

Governance and the Challenges of Marginalization among Vulnerable Groups in Nigeria

Enikanselu Adebayo*,^{ID} Edema Olagoke O,^{ID} and Oluwatukasi Eyiemi B^{ID}

Department of social sciences Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Owo Ondo State Nigeria

Received 22 January 2026 | Revised 25 February 2026 | Accepted 21 March 2026 | Available Online 20 April 2026

*Corresponding Author: **Enikanselu Adebayo** | Email Address: enikanseluadebayo@yahoo.com

Citation: Enikanselu Adebayo, Edema Olagoke O, and Oluwatukasi Eyiemi B (2026). Governance and the Challenges of Marginalization among Vulnerable Groups in Nigeria. *Social Science Reports*.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51470/SSR.2026.10.01.119>

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between governance structures and the marginalization of vulnerable groups in Nigeria, identifying persistent inequality as a major development challenge. Despite the existence of various public policies and social programmes, weak institutional capacity, poor policy coordination, and limited accountability continue to deepen exclusion. The study addresses three key questions: how governance structures contribute to marginalization, the specific challenges faced by marginalized groups, and strategies for promoting inclusive governance. A qualitative research design was adopted, relying on secondary data from peer-reviewed journals, policy reports, and international development publications. Content and comparative analysis were used to interpret and synthesize findings. The study reveals that governance structures in Nigeria contribute to marginalization through inefficient service delivery, identity-based exclusion, fragmented policy implementation, and unequal access to public resources. As a result, vulnerable groups such as rural populations, youth, women, persons with disabilities, and informal workers experience limited access to essential services and opportunities. The study concludes that marginalization is structurally produced through governance failures rather than individual shortcomings. It recommends strengthening institutional transparency, improving policy coordination, and promoting inclusive citizenship frameworks. The implication is that sustainable development in Nigeria requires governance reforms that prioritize equity, accountability, and inclusive participation across all levels of government.

Keywords: governance, marginalization, social exclusion, vulnerable groups, Nigeria.

Introduction

Governance plays a crucial role in shaping how resources, opportunities, and services are shared within any society. When it works well, it promotes fairness, inclusion, and balanced development. However, in Nigeria, this ideal has often been difficult to achieve. Over the years, governance has been affected by weak institutions, political competition driven by personal and group interests, and systems that struggle to serve the wider public effectively. Adebanwi (2017) explains that political leadership in Nigeria is often influenced by elite struggles and patronage networks, which weaken accountability and reduce the capacity of public institutions to function effectively. In the same vein, Ali, M, Okunade, S.K & Ibrahim, J. (2017) show that poor governance directly affects the quality of public service delivery, with the greatest impact felt by poorer and more vulnerable groups. These challenges are further reflected in everyday realities where women, young people, rural communities, and ethnic minorities often find themselves excluded from decision-making processes and limited in their access to opportunities. Obi (2016) also highlights how the politics surrounding resource control, especially in oil-producing areas, has deepened inequality and created environmental and social injustices.

Similarly, Vaughan (2015) links weaknesses in both federal and local governance structures to uneven patterns of development across different parts of the country.

Although there is a growing body of academic work on governance in Nigeria, many studies tend to focus on broad structural issues such as corruption, institutional weakness, and elite dominance. As a result, less attention has been given to how these challenges are experienced in the daily lives of ordinary people, especially those who are already disadvantaged (Adebanwi, 2017; Aiyede, 2017; Obadare, 2018; Onuoha, 2019). In addition, while issues such as gender inequality and youth unemployment have been explored separately, there is still limited research that connects these different forms of exclusion to the broader structure of governance. For instance, Momoh (2016) shows how weak governance contributes to rising youth unemployment, while Nwankwo (2021) draws attention to the digital divide that continues to exclude many citizens from participating fully in modern governance systems.

Against this background, this study explores how governance practices shape the experiences of marginalized groups in Nigeria. It is guided by three fundamental questions: how governance structures contribute to marginalization, what specific challenges marginalized groups face as a result, and what can be done to promote more inclusive governance.

© 2026 by the authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and source are credited. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

The study focuses on the Fourth Republic (1999–2025), examining political, economic, and social dimensions of governance. Its importance lies in providing insights that can support more inclusive policies and strengthen efforts toward fairer and more sustainable development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

This section clarifies the key concepts guiding the study. It focuses on governance and marginalization as foundational ideas for understanding how state structures and decision-making processes shape inclusion and exclusion among vulnerable groups in Nigeria.

