

Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) Analysis of the Church and Governance in the Nigerian Context

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Abstract

This study examined the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) analysis of the church and governance in the Nigerian context. The study anchored on religious influence theory. The study employed a qualitative research method, in-depth interviews were chosen as the primary data collection technique, enabling a detailed exploration of clergymen's views on the Church's role in governance and civic engagement. The study selected six (6) clergymen: the selection of six clergymen was based on purposive sampling techniques, which involved deliberately choosing individuals who possess specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic method, which involved identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the interview data. The findings revealed that the extent of knowledge among church members in Nigeria regarding their civic rights and responsibilities is varied, with many urban churchgoers aware of their basic rights, such as voting and freedom of speech, often due to media exposure and church-led civic engagement programs. However, in rural or less educated communities, awareness is limited due to low literacy levels, limited access to information, and a focus on spiritual rather than civic matters. While some church members understand their rights, fewer grasp the importance of fulfilling civic responsibilities like paying taxes and holding officials accountable, often resulting in passive citizenship. The study concluded that the level of knowledge about civic rights and responsibilities among church members in Nigeria is heavily influenced by the church's engagement with civic issues, with more awareness in urban, educated congregations and less in rural, less informed communities, highlighting the critical role of religious leaders in shaping civic consciousness. The study recommended that Churches should integrate civic education into their teachings and encourage active participation in governance to foster a more informed and responsible citizenry.

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices, KAP Analysis, Church, Governance, Nigeria

Introduction

The Church has historically played a pivotal role in governance and social transformation in Nigeria. As a significant institution, it influences the moral and ethical standards of society, which can affect governance practices. This Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) analysis seeks to understand how church teachings and activities shape the political landscape in Nigeria. It examines the knowledge church leaders and members possess about governance, their attitudes towards political engagement, and the practices that arise from this knowledge and attitude, particularly in addressing corruption and promoting democratic values. Knowledge about governance among church members varies widely, influenced by educational background and church teachings. Many church leaders emphasise the moral implications of governance, underscoring the need for ethical leadership (Adebayo, 2023). A recent survey indicated that approximately 70% of congregants lack a comprehensive understanding of their civic rights and responsibilities, particularly regarding electoral processes (Nigerian Political Forum, 2023). This knowledge gap can hinder effective participation in democratic processes, resulting in voter apathy and disillusionment with political institutions.

The attitude of church members towards political participation is often shaped by their theological beliefs and the political climate. While some view engagement in politics as a moral duty, others perceive it as a deviation from spiritual pursuits (Ogunyemi, 2023). Research shows that many churchgoers are sceptical about the integrity of political systems, leading to a general reluctance to participate actively in politics (Olaoye, 2023). This ambivalence is further compounded by the experiences of political corruption and mismanagement that have marred Nigeria's governance landscape. Church leaders significantly influence the political attitudes of their congregations. Many leaders actively encourage political engagement, framing it as a Christian obligation to promote justice and righteousness in governance (Eze, 2023). Recent initiatives by various denominations to educate their members on civic responsibilities reflect a growing recognition of the church's role in promoting good governance (Christian Association of Nigeria, 2023). This proactive stance can foster a more politically aware and engaged congregation, capable of holding political leaders accountable.

In practice, many churches have initiated programs aimed at increasing political awareness and participation among their members. These programs include voter education campaigns, discussions on governance issues, and organising community forums for political candidates (Adeoye, 2023). However, despite these efforts, the impact of such initiatives often remains limited, as many members still prioritise spiritual activities over political engagement. Furthermore, the fear of political repercussions can deter church members from expressing their political views openly (Ogunleye, 2023). Corruption is a critical issue affecting governance in Nigeria, and the church's stance on this matter is vital. Many church leaders speak out against corruption, advocating for transparency and accountability in government (Nwankwo, 2023). Some denominations have even established anti-corruption units to educate their members on the importance of integrity in public service. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives is often undermined by the pervasive culture of corruption within the broader society, which can create a sense of helplessness among church members.

The church has the potential to serve as a powerful platform for advocacy and social change. By mobilising their congregations, church leaders can influence policy discussions and advocate for reforms that promote good governance (Afolabi, 2023). Recent movements led by religious groups, such as the “Bring Back Our Girls” campaign, illustrate how the church can address pressing societal issues through collective action. These advocacy efforts highlight the church's role in promoting not just spiritual values but also social justice. The intersection of religion and politics in Nigeria is complex and often contentious. While the church aims to promote ethical governance, it must navigate a political landscape fraught with challenges, including ethnic tensions and religious divisions (Oladapo, 2023). Church leaders must find a balance between encouraging political participation and maintaining their congregants' trust. Engaging in partisan politics can alienate some members, leading to divisions within the church community.

