

Policy Inconsistencies and the Social Politics
of Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria:
A Critical Study Toward Achieving Gender Equality (SDG 5)

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Master in International Studies

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Department of History

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Resumo

A violência baseada no gênero (VBG) é uma das violações de direitos humanos mais prevalentes e generalizadas em Nigéria, afetando de forma desproporcional mulheres e raparigas em todos os setores da sociedade. Uma em cada três mulheres com idades entre os 15 e os 49 anos já experienciou violência física ou sexual pelo menos uma vez na vida (FMoHSW, NPC, & ICF, 2024; ONU Mulheres, 2024). Apesar da existência de instrumentos legislativos robustos — como a Lei de Proibição da Violência Contra as Pessoas (VAPP Act) de 2015 — e do compromisso formal da Nigéria com acordos internacionais como a CEDAW e o Objetivo de Desenvolvimento Sustentável 5 (ODS 5) sobre Igualdade de Gênero, as taxas de VBG não diminuíram; pelo contrário, agravaram-se.

A presente dissertação interroga a lacuna entre a formulação e a implementação de políticas na arquitetura de governança de gênero da Nigéria. A violência baseada no gênero é utilizada como lente empírica através da qual se observam as dinâmicas de incoerência política. Utilizando perspectivas feministas teóricas e análise crítica de políticas — incluindo a teoria feminista pós-colonial, o institucionalismo feminista e o conceito de masculinidade hegemônica de Connell —, o estudo examina a interação entre fragilidade institucional, resistência cultural, falta de vontade política e normas patriarcais. Recorre-se à análise documental qualitativa, adotando a abordagem WPR de Bacchi (2009) e a análise temática de Braun e Clarke (2006) aplicadas a um corpus de documentos legislativos, institucionais, da sociedade civil e internacionais. Os resultados pretendem demonstrar a interplay entre a fragmentação das políticas e as dinâmicas sociopolíticas, gerando recomendações para a coerência política na governança de gênero da Nigéria e contribuindo para os debates acadêmicos sobre política de gênero pós-colonial no Sul Global.

Palavras-chave: Violência Baseada no Gênero, Inconsistência de Políticas, Política Social, Igualdade de Gênero, Nigéria, ODS 5, VAPP Act, Teoria Feminista, Análise Documental, Governança Pós-Colonial.

Abstract

Gender based violence (GBV) is the most prevalent and pervasive human rights violations in Nigeria which disproportionately affects women and girls in all sectors of the society. One out of three women aged 15-49 years has experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in her lifetime across Nigeria (FMoHSW, NPC, & ICF, 2024; UN Women, 2024). Most of this violence has occurred in personal relationships. Despite the presence of robust legislative instruments such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015 (VAPP Act) and Nigeria's formal commitment to international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on Gender Equality, the rate of gender-based violence (GBV) has not gone down but has gone up. Gender-based violence (GBV) serves in this study as the primary empirical lens through which the dynamics of policy incoherence are observed: it is the concrete indicator of governance failure and the landscape in which the contradictions of Nigeria's gender policy architecture are most visibly enacted. This dissertation interrogates the policy formulation-implementation gap in Nigeria's gender governance architecture, arriving at the conclusion of systemic policy incoherence. It argues that the socio-political underpinnings that sustain gender-based violence at epidemic levels also undergird the structural policy incoherence of the uneven implementation of the VAPP Act, the continued rejection of significant gender legislation by the National Assembly and the incongruence between secular laws and customary and religious legal norms.

Using feminist theoretical perspectives and critical policy analysis, including postcolonial feminist theory, feminist institutionalism and Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, the study examines the interaction of institutional fragility, cultural resistance, lack of political will and patriarchal norms in weakening the efficacy of gender policy. The method used in this research is qualitative analysis. This research draws on Bacchi's (2009) 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' paradigm and thematic analysis of selected legislative, institutional, civil society and international texts (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The results are intended to demonstrate the linkage between policy fragmentation and socio-political processes, as well as to provide analytically driven recommendation for policy coherence in Nigeria's gender governance. This research contributes to wider scholarly debates surrounding postcolonial gender relations in the Global South and the challenges of translating global gender norms into local legal and social transformation.

Keywords: Gender-Based Violence, Policy Inconsistency, Social Politics, Gender Equality, Nigeria, SDG 5, VAPP Act, Feminist Theory, Documentary Analysis, Postcolonial Governance.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACJA	Administration of Criminal Justice Act
AGILE	Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment
AU	African Union
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFHI	Centre for Family Health Initiative
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRPC	Development Research and Projects Centre
EVA	Education as a Vaccine
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FMoHSW	Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
FMWASD	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEP3	Girls Education Project Phase III
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NAPTIP	National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NDHS	Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey
NGP	National Gender Policy
NPC	National Population Commission
PLAC	Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre
PWAN	Partners West Africa Nigeria
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SGVRT	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Response Team
STER	Stand to End Rape Initiative
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VAPP Act	Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015
V-Dem	Varieties of Democracy
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy
WPEI	Women's Political Empowerment Index
WPR	What's the Problem Represented to Be? (Bacchi 2009)
WRAPA	Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the most deeply entrenched human rights crises confronting Nigeria in the twenty-first century. It cuts across class, ethnicity, religion, and geographic boundary, operating both in public spaces and within the domestic sphere. Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Women Affairs recorded 27,698 cases of sexual and gender-based violence across six states alone between 2020 and 2023, a figure that represents only the tip of a vastly under-reported iceberg (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2023). Studies consistently reveal that approximately one in three Nigerian women has experienced some form of physical or sexual violence during her lifetime, with rates surging during periods of crisis (NPC & ICF, 2019; Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare [FMoHSW], NPC, & ICF, 2024). During the COVID-19 lockdown of April 2020, a 149 percent increase in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) cases was documented across twenty-three states in the first two weeks of restrictions alone (UN Women, 2020). By 2022, an estimated 401 femicide cases, gender-motivated killings of women were recorded in Nigeria, while Lagos State documented 24,009 GBV cases between January 2019 and December 2023 across its twenty local government areas (Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, 2024). These figures are not merely supplementary data, they are intended to show a systemic failure of governance.

Nigeria has, in formal terms, constructed an ambitious legislative architecture designed to combat GBV and advance gender equality. The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015 (VAPP Act) expanded the definition of rape, recognized spousal rape for the first time and criminalized harmful traditional practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) and harmful widowhood rituals (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015). Nigeria has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, and has committed to SDG 5 — Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG 5 comprises nine targets covering the elimination of discrimination and violence against women (Targets 5.1 and 5.2), harmful practices including child marriage and female genital mutilation, or FGM (Target 5.3), recognition of unpaid care work (Target 5.4), women's political and economic participation (Target 5.5), universal access to reproductive

health (Target 5.6), equal rights to economic resources (Target 5.a), technology access (Target 5.b), and strengthened policy frameworks for gender equality (Target 5.c) (African Union, 2003; United Nations, 1979, 2015). But even with this apparently strong normative framework, GBV is happening with alarming regularity and progress towards SDG 5 is clearly off track (UN Women, 2023). The federal government's legislative successes have not resulted in uniform protection across the country's thirty-six states. In 2016, the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill was rejected by the National Assembly on the basis that it was not compatible with Islamic law; five other gender bills were defeated in 2022 (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2022). These patterns of legislative pushback are not incidental, they are reflective of deeper contradictions between formal policy commitments and the social politics of gender in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The core question that underpins this dissertation is, why do progressive gender policies in Nigeria not translate into meaningful protection from GBV for women and girls?" The high prevalence of GBV, despite the volume of legislative action taken, suggests a large implementation deficit that cannot be explained by the content of legislation. Previous studies on GBV in Nigeria have been done with academic silos, with sociological studies focused on cultural norms, public health studies exploring the epidemiology of GBV and legal studies concentrating on legislative frameworks (Makama, 2013). Very few have studied in depth the intersection of policy architecture and the socio-political context to understand how legal fragmentation, institutional weakness and political dynamics combine to support GBV.

The differential for integrated analysis is enormous. Inconsistent application of the VAPP Act across the states, constitutional exception of personal laws from anti-discrimination provisions, existence of statutory, customary and religious legal systems and repeated failure of gender legislation in the National Assembly have created a pattern of policy inconsistency with direct and measurable impacts on women's safety and rights.

Alongside these structural inconsistencies, the social politics of gender, patriarchal norms, religious interpretations of female subordination, community mechanisms of social control, and the institutional cultures of state enforcement agencies, interact to entrench GBV even where formal law would prohibit it. This intersection is the problem this dissertation addresses.

1.3 Research Aim, Objectives, and Questions

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to critically examine how policy inconsistencies and the social politics of gender-based violence interact to shape Nigeria's pursuit of gender equality, with specific reference to the targets of SDG 5. His objective is pursued through four specific aims. One, to identify and critically evaluate the gaps in Nigeria's gender and GBV related policies and legal structures such as the VAPP Act, the National Gender Policy and pertinent constitutional provisions. Two, to study the impact of social, political, cultural and religious factors on the implementation and enforcement of gender policies in Nigeria. Three, to investigate the effect of policy fragmentation and socio-political challenges on Nigeria's progress toward the achievement of SDG 5. Last, to provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance policy coherence and promote gender equality outcomes within Nigeria's federal system of governance.

These purposes are pursued by means of a main question and four additional questions. The main research question is: Why are progressive gender policies in Nigeria unsuccessful in delivering genuine gender equality and what are the essential processes of policy inconsistency that sustain the ineffectiveness in the implementation of SDG 5? Gender-based violence (GBV) provides the empirical lens to examine the paradoxes of policy inconsistency, GBV is a tangible evidence of governance failure and the arena of the contradictions of Nigeria's gender policy framework most visibly enacted.

The dissertation is organized around four subsidiary queries which provide the analytical framework. What are the key differences in Nigeria's gender and GBV policy frameworks and where do they come from? ii) What are the social, political, cultural and religious elements that influence the implementation and effectiveness of gender policy in Nigeria? Third, what are the roles of policy fragmentation and socio-political constraints in limiting Nigeria's progress toward the attainment of the goals of SDG 5 (Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Gender Equality, set by the United Nations in 2015)? What policy methods and institutional arrangements can strengthen policy coherence and improve gender equality outcomes under Nigeria's federal form of governance? These sub-questions form the basis of the systematic thematic analysis in Chapter Four, the discourse in Chapter Five and the integration in Chapter Six.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research is integrative in its very nature and has an academic significance. This dissertation tries to connect critical policy analysis with feminist theory to better understand the gap between progressive laws and the reality of gender governance. The relationship between policy architecture and socio-political context has not been thoroughly investigated in the previous work (Krook & Mackay, 2011; Waylen, 2014), thereby addressing a critical need. It is conceptually advanced and pragmatically grounded, building on Bacchi's (2009) 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' (WPR), feminist institutionalism and postcolonial feminist theory.