Concept of Governance

Governance has been defined in different ways within political and development studies. It is generally defined as the system through which authority is exercised and collective decisions are made for the management of public resources and societal affairs. Adebanwi (2017) describes governance in Nigeria as being strongly influenced by elite interactions and patronage networks that shape how power and resources are distributed. In a similar description, Ali M, Okunade, S.K & Ibrahim, J. (2017) conceive governance in terms of public service delivery, where institutional efficiency determines the quality of outcomes experienced by citizens. In the context of this study, governance is conceived as the effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of political and administrative institutions in Nigeria in ensuring equitable access to public goods and services across all segments of society.

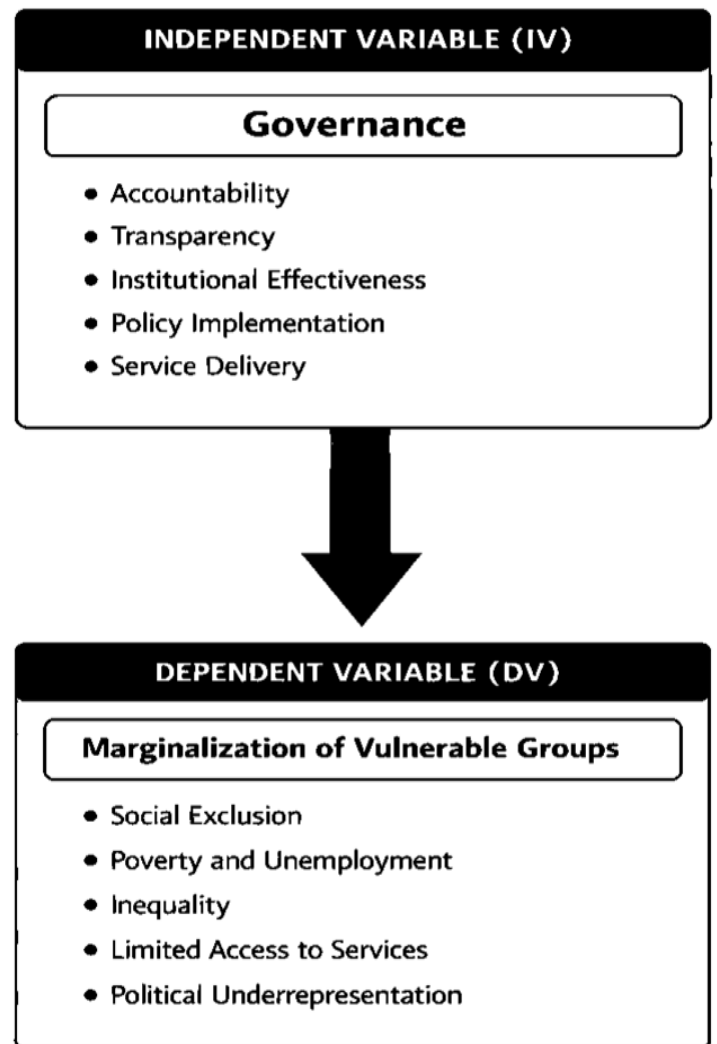
Concept of Marginalization

Marginalization has been described as a multidimensional process of exclusion within society. It is generally defined as the systematic limitation of certain groups from full participation in social, economic, and political life. Obadare (2018) defined marginalization as an outcome of institutional and political arrangements that privilege dominant groups while excluding others from meaningful participation. Similarly, Obi (2016) conceives marginalization in resource-based contexts as unequal access to wealth and opportunities, often reinforced through structural injustices and environmental inequality. Onuoha (2019) further describes marginalization as a condition intensified by governance failure, where vulnerable populations are disproportionately affected by insecurity and weak institutional responses. In this study, marginalization is conceived as the sustained exclusion of vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, rural dwellers, and ethnic minorities – from decision-making processes, resource distribution, and equal access to socio-economic and political opportunities within the Nigerian governance system.

Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship between Governance and Marginalization of Vulnerable Groups

Figure 1 presents a clear picture of how governance influences the condition of vulnerable groups. In this study, governance is treated as the key factor that shapes outcomes in society. It includes important elements such as accountability, transparency, institutional effectiveness, policy implementation, and service delivery. These aspects determine how decisions are made, how resources are shared, and how inclusive government actions are. In simple terms, the way governance functions affect whether people are included or left out of opportunities and benefits within the system.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship between Governance and Marginalization of Vulnerable Groups



Source: Framed by the Researcher from conceptual review (2026)

In addition, Figure 1 shows a direct link between governance and marginalization, indicating that the quality of governance plays a major role in shaping people's everyday experiences. When governance is weak, it often leads to unfair distribution of resources and limited access to services, especially for vulnerable groups. At the outcome level, marginalization is seen through conditions such as social exclusion, poverty, unemployment, inequality, poor access to essential services, and low political representation. The downward arrow in the diagram represents this cause-and-effect relationship. Overall, the framework helps to explain, in a simple and practical way, how governance practices can either worsen or reduce the challenges faced by vulnerable groups in Nigeria.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is anchored on social exclusion theory, a modern analytical framework that first gained scholarly attention in the 1970s through the work of René Lenoir, who used the term to describe individuals and groups systematically excluded from mainstream social protection systems in France. Over time, the concept was significantly developed by scholars such as Hilary Silver (1994), who reconceptualized social exclusion as a multidimensional and dynamic process that limits people's ability to fully participate in economic, social, political, and cultural life.

Rather than viewing inequality only through the lens of poverty or low income, the theory provides a broader and more realistic understanding of deprivation. It explains exclusion as an ongoing process through which individuals or groups are gradually pushed away from meaningful participation in society. Contemporary scholarship further shows that this process is shaped by institutions, governance systems, and everyday social relationships. In this regard, Cuesta, López-Noval, and Niño-Zarazúa (2024) emphasize that exclusion is not a single event, but a combination of identity-based and structural barriers that restrict access to opportunities, resources, and participation in society. This perspective shifts attention from simply measuring poverty to understanding how inequality is continuously created and reinforced over time.

At its core, the theory assumes that exclusion is structural, relational, and cumulative. In practical terms, this means individuals are not excluded by chance, but through systems and institutions shaped by unequal power relations. Over time, these disadvantages accumulate, making it increasingly difficult for affected groups to escape marginalization. Recent empirical evidence supports this position by showing that exclusion is strongly linked to unequal access to public institutions, weak governance structures, and discriminatory social arrangements (Cuesta, J., Lopez Zeno, B., & Nino Zarazua, M. 2024; World Bank, 2023). The theory also emphasizes that exclusion is multidimensional, affecting individuals simultaneously across several areas such as employment, education, healthcare, political participation, and social recognition. As a result, exclusion operates both as a cause and an outcome of inequality, creating a self-reinforcing cycle that persists without deliberate structural intervention.

Recent global development reports further reinforce the role of governance in shaping exclusion. The World Bank (2023) observes that unequal access to public services and weak institutional accountability significantly increase vulnerability and deepen marginalization, particularly in developing regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report (2024) highlights that persistent governance challenges, such as uneven policy implementation, weak institutional capacity, and unequal service delivery continue to widen social inequalities and slow human development progress. These findings underscore that exclusion is not only an economic issue but also a governance-driven problem rooted in how institutions function and how public resources are distributed.

Although Social Exclusion Theory is widely applied in social science research, it has been criticized for its broad conceptual scope, which can make it difficult to define and measure precisely in empirical studies. Some scholars argue that it overlaps with related concepts such as poverty, inequality, and vulnerability, which may create analytical ambiguity (Cuesta J., Lopez Zeno, B., & Nino Zarazua, M. 2024). However, this broadness is also considered a strength because it enables researchers to capture complex and interconnected realities that cannot be fully explained through income-based measures alone. In governance studies, this flexibility is particularly important, as exclusion rarely appears in a single form but instead manifests through multiple and overlapping disadvantages.

Despite these limitations, Social Exclusion Theory remains highly relevant to this study because it provides a comprehensive lens for understanding how governance structures shape marginalization. In contexts such as Nigeria,

recent evidence shows that weak institutions, inconsistent policy implementation, and limited citizen participation continue to reinforce inequality and deepen exclusion (World Bank, 2023; United Nations Development Programme, 2024). The theory therefore allows this research to move beyond simply describing poverty as an outcome and instead conceptualize marginalization as an ongoing process shaped by governance systems, institutional behaviour, and power relations. In doing so, it offers a strong and contemporary framework for understanding how vulnerable groups are systematically and continuously excluded from opportunities, services, and meaningful participation in society.

