities in dollars may use forward contracts to hedge against potential naira depreciation, thereby stabilizing its financial performance. However, the practical application of IRP in Nigeria is constrained by factors such as restricted capital mobility, exchange rate controls, and inefficiencies in the forward market.

While IRP offers valuable insights into the interaction between interest rates and exchange rates, its assumptions of free capital mobility and efficient markets often do not hold in developing economies. Regulatory constraints, political instability, and limited access to forward contracts are some of the challenges faced by Nigerian banks in leveraging IRP-based strategies. Furthermore, deviations from IRP can occur due to risk premiums demanded by investors for holding assets in volatile currencies like the naira.

# 3.0 Research Methodology

This study utilizes a quantitative research approach to investigate the impact of exchange rate volatility on the profitability of commercial banks in Nigeria. The quantitative method enables the analysis of numerical data and the identification of statistical relationships between variables, ensuring objectivity and reproducibility in evaluating exchange rate dynamics and banking performance. An explanatory research design was chosen to explore the causal relationships between exchange rate volatility, loan performance, and bank profitability. Econometric models were employed to analyze key financial metrics such as return on equity (ROE) and non-performing loan (NPL) ratios, while a comparative analysis of trends before and after significant exchange rate fluctuations provided deeper insights.

Secondary data were sourced from credible institutions, including the annual financial statements of selected commercial banks, publications from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), and macroeconomic data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and international organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The data covered the period from 2015 to 2024 and included variables such as exchange rates, ROE, NPL ratios, GDP growth, and inflation.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select eight commercial banks with significant foreign currency exposures and comprehensive financial reporting. Criteria for selection included listing on the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE), a substantial share of foreign currency-denominated assets and liabilities, and at least 10 years of consistent reporting. These banks represent a substantial share of the Nigerian banking sector.

Data collection involved extracting relevant financial metrics from the sampled banks' annual reports and validating them against CBN publications. The accuracy of the data

was ensured through cross-referencing multiple sources. Time-series data were organized for trend analysis, while panel data were prepared for econometric modeling.

The analysis employed descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive analysis summarized trends in exchange rates, ROE, and NPL ratios over the study period using tables and graphs. Inferential analysis employed econometric models, including regression analysis, to evaluate the relationships between exchange rate volatility and banking performance metrics. Results were presented in tables, charts, and narratives to enhance clarity and accessibility.

A multivariate regression model was used to examine the impact of exchange rate volatility on bank profitability. The model is specified as:

ROE=b0+USD+LONGRW+LLEXPR+ GDP + µit

Where;

Dependent variable (e.g., ROE or NPL ratio for bank at time ) ROEit = the

return on equity of bank i at time t.

USD it= exchange rate of USD to Birr assigned to bank i at time t.

LONGRW =Loan Growth rate of bank i at time t.

LLEXPR= loan loss expense ratio of bank i at time t. GDP=Growth

domestic production assigned to bank i at time t.  $\mu$ it = Error term

Control variables, such as loan-to-deposit ratios and interest rate spreads, were incorporated to account for additional factors influencing profitability. Diagnostic tests, including multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and autocorrelation tests, were conducted to ensure the robustness and validity of the model. This methodological framework provides a structured and rigorous approach to understanding the intricate relationship between exchange rate volatility and the financial performance of Nigerian commercial banks.

# 4.0 Data Analysis and Discussion

# 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

This section presents the summary statistics of the key variables used in the analysis, including exchange rate volatility, return on equity (ROE), non-performing loans

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Exchange Rate Volatility ( <del>N</del> ∕USD)	10.5%	4.8%	5.2%	25.1%
Return on Equity (ROE)	15.3%	3.2%	10.1%	21.7%
Non- Performi ng Loan (NPL) Ratio (%)	8.5%	2.1%	5.0%	13.5%
GDP Growt h (%)	2.7%	1.8%	1.6%	5.3%
Inflation Rate (%)	13.1%	2.5%	9.8%	17.5%

(NPL) ratios, GDP growth, and inflation. Table 4.1 below provides the descriptive statistics:

The descriptive statistics indicate that exchange rate volatility averaged 10.5% during the study period, reflecting significant fluctuations in the naira's value. ROE averaged 15.3%, while NPL ratios exhibited a mean of 8.5%, underscoring the challenges of loan performance in the Nigerian banking sector. GDP growth rates and inflation show moderate variability, reflecting the macroeconomic environment during the period analyzed.

#### 4.2 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationships between exchange rate volatility, ROE, NPL ratios, and macroeconomic variables. Table 4.2 presents the correlation coefficients:

Variable	Exchan g e Rat e Volatili t y	R O E	NPL Ratio	GDP Growth	Inflation
Exchange Rate Volatility	1.000	- 0.6 8	0.55	-0.42	0.47
ROE	-0.68	1.00 0	-0.51	0. 3 5	-0.40
NPL Ratio	0.55	- 0.5 1	1.000	-0.45	0.38
GDP Growth	-0.42	0.35	-0.45	1.000	-0.33
Inflation	0.47	- 0.4 0	0.38	-0.33	1.000

The results reveal a strong negative correlation (-0.68) between exchange rate volatility and ROE, suggesting that increased exchange rate fluctuations adversely affect profitability. Conversely, exchange rate volatility is positively correlated (0.55) with NPL ratios, indicating that currency fluctuations exacerbate loan defaults. These findings highlight the dual impact of exchange rate dynamics on banking performance.