Equally striking is the social and policy relevance of the findings. Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, with over 220 million people, and has a huge influence on the continent's governance norms (United Nations Population Fund, 2023). The lessons learnt from Nigeria's experience are intended to inspire discussions on gender governance throughout Africa and the broader Global South where hybrid legal regimes, postcolonial institutional practices and patriarchal cultural norms pose similar structural obstacles. The findings are intended to offer analytically informed insights for governments, civil society organizations, gender activists and international development collaborators working toward achieving gender equality in Nigeria and abroad.

1.5 Structure of the Dissertation

Following this introduction, the dissertation continues with five relevant chapters. This chapter reviews the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the subject, including feminist political theory, postcolonial scholarship, policy implementation research, and comparative GBV literature. The third chapter gives the contextual framing, describing Nigeria's political and federal architecture, the historical evolution of gender policy, socio-economic realities of the nation and its interaction with global gender initiatives. In Chapter Four, the research methodology is explained using a qualitative documentary analysis design, justifying the choice, adopting Scott's (1990) framework of documentary inquiry, specifying

the conceptual category of ‘civil society’ as a defined group of identified actors, meeting institutional ethics committee requirements, and presenting the systematic thematic results derived from the coded analysis of the documentary corpus. Chapter Five constitutes the analytical discussion, in which the thematic findings are interpreted through the What’s the Problem Represented to Be? (WPR) framework and the feminist theoretical apparatus to advance the dissertation's central argument concerning the stratified policy/practice gap. Chapter Six concludes the dissertation by answering the research questions, synthesising findings, and offering recommendations for policy reform.

2. State of the Art

2.1 Feminist Political Theory and Gender Governance

Theoretically, this inquiry is grounded in feminist political theory. Feminist political philosophy is not a single tradition, but a multiplicity of liberal, radical, socialist, postcolonial and African feminist perspectives that offer different insights into the relation between gender, power and political institutions (Okin, 1989; MacKinnon, 1989; Mohanty, 2003). The principal theoretical contribution for the purposes of this dissertation is the engagement with feminist institutionalism, postcolonial feminist theory and the concept of hegemonic masculinity, a constellation of frameworks that together explain why gender governance fails in postcolonial federal states such as Nigeria.

For the purposes of this dissertation, gender equality is understood as the condition in which women and men enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities, and protections, irrespective of whether they are born female or male. It encompasses formal equality before the law, substantive equality in access to resources and decision-making, and transformative equality, meaning the dismantling of structural conditions that reproduce gender hierarchy. This definition follows the framework established by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in its General Recommendation No. 25, and is operationalised in this dissertation through the indicators of SDG 5, which include the elimination of violence against women and girls, the eradication of harmful practices, women's full and effective political participation, and equitable access to economic resources and reproductive health. GBV — gender-based violence — is understood as the empirical standard against which the failure to achieve gender equality is most concretely measured in the Nigerian context; it is the lens through which the dynamics of policy incoherence are observed and analysed throughout this dissertation.

Georgina Waylen (2014), Mona Lena Krook (Krook & Mackay, 2011) and Joni Lovenduski have pioneered feminist institutionalism, which argues that political institutions are not gender-neutral bureaucratic systems. They are gendered in themselves, created by and reproducing the rules, interests and power asymmetries of the cultures in which they are found. Informal norms are always tied to formal institutional standards, and can be in opposition to or undermine formal commitments to gender equality (Waylen, 2014). This difference is significant. A legislature may adopt progressive gender legislation in theory, but its informal culture may condone the patriarchal practices it professes to oppose; The official

institutions in Nigeria responsible for implementing gender policies, police forces, courts, the ministry of women affairs, often reproduce and mirror the patriarchal practices that such policies are designed to fight. The feminist institutionalist lens brings into focus these informal rules, cultural practices and normative expectations that co-exist with official policy texts to influence if and how laws are enforced in practice.

Further work on the development of critical mass theory is found in the work of Drude Dahlerup (2006). Dahlerup says that there needs to be a critical mass of women's representation in political institutions before the presence of women begins to change institutional cultures and policy outputs. Thirty percent is often quoted as this critical mass. The structural vulnerability of gender legislation to male legislative majorities is thus aided by the fact that women comprise approximately 4.2 percent of the House of Representatives and 2.8 percent of the Senate in Nigeria after the 2023 elections, well below this threshold dramatically (IPU, 2024a, 2024b).

The repeated failure of gender bills in the National Assembly is thus not simply an expression of individual senators' values; the findings are intended to demonstrate that this is a structural outcome predictable from feminist institutionalist theory.

Liberal feminist theory, as developed from John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill through to contemporary scholars including Susan Moller Okin (1989), provides the foundational normative claim that gender equality requires dismantling the legal and institutional barriers that systematically disadvantage women. Within the liberal framework, Nigeria's direct engagement with CEDAW and the SDGs is legible and takes a rights-based approach to gender equality based on the formal equality of all persons before the law. But weaknesses of liberal feminism are also evident in Nigeria: formal legal equality is not necessarily substantive equality in a society that is marked by deep-rooted patriarchal norms, economic inequality and institutional cultures that reproduce gender hierarchy. Such a limitation has led to the emergence of more structural, post-colonial and radical feminist analyses.

Radical feminist thought, from Shulamith Firestone (1970) to Catharine MacKinnon (1989), sees patriarchy, the institutionalized male supremacy over women, as the core of gender subordination, which cannot be reduced to social disparity or legal injustices. Radical feminist theory, for instance, maintains that personal relationships, family arrangements, and cultural practices are inherently political. It holds that the private sphere is a space of gendered

authority and gender-based violence (GBV), which one must comprehend if one is to understand the persistence of GBV in Nigeria's domestic and communal spaces, despite public laws which ostensibly prohibit it. MacKinnon's explanation of the way law perpetuates male supremacy by pre-establishing the male experience as the normative benchmark is illuminating to understand the way Nigerian legislation, especially with its progressive VAPP Act provisions, is still influenced by patriarchal institutional frameworks that distort its implementation.

2.2 Hegemonic Masculinity and Patriarchal Governance

Theoretical resource for the understanding of GBV in Nigeria is R.W. Connell's hegemonic masculinity (1987, 2005). Connell (1995) posits that within any social structure there exists a dominant form of masculinity, which she calls hegemonic masculinity. This form of masculinity maintains patriarchal advantage through not only overt force, but also through cultural sanction, institutional power, and the active or passive consent of subordinated groups. Hegemonic masculinity is not a type of person, but a behavior that symbolizes the most legitimate position of men in gender relations. This is sustained by cultural narratives, institutional structures and political practices that mainstream male domination.

In Nigeria, hegemonic masculinity is expressed in many cultural discourses that normalize male power in the home, community and state, and justify women's subservience as either God-ordained or culturally prescribed. These scripts operate in varied institutional settings: in religious teachings that build wifely submission into a moral virtue; in customary legal practices that restrict women's inheritance rights; in attitudes among law enforcement officials who see domestic violence as a family matter; and in legislative efforts that interpret gender reform as a threat to cultural identity. Connell's subsequent collaboration with Messerschmidt (2005) further refines the notion to appreciate its complex and contestable character, whereby different masculinities exist and compete within any social space; this is particularly important to understand how Nigerian civil society has managed to contest dominant gender norms even in structurally limited circumstances.

According to Ratele (2014), African masculinities are informed by the intersections of patriarchal traditions, a colonial past and economic uncertainty in the present. These elements produce unique manifestations of gendered power and violence. He bases his analysis on hegemonic masculinity theory in the African context. Ratele's analysis is especially pertinent in northern Nigeria where economic disenfranchisement, religious hegemony and traditional political structures intersect to produce masculine identities that are based on the control of women and girls through marriage, purdah and enforcement of gender norms, and form a key axis of social status. These notions of masculinity and their institutional support are embedded in the incidence of GBV and harmful practices such as child marriage in the northern states.

2.3 Postcolonial Feminist Theory in the African Context

Postcolonial feminist theory is also significant and contributes to the analytical framework. Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí (1997); Obioma Nnaemeka (2004); Amina Mama (1996) and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) have critiqued the naïve application of Western feminist paradigms to African socioeconomic reality. They have pointed to the need to consider the particular histories of colonialism, the hybrid systems of law and government created by colonialism, and the various ways African women exercise agency within and against patriarchal regimes.

Oyěwùmí's work is based on the premise that the notion of woman as a social category is a colonial imposition on Yoruba society, challenging the universalist assumptions underlying mainstream feminist theory and international gender frameworks. In this sense, social ties are structured historically by seniority and not by biology. Although Oyěwùmí's thesis has been challenged, her fundamental insight that gender functions differently in different cultural contexts and that Western analytical categories are not readily applicable to African social reality remains valuable for this study. It defies reading as a mere failure of the internationalisation of Western gender standards against the backdrop of Nigerian gender governance deficits and requires an explanation grounded in the specificity of Nigerian social and political history.

The concept of nego-feminism by Nnaemeka (2004) that feminism is a matter of negotiation, compromise and strategic accommodation rather than direct confrontation, is particularly useful in understanding how Nigerian women and gender advocates negotiate spaces of resistance within constraining socio-political environments. Nego-feminist is a form of

African feminism that works with rather than against traditional authority, religious institutions and cultural frameworks. This has implications for GBV advocacy practice in Nigeria. The literature indicates that the most effective civil society interventions are those that work with customary institutions, religious authority or community leaders rather than at the top-down law enforcement level.

Amina Mama (1996) has written on women's movements and the Nigerian state providing a historically grounded analysis of the ways in which gender advocacy has negotiated the political landscape of the post-independence period, especially under military rule when civil society was severely constrained. Mama's work can be read as a commentary on the institutional settings of state power, civil society and gender politics that continue to shape the context in which contemporary GBV advocacy occurs. Her analysis of how successive Nigerian governments have simultaneously co-opted and repressed women's organisations is directly relevant to understanding the political dynamics of gender policy implementation today. Mohanty's (2003) critique of Western feminist representations of Third World women as uniformly victimised provides a further methodological caution. This dissertation avoids reproducing a development deficit narrative that reduces Nigerian women to passive victims of an inadequate state, attending instead to the forms of agency, resistance, and advocacy that Nigerian women and gender organisations exercise within structurally constraining conditions.