Moving forward, the church must adopt a more proactive and informed approach to governance issues. This involves not only educating its members but also collaborating with civil society organizations and governmental agencies to promote good governance (Adebayo, 2023). Establishing partnerships can enhance the church's advocacy efforts and provide a broader platform for addressing governance challenges in Nigeria. Additionally, fostering inter-denominational dialogue can help create a unified voice against corruption and poor governance. The church's involvement in governance within the Nigerian context is crucial for fostering democratic values and ethical leadership. A comprehensive KAP analysis reveals significant knowledge gaps and varying attitudes towards political participation among church members. While there are promising practices in civic engagement and advocacy, more concerted efforts are needed to address the challenges posed by corruption and political disillusionment. By leveraging its influence and resources, the church can play a transformative role in shaping a more accountable and just governance framework in Nigeria.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to illuminate the complex relationship between the Church and governance in Nigeria, providing valuable insights into how religious beliefs and practices influence political engagement and accountability. By analysing the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of church members regarding governance, the study aims to identify barriers to effective civic participation and offer recommendations for enhancing the Church's role as a catalyst for good governance and social justice. Ultimately, this research contributes to fostering a more informed and active citizenry, strengthening democratic values, and promoting ethical leadership in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The interplay between religion and governance is a critical issue in Nigeria, where the Church has historically wielded significant influence over societal values and norms. Despite this influence, there is a notable disconnection between the Church's teachings on ethical leadership and the prevailing governance practices in the country, characterised by widespread corruption and political disillusionment. This disjunction raises important questions about the effectiveness of the Church's role in promoting civic engagement and good governance. Many congregants possess limited knowledge of their civic rights and responsibilities, which contributes to a culture of political apathy and disengagement. Without adequate understanding and awareness, the potential

for the Church to mobilise its members towards active participation in governance remains unfulfilled.

Furthermore, the attitudes of church members towards political participation are often shaped by a combination of theological beliefs and the socio-political climate. While some church leaders advocate for increased political engagement as a moral obligation, many members exhibit scepticism about the integrity of political systems and their ability to effect change. This ambivalence is exacerbated by negative experiences with political corruption, leading to a general reluctance to participate in electoral processes. As a result, the Church's potential as a vehicle for promoting democratic values and fostering accountability is undermined. Understanding these attitudes is crucial to addressing the challenges that hinder effective civic engagement among church members.

Additionally, the practices of civic engagement within the Church often fall short of their intended impact. While numerous churches implement programs aimed at educating their congregations about political issues, these initiatives frequently struggle to resonate with members who prioritise spiritual pursuits over political involvement. The fear of political repercussions further discourages open discussion about governance and political matters within church communities. As a consequence, the Church's influence as a promoter of good governance may be limited, leaving congregants ill-equipped to engage meaningfully in the political sphere. A critical examination of these practices is essential to identify ways to enhance their effectiveness and ensure that they foster a more politically aware and active congregation.

Finally, the problem of corruption in governance remains a significant barrier to the Church's involvement in political advocacy. Despite the vocal opposition from many church leaders, the pervasive culture of corruption poses a formidable challenge to promoting integrity and accountability in government. Church initiatives aimed at combating corruption often face systemic obstacles and societal apathy, leading to a sense of helplessness among church members. The Church must navigate this complex landscape while maintaining its moral authority and encouraging its members to advocate for change. Thus, this study seeks to explore the current state of knowledge, attitudes, and practices within the Church regarding governance to develop a framework that enhances its role in promoting good governance and combating corruption in Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows

1. To assess the level of knowledge church members have about their civic rights and responsibilities in the context of governance in Nigeria.
2. To examine the attitudes of church members towards political participation and engagement in governance-related issues.
3. To evaluate the practices implemented by churches to promote civic engagement and political awareness among their congregants.
4. To identify the role of the Church in addressing corruption and advocating for good governance in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent of knowledge among church members regarding their civic rights and responsibilities in Nigeria?
2. How do church members perceive political participation and its relevance to their faith and community?
3. What specific practices do churches employ to educate and engage their members in political issues?
4. In what ways does the Church contribute to combating corruption and promoting ethical governance in Nigeria?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Understanding Civic Rights and Responsibilities in the Nigerian Context

Civic rights and responsibilities are foundational elements of democratic governance, encompassing the rights individuals have within a political system and the obligations they owe to their society. In the Nigerian context, these rights include the right to vote, access to information, freedom of speech, and the right to participate in political processes. However, a significant portion of the population, particularly among church members, lacks comprehensive knowledge of these rights. Studies indicate that approximately 65% of Nigerian citizens do not fully understand their civic rights, which impedes their ability to engage effectively in governance (Nigerian Political Forum, 2023). This knowledge gap often leads to political apathy and disengagement, undermining the democratic process. The Church, as a significant societal institution, has the potential to play a crucial role in educating its members about their civic rights and responsibilities. Many church leaders advocate for the integration of civic education into church programs, recognising that an informed congregation is more likely to participate actively in governance (Adebayo, 2023). By promoting awareness of civic rights, the Church can empower its members to advocate for their interests and hold political leaders accountable. Moreover, integrating civic education into church activities aligns with the broader mission of the Church to promote justice and righteousness within society.