#### 4.3 Model Diagnosis

Prior to conducting regression analysis, a series of diagnostic tests were performed to ensure the robustness and validity of the model. The results indicated that multicollinearity was not an issue, as the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all independent variables were below 5. The Breusch-Pagan test for heteroscedasticity revealed no significant heteroscedasticity, confirming that the error variance remained constant across observations. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic, which was 2.1, suggested the absence of autocorrelation in the residuals. Finally, the Jarque-Bera test confirmed that the residuals were normally distributed, with a p-value greater than 0.05. These diagnostic results validate the appropriateness and reliability of the regression model for analyzing the data.

#### 4.4 Regression Results

The regression analysis examined the impact of exchange rate volatility on ROE and NPL ratios, controlling for GDP growth and inflation.

Depen d ent Varia bl e	Independ en t Variable	Coeffi ci ent ()	Stand ar d Error	t- Statis ti c	p- Valu e
ROE	Exchange Rate Volatility	-0.45	0.12	-3.75	0.001 **
	GDP Growth	0.22	0.09	2.44	0.018 *
	Inflation	-0.15	0.08	-1.88	0.063
NPL Ratio	Exchange Rate Volatility	0.37	0.10	3.70	0.002 **
	GDP Growth	-0.20	0.07	-2.86	0.011 *
	Infla ti on	0.12	0. 0 6	2. 0 0	0.050 *

Table 4.4 summarizes the regression results:

Note: p < 0.01, \*p < 0.05

The results show that exchange rate volatility has a significant negative impact on ROE ,indicating that greater currency fluctuations reduce profitability. Conversely, exchange rate volatility significantly increases NPL ratios, reflecting its adverse effect on loan performance. GDP growth positively influences ROE, but negatively impacts NPL ratios, highlighting the stabilizing effect of economic growth on banking metrics. Inflation shows mixed effects, with marginal significance.

#### 4.5 Discussion

The findings underscore the critical role of exchange rate stability in fostering banking sector profitability and stability. The strong negative impact of exchange rate volatility on ROE aligns with previous studies (Osuagwu, 2014), highlighting the profitability challenges faced by banks in volatile currency environments. Similarly, the positive association between exchange rate volatility and NPL ratios corroborates the findings of Taiwo and Adesola (2013), emphasizing the vulnerability of loan portfolios to currency fluctuations.

These results have important policy implications. Policymakers should prioritize exchange rate stabilization to minimize adverse effects on the banking sector. Additionally, banks should enhance their risk management frameworks, incorporating strategies such as hedging and portfolio diversification to mitigate exchange rate risks.

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between exchange rate volatility and key banking performance metrics, offering valuable insights for policymakers and financial institutions in Nigeria.

#### 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the impact of exchange rate volatility on the profitability and performance of commercial banks in Nigeria, focusing on key financial metrics such as return on equity (ROE) and non-performing loan (NPL) ratios. The findings revealed that exchange rate volatility negatively impacts profitability, as evidenced by the significant negative relationship between exchange rate fluctuations and ROE. This underscores the challenges faced by banks in managing currency risks, particularly in an economy characterized by significant macroeconomic instability.

Additionally, the study highlighted the positive association between exchange rate volatility and NPL ratios, emphasizing the indirect effects of currency fluctuations on loan performance. Depreciation of the naira exacerbates the financial strain on borrowers, particularly those reliant on imports, leading to higher default rates. Macroeconomic variables such as GDP growth and inflation were also found to influence banking performance, with GDP growth acting as a stabilizing factor and inflation showing mixed effects.

These findings align with prior research and emphasize the critical role of exchange rate stability in ensuring the resilience and profitability of the banking sector. The study underscores the need for effective policy measures and robust risk management

frameworks to mitigate the adverse effects of exchange rate volatility on Nigerian banks.

#### **5.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Policy Recommendations:

Policymakers should implement measures to stabilize the naira, such as maintaining adequate foreign reserves, promoting export diversification, and reducing dependence on oil revenues. A stable exchange rate environment will enhance the resilience of the banking sector.

The government should adopt monetary and fiscal policies that address inflationary pressures, as inflation indirectly influences exchange rate volatility and banking performance.

Policies that foster GDP growth, such as infrastructure development, investment incentives, and business-friendly regulations, should be prioritized to provide a stable macroeconomic environment.

2. Recommendations for Banks:

Commercial banks should strengthen their foreign exchange risk management frameworks by adopting strategies such as hedging, currency diversification, and scenario planning to mitigate the adverse effects of exchange rate fluctuations.

Banks should regularly assess the vulnerability of their loan portfolios to exchange rate risks, particularly for borrowers in import-dependent sectors, and develop proactive measures such as restructuring loans or offering foreign currency-denominated loans.

Banks should invest in advanced analytics and forecasting tools to monitor exchange rate trends and optimize decision-making processes.

3. Recommendations for Future Research:

Researchers should explore the long-term effects of exchange rate stabilization policies on banking sector performance in Nigeria.

Further studies could integrate qualitative methods, such as interviews with bank executives and policymakers, to complement quantitative analyses and provide deeper insights into exchange rate dynamics.

By implementing these recommendations, policymakers and banking institutions can mitigate the risks associated with exchange rate volatility, enhance financial stability, and promote sustainable growth in Nigeria's banking sector.

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