2.4 Policy Implementation Theory

Policy implementation theory, the body of scholarship concerned with the gap between policy design and policy outcome, provides an additional analytical resource. Pressman and Wildavsky's (1973) foundational study established that implementation failure is a normal rather than an exceptional feature of policy systems, particularly where multiple jurisdictions, agencies, and stakeholders are involved. Lipsky's (1980) concept of street-level bureaucracy further illuminates how the actual implementation of policy depends on the discretionary decisions of frontline officials, police officers, social workers, court clerks, and health worker whose institutional cultures, working conditions, and personal beliefs shape the effective meaning of law in practice.

This paradigm can be easily applied to the Nigeria instance. The progressive provisions of the VAPP Act are mediated by the institutional cultures of the police forces, prosecutors, judicial officials and social workers who are charged with operationalising it. Where street-

level groups perpetuate patriarchal norms, rejecting complaints of domestic violence as private family matters or encouraging survivors to reconcile with abusers for example, the statutory protections of the Act are made almost worthless. Stone's (2012) research on the politics of policy interpretation adds another analytical dimension by showing how ongoing political fights about the meaning and importance of policy commitments influence policy outcomes. These insights inform the analytical technique in Chapter Five for examining the political and institutional elements mediating Nigeria's gender policy implementation.

2.5 The SDG Framework and Gender Equality

The most comprehensive global framework for gender equality today is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations in 2015. SDG 5 has nine specific targets, ranging from the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls (Target 5.1) and violence against women and girls (Target 5.2) to the elimination of harmful practices including child marriage and FGM (Target 5.3), the recognition of unpaid care work (Target 5.4) and women's full and effective involvement in political and economic decision-making. (Target 5.5) Nigeria's commitment to SDG 5 is formalised in its Voluntary National Reviews and in the alignment of national policy frameworks, particularly the updated National Gender Policy (2021–2026), with SDG indicators.

However, the SDG framework has been critiqued by feminists. True (2012) has argued in her work on the political economics of violence against women that SDG 5 risks addressing gender inequality as a discrete domain, rather than as a structural element of political and economic institutions. A 2023 UN Women Gender Snapshot halfway review revealed that none of the SDG 5 targets are on course to be achieved by 2030 at a global level and Nigeria's performance is among the worst in the world. The mismatch between Nigeria's formal SDG commitments and its measurable progress on gender indicators is one of the central empirical observations underpinning this dissertation.

2.6 GBV in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Comparative Overview

Comparative scholarship on GBV in sub-Saharan Africa provides important context for the Nigerian case. Htun and Weldon (2012, 2018), in their comparative analysis of the conditions under which states adopt progressive policy on violence against women, identify autonomous feminist movements as the single most important predictor of policy adoption. Their findings illuminate why Nigeria has been able, despite institutional weakness, to

achieve the formal enactment of laws such as the VAPP Act: sustained civil society advocacy by feminist lawyers and women's organisations has been the proximate driver of legal reform. However, their analysis also clarifies why formal adoption does not equate to substantive implementation: the same conditions that produce legal change do not necessarily translate into the institutional and cultural transformations required for that change to deliver substantive outcomes.

The comparative African literature also illuminates important variations across the continent. Rwanda's post-genocide constitutional commitment to gender parity has produced women's parliamentary representation exceeding sixty percent, the highest in the world and has been associated with progressive legislation on GBV (Devlin & Elgie, 2008). South Africa's Domestic Violence Act of 1998 has been implemented unevenly but has produced substantially better case outcomes than the Nigerian VAPP Act. Senegal's gender parity law, mandating equal representation of women and men on electoral lists, has produced a near-parity National Assembly and substantive gains in policy attention to gender issues. These comparative cases are intended to demonstrate that the Nigerian outcome formal commitment without substantive implementation is not inevitable; it reflects specific institutional, political, and socio-cultural configurations that this dissertation interrogates.

2.7 Nigerian Feminist Scholarship and Civil Society Knowledge Production

A specifically Nigerian tradition of feminist scholarship has developed over the postindependence period, providing a distinctive theoretical and empirical resource for understanding the country's gender governance trajectory. This tradition extends from foundational scholars including Funmi Olonisakin and Nina Mba whose pioneering work on women's political organising in colonial and early post-independence Nigeria established the historical foundations of the field through to contemporary scholars including Charmaine Pereira, Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso, Akin Iwilade, and a generation of scholars based at Nigerian universities and at diasporic institutions whose work has interrogated the relationship between the Nigerian state, women's movements, and the social politics of gender. Theoretically, the tradition is eclectic, embracing liberal, radical, postcolonial, and Africana feminist strands. In practice it is based on detailed case studies of various facets of Nigerian gender governance.

Pereira (2007) investigates the politics of gender at Nigerian universities and shows that the academic institutional environment itself promotes gender hierarchies. This has ramifications for the growth of gender knowledge in the nation. Yacob-Haliso's work is on women's political involvement and the institutional conditions for women's effective engagement with the Nigerian state. She draws on a wide body of empirical data from women's groups and from women candidates and officeholders. The work of experts such as Akachi Odoemene and Bukola Adeyemi-Suenu on GBV and hazardous traditional practices has created rich case-study material, which complements the survey-based literature that is dominated by international organizations. This material also provides a basis for the broader theoretical demands of feminist political theory in the Nigerian empirical particular.

Methodologically, this dissertation is important in that it explores the parallel heritage of civil society knowledge production in Nigerian feminist organizations. The reports of WRAPA, CFHI, EVA Nigeria and other civil society organizations (CSOs) discussed in Section 4.4 are not merely advocacy documents. They are a corpus of knowledge produced under avowed feminist commitments and grounded in the operational realities of Nigerian gender governance. These publications are often not directly accessible to the academic scholarship. DOHS Cares and Document Women's femicide monitoring, STER's case attrition data, CFHI's study of institutional impediments, and DRPC's budget-analytical work have all come together to create a uniquely Nigerian feminist counter-data tradition. This legacy has mainly filled the gaps in state data and, in many respects, shaped and prefigured the academic research agenda. This dissertation's analytical stance, which treats CSO-produced material as the key data for systematic analysis within the framework of Scott (1990), is itself an acknowledgment of the methodological position of this counter-data heritage.

3. Contextual Background

3.1 Nigeria's Political, Federal, and Legal Structure

The complex architecture of governance in Nigeria is a significant aspect in the gender policy narrative. The federal system in the Federal Republic of Nigeria was established by the 1999 Constitution and comprises thirty-six states and the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. The Federal Government has the power to make laws on matters contained in the Exclusive Legislative List. The state governments have the residual or concurrent jurisdiction over anything not preempted by the federal government. Certain issues, including as marriage, family law, and many aspects of personal status, are not on the Exclusive List and may thus be the subject of laws passed by both the federal and state governments. In reality, state law is often paramount (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). This is vital for gender policy .

Nigeria's judicial system is truly pluralistic. There are three formal legal systems that operate in parallel: statutory law (based on English common law and administered through the federal court system); customary law (based on ethnic group and traditional authority structure); and Islamic Sharia law (formally codified in twelve northern states since the adoption of Sharia in 1999). These legal regimes are not hierarchically linked but pluralistic: the same factual situation can be covered by one or several legal regimes depending on the parties involved, the place of the dispute and the forum chosen. This legal plurality is of cultural importance but creates significant governance problems for gender policy. statutory reforms such as the VAPP Act may have limited operational reach in contexts where household and family ties are governed by customary or religious legal frameworks.

Section 12 of the Nigerian Constitution provides that the National Assembly shall make the foreign treaties a law before it becomes binding on the federation and the other party to the treaty. This provision, combined with the federal framework, means that international gender commitments such as CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol cannot be immediately used in Nigerian courts without first being domesticated. The CEDAW Committee has made a number of recommendations but CEDAW has not been domesticated in Nigeria (CEDAW Committee, 2017). Section 42 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex but this provision is itself subject to Section 42(3) which preserves the validity of matters

of personal law governed by religious or customary regimes. This structural compromise has been utilized to narrow the scope of constitutional commitments of gender equality.

3.2 Historical Evolution of Gender Policy in Nigeria

The story of gender policy in Nigeria is a story of colonial legacies and reform initiatives after independence. Colonial rule introduced some modernising features, such as formal schooling for some women, but it also reinforced and formalised patriarchal institutions through the colonial legal system. Customary law as accepted in the colonial courts was often a distorted representation of pre-colonial practice, often written down in ways that were more to the disadvantage of women than the pre-colonial systems it replaced. Colonial rule altered the gender relations of indigenous peoples, usually imposing more rigid hierarchies than had existed prior to this (Oyěwùmí, 1997; Mama, 1996). This is well-documented.

Post-independence Nigeria inherited these distorted gender structures and has tried, though imperfectly, to change them in a progressive direction. The Women in Development (WID) approach of the 1970s acknowledged women's creative role but failed to challenge the prevailing structures of patriarchy. Gradual evolution of the 1980s Women in evolution (WID) approach and the Gender and Development (GAD) framework of the late 1980s and 1990s helped to study gender power dynamics and developed the national gender policies . An important institutionalization of gender governance at the federal level was the creation of the National Commission for Women in 1989, which was later converted into the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs. The Ministry, however, has been historically underfunded and politically marginal in the federal cabinet.

The implementation of the National Gender Policy in 2006 was a milestone and set an objective of thirty five percent women's presence in political and public life and gave frameworks for gender mainstreaming in sectors (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development [FMWASD], 2006). The aim for fifty percent affirmative action in elective and appointive positions was increased in the amended National Gender Policy 2021-2026 (FMWASD, 2021). This promise has, however, not translated into concrete action with the representation of women in Nigeria's National Assembly among the lowest in the world. This dissertation demonstrates how the gap between policy aspiration and actual numbers of representation has been reproduced across successive electoral cycles with little accountability or institutional response, an example of the wider pattern of policy ambition without implementation that this dissertation interrogates.

The VAPP Act 2015 was the most significant development in the history of GBV law in Nigeria. Such acceptance is the fruit of almost a decade of tireless advocacy on the part of civil society organizations, feminist lawyers and gender activists and shows the power of organized civil society to push for legislative change even in difficult institutional circumstances. It was passed after much discussion, using deliberately broad language, and with substantial popular support. As Chapter Five shows, however, the revolutionary potential of the Act has been restricted by the very political and institutional forces civil society aimed to oppose. This pattern suggests the structural constraints of legal reform as a tactic for social change where the law enforcement agencies themselves are centers of patriarchal reproduction.