However, the extent to which churches are effective in imparting this knowledge varies significantly across denominations and localities. While some churches have initiated voter education campaigns and community forums, others remain focused primarily on spiritual teachings, neglecting the importance of civic engagement (Ogunyemi, 2023). This disparity highlights the need for a more systematic approach to integrating civic rights education into church programs. Engaging church leaders in discussions about the importance of civic responsibility can foster a more politically aware congregation that understands its role in promoting good governance. Ultimately, enhancing the understanding of civic rights and responsibilities among church members is essential for fostering a culture of active citizenship in Nigeria. As congregants

become more informed about their rights, they are likely to engage more meaningfully in the political process, leading to increased accountability and transparency in governance. This transformation not only benefits individual church members but also contributes to the overall health of Nigeria's democracy.

Attitudes towards Political Participation among Church Members

Attitudes towards political participation are shaped by a myriad of factors, including personal beliefs, societal influences, and the teachings of religious leaders. Within the Nigerian context, many church members exhibit ambivalence towards political engagement, often viewing it as a distraction from spiritual matters (Eze, 2023). This perspective is rooted in a historical context where political involvement has frequently been associated with corruption and ethical compromises. Consequently, a significant number of congregants may feel that engaging in politics contradicts their religious values, leading to a general reluctance to participate in governance. However, there is a growing recognition among some church leaders of the importance of political engagement as a means of promoting ethical leadership and social justice. These leaders advocate for a shift in attitude, encouraging their congregations to see political participation not only as a right but also as a moral obligation (Nwankwo, 2023). Recent surveys indicate that church members who receive encouragement from their leaders are more likely to express positive attitudes toward political participation, suggesting that leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping these attitudes (Olaoye, 2023).

Moreover, the socio-political climate in Nigeria significantly influences church members' attitudes towards political participation. Experiences of political disenfranchisement, corruption, and ineffective governance contribute to feelings of scepticism and disillusionment. Many congregants feel that their participation in the political process will not yield meaningful change, which reinforces their disengagement (Ogunleye, 2023). Addressing these concerns requires a comprehensive understanding of the barriers that hinder effective participation and fostering a sense of agency among church members. To cultivate positive attitudes towards political participation, it is essential for the Church to engage in dialogue that connects faith and politics. By framing political engagement as a continuation of their spiritual mission, church leaders can inspire congregants to take an active role in governance. This transformation not only enhances the political landscape but also aligns with the Church's mission to promote justice and serve the common good. Thus, understanding and addressing the attitudes of church members towards political participation is vital for fostering an active and engaged citizenry in Nigeria.

Church Practices in Promoting Civic Engagement and Political Awareness

Church practices aimed at promoting civic engagement and political awareness have emerged as vital components in fostering active citizenship among congregants in Nigeria. Many churches have initiated programs that focus on educating their members about political processes, voting rights, and the importance of civic participation (Adeoye, 2023). These initiatives often include workshops, seminars, and community discussions that encourage dialogue about governance issues. Such practices not only equip congregants with necessary knowledge but also create a sense of community and collective responsibility towards societal change. Despite these efforts, the

effectiveness of church practices in promoting civic engagement can vary significantly. Some denominations have successfully implemented voter education campaigns that engage large numbers of congregants, while others struggle to garner interest in political discussions (Afolabi, 2023). Factors influencing this disparity include the level of commitment from church leadership, the socio-economic background of congregants, and the prevailing political climate. Furthermore, the integration of civic education into church programs is often hindered by a focus on spiritual teachings, which may marginalise the importance of civic engagement.

Additionally, the fear of political repercussions can inhibit open discussions about governance within church settings. Many congregants may be reluctant to express their political views or participate in advocacy efforts due to concerns about potential backlash from political authorities or fellow church members (Ogunyemi, 2023). This environment of apprehension can undermine the effectiveness of church-led initiatives aimed at promoting political awareness. Therefore, creating a safe and supportive space for dialogue is crucial for fostering meaningful engagement among church members. To enhance the impact of church practices on civic engagement, it is essential for church leaders to prioritise the integration of civic education into their teachings. Encouraging congregants to see the connection between their faith and their civic duties can empower them to take an active role in governance. By fostering a culture of political awareness and responsibility, churches can contribute to the development of an informed and engaged citizenry, capable of advocating for justice and accountability in Nigeria.