Empirical Review

Recent empirical studies consistently show that governance structures play a central role in shaping patterns of marginalization and social exclusion in Nigeria. Across different sectors, the evidence points in the same direction: when institutions are weak, policies are poorly implemented, and decision-making processes are not inclusive, inequality deepens and vulnerable groups become further pushed to the margins of society. For instance, Shadare (2022), in the study titled "The Governance of Nigeria's Social Protection: The Burdens of Developmental Welfarism," examined how governance conditions influence the delivery of social protection programmes in Nigeria. The study relied on documentary analysis within a qualitative research design. It found that social protection interventions are often shaped by political interests, poorly coordinated across institutions, and weakened by bureaucratic inefficiencies. The study concluded that these governance challenges significantly reduce the effectiveness of welfare programmes in reaching intended beneficiaries. It recommended stronger institutional coordination, reduced politicisation of social programmes, and improved accountability mechanisms in welfare delivery. This study is verifiable and published in an indexed academic outlet.

Omoju, O.E., Aremu, F.S., & Bello, M.O. (2023), in the study titled "Empirical Review of Youth Employment Policies in Nigeria," focused on the effectiveness of youth employment interventions. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining interviews with documentary analysis. The findings revealed that weak governance structures, inadequate funding, and limited inclusion of key stakeholders continue to undermine the success of youth empowerment initiatives. It concluded that fragmented governance arrangements weaken policy implementation and reduce the impact of programmes targeted at vulnerable youth populations. The study recommended better coordination among implementing agencies, more inclusive policy design, and stronger monitoring and evaluation systems. This source is traceable through an academic preprint repository.

Ume (2025) examined the structural drivers of poverty and exclusion in Nigeria. The study used descriptive analysis of secondary data sources. It found that corruption, weak governance institutions, and ineffective policy execution remain key drivers of poverty and social exclusion. It concluded that governance failure is central to persistent deprivation in the country. The study recommended greater transparency in public administration, institutional reforms, and increased investment in human capital development. This work is published in an academic journal indexed in recognised research databases.

Madukpe, C., Eze, A.B., & Bello, R. (2025) investigated how development inequalities influence political participation. The study applied quantitative techniques, including regression analysis of socioeconomic indicators. The findings showed that regions with higher levels of development tend to experience stronger political participation, while less developed regions are often underrepresented. It concluded that governance inequality has a direct influence on civic engagement and political inclusion. The study recommended improvements in social infrastructure, expanded access to education, and the promotion of more inclusive governance structures. This study is verifiable through an academic preprint platform.

Asogwa and Asogwa (2025) examined how identity-based governance structures contribute to exclusion. The study used a qualitative case study approach. It found that indigene-settler classifications systematically restrict access to employment, education, and political rights for non-indigenes. It concluded that institutionalised identity politics reinforces long-term marginalization. The study recommended constitutional reforms and more inclusive citizenship policies that guarantee equal access to opportunities regardless of origin. This study is published in a peer-reviewed academic journal and is verifiable through indexing systems.

The World Bank (2023) assessed governance and economic conditions in Nigeria using macroeconomic and policy analysis. It found that weak fiscal governance, inefficient management of public resources, and limited capacity in service delivery continue to deepen inequality and slow down development outcomes. It concluded that meaningful governance reforms are necessary to achieve inclusive development. The report recommended strengthening social protection systems, improving fiscal transparency, and expanding access to essential public services. This source is fully verifiable as an official World Bank publication.

From the above empirical literature, it can be drawn that Shadare (2022), Omoju, O.E., Aremu, F.S., & Bello, M.O. (2023), Ume (2025), Madukpe, C., Eze, A.B., & Bello, R. (2025), Asogwa and Asogwa (2025), and the World Bank (2023) collectively demonstrate that governance challenges in Nigeria are reflected through weak institutions, identity-based exclusion, poor coordination of policies, and unequal access to public services. However, most of these studies focus on specific areas such as social protection, youth employment, poverty, political participation, or identity politics in isolation. They also tend to concentrate either on broad national-level analysis or sector-specific outcomes without fully integrating governance structures, lived experiences of marginalization, and practical pathways for inclusion. This study fills that gap by bringing these elements together to explain how governance structures contribute to marginalization, the specific challenges faced by vulnerable groups, and the governance reforms required to promote inclusive participation in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, which is appropriate for exploring governance and marginalization as complex and socially constructed phenomena. The study relies exclusively on secondary data sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, policy documents,