3.3 International Commitments and the SDG Framework

Global gender structures and Nigeria's engagement with them provide an important context for understanding the gap between formal commitment and practical achievement. Nigeria acceded to CEDAW in 1985, therefore embracing legally binding commitments under international law to take all relevant measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all sectors of political, social, cultural and economic life. The CEDAW Committee has issued several rounds of Concluding Observations to Nigeria expressing concern about gaps in implementation including a call for nation-wide domestication of the VAPP Act, action to address child marriage and FGM and strengthening of institutions for gender justice (CEDAW Committee, 2017). This is also shown in the failure of Nigeria to submit periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee in a timely manner because of the lack of institutional importance attached to gender accountability measures.

The Maputo Protocol is the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. By ratifying this Protocol, Nigeria's commitments are taken in a continental perspective that is more contextually relevant in many respects than CEDAW (African Union, 2003). The Maputo Protocol explicitly addresses harmful traditional practices, reproductive rights including access to safe abortion, and women's rights in the context of conflict and displacement. Its obligations are directly relevant to the Nigerian context, where FGM, child marriage, and conflict-related sexual violence are significant dimensions of the GBV landscape. However, the gap between Nigeria's ratification of the Maputo Protocol and its domestic implementation is as wide as that evident in its CEDAW

compliance, with civil society organisations consistently documenting the lack of domestic legislative action to operationalise the Protocol's provisions.

The SDGs adopted in 2015 have added a further normative layer to Nigeria's international gender commitments (United Nations, 2015). Nigeria's SDG Voluntary National Reviews have acknowledged deficits in gender governance while presenting an optimistic account of legislative achievements. Critical analysis of these reviews by civil society organisations including Action-aid Nigeria and WRAPA has consistently identified the gap between the formal content of Nigeria's SDG commitments and the operational reality of GBV governance on the ground. For instance, in 2023, UN Women conducted a mid-term evaluation of progress towards SDG 5 which showed that Nigeria was significantly behind the targets on almost all gender-related indicators (UN Women, 2023).

3.4 Socioeconomic and Demographic Context

Without proper reference to the socio-economic situation in the country, it is impossible to understand the continuation of GBV in Nigeria. Nigeria is the continent's largest economy by GDP and has staggering inequality. More than forty percent of Nigerians are impoverished by the national poverty line, with some northern states having as much as ninety percent (UNICEF, 2024a). The economic marginalization of women is particularly severe: women are systematically constrained in their ownership of property, in formal employment and in access to finance, and their economic participation rate is significantly lower than that of men in all sectors. This economic dependency creates structural conditions for GBV. Women who lack independent financial resources have less options to leave abusive relationships, acquire legal aid or support themselves and their children during court battles. Hence, poverty and gender inequality together comprise a basic structural element of gender-based violence, which cannot be addressed by legal measures alone.

Another challenge to administration is the huge population of Nigeria . By definition, the effective reach of government institutions is limited in a country of nearly 220 million people spread across large geographical distances, including remote rural areas with poor infrastructure and a limited official presence. Rural women, particularly in the north of Nigeria, are doubly vulnerable, with higher rates of child marriage and FGM, lower levels of education achievement, less access to official legal systems and greater dependence on customary authority structures. There is a wide variation in GBV governance across the

region. Formal GBV responses have become relatively stronger in Lagos State, but many northern states have minimal formal GBV response infrastructure and rely heavily on customary and religious institutions which often prioritize family unity over survivor safety.

One in four women aged 18 to 24 years had experienced sexual violence before age 18 years (UNICEF 2024b: Situation Analysis of Nigeria). The prevalence of child marriage is about 33.4 percent across the country, but with the rate rising to almost fifty percent in the North-East and North-West geopolitical zones. An estimated 7.6 million Nigerian girls remain out of school, half of them in the north, where the median age at first marriage for girls with no education is 16.6 years (UNICEF, 2024b; Marie Claire Nigeria, 2025). These figures collectively are intended to illustrate how gender inequality is reproduced across generations through the intersection of educational exclusion, early marriage, economic marginalisation, and violence a systemic dynamic that no single policy intervention can reverse without coordinated, sustained action across multiple governance domains.

3.5 The Spatial Distribution of GBV: Regional Disparities and Their Reproduction

The aggregate national GBV figures cited in Section 1.1 conceal significant sub-national variation that is itself analytically important. According to the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 2021 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and other civil society oversight, incidence of intimate partner violence varies greatly across the six geopolitical zones with the highest lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence among women aged 15–49 years in the South-South and Southeast zones, and the lowest in the Northwest. The interpretive challenge is that these geographic differentials reflect both genuine variation in underlying prevalence and substantial variation in survey-response patterns conditioned by social norms about disclosure. Where social norms classify domestic violence as a private family matter, survey respondents are systematically less likely to report victimisation in formal interview contexts, with the consequence that aggregate statistics for high-norm-restriction regions may understate underlying prevalence. The analytical implication is that the regional disparities visible in the official statistics should be read alongside the qualitative reporting of CSOs operating in the under-reporting regions, particularly in the northern zones where civil society documentation has identified patterns of severe under-reporting.

The geographic distribution of harmful practices presents a different and more sharply differentiated pattern. Female genital mutilation prevalence is highest in the South-West zone, with the cutting of girls before age five concentrated in specific ethnic and religious communities; child marriage prevalence is highest in the North-East and North-West zones, where median age at first marriage for girls with no education falls below seventeen. The sharp geographic concentration of these practices is intelligible as a function of the intersection of educational deprivation, economic marginalisation, religious-traditional authority structures, and the institutional weakness of state response infrastructure. The analytical implication is that a uniform national policy framework, however well-designed at the level of statutory text, will not adequately address the geographically concentrated dimensions of harmful practices unless the policy framework includes the institutional infrastructure for differentiated regional implementation. This is the analytical case for the integrated regional reform agenda articulated in Chapter Six, which identifies northern Nigeria as a priority for multi-dimensional intervention design.

The financial-economic side is in line with the regional structure. Multidimensional poverty, poor state infrastructure and declining household resources for investment in education are generally widespread throughout the northern geopolitical zones. Girls are at a disadvantage in these areas: they are more likely to be out of school, more likely to marry before they are adults, more likely to give birth as a teenager, and more likely to live in communities where formal justice systems are geographically and culturally distant. This multi-dimensional disadvantage cannot be adequately captured by one national metric and therefore requires the disaggregated analytical treatment which this research seeks to undertake in Chapter Five for particular regions.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Epistemological Position

This study adopts a qualitative approach, drawing on critical policy analysis and feminist theoretical viewpoints. The qualitative approach is adequate to the epistemological principles of the study and the nature of the research questions. The reason is that, if we want to understand why gender policies do not work, we need interpretive, context-sensitive approaches that are able to grasp the complex nature of institutional mechanisms, cultural interactions and political conflicts that quantitative approaches cannot capture properly.

This research is epistemologically anchored in the feminist perspective theory of Sandra Harding (1991) and Dorothy Smith (1987). Standpoint theory postulates that knowledge is always produced from a particular social context, asserts that historically, dominant social groups have generated knowledge that marginalizes the experiences and viewpoints of subordinate groups, and emphasizes that research on gender and power should be reflective of the researcher's standpoint and prioritize the structural conditions that shape women's lived realities. This epistemological position should not be read as a negative sense of subjectivity; it argues, following Harding's notion of strong objectivity, that acknowledging one's standpoint and systematically including marginalized perspectives results in more inclusive and robust knowledge than the false universalism of a supposedly neutral standpoint.

The research is presented as a qualitative case study of Nigeria, chosen as a theoretically purposive example which exemplifies broader patterns of female governance in postcolonial federal nations with differing legal systems. The combination of strong legislative development and serious implementation gaps, complex socio-political circumstances and the availability of copious documentary evidence in Nigeria makes it a productive case for developing theoretical insights pertinent for the Global South. The single-case design is appropriate here since the research is not intended for statistical generalization, but for theoretical generalization, in the sense of developing explanatory frameworks that can throw light on similar governance dynamics in other country contexts.

4.2 Critical Policy Analysis as Inquiry Framework

The dissertation adopts a critical policy analysis method to study, namely the framework of Carol Bacchi, What's the Problem Represented to Be? approach (Bacchi, 2009) (WPR). Critical policy analysis differs from conventional policy analysis in that it refuses to accept a surface reading of policy problems. Critical policy analysis is not simply an evaluation of whether the policy achieves its stated goals but rather an analysis of how the policy frames the issue it attempts to address, the assumptions embedded in that framing, the implications of those assumptions and the alternatives foreclosed by the dominant representation of the problem.

Bacchi's WPR framework employs this methodology through six leading questions asked of policy documents: What problem is demonstrated in some policy? What basic assumptions or presuppositions are involved in this description? How does this representation arise? What is there in this picture that nobody disputes? What are the implications of this portrayal? How and where has this representation been made, distributed and legitimized? The use of these questions in relation to Nigeria's gender and GBV policy framework, including the VAPP Act, the National Gender Policy (2006; revised 2021–2026) and the transcripts of the National Assembly discussions on gender legislation, reveals the underlying assumptions embedded within the official portrayal of the GBV issue in Nigeria, the alternatives that are not made visible through such portrayals, and the political dynamics that maintain particular representations of the problem over time. Critical policy analysis is complemented by thematic analysis of documentary sources, following the framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis provides a systematic method for identifying, organising, and interpreting patterns of meaning themes across a body of textual data. The procedural details of how the thematic analysis was operationalised in this study, including the inductive and deductive coding moves, the development of the codebook, and the matrix-based mapping of themes onto civil society sources, are set out in Section 4.5 below; the results of that analysis are presented in Section 4.7 and form the empirical foundation for the discussion advanced in Chapter Five.

4.3 Documentary Analysis: Sources, Strategy, and the Justification of Scott (1990)

This dissertation relies on a systematic and extensive documentary analysis as its primary data collection strategy. Documentary analysis is a well-established qualitative research method with particular strengths in the study of policy processes, institutional behaviour, and governance systems. The methodological framework used to evaluate the documentary corpus is John Scott's (1990) *A Matter of Record: Documentary Sources in Social Research*, which proposes four criteria for the systematic appraisal of documents: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning.

The use of Scott (1990) requires explicit justification, both because the work is now over thirty years old and because it precedes the substantial digitisation of policy documents and the proliferation of civil-society counter-data on which a contemporary documentary study must rely. Three considerations support its continued use as the foundational evaluative framework in this dissertation. First, Scott's four criteria remain the most rigorous and most widely cited tools available for the appraisal of social-research documents and have been treated as a baseline reference in subsequent methodological scholarship. Authenticity addresses whether a document is genuine and of unquestionable provenance; credibility addresses whether it is free from error or distortion; representativeness addresses whether the documents in a corpus typify the wider class of relevant documents; and meaning addresses both literal and interpretive understanding of textual content. These criteria are theoretically agnostic and apply equally to a 1985 government white paper, a 2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) Key Indicators Report, a CSO-derived femicide tracker, and a Twitter-era civil society advocacy brief.