The Role of the Church in Combating Corruption and Advocating for Good Governance

The Church in Nigeria has a significant role in addressing corruption and advocating for good governance, as it is often seen as a moral compass for society. Many church leaders have been vocal about the detrimental effects of corruption on national development and social justice, urging their congregations to uphold ethical standards in all spheres of life (Nwankwo, 2023). By framing corruption as a moral issue, the Church can galvanise its members to actively oppose corrupt practices and demand accountability from their leaders. This advocacy is crucial in a political landscape where corruption is pervasive and often goes unpunished. Several denominations have established anti-corruption units or initiatives aimed at educating their members about the importance of integrity in governance. These programs often focus on promoting transparency and ethical behaviour among public officials and citizens alike (Adebayo, 2023). For instance, some churches conduct workshops and campaigns that encourage congregants to report corrupt practices and participate in community monitoring efforts. Such initiatives not only empower individuals but also foster a collective sense of responsibility for promoting good governance within society.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain in the Church's fight against corruption. The prevailing culture of impunity in Nigeria can make it difficult for church-led initiatives to effect meaningful change (Olaoye, 2023). Additionally, the fear of political retribution may discourage church members from actively participating in anti-corruption efforts, leading to a sense of helplessness. To overcome these obstacles, it is essential for church leaders to create an environment that encourages open discussions about corruption and empowers congregants to take action without fear of repercussions. The Church's role in combating corruption and advocating for good governance is critical for promoting ethical leadership in Nigeria. By leveraging its moral

authority and engaging its members in advocacy efforts, the Church can contribute significantly to fostering a culture of accountability and transparency. Encouraging congregants to see their spiritual and civic responsibilities as interconnected can lead to a more active and engaged citizenry, ultimately enhancing the overall governance landscape in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Religious Influence Theory

This theory has been shaped by various scholars, with significant contributions from Andrew Greeley in the 1970s and 1980s, examined how religion affects political behaviour and attitudes. Greeley (1972) argued that religious beliefs and affiliations significantly influence individuals' civic responsibilities and political engagement. The main tenets of Religious Influence Theory suggest that religious beliefs provide individuals with moral frameworks that guide their attitudes toward governance and civic duties. It assumes that individuals who actively engage in religious practices are more likely to participate in civic life and hold values that promote social justice, accountability, and ethical leadership (Djupe & Grant, 2001). The theory posits that churches can serve as platforms for political socialisation, shaping congregants' views on governance and encouraging active participation in democratic processes. Critics of Religious Influence Theory argue that it may overstate the uniformity of religious influence across different denominations and cultural contexts, potentially ignoring the diversity of beliefs and practices within religious communities (Hout & Fischer, 2002). Additionally, the theory may not fully consider the complexities of political behaviour influenced by factors such as socioeconomic status and education. Despite these criticisms, the theory is relevant to this study as it underscores the Church's potential to mould its members' attitudes toward political participation, thereby fostering a more engaged and informed citizenry committed to combating corruption and promoting good governance in Nigeria.

Empirical Studies

Odukoya (2022) carried out a study on “The Role of the Church in Promoting Civic Awareness among Congregants in Nigeria.” This study assessed how church teachings influence the civic awareness of congregants and their participation in governance. A mixed-methods approach was employed, using surveys and interviews with church leaders and members across various denominations in Lagos State. The study found that congregants who received regular education on civic rights and responsibilities from their church were more likely to participate in political activities such as voting and advocacy. Both studies focus on the Church's influence on civic engagement and political participation. While Odukoya's study emphasises civic awareness specifically, the present study aims to explore broader themes, including attitudes and practices related to governance.

Okafor (2023) conducted a study on “Church Leadership and Political Engagement: The Nigerian Experience.” This study examined the impact of church leadership on congregational attitudes towards political participation in Nigeria. Qualitative interviews were conducted with church leaders and active members from different denominations to gather in-depth insights. The study revealed that churches with proactive leaders who advocate for political engagement

significantly increased the likelihood of congregants participating in governance. Both studies investigate the relationship between church influence and political participation among members. Okafor's study specifically focuses on church leadership's role, while the present study encompasses a broader analysis of knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding governance.

Nwosu (2021) did a paper on "The Church as a Platform for Civic Engagement: A Case Study of Selected Denominations in Nigeria." This study explored how different denominations facilitate civic engagement among their congregants through various initiatives. The study utilised a comparative case study approach, examining three different church denominations and their civic engagement programs. It found that some denominations actively promote civic engagement through education and community service, while others focus primarily on spiritual matters, leading to varying levels of political participation among congregants. Both studies assess the role of the Church in fostering civic engagement and its impact on political participation. Nwosu's study highlights comparative differences between denominations, while the present study focuses on the collective understanding and practices across the Church as a whole.

Akinyemi (2022) conducted a research on "Faith and Politics: Analysing the Impact of Religious Institutions on Governance in Nigeria." The study analysed the influence of religious institutions, specifically the Church, on governance and political accountability in Nigeria. The study employed a survey of church members and political leaders, supplemented by focus group discussions to gain a deeper understanding of perceptions and practices. It was found that religious institutions have a dual role, both in promoting good governance and in being susceptible to political manipulation, which can undermine their effectiveness. Both studies explore the Church's influence on governance and its role in promoting accountability among political leaders. Akinyemi's study provides a broader analysis of religious institutions and their political implications, while the present study specifically focuses on the Church's role in civic engagement among its members.

The literature review is crucial in providing a comprehensive understanding of existing research related to the Church's role in governance and civic engagement, highlighting theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and key findings that inform the current study. However, it reveals a significant gap in empirical studies specifically examining the perceptions and practices of church leaders in Nigeria regarding civic education and political participation among congregants, indicating a need for focused research to explore how these leaders can effectively promote civic responsibility within their communities.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research method, which is particularly suited for exploring complex social phenomena and gaining in-depth insights into participants' experiences and perspectives. Qualitative research is characterised by its focus on understanding the meanings individuals attach to their experiences, allowing researchers to capture rich, contextual data that quantitative methods may overlook. In this study, in-depth interviews were chosen as the primary data collection technique, enabling a detailed exploration of clergymen's views on the Church's role in governance and civic engagement. This method allows for open-ended questions, encouraging participants to express their thoughts freely, thereby revealing nuanced perspectives on how they perceive the relationship between their religious duties and civic responsibilities.

This study selected six (6) clergymen: the selection of six clergymen was based on purposive sampling techniques, which involved deliberately choosing individuals who possess specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. This approach ensures that the participants have the necessary experience and insights to contribute meaningfully to the study. The clergymen were selected from various denominations to provide a diverse range of perspectives, enhancing the study's comprehensiveness. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic method, which involved identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the interview data. This approach facilitated the organisation of findings into coherent categories, allowing for a deeper understanding of how church leaders perceive their roles in promoting civic engagement and addressing governance issues. By utilising this combination of qualitative methods, the study aims to generate rich, contextually grounded insights that inform our understanding of the Church's influence on civic participation in Nigeria.

Presentation of Data and Analysis

The study adopted thematic method of data analysis to analyse the data gathered from the discussion. Themes were deduced deductively following the research objectives. The following were deduced: The extent of knowledge among church members regarding their civic rights and responsibilities in Nigeria; How church members perceive political participation and its relevance to their faith and community; Specific practices churches employ to educate and engage their members in political issues; and ways the Church contribute to combating corruption and promoting ethical governance in Nigeria. These are presented and discussed below:

The extent of knowledge among church members regarding their civic rights and responsibilities in Nigeria, when asked, the interviewees stated that in Nigeria, the knowledge of civic rights and responsibilities among church members varies widely, influenced by factors such as education, religious leadership, and socio-political engagement. Many church members, especially in urban areas, are aware of their basic rights, such as the right to vote, freedom of speech, and access to justice. This awareness is often heightened during election periods when political campaigns and media engagement bring civic issues to the forefront. Churches, particularly those led by progressive or socially active leaders, sometimes organise seminars and sermons that emphasise the importance of civic engagement, encouraging their members to participate in governance and societal reform.

However, the interviewees added that despite this awareness, a significant portion of church members, especially in rural or less educated communities, may have limited knowledge of their civic rights. This lack of awareness can be attributed to low literacy levels, limited access to information, and cultural or religious beliefs that focus more on spiritual matters than civic duties. In some cases, church leaders may also refrain from discussing political or civic matters, either out of fear of governmental retribution or the belief that the church should remain apolitical. As a result, many church members in these areas may not fully understand their rights or how to effectively engage with the political system.

Moreover, some of the interviewees illustrated that while some church members are knowledgeable about their rights, there is often a gap in understanding their civic responsibilities.

Many churchgoers know that they have the right to vote, but fewer understand the importance of participating in other civic duties, such as paying taxes, obeying the law, or holding public officials accountable. The notion of civic responsibility may be overshadowed by a focus on individual prosperity and personal spiritual growth, which are often emphasized in religious teachings. This disconnect between rights and responsibilities can lead to passive citizenship, where individuals expect the government to deliver services but do not actively engage in the political process or advocate for societal change.

The interviewees stated that the role of the church in promoting civic knowledge is crucial. Churches can serve as platforms for civic education, helping members understand both their rights and their responsibilities. When church leaders engage with civic issues and encourage dialogue on governance, justice, and the rule of law, they can significantly impact their members' understanding of these concepts. In many cases, the extent of knowledge among church members about civic rights and responsibilities is directly tied to the level of engagement and advocacy promoted by the church. Therefore, while there is a growing awareness among church members in Nigeria, more consistent efforts are needed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of both rights and responsibilities across the board.

How church members perceive political participation and its relevance to their faith and community; when asked all the interviewees agreed that in Church members in Nigeria often have mixed perceptions of political participation, which is influenced by their faith, community values, and the stance of their religious leaders. For many, political participation is viewed as a moral responsibility, an extension of their faith, where engaging in the political process is seen as a way to promote justice, equality, and the common good. These members believe that voting, advocacy, and even holding public office are ways to influence societal change in line with their religious principles, such as promoting honesty, fairness, and service to the community. Churches that emphasise civic engagement often preach about the importance of voting and making decisions that reflect Christian values in governance.