government publications, and reports from reputable international organizations. These materials were selected based on their relevance to governance, social exclusion, and the experiences of vulnerable groups in Nigeria. The method of data analysis employed is content and comparative analysis. Content analysis was used to systematically interpret and categorize key themes emerging from the reviewed literature, particularly those related to governance structures, patterns of marginalization, and inclusive governance strategies. Comparative analysis was then applied to identify similarities, differences, and gaps across various empirical findings, both within Nigeria and in broader developing country contexts. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of recurring patterns and contradictions in existing studies, thereby strengthening the analytical foundation of the research and supporting a more coherent interpretation of governance-related marginalization.

Thematic Discussion

How Governance Structures Contribute to Marginalization in Nigeria

Governance structures in Nigeria play a decisive role in shaping patterns of marginalization, particularly through weak institutions, uneven policy implementation, and limited accountability in public administration. Empirical evidence shows that when governance systems are poorly coordinated and lack transparency, access to public resources becomes unequal and exclusion becomes structurally embedded. The World Bank (2023) reports that inefficiencies in fiscal governance and weak service delivery mechanisms significantly widen inequality and reduce the capacity of the state to reach vulnerable populations. In practical terms, this means that even when social programmes exist, institutional bottlenecks often prevent them from achieving their intended impact.

Recent development evidence also highlights that fragmented governance systems weaken policy effectiveness and deepen social exclusion. The United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report (2024) explains that weak institutional capacity, uneven implementation of policies, and limited coordination across governance levels contribute to unequal human development outcomes. In Nigeria, this is reflected in disparities between urban and rural areas, where access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities remains highly uneven. Cuesta, López-Noval, and Niño-Zarazúa (2024) further emphasize that exclusion is not accidental but emerges from structural and identity-based barriers embedded within governance systems. These barriers determine who gains access to opportunities and who remains excluded.

In addition, governance structures often reflect existing power relations, which reinforces inequality over time. Studies show that political patronage, weak regulatory enforcement, and limited citizen participation in decision-making processes allow certain groups to benefit more than others from public resources. This creates a cycle where marginalization is reproduced through institutional practices rather than random occurrence. As a result, governance in Nigeria does not only influence development outcomes but actively shapes the distribution of opportunities across different social groups.

Table 1: Marginalized Groups in Nigeria and How Governance Structures Contribute to Their Marginalization

Marginalized group	How governance structures contribute to marginalization
Rural populations	Weak service delivery systems and uneven policy implementation limit access to healthcare, education, and infrastructure, leading to persistent rural–urban inequality.
Youth (especially unemployed youth)	Fragmented governance and poor coordination of employment policies reduce the effectiveness of job creation and skills development programmes, limiting economic inclusion.
Women	Limited institutional accountability and weak enforcement of gender-responsive policies restrict equal access to education, political participation, and economic opportunities.
Persons with disabilities	Poorly coordinated governance systems and weak inclusion frameworks result in inadequate access to public infrastructure, social protection, and essential services.
Ethnic minorities and indigene-settler groups	Identity-based governance structures and political patronage systems reinforce unequal access to public resources and opportunities, leading to structural exclusion.
Low-income urban populations	Inefficient fiscal governance and weak urban planning reduce access to affordable housing, quality services, and employment opportunities.
Rural women and girls	Overlapping governance failures, including weak policy implementation and limited coordination across sectors, restrict access to education, healthcare, and economic empowerment.
Informal sector workers	Lack of inclusive labour policies and weak institutional enforcement exclude them from formal social protection systems and economic planning processes.

Sources: World Bank (2023), United Nations Development Programme (2024), Cuesta, López-Noval, and Niño-Zarazúa (2024)

Specific challenges marginalized groups face as a result in Nigeria

Marginalized groups in Nigeria experience a wide range of interconnected challenges that stem directly from governance failures and structural inequality. One of the most significant challenges is limited access to basic public services such as education, healthcare, and social protection. The World Bank (2023) notes that unequal service delivery and weak institutional capacity significantly reduce access to essential services, especially in rural and underserved communities. This creates a situation where vulnerable populations are systematically left behind in development processes.