Second, Scott's framework is methodologically appropriate to the dissertation's particular epistemological commitments. The standpoint-feminist position adopted here treats CSO-derived monitoring data including the DOHS Cares Foundation femicide tracker, the Document Women repository, and Partners West Africa Nigeria's VAPP Tracker as legitimate documentary evidence rather than supplementary grey literature. Scott's criteria provide a transparent procedure for assessing the authenticity of these sources (verifying organisational provenance and version control), their credibility (cross-checking against state-issued and survey-based data), their representativeness (assessing whether they typify the universe of comparable monitoring outputs), and their meaning (attending to the discursive context in

which they were produced). Without an explicit appraisal framework of this kind, the use of CSO-derived counter-data would be vulnerable to the criticism that it lacks methodological grounding; with Scott (1990) applied consistently, that data is held to the same evaluative standard as state and intergovernmental sources.

Third, Scott's framework is operationally adequate to the multi-source documentary corpus assembled here. The corpus encompasses five main categories of sources, each of which has been individually appraised against the four criteria. First, primary legal and policy documents: Nigeria's 1999 Constitution (as amended), the VAPP Act (2015), the Child Rights Act (2003), the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (2015), the National Gender Policy (2006; revised 2021–2026), National Assembly records for relevant legislative debates, and the official text of CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol, and SDG 5 documentation. Second, official government and institutional reports: FMWASD report, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), National Human Rights Commission, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Gender Policy 2021–2025 and Nigeria's Voluntary National SDG Reviews. Third, international and intergovernmental reports: CEDAW Concluding Observations, UN Women country and gender snapshot reports, UNICEF Nigeria Annual Reports and Situation Analyses, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)'s FGM country snapshot, and UN Women / United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) joint femicide reports. Fourth, civil society and NGO documentation, examined in detail in Section 4.4 below. Fifth, peer-reviewed academic literature accessed through JSTOR, Google Scholar, PubMed, and the b-on EBSCO platform.

The selection of documents follows a purposive sampling strategy designed to ensure coverage of multiple institutional perspectives governmental, civil society, and international and multiple dimensions of the research problem legislative, implementational, cultural, and comparative. The documentary corpus is supplemented by quantitative data drawn from nationally representative surveys, principally the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) series (most recently the 2023–24 round), the Nigeria Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2021, the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parline database, Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) indicators, and Afrobarometer Round 9 (2022/23). Each of these sources has been appraised against Scott's four criteria before inclusion.

4.4 Defining Civil Society for the Purposes of This Study

The conceptual category 'civil society' is invoked frequently in the literature on Nigerian gender governance but is too often left undefined or treated as a residual category encompassing any non-state actor active in policy advocacy. This dissertation adopts a deliberately narrow operational definition. For the purposes of this study, 'civil society' refers to non-state, non-profit organisations with a substantive Nigerian operational footprint whose published documentation forms part of the corpus of analysis. International intergovernmental bodies (the UN system, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the World Bank, regional bodies of the African Union) are referenced separately as international or intergovernmental actors. Independent media outlets (Premium Times, Tribune Online, Channels TV, HumAngle, allAfrica, Bloomberg, The Africa Report, The Republic, The Sun Nigeria, Marie Claire Nigeria) are referenced as journalistic sources subject to credibility and authentication appraisal under Scott's framework. Independent research bodies and thinktanks (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Westminster Foundation for Democracy) are referenced as policy-research actors.

Within the narrowed definition, the civil-society actors whose documentary outputs are systematically analysed in this study are the following named organisations, each of which has been profiled in Annex C and cross-referenced to the thematic findings presented in Section 4.7. The principal Nigerian feminist legal-advocacy organisation is the Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA), Abuja-based with multi-state operations, focused on women's legal rights and VAPP Act domestication advocacy. The Centre for Family Health Initiative (CFHI) is a Nigerian health-and-rights organisation whose 2025 study *Institutional Barriers to Eliminating Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria* provides foundational evidence on the institutional cultures of frontline implementers. Education as a Vaccine (EVA Nigeria) operates on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and on community-level GBV norms. Stand to End Rape Initiative (STER), Lagos-headquartered with national reach, focuses on the survivor pathway and case attrition. The Mirabel Centre, located within Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, is the only specialised sexual assault referral centre in Nigeria of its scale and produces programmatic data on survivor service delivery.

Three Nigerian feminist counter-data and documentation organisations form a distinct cluster within the corpus: the DOHS Cares Foundation, which maintains the most

comprehensive Nigerian femicide tracker; Document Women, which produces a femicide repository with cross-national comparative ranking; and Naija Feminist Media, which combines journalistic and analytical output on femicide and gender-based violence. Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN), a regional security and rule-of-law civil society actor, maintains the VAPP Tracker that documents state-by-state domestication. Two Nigerian governance-focused organisations the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), which monitors gender legislation, and the Development Research and Projects Centre (DRPC), which publishes gender-responsive budgeting analyses provide critical institutional and fiscal evidence. The NorthNormal collective is a northern-Nigerian feminist advocacy coalition that has co-mobilised the Kano VAPP campaign. Alliances for Africa, ActionAid Nigeria, and CDD West Africa contribute pan-African and regional advocacy and policy outputs. The Centre for Girl Child Education (CGCE), based in northern Nigeria, contributes statistical and programmatic evidence on girls' educational deprivation.

Two additional categories warrant transparent inclusion. International human rights NGOs (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch) are documented as international-civil-society actors with a long-standing Nigerian engagement; their reporting has been included with appropriate appraisal under Scott's framework. International thematic NGOs with cross-national focus and a Nigerian remit notably 28 Too Many on female genital mutilation have been included where their thematic specialisation provides data not produced by Nigerian-headquartered organisations. The complete list of thirty-three civil-society and CSO-adjacent organisations whose documentary outputs were systematically coded is provided in Annex C, alongside the codebook and CSO × Theme matrix. By specifying the actors in this way, the dissertation addresses the methodological problem of conceptual vagueness around 'civil society' and produces a transparent record of which sources have been treated as evidence and which have not.

4.5 Data Analysis Method: Coded Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis of the documentary corpus is conducted in two stages. The first stage involves a descriptive mapping of the policy landscape: systematically documenting the content, scope, and provisions of Nigeria's key gender policy instruments; mapping the state-by-state pattern of VAPP Act domestication; cataloguing legislative actions and inactions on gender bills; and tracing the trajectory of Nigeria's international gender commitments through

successive rounds of CEDAW review and SDG reporting. This descriptive mapping provides the factual foundation for the subsequent interpretive analysis.

The second stage involves systematic coded thematic analysis following the six-phase procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation with the corpus, generation of initial codes, search for themes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes, and production of the report. The coding process combined inductive and deductive moves. The initial inductive coding read each document line by line to identify discrete units of meaning relevant to the research questions; these units were assigned descriptive labels and tagged with the source organisation and year. The deductive moves then mapped the inductively generated codes against the analytical framework developed in Chapter Two, allowing the codes to be grouped into candidate themes and the themes to be refined against the WPR analytical questions.

The output of this process is a thirty-six-code codebook organised into ten themes. The codebook is reproduced in full in Annex C and operationalised in an Excel workbook that accompanies this dissertation as a supporting deliverable. The themes are: (T1) Legislative Coverage and Vertical Implementation Gap; (T2) Enforcement Failures and Institutional Cultures; (T3) Femicide and Documentation of Gendered Killings; (T4) Harmful Practices including FGM, Child Marriage and Widowhood Practices; (T5) Women's Political Representation and Quota Politics; (T6) Educational Deprivation and Gendered Geography of Opportunity; (T7) Public Attitudes and Social Norms; (T8) Economic Marginalisation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting; (T9) Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Displacement; and (T10) Constitutional, Religious and Customary Legal Pluralism. Each code carries five attributes: an organisational source, a documented report or output, a year, a descriptive category, and an explicit rationale for the code's inclusion. A second matrix maps the named civil society organisations against the ten themes, identifying which actor's documentary output contributes to which theme; this matrix is reproduced in Annex C and is the structural basis for the findings presented in Section 4.7.

The theme coding was conducted with MAXQDA (version 2024), a qualitative data analysis software allowing systematic coding of documents, estimation of code frequency and visual display of theme frameworks in comprehensive documentary collections. MAXQDA made it possible to implement the coding technique, organize the thirty-six-code codebook, and generate the CSO x Theme matrix that is shown in Annex C. The use of MAXQDA

increased procedural transparency and the possibility to verify coding decisions but it is up to the researcher to generate analytical insights, and the software is not meant to substitute interpretive competence.

Three procedural obligations guaranty analytical accuracy. Each coded unit is first linked to a particular documentary source, the source organization and year being recorded along with the code; thus preserves the required audit trail for documentary examination. Secondly, the WPR analytical questions are used systematically to the coded data, thereby ensuring that the study moves beyond a mere description of the content of the documents and critically interrogates how the documents frame the topic of GBV. Thirdly, reflexivity is maintained throughout: the position of the researcher as an international studies scholar engaging with a complex postcolonial governance framework is recognized and analytical assessments are weighed against different documentary perspectives (governmental, civil society, international and scholarly), to minimize the possibility of single-source bias.

4.6 Ethical Considerations and Institutional Compliance

This dissertation was carried out in full compliance with the ethical standards established by ISCTE Instituto Universitário de Lisboa and in line with the institutional protocols applicable to social research that uses documentary sources instead of primary empirical data. The methodology was limited to the analysis of publicly available documents and no direct contact with human subjects, observation, interviews or collection of personal data was made. This allowed the research to be covered by the institutional review procedures of ISCTE to a documentary-only ethics protocol, rather than a full ethics committee submission. This conclusion was made together with the thesis advisor and is registered in the methodological documentation presented to the ISCTE program administration.

However, ethical issues were considered during the research process and the research was in accordance with the ISCTE Code of Conduct in Research, the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, 2017, updated 2023) and the general principles of the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice (BSA, 2017). The study involves sensitive information about gender-based violence, femicide, child marriage, wartime sexual abuse and the personal anguish of survivors.

In presenting documented cases of GBV including specific incidents reported in the scholarly and journalistic literature the study has adhered to the following protocols: all case data is drawn exclusively from publicly available, formally reported sources; no individual survivors are identified beyond information already in the public domain through formal civil-society or judicial reporting; no information about minors is included beyond what is published in formal CSO or UN system reports; and case material is presented with appropriate analytical sensitivity, resisting sensationalism or the reproduction of voyeuristic detail that would violate survivors' dignity.