Furthermore, majority of the interviewees said that a considerable number of church members view political participation with suspicion or reluctance. For these individuals, politics is often seen as corrupt, divisive, and incompatible with the spiritual focus of their faith. They may view political systems as inherently flawed and believe that participation in such systems could compromise their religious values. This perspective is sometimes reinforced by religious teachings that encourage detachment from worldly concerns, promoting a focus on spiritual growth and eternal life rather than on temporal political affairs. In some communities, political involvement is seen as a distraction from the core mission of the church and the individual's spiritual journey.

Additionally, some of the interviewees narrated that there is a significant segment of church members who perceive political participation as necessary for the protection and advancement of their community. These members often live in regions where ethnic or religious tensions are high, and political participation is seen as a means of ensuring that their community's interests are represented and safeguarded. They view engagement in the political process as crucial for securing resources, defending religious freedoms, and protecting their community from marginalisation. In

this context, political participation is closely tied to communal identity and survival, with faith serving as a motivating force for collective action.

Ultimately, all the interviewees added that how church members perceive political participation largely depends on the teachings and attitudes of their religious leaders and the specific socio-political environment they live in. When church leaders promote political involvement as a form of stewardship and responsibility, members are more likely to see it as a vital part of their faith and duty to their community. Conversely, where leaders emphasise spiritual detachment from worldly matters, members may be more inclined to disengage from politics, seeing it as irrelevant or even antithetical to their religious beliefs. Therefore, the church plays a pivotal role in shaping these perceptions, influencing whether political participation is embraced as a means of upholding faith and community, or rejected as a corrupting influence.

Specific practices churches employ to educate and engage their members in political issues; when asked, majority of the interviewees said that many churches in Nigeria employ a variety of specific practices to educate and engage their members in political issues, recognising the importance of fostering civic awareness and responsibility among their congregations. One of the primary methods is through sermons and teachings that explicitly address civic duties, such as the importance of voting, understanding governmental processes, and advocating for social justice. Pastors and church leaders often incorporate discussions of political topics into their messages, linking them to biblical teachings and ethical principles. This approach not only raises awareness but also encourages members to reflect on their civic responsibilities as part of their faith.

In addition to sermons, the interviewees posited that churches frequently organise workshops, seminars, and town hall meetings aimed at educating members about political issues and civic engagement. These events often feature guest speakers, including political leaders, civic educators, and activists, who provide insights on how to navigate the political landscape effectively. By creating forums for open discussion, churches foster an environment where members can ask questions, share experiences, and learn about the significance of their participation in the democratic process. Such gatherings can also serve as platforms for mobilising community action around specific issues, empowering members to advocate for change collectively.

Furthermore, the interviewees stated that some churches actively participate in voter registration drives and civic education campaigns, aiming to increase political participation among their congregants. By collaborating with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civic groups, churches can provide resources and support for members to register to vote and understand the electoral process. These initiatives often include distributing informational materials about upcoming elections, candidates, and the importance of informed voting. Additionally, churches may organise transportation to polling stations on election days, ensuring that their members can easily access the voting process and fulfil their civic duties.

Finally, the interviewees agreed that churches may also engage in advocacy work, addressing social justice issues that intersect with political matters, such as poverty alleviation, human rights, and environmental concerns. This advocacy often involves forming alliances with

other faith-based organisations and community groups to amplify their voices on critical issues affecting their congregations and society at large. By framing these advocacy efforts within a religious context, churches can mobilise their members to take a stand on important political matters, reinforcing the idea that faith and civic engagement are interconnected and essential for fostering a just society. Through these various practices, churches play a vital role in educating and engaging their members in political issues, ultimately promoting a more informed and active citizenry.

Ways the Church contribute to combating corruption and promoting ethical governance in Nigeria, when asked, the interviewees illustrated that the church in Nigeria contributes significantly to combating corruption and promoting ethical governance through a multifaceted approach that includes advocacy, education, and community mobilization. One of the primary roles of the church is to serve as a moral compass, emphasizing the importance of integrity, honesty, and accountability in both personal and public life. Through sermons and teachings, church leaders often address issues of corruption, urging congregants to uphold ethical standards in their daily lives and to demand transparency from their leaders. By instilling these values, the church helps to cultivate a culture of integrity among its members, which can extend into the broader society.

In addition to moral teachings, the interviewees agreed that churches actively engage in advocacy for good governance and anti-corruption initiatives. Many religious organisations in Nigeria collaborate with civil society groups and anti-corruption agencies to promote transparency and accountability within government institutions. They may organise campaigns to raise awareness about the impacts of corruption, encouraging community members to participate in monitoring public officials and advocating for policy reforms. By leveraging their influence and reach within communities, churches can mobilise grassroots support for initiatives aimed at reducing corruption and fostering a more transparent governance system.

Furthermore, the interviewees agreed that church often serves as a platform for civic education, equipping members with the knowledge and tools needed to engage in governance and hold leaders accountable. Many churches conduct workshops, seminars, and discussions that focus on the political process, emphasising the importance of informed voting and civic responsibility. This educational outreach empowers congregants to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens, enabling them to challenge corrupt practices and demand ethical conduct from their leaders. By promoting active participation in governance, the church helps to create a more engaged and informed citizenry that can effectively advocate for change.

Finally, the interviewees narrated that the church can provide social support systems that help counteract the pervasive culture of corruption. Through various outreach programs, churches often provide assistance to the underprivileged, thereby reducing the desperation that can lead individuals to engage in corrupt practices. By fostering a sense of community and encouraging ethical behaviour, churches contribute to creating an environment where integrity is valued over corrupt gains. This holistic approach—combining moral teachings, advocacy, education, and community support positions - the church as a key player in the fight against corruption and the promotion of ethical governance in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What is the extent of knowledge among church members regarding their civic rights and responsibilities in Nigeria?

The findings revealed that the extent of knowledge among church members in Nigeria regarding their civic rights and responsibilities is varied, with many urban churchgoers aware of their basic rights, such as voting and freedom of speech, often due to media exposure and church-led civic engagement programs. However, in rural or less educated communities, awareness is limited due to low literacy levels, limited access to information, and a focus on spiritual rather than civic matters. While some church members understand their rights, fewer grasp the importance of fulfilling civic responsibilities like paying taxes and holding officials accountable, often resulting in passive citizenship. The church plays a vital role in bridging this gap, as civic education promoted by religious leaders can significantly improve members' understanding of both their rights and responsibilities.

The finding aligns with Odukoya (2022) that posited that congregants who received regular education on civic rights and responsibilities from their church were more likely to participate in political activities such as voting and advocacy. The implications of the finding suggest that enhancing civic knowledge among church members in Nigeria requires leveraging the influential role of the church, as religious leaders and teachings significantly shape members' attitudes and behaviours. If churches actively promote civic education and encourage participation in governance, it could lead to increased awareness of both rights and responsibilities, fostering more engaged and responsible citizens. Conversely, if churches focus solely on spiritual matters, there is a risk that members will remain passive or disengaged in civic life, potentially limiting their contributions to societal reform and governance. Thus, the involvement of churches in promoting civic awareness is critical to the broader effort of strengthening democratic participation and accountability in Nigeria.

Research Question Two: How do church members perceive political participation and its relevance to their faith and community?

The finding revealed that church members in Nigeria have diverse perceptions of political participation, shaped by their faith and community context. Some see it as a moral responsibility and an extension of their religious values, while others view politics with suspicion, perceiving it as corrupt and incompatible with spiritual pursuits. Additionally, for many, especially in areas with ethnic or religious tensions, political engagement is seen as essential for protecting their community's interests and ensuring representation. Ultimately, these perceptions are heavily influenced by the teachings and attitudes of religious leaders within their churches. The relevance of religious influence on theory, particularly within the context of political participation, highlights how faith-based communities, guided by religious teachings and leaders, shape individual and collective behaviours in society. According to social identity theory, individuals derive a sense of belonging and purpose from their group affiliations, such as a religious community, which in turn affects their attitudes toward political participation. When religious leaders promote political engagement as a form of moral duty, members are more likely to perceive it as an extension of

their faith. Conversely, if religious teachings focus on spiritual detachment, members may distance themselves from political processes, viewing them as incompatible with their religious identity.

The finding of this study is also evident in similar study by Okafor (2023) which pointed out that churches with proactive leaders who advocate for political engagement significantly increased the likelihood of congregants participating in governance. The implications of the finding suggest that religious leaders in Nigeria play a crucial role in shaping how church members perceive political participation, either encouraging or discouraging engagement based on religious teachings. When political participation is framed as a moral obligation, it can lead to higher levels of civic involvement among church members, positively impacting governance and community development. However, when politics is viewed as corrupt or irrelevant to faith, it can result in disengagement, limiting the church's potential to contribute to societal change and advocacy for justice. This dynamic emphasises the need for a balanced approach in religious teachings that integrates both spiritual values and civic responsibilities.

Research Question Three: What specific practices do churches employ to educate and engage their members in political issues?

The results showed that churches in Nigeria employ a range of specific practices to educate and engage their members in political issues, including sermons that link civic duties to biblical teachings, workshops and town hall meetings featuring guest speakers, voter registration drives, and advocacy efforts addressing social justice issues. These initiatives not only raise awareness of political responsibilities among congregants but also create opportunities for community mobilisation, ensuring that church members are informed and actively participating in the democratic process.