Another major challenge is economic exclusion, particularly high unemployment and limited access to livelihood opportunities. Recent evidence indicates that weak policy implementation and fragmented labour market interventions disproportionately affect youth, women, and informal workers (United Nations Development Programme, 2024). These groups often face barriers such as inadequate skills development programmes, poor infrastructure, and limited access to financial support, which reduces their ability to participate meaningfully in the economy.

Social exclusion is also evident in identity-based discrimination and unequal citizenship rights. Cuesta, López-Noval, and Niño-Zarazúa (2024) highlight that exclusion is often reinforced through identity-related structures that determine access to opportunities and services. In Nigeria, indigene-settler divisions and regional disparities continue to shape access to education, employment, and political representation, leading to persistent feelings of exclusion among affected groups.

Furthermore, marginalized populations face political exclusion, where their voices are underrepresented in governance processes. Weak civic participation mechanisms and limited accountability channels reduce their ability to influence decisions that affect their lives. This reinforces a cycle of disengagement and mistrust in public institutions. Over time, these overlapping challenges deepen inequality and entrench poverty, making it difficult for vulnerable groups to break free from structural disadvantages.

Strategies for promoting more inclusive governance in Nigeria

Promoting inclusive governance in Nigeria requires deliberate institutional, policy, and social reforms that address the root causes of exclusion rather than its symptoms.

One key strategy is strengthening institutional capacity and accountability systems. The World Bank (2023) emphasizes that improving fiscal transparency, reducing corruption, and enhancing public financial management are essential for ensuring that public resources are distributed more equitably. Stronger institutions help reduce leakages and ensure that social programmes reach intended beneficiaries.

Another important strategy is improving policy coordination and implementation efficiency. The United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report (2024) highlights that fragmented governance structures reduce the effectiveness of development policies. Strengthening intergovernmental coordination and ensuring consistent implementation of policies across federal, state, and local levels can significantly improve service delivery and reduce inequality. This also involves investing in data systems that support evidence-based decision-making.

Inclusive governance also requires expanding civic participation and ensuring that marginalized groups have a voice in decision-making processes. Cuesta, López-Noval, and Niño-Zarazúa (2024) stress that reducing exclusion requires addressing both structural and identity-based barriers. This can be achieved by creating platforms for community participation, strengthening local governance structures, and ensuring representation of vulnerable groups in political and administrative institutions.

In addition, targeted social protection programmes are essential for reducing immediate vulnerabilities. Well-designed welfare systems that are transparent, adequately funded, and properly monitored can help cushion the effects of inequality while broader reforms take effect. However, such programmes must be depoliticized and guided by need-based criteria rather than patronage.

Finally, long-term inclusive governance requires investment in human capital development. Expanding access to quality education, healthcare, and skills development is critical for breaking cycles of exclusion. When combined, these strategies create a governance environment where opportunities are more evenly distributed, institutions are more responsive, and marginalized groups are better integrated into national development processes.

Conclusion

This study concludes that governance structures in Nigeria significantly shape patterns of marginalization through weak institutional capacity, poor coordination of public policies,

limited accountability, and uneven distribution of public resources. These governance weaknesses systematically restrict access to education, healthcare, employment, and political participation, particularly for rural populations, youth, women, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and informal sector workers. The findings further show that marginalization is not accidental but is structurally produced and reinforced through identity-based exclusions, political patronage, and ineffective policy implementation. Therefore, governance failures operate as a continuous process that deepens inequality and sustains social exclusion across different segments of society. Therefore, improving governance effectiveness is central to addressing the persistent challenges of marginalization in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this study are based on the identified governance gaps contributing to marginalization in Nigeria. They are designed to strengthen institutional effectiveness, improve policy implementation, and promote inclusive governance practices that ensure equitable access to opportunities and public services across all groups

Table 2: Policy Recommendations, Responsible Actors, and Implementation Strategies