The documentary corpus includes statistical material derived from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey series and the Nigeria Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, both of which were collected under nationally and internationally approved ethics protocols (FMoHSW, NPC, & ICF, 2024; National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] & UNICEF, 2022). The dissertation cites this data within the terms of those protocols and does not attempt to disaggregate beyond the levels at which the data is officially released. Data from civil-society monitoring, as collected by organizations such as the DOHS Cares Foundation, Document Women, Partners West Africa Nigeria, and the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, are cited in accordance with the disclosure policies of each respective organization; this dissertation does not reprint names in individual case-level information from public outputs, even if the producing organization has included them, to protect the privacy of survivors and their families.

The research seeks to genuinely convey the perspectives and experiences of Nigerian women and gender advocates, refusing a narrative that presents them as passive victims of a failed state. Reflexivity is maintained throughout the analytical process, attending to the ways in which the researcher's own position as an international studies scholar engaging with a complex postcolonial governance context may shape the interpretive framings applied to the data. Should primary empirical research be conducted in any subsequent phase of this project through interviews, focus groups, ethnographic observation, or any other mode of direct human-participant research full ethics committee approval will be sought from the relevant ISCTE institutional review body before the commencement of any data collection involving human participants, in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the institution and the relevant professional associations.

4.7 Findings: Systematic Thematic Analysis of the Documentary Corpus

This section presents the findings of the systematic coded thematic analysis described in Section 4.5. The findings are organised under the ten themes that emerged from the coding process and are presented here in advance of the analytical discussion advanced in Chapter Five. Each thematic finding is reported with reference to the codes and named civil society organisations whose documentary outputs constitute the evidentiary basis. The detailed coding frame, the CSO × Theme matrix, and the underlying Excel workbook are reproduced in Annex C. The findings reported here are intended to demonstrate the patterned, structural character of Nigeria's gender governance failures across multiple institutional and discursive registers they are descriptive in form but analytic in their implications, providing the empirical foundation for the WPR-informed discussion that follows.

4.7.1 Theme 1 Legislative Coverage and the Vertical Implementation Gap

Analysis of Theme 1 (codes C01-C04) also shows a clear trend; the difference in implementation between federal legislative success and state operational methods is the most frequently seen outcome across the dataset. Partners West Africa Nigeria's VAPP Tracker (C01) records that thirty-five of thirty-six states had domesticated the VAPP Act by early 2024, with Kano State as the sole hold-out (PWAN, 2024). However, the twelve state assessment by Westminster Foundation for Democracy (C02) shows that formal domestication does not always come with the implementing regulations, dedicated budgets and operational SGBV response infrastructure that would make the Act work on the ground (Westminster Foundation for Democracy [WFD], 2023). Further, the NorthNormal group (C03) materials show that in Kano, where the VAPP Act has not been domesticated, the large caseload of GBV has continued to be prosecuted under the residual provisions of the colonial-era Penal Code (allAfrica, 2024). Tribune Online's reporting (C04) captures the cultural-political framing of religious opposition to specific VAPP provisions particularly those addressing FGM, widowhood practices, and harmful traditional practices that has slowed domestication in conservative jurisdictions. The findings under Theme 1 are intended to demonstrate that the Nigerian gender governance failure is not primarily a problem of legislative under-coverage but rather a problem of stratified, jurisdictionally fragmented implementation.

The internal heterogeneity within the broad category of 'domesticated' states is itself a finding of analytical significance. The Borno State VAPP Act, domesticated in 2022 in the intentionally amended version to reflect cultural and traditional norms, is an example of how the formal naming of domestication can mask substantive difference in the protective scope of state legislation. Civil society analysis of the Borno modification, tagged as code C32, has mapped out particular clauses where the substantive scope of the federal Act has been narrowed at the state level, to the detriment of the protection of displaced women living in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and host communities. Similar inconsistencies are also visible across various state legislations: variances in consent definitions, evidential standards for sexual offenses, protection orders, and criminal codes. The much-publicized figure of thirty-five states hides enormous differences in the legal protections offered to a Nigerian woman, depending on where she lives.

4.7.2 Theme 2 Enforcement Failures and Institutional Cultures

Theme 2 coding (codes C05-C09) reveals a consistent pattern in the civil society corpus that GBV laws are consistently undermined in their enforcement by the institutional cultures of the legal, prosecution, and law enforcement systems and the ongoing lack of funding for the formal SGBV response framework. The most extensive research by a Nigerian author on how the patriarchal institutional culture of frontline implementers negates the essential provisions of the Act is the 2025 report of the Center for Family Health Initiative (CFHI, 2025). Police tend to see domestic violence as a private family affair and survivors are often urged to make peace with their abusers. Conviction-rate attrition analysis (C06) and annual reports of the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (C07) (Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency [LSDSVA], 2024) indicate that the journey of a survivor, from initial report to final case resolution, is characterized by numerous attrition points, even in Nigeria's most resource-endowed state. Service-provider data from the Mirabel Centre (C08) and advocacy briefs from Stand to End Rape Initiative (C09) corroborate the chronic capacity shortfall of the state response infrastructure: where civil society organisations have stepped in to provide survivor services, they have done so as a substitute for, rather than a supplement to, what the state ought to be providing.

The CFHI study's documentation of the survivor pathway warrants further attention because it identifies the specific institutional decision-points at which the formal protection of the VAPP Act may be effectively withdrawn through routine institutional practice. At the initial-report stage, frontline police officers operate substantial discretion over whether a complaint is recorded as a criminal matter or referred for informal mediation; the CFHI documentation indicates that informal mediation referral is the modal outcome in many divisional offices, with the consequence that the case never enters the formal investigative pathway. At the evidence-collection stage, the absence of dedicated SGBV response infrastructure in many states means that survivors are required to access medical examination and forensic evidence collection through general health-service pathways that were not designed for the time-sensitive requirements of sexual offence cases; the consequence is that critical evidence is often lost before formal charges can be brought. In the prosecutorial phase, the state prosecutorial offices have a broad latitude in determining which charges to bring and which particular offenses to charge. The CFHI documentation shows a pattern of under-charging (charging for assault rather than rape; charging for lesser rather than aggravated offenses), with penalties that do not adequately reflect the seriousness of the conduct involved. At the legal tier, evidentiary standards, procedural delays and judicial practices reduce the probability of successful prosecution. STER's advocacy materials show that overall, the rate of cases of GBV that result in successful prosecution is low, with great variation across the states.

4.7.3 Theme 3 Femicide and the Documentation of Gendered Killings

Coding under Theme 3 (codes C10–C13) highlights a striking finding with significant analytical implications. The Nigerian state does not maintain a national femicide registry; the most comprehensive documentation of the killing of women and girls in Nigeria is produced by civil society organisations operating as compensatory counter-knowledge actors. The DOHS Cares Foundation's femicide tracker (C10) documents 133 confirmed femicides in 2024 alone, with similar magnitudes in the preceding two years (DOHS Cares Foundation, 2024). Document Women's One-Year Report on Femicide (C11) ranks Nigeria fifth globally on documented femicide cases for the period July 2023 to June 2024 (Document Women,

2024). Naija Feminist Media's coverage (C12) and CDD West Africa's policy framing (C13) provide further corroborating evidence and identify the absence of a femicide-specific offence in the Penal/Criminal Code as a concrete legislative-reform target (CDD West Africa, 2025). The finding under Theme 3 that civil society monitoring substantially compensates for the absence of state data infrastructure is methodologically and politically significant: it is intended to demonstrate that what is officially measured (or not measured) is itself a constitutive dimension of policy.

4.7.4 Theme 4 Harmful Practices: FGM, Child Marriage, and Widowhood

Coding under Theme 4 (codes C14–C16) documents the geographic concentration and cyclical reproduction of harmful practices. The countrywide prevalence of FGM amongst women age 15-49 years is 19.5 per cent (UNFPA Nigeria FGM Country Snapshot, C14) which is a drop from previous survey rounds yet the high incidence of FGM still persists in the southern regions. It also points to a worrying trend of medicalisation with health staff making up 8.6% of cuts on adults and 7.1% on girls. UNICEF's State of Nigeria's Children: 2024 Updated Situation Analysis (C15) documents a national child marriage rate of 33.4 percent, rising to approximately fifty percent in the North-East and North-West geopolitical zones, with the median age at first marriage for girls with no education at 16.6 years (UNICEF, 2024b). 28 Too Many's 2023 Country Profile Update (C16) provides independent verification with sub-national breakdown (28 Too Many, 2023). The findings under Theme 4 are intended to demonstrate that harmful practices are not residual cultural phenomena fading under the pressure of legal reform but are reproduced through the intersection of educational deprivation, early marriage, religious authority, and economic marginalisation a structural reproduction that legal prohibition alone cannot reverse.

4.7.5 Theme 5 Women's Political Representation and Quota Politics

Coding under Theme 5 (codes C17–C21) yields what is arguably the most striking single quantitative finding of the dissertation. The Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parline data (C17) records that, following the 2023 elections, women hold approximately 2.8 percent of seats in the Nigerian Senate and approximately 3.9 percent of seats in the House of Representatives, placing Nigeria 178th of 182 countries globally on women's parliamentary representation (IPU, 2024a, 2024b). Africa Renewal's 2024 review (C21) records that the Nigerian Senate is the only African upper chamber to have recorded a decline in women's representation in the 2023 election cycle. PLAC's tracking of HB 1349 (the Bill for Special Legislative Seats for

Women, C18) documents the trajectory of the principal structural reform proposal currently before the National Assembly. The Carnegie Endowment's analysis (C19) and The Republic's longitudinal review (C20) further document the constellation of structural barriers party gatekeeping practices, financial entry costs, election scheduling, campaign violence, and online and offline harassment of women candidates that produce this representational deficit. The findings under Theme 5 are intended to demonstrate that Nigeria's representational deficit is not a transient outcome of particular electoral cycles but a structurally reproduced pattern that is unlikely to be reversed without targeted constitutional or legislative quota mechanisms.

The qualitative dimension of women's political under-representation is documented through the cluster of barriers identified by the Carnegie Endowment and corroborated by Nigerian civil society reporting. Women candidates face elevated party-nomination fees disproportionate to those imposed on men, scheduling of party primaries at hours and venues that disadvantage candidates with caregiving responsibilities, and informal exclusion from the party-internal networks within which candidate slates are negotiated. Campaign costs in Nigerian elections already among the highest in West Africa function as a structural filter that disadvantages women candidates, who in aggregate command lower personal capital and weaker access to corporate sponsorship. Online and offline campaign harassment, documented in the V-Dem index and in the Afrobarometer attitudinal data, further raises the personal cost of political candidacy for Nigerian women. The aggregate effect is that the small number of women who do reach the National Assembly and state assemblies are typically those with extraordinary personal resources or with elite political-family connections a profile that itself shapes the substantive priorities of women's representation in ways that civil society analyses have begun to interrogate.

4.7.6 Theme 6 Educational Deprivation and the Gendered Geography of Opportunity

Coding under Theme 6 (codes C22–C24) documents the educational dimension of Nigeria's gender governance failure. There are an estimated 7.6 million girls out of school in Nigeria and half of the females out of school are from the northern geopolitical zones, said UNICEF Nigeria (C22). Female primary net attendance rate is 47.7 per cent for the North-East and 47.3 per cent for the North-West and much higher in the south (UNICEF, 2022, 2024b). For instance, the 2025 synthesis by Marie Claire Nigeria references data from the Centre for Girl Child Education (C23) that reveals the rates of secondary completion

declining to four percent in some northern states.. World Bank reporting on the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment programme (C24) demonstrates that targeted, well-funded interventions can deliver measurable gender-parity gains at scale across eighteen states (Reliefweb, 2023). The finding under Theme 6 is intended to demonstrate that educational deprivation is the principal reproductive mechanism of gender inequality across generations: girls who are out of school are more likely to be married early, to bear children before adulthood, and to remain in conditions of economic dependence that structurally limit their capacity to leave abusive relationships.

4.7.7 Theme 7 Public Attitudes and the Social Substrate

Coding under Theme 7 (codes C25–C27) documents the social-political substrate within which gender legislation must operate. According to Afrobarometer Round 9 (C25), only 53 percent of Nigerians believe women should have the right to paid labor, and only 51 percent believe women should have land rights, well below the equivalent levels in similar countries on the continent (Afrobarometer, 2022). The dissertation window is a research of Nigeria on civil rights, civil society engagement and descriptive representation (V-Dem, 2024) in the V-Dem Women's Political Empowerment Index (C26). The Nigeria Men and Gender Equality Survey (NiMAGES, C27), produced by Voices for Change Nigeria, documents extensive male endorsement of patriarchal household authority and conditional acceptance of intimate partner violence (Voices for Change, 2015). The findings under Theme 7 are intended to demonstrate that Nigerian gender legislation operates in a discursive environment in which substantive equality is contested by a substantial minority of the population a finding with direct implications for the political economy of legislative reform and for the design of community-level interventions.

4.7.8 Theme 8 Economic Marginalisation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting

Coding under Theme 8 (codes C28–C30) documents the fiscal dimension of Nigeria's gender governance failure. The Development Research and Projects Centre's gender-responsive budgeting analyses (C28) document that allocations to Women's Economic Empowerment have ranged from 0.77 to 1.82 percent of the federal capital budget across 2019–2023, with 0.98 percent in the proposed 2025 budget (DRPC, 2025). Similarly, the Development Research and Projects Centre (C28) gender response budgeting research found that allocations to Women's Economic Empowerment have ranged from 0.77 to 1.82 per cent of the federal capital budget for 2019-2023 and 0.98 per cent in the projected 2025 budget

(DRPC, 2025). For example, ActionAid Nigeria's (2024) in-depth analysis on Nigeria's Voluntary National Reviews (C29) points out several times the inconsistencies between Nigeria's own reports on the SDGs and actual gender-related results. WRAPA's policy briefs on women's land and economic rights (C30) document the persistence of customary inheritance practices that systematically disadvantage women in property and land rights, even where statutory reform has nominally extended equality. The finding under Theme 8 is intended to demonstrate that the substantive realisation of gender equality requires fiscal commitment as much as legislative commitment a dimension that has been notably under-prioritised in Nigeria's gender governance to date.

The fiscal pattern is reinforced by the structural under-funding of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development itself. The Ministry's recurrent and capital allocations across successive federal budget cycles have consistently positioned it among the most under-resourced ministries in the federal cabinet, with the result that even where progressive policy direction is articulated at the ministerial level, the operational capacity to implement that direction across the country's thirty-six states is structurally inadequate. The cyclical character of the Ministry's under-funding with each successive administration reproducing rather than reforming the inherited fiscal position is intelligible as a function of the political marginality of gender governance within the federal cabinet, a marginality that the structural-representational findings under Theme 5 directly illuminate.

4.7.9 Theme 9 Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Displacement

Coding under Theme 9 (codes C31–C33) documents the conflict and displacement dimension of GBV in Nigeria, particularly in the North-East. Research by Amnesty International (C31) on abuse against women in Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2021) shows the pattern of conflict-related sexual abuse by state and non-state armed groups and the insufficient institutional responsiveness towards survivors. HumAngle's C32 study explores the trade-offs of modified versions of northern VAPP and consequences for security of displaced women. (HumAngle. 2022). UNICEF's reporting on out-of-school children in the North-East (C33) quantifies the scale of insurgency-related disruption to girls' education and protection. The findings under Theme 9 are intended to demonstrate that GBV in conflict-affected and displacement contexts requires distinct institutional responses that Nigeria's principal GBV legislative framework designed primarily for non-conflict settings has not been adapted to deliver.

4.7.10 Theme 10 Legal Pluralism and Constitutional Carve-Outs

Coding under Theme 10 (codes C34–C36) documents the legal-pluralist dimension of Nigeria's gender governance, which mediates virtually every other thematic dimension. The CEDAW Committee's most recent Concluding Observations on Nigeria (C34) document Nigeria's persistent failure to domesticate CEDAW under Section 12 of the Constitution, despite ratification in 1985 (CEDAW Committee, 2017). The Republic's examination of the 2024 repeal-and-reenact bill (C35) (The Republic, 2024) provides an illustration of the precarity of the substantive provisions of the VAPP Act in a hostile political context. Evidence of the nego-feminist engagement of religious and traditional authority (EVA Nigeria, 2024) may be seen in EVA Nigeria's documentation of community level engagement strategies (C36). The finding under Theme 10 is intended to demonstrate that the constitutional architecture itself particularly Section 42(3)'s preservation of personal law from gender-equality scrutiny is a structural impediment to substantive gender governance, and that any comprehensive reform agenda must engage the constitutional dimension alongside the statutory and institutional dimensions.

4.7.11 Cross-Theme Patterns and Implications for Discussion

The systematic thematic analysis yielded three main topics. The most common theme at the initial stage is the gap between formal commitments and practical action, as reflected in legislative reporting versus implementation, international ratification versus local adoption, and declared budget priorities versus actual funding allocation. Second, civil society documentation has compensated systematically for state data deficits, particularly on femicide, on enforcement attrition, and on regional disparities; the analytical implication is that civil society is not merely an advocacy actor but a constitutive component of the country's gender data infrastructure. Third, the structural dimensions of GBV educational deprivation, economic marginalisation, attitudinal substrate, legal pluralism are interlocking rather than discrete, such that legal reform isolated from educational, economic, and constitutional reform is structurally insufficient. These cross-theme patterns are interpreted analytically in Chapter Five, which advances the dissertation's central argument concerning the stratified policy/practice gap and its implications for Nigeria's pursuit of SDG 5.

5. Discussion: The Stratified Policy/Practice Gap in Nigerian Gender Governance

5.1 From Findings to Discussion: Orientation

This chapter interprets the systematic thematic findings presented in Section 4.7 through the analytical apparatus assembled in Chapter Two. The findings are not, in this chapter, represented descriptively; rather, they are read through the WPR analytical questions, the feminist institutionalist framework, the concept of hegemonic masculinity, and the postcolonial feminist critique of legal transplantation. The argument advanced through the chapter is that Nigeria's gender governance failure is not adequately understood as a deficit of formal legal commitment, nor as a transient implementation lag, nor as a residual cultural problem destined to fade under modernising pressure. It is best understood as a stratified policy/practice gap in which formal legislative commitments and operational realities are systematically disconnected across multiple institutional registers, vertical (federal/state), horizontal (cross-institutional), constitutional (statutory/customary/religious), and discursive (problem representation). The findings are intended to demonstrate that gender governance in Nigeria operates through patterned disconnects that reproduce themselves through institutional and discursive mechanisms rather than through the absence of formal law.

5.2 The Stratified Policy/Practice Gap: Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions

The vertical dimension of the policy/practice gap, documented under Theme 1 of the findings, is the one most readily visible in the public discourse on Nigerian gender governance. The common depiction in advocacy documents of the trend of state-specific VAPP Act implementation as a significant milestone, with thirty-five states having formally adopted it by early 2024 and Kano the only holdout, suggests that national legislative coverage is almost complete. This research's results contradict such interpretation. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy's twelve-state assessment is intended to demonstrate that formal domestication is not in itself evidence of operational gender protection: implementing regulations, dedicated state-level budgets, and operational SGBV response infrastructure are absent or fragmentary in the majority of states, including in many that have formally domesticated the Act. The vertical gap is, in this sense, double-stratified: there is a gap between federal enactment and state domestication, and a further gap between state

domestication and state implementation. The headline domestication figure obscures the second of these gaps, with the analytical effect of producing an overly optimistic reading of legislative achievement.

The horizontal dimension of the gap is documented under Theme 2 and is, in many respects, more analytically significant. The horizontal gap is the disjuncture between formal statutory commitment and the institutional cultures of the police, prosecutorial, judicial, and social-service institutions charged with implementing it. The Centre for Family Health Initiative's documentation, supported by the corroborative reporting of the Mirabel Centre and Stand to End Rape Initiative, is intended to demonstrate that GBV survivors confront a sequence of institutional decision-points: initial police report, evidence collection, charge decision, prosecutorial pursuit, judicial proceeding, at each of which the formal protection of the VAPP Act may be effectively withdrawn through the discretion of frontline officials operating within institutional cultures that reproduce patriarchal norms. The result is a survivor pathway characterised by attrition: the proportion of cases that begin with a formal report and end with a successful conviction is small, and even formally successful prosecutions often produce sentences that do not adequately reflect the gravity of the offence.

These vertical and horizontal dimensions intersect to produce a layered model of effective gender safeguarding that varies greatly across geographic and institutional contexts. The formal VAPP structure in Lagos State is backed up by a specialized Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, a strong civil society network, and a judicial system that is open to reform. Therefore, the protection of survivors has been much better than in the northern states, where the formal structure exists but the necessary institutional support is either incomplete or missing. (Source: Gender Based Violence in Nigeria) Nigeria's national data on gender based violence hides huge regional differences. The reality is that a woman's access to protection depends on where she lives, the institutional set-up of her state, and the attitudes of the officials she comes across. The implications for SDG 5 are profound. Success metrics must be disaggregated below the national level to accurately capture the experiences of Nigerian women on GBV.

The temporal dimension of the stratified inequality also deserves attention. Since 2015, more and more states have signed onto the Act, narrowing the gap between federal law and

state adoption considerably; nonetheless, the gap between formal adoption and actual implementation has not improved. This temporal imbalance is analytically important. It suggests that the political-symbolic dimensions of legislative reporting are more easily fulfilled than the institutional and financial dimensions of operational execution. It also suggests that the main measures used to assess Nigeria's gender governance progress reflect the more readily available political-symbolic dimension, while concealing the slowly evolving institutional dimension. The period between 2015 and the present day provides a stark example of this. During this period, Nigeria has increased its state VAPP Act implementation from one to thirty-five, a fortyfold increase, but the operational data on case attrition, conviction rates and survivor service access have not progressed in a similar way. The implication for the accountability framework of SDG 5 is that the choice of indicators shapes the perceived trajectory of progress. Nigeria's better performance on coverage indicators than operational effectiveness indicators is not coincidental but is determined by the different political economy of these two sets of indicators.

Special attention deserves the judicial dimension of the horizontal discrepancy. Nigerian civil society organizations have documented that sexual crime cases that are brought before the formal justice system suffer from a persistent pattern of procedural delays, evidentiary impediments, and judicial standards that tend to favor the accounts of male accused persons over the accounts of female complainants. The annual report of the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (reference C07) states that the time frame for the average case of gender-based violence, from indictment to judgment, in Lagos is more than eighteen months, even in specialized divisions of the court that are established to deal with such cases expeditiously; the time frame is longer in jurisdictions without such specialized facilities and the attrition rate is higher. The judicial element is another institutional layer where statutory protection of the VAPP Act can be systematically annulled through customary institutional procedures. The reform agenda should, therefore, focus on judicial ethos and specialized court facilities for institutional transformation.

5.3 The Institutional Culture Problem: Feminist Institutionalism

Applied

The cross-sectional dimension of the discrepancy needs an institutional explanation and the feminist institutionalist framework presented in Section 2.1 is the most relevant analytical tool for this purpose. The findings on Themes 2 and 5 on enforcement deficiencies and women's political representation are generally meant to demonstrate that Nigerian state institutions are not neutral bureaucratic bodies that mechanically implement statutory provisions but are gendered institutions that are shaped by informal norms, discretionary practices and demographic composition that influence the practical implementation of law. Three organizational dynamics deserve special scrutiny.

First, the demographic composition of the National Assembly (women comprise 2.8 percent of the Senate and 3.9 percent of the House of Representatives after the 2023 elections) is far below Dahlerup's critical-mass threshold. This is not only a lack of description; it carries with it substantial structural consequences. From a feminist institutionalist perspective, the repeated rejection of gender legislation highlighted in Theme 5, such as the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill (rejected in 2016) and the five gender bills defeated in 2022, is a structural outcome that is to be expected rather than an accidental outcome of the beliefs of individual senators. In legislative chambers where women constitute less than four percent of the membership, the institutional culture is largely male-centric, making gender-related legislation inherently vulnerable to defeat. Institutional response to this dynamic is the introduction of structural quota systems, and the advancement of HB 1349 is the most important signpost for the institutional feasibility of this transition.

Secondly, patriarchal standards are reproduced in the institutional cultures of law enforcement, prosecution and justice not via the conscious choices of individual officials but through the normal operation of institutional processes. A police culture that commonly understands domestic violence as a private matter for the family is not simply the product of individual misogynist police officers, but an institutional pattern that is solidified through training, supervision, evaluation of work, expectations of peers, and the symbolic design of the police station. The results linked to Theme 2 seek to establish that institutional culture is the proximal factor causing survivor pathway attrition and that any reform initiative to close

the horizontal gap needs to take place at the level of institutional culture, as opposed to merely concentrating on officer training or formal policy amendments.

Thirdly, the institutional aspect is the executive branch. The continuing underfunding of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development as observed during the period of the dissertation exposes the political irrelevance of gender governance in the federal cabinet. A symbolically important but financially peripheral ministry will not generate the bureaucratic momentum required for cross-sectoral implementation. The most conclusive evidence of this institutional marginalization are the financial figures recorded in Theme 8 on the Women's Economic Empowerment, which budget a range of between 0.77 and 1.82 percent of the federal capital budget. The continuity of this marginalization across the different administrations is meant to show that this marginalization is systemic and not political.

The attention to the relationship of formal authority and informal influence in Nigerian government institutions enhances the study of institutions. Waylen's (2014) distinction between formal and informal institutional regulations is relevant: the formal mandate of the VAPP Act criminalizes domestic violence, but the informal institutional norms within police divisions, unwritten standards of how to treat the seriousness of complaints, the credibility of complainants, and the cases that should receive investigative resources (operate simultaneously and often in contradiction to the formal mandate). Where the formal and informal institutional rules diverge, the informal rules typically prevail at the operational level, with the result that the formal protection of the Act is effectively withdrawn through routine institutional practice rather than through any explicit institutional decision. This is the institutional dynamic that the survivor-pathway data documented under Theme 2 records empirically and that the feminist institutionalist framework explains theoretically.

The implication for institutional reform design is significant. Reform agendas that operate at the level of formal institutional rules additional training, revised procedures, expanded statutory provisions will not adequately address institutional outcomes that are produced primarily by informal institutional rules. Effective reform must engage the informal institutional dimension: the routines, the symbolic geography of the police station, the peer-

evaluation criteria within the institution, the career-incentive structure that determines which kinds of cases generate professional credit and which do not. The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, documented under code C07, illustrates a partial institutional model a dedicated agency with its own personnel, budget, and case-handling procedures that addresses some of these dimensions, though even the LSDSVA operates within a wider institutional environment that has not been comparably reformed. The replication of the LSDSVA model in other states, identified as a recommendation in Section 6.3, would extend the institutional reform but would not, on its own, achieve the wider institutional culture change that the analysis advanced here suggests is required.

5.4 Hegemonic Masculinity and the Social Politics of Resistance

The findings under Themes 4, 7, and 9 are best interpreted through Connell's framework of hegemonic masculinity as developed in Section 2.2. The persistence of harmful practices including FGM, child marriage, and harmful widowhood rituals (Theme 4); the attitudinal data documenting male endorsement of patriarchal household authority and conditional acceptance of intimate partner violence (Theme 7); and the patterns of conflict-related sexual violence in the North-East (Theme 9) are not analytically separate phenomena. They are symptoms of a distinctive core structure in which male status is defined by the domination of women and girls through marriage, sexual entitlement, restrictions on mobility and the enforcement of gender rules throughout interrelated social domains.

Theme 4 illustrates the geographical expression of hegemonic masculinity with the spatial concentration of harmful practices in northern Nigeria. In this context, Ratele's analysis of African masculinities, affected by patriarchal practices, colonial history and present economic instability, is relevant: in zones of economic disenfranchisement, fragile administrative systems and hegemonic religious and traditional authority, masculine identity is intrinsically linked to the subjugation of women, and the abolition of harmful practices looks, from this perspective, like a threat to social stability rather than an effort toward human rights activism. The objective of legal change has often been presented by religious and traditional leaders as a foreign imposition threatening cultural and religious independence. Connell and Ratele argue that this reading is not arbitrary or utilitarian but rather points to the intrinsic relationship between masculinity and patriarchal authority in the context of economic and institutional instability.

The attitudinal data under Theme 7, particularly the NiMAGES findings on male endorsement of patriarchal household authority, supports a discussion-level interpretation that places the social politics of GBV at the centre of the analytical frame. Fifty-three percent endorsement of women's right to a paying job, while a numerical majority, is far below the corresponding figures in continental peer countries and represents a substantial minority position contesting basic dimensions of women's substantive equality. The implication for the WPR analysis is significant: in Nigeria, the formal-legal commitment to women's equality coexists with a substantial discursive contestation of the underlying premise. Legislation operates not in a normative vacuum but in a contested social-political field, and the effective meaning of any formal legal commitment is shaped by ongoing political-discursive struggle over the legitimacy of women's substantive equality. This is the analytical content of the phrase 'social politics of gender-based violence' in the dissertation's title.

Within Theme 9, the element of conflict adds another shade. Sexual violence in conflict is more than increased gender-based violence in times of state failure, it is a distinct expression of male domination, used as a tool of war, social oppression and the assertion of one male group over another. The findings on the North-East, drawing on Amnesty International's documentation and HumAngle's reporting on modified VAPP versions in Borno, are intended to demonstrate that the conflict-affected jurisdictions present specific institutional challenges that the standard VAPP architecture is not designed to address. The Maputo Protocol's specific provisions on women's rights in conflict are directly relevant here, and Nigeria's incomplete domestication of the Protocol is intended to demonstrate the international-law dimension of the institutional gap.

5.5 Postcolonial Governance and the Limits of Legal Transplantation

The findings under Themes 1, 4, and 10 on the differential domestication of the VAPP Act, on the geographic concentration of harmful practices, and on legal pluralism and constitutional carve-outs are best read through the postcolonial feminist framework developed in Section 2.3. The Nigerian gender governance system is the inheritor of a colonial legal architecture in which English common law, codified customary law, and codified Islamic law were arranged into a pluralist hierarchy by the colonial administration. The post-independence

Nigerian state has progressively, if incompletely, sought to reform this inherited architecture, but the constitutional preservation of personal-law matters under Section 42(3) of the 1999 Constitution maintains a structural compromise that limits the reach of constitutional gender-equality scrutiny.

The implications for legal reform are profound. A statutory enactment such as the VAPP Act, operates against a backdrop of constitutional carve-outs, customary legal practices, and religious legal regimes that, in many jurisdictions, govern the everyday relationships in which GBV occurs. Where customary inheritance law disinherits widows, where customary marriage practices recognise child marriage, where Sharia courts apply different evidentiary standards in cases of sexual violence, and where Section 42(3) preserves these regimes from constitutional gender-equality review, the substantive reach of statutory reform is structurally limited. The findings under Theme 10 are intended to demonstrate that any comprehensive reform agenda must engage the constitutional dimension, particularly Section 42(3), and the under-domestication of CEDAW under Section 12 alongside the statutory and institutional dimensions.

Nnaemeka's nego-feminist framework here, articulated at a discussion-level register, indicates a productive analytic perspective. The most successful Nigerian civil society interventions, documented under Themes 4 and 10 (EVA Nigeria's community-level engagement, the Mirabel Centre's clinical-survivor focus, WRAPA's sustained advocacy on women's economic rights) have operated through engagement with traditional and