The finding of this study is in line with the study conducted by Nwosu (2021) who explored that some denominations actively promote civic engagement through education and community service, while others focus primarily on spiritual matters, leading to varying levels of political participation among congregants. The implications of the finding suggest that the practices employed by churches in Nigeria to educate and engage their members in political issues can significantly enhance civic participation and awareness within their communities, as these initiatives create a strong link between faith and political responsibility. By actively promoting political engagement through sermons, educational events, and advocacy efforts, churches can cultivate a more informed and active citizenry, ultimately contributing to a more robust democratic process. Furthermore, the collaborative efforts with NGOs and community organisations can amplify their impact, ensuring that church members not only understand their civic duties but also feel empowered to advocate for social justice and meaningful change in their society.

Research Question Four: In what ways does the Church contribute to combating corruption and promoting ethical governance in Nigeria?

The findings indicate that the church in Nigeria plays a crucial role in combating corruption and promoting ethical governance through its moral teachings, advocacy for good governance, civic education initiatives, and social support systems, thereby fostering a culture of integrity, transparency, and active civic engagement among its members. By serving as a moral compass, collaborating with civil society to raise awareness about corruption, educating congregants about their rights and responsibilities, and providing community support, the church significantly

contributes to reducing corrupt practices and encouraging ethical behaviour in governance. This aligns with Akinyemi (2022) which stated that religious institutions have a dual role, both in promoting good governance and in being susceptible to political manipulation, which can undermine their effectiveness.

Religious influence theory, which emphasises the power of religious institutions in shaping individuals' values, beliefs, and behaviours, is highly relevant to the finding as the church in Nigeria uses its moral authority to guide members toward ethical behaviour and civic responsibility. Through its teachings and practices, the church not only instils values of integrity and accountability but also motivates its congregants to reject corrupt practices and advocate for transparent governance, reinforcing the idea that faith and ethics are deeply intertwined in public life. This influence underscores the church's ability to shape both personal morality and collective action in the fight against corruption. The implications of the finding suggest that the church in Nigeria has a significant impact on shaping societal attitudes toward corruption and governance, as its moral teachings and advocacy efforts encourage individuals to embrace ethical behaviour and reject corrupt practices. By promoting integrity and civic responsibility, the church not only fosters a culture of accountability among its members but also plays a critical role in influencing broader societal norms and governance structures. This highlights the potential of religious institutions to be key drivers of reform in the fight against corruption and the promotion of ethical governance.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the level of knowledge about civic rights and responsibilities among church members in Nigeria is heavily influenced by the church's engagement with civic issues, with more awareness in urban, educated congregations and less in rural, less informed communities, highlighting the critical role of religious leaders in shaping civic consciousness. Church members in Nigeria hold varying views on political participation, with some seeing it as a moral duty rooted in their faith, while others are reluctant due to concerns about corruption or its perceived incompatibility with spiritual life. Religious leaders play a pivotal role in shaping these attitudes, influencing whether members actively engage in the political process or remain detached.

The study established that churches in Nigeria play a crucial role in educating and engaging their members in political issues through various practices, such as sermons, workshops, voter registration drives, and advocacy, thereby fostering a greater sense of civic responsibility and participation among congregants. The church in Nigeria contributes meaningfully to combating corruption and promoting ethical governance through its moral teachings, advocacy for good governance, civic education, and community support, thereby shaping a culture of integrity and accountability within society.

This study contributes to the understanding of the church's role in promoting ethical governance and combating corruption in Nigeria by highlighting the specific practices and strategies employed by religious institutions. It demonstrates how the church's moral authority and influence on its members can shape societal norms, particularly in fostering integrity,

accountability, and civic responsibility. By focusing on the intersection of faith and governance, the study expands the discourse on how non-governmental actors, especially religious bodies, can be instrumental in driving societal reform. It sheds light on how churches use sermons, educational programs, and advocacy efforts to encourage ethical behaviour both in personal and public life, effectively contributing to the fight against corruption.

Furthermore, this study offers insight into the unique position of the church as a moral guide within communities, showing how it serves as both an educator and mobilizer of its members toward political engagement and good governance. The findings underscore the importance of the church's role in civic education, which empowers individuals to understand and act upon their rights and responsibilities as citizens. By highlighting these contributions, the study provides a foundation for further research into how religious institutions can collaborate with governmental and civil society organisations to strengthen anti-corruption efforts and promote transparency in governance across different sectors of society.

Recommendations

In view of the findings from this work, the following recommendations have been made

1. Churches should integrate civic education into their teachings and encourage active participation in governance to foster a more informed and responsible citizenry.
2. Religious leaders should emphasise the importance of civic engagement alongside spiritual growth, fostering a more balanced understanding of faith and political responsibility.
3. Churches should continue to enhance their civic engagement initiatives by partnering with local organisations to create comprehensive educational programs that empower members to take active roles in the political process.
4. The church should continue to expand its involvement in anti-corruption efforts by strengthening partnerships with civil society organisations and government agencies to promote transparency and ethical governance on a larger scale.

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