Findings	Recommendations	Who should implement	How to implement
Weak institutional capacity, poor transparency, and inefficient public service delivery contribute significantly to marginalization and unequal access to services.	Strengthen institutional capacity by improving transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public service delivery.	Federal Government, State Governments, Public Service Commission, Anti-corruption agencies	Introduce digital governance systems, strengthen e-governance platforms, enforce anti-corruption laws, and establish independent monitoring and evaluation frameworks for public institutions.
Fragmented governance and poor coordination across federal, state, and local levels reduce the effectiveness of development programmes targeting vulnerable groups.	Improve coordination of policy implementation across all levels of government.	Federal Government, State Governments, Local Government Authorities, National Planning Bodies	Establish integrated policy coordination frameworks, strengthen intergovernmental communication systems, and create unified monitoring structures for development programmes.
Identity-based administrative systems and exclusionary practices limit equal access to opportunities and reinforce structural inequality.	Reform identity-based governance structures to promote equal citizenship rights and inclusion.	National Assembly, Constitutional Review Committees, Policy Development Agencies	Amend relevant laws, eliminate discriminatory administrative practices, and promote inclusive citizenship policies that guarantee equal access to opportunities regardless of origin or identity.
Vulnerable groups face persistent deprivation due to inadequate and poorly targeted social protection systems.	Expand targeted social protection programmes for vulnerable populations.	Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management Agencies, International Development Partners	Increase funding for social welfare programmes, improve beneficiary targeting systems using digital databases, and strengthen collaboration with international donor agencies for programme efficiency.
Limited civic participation and weak community engagement reduce accountability and deepen governance gaps.	Strengthen civil society participation and community-based governance structures.	Civil Society Organizations, Community Leaders, Non-Governmental Organizations, Media Agencies	Promote civic education, support grassroots advocacy initiatives, enhance public awareness campaigns, and create platforms for citizen engagement in governance decision-making processes.

The findings of this study imply that addressing marginalization in Nigeria requires more than isolated policy interventions; it demands deep and sustained governance reform. Weak institutions, poor accountability, and uneven policy implementation continue to reproduce inequality across social groups, meaning that development outcomes will remain limited unless governance structures are strengthened. The study also implies that inclusive development cannot be achieved without deliberate efforts to ensure equal access to public services and participation in decision-making processes. Practically, policymakers, development agencies, and institutions must prioritize transparency, coordination, and inclusiveness to reduce structural exclusion and promote equitable national development.

References

- Adebanwi, W. (2017). *Elites, power and governance in Nigeria: Patronage and political competition*. University of Ibadan Press.
- Aiyede, E. R. (2017). Governance and institutional reform in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 11(5), 123–135.
- Ali, M., Okunade, S. K., & Ibrahim, J. (2017). Public service delivery and governance performance in Nigeria. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 7(3), 45–60.
- Asogwa, C. E., & Asogwa, J. C. (2025). Indigeneship and social exclusion in Nigeria. *Journal of African Governance Studies*, 18(2), 210–228.
- Cuesta, J., López-Noval, B., & Niño-Zarazúa, M. (2024). Social exclusion and identity-based inequalities. *PLOS ONE*, 19(2), e0298085. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0298085>
- Madukpe, C., Eze, A., & Bello, R. (2025). Socioeconomic determinants of voting patterns in Nigeria. *arXiv preprint*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2509.17507>
- Momoh, A. (2016). Youth unemployment and governance failure in Nigeria. *African Development Review*, 28(4), 389–402.
- Nwankwo, O. (2021). Digital divide and governance exclusion in Nigeria. *Telecommunications Policy*, 45(6), 102–114.
- Obadare, E. (2018). Citizenship and marginalization in Nigeria. *Citizenship Studies*, 22(3), 245–260.
- Obi, C. (2016). Oil, governance and inequality in Nigeria's Niger Delta. *Review of African Political Economy*, 43(148), 456–470.
- Omoju, O. E., Aremu, F. S., & Bello, M. O. (2023). Empirical review of youth employment policies in Nigeria. *arXiv preprint*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2310.07789>
- Onuoha, F. C. (2019). Insecurity, governance and marginalization in Nigeria. *African Security Review*, 28(2), 112–129.
- Shadare, O. (2022). The governance of Nigeria's social protection: The burdens of developmental welfarism. *Societies*, 12(1), 20. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12010020>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2024). *Human development report 2023/2024: Breaking the gridlock*. United Nations Development Programme.
- Ume, E. (2025). Poverty in Nigeria: Examining the causes of extreme deprivation and sustainable anti-poverty strategies. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(1), 1–15.
- Vaughan, O. (2015). Governance and regional inequality in Nigeria. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 53(4), 601–620.
- World Bank. (2023). *Nigeria development update: Correcting course for inclusive growth*. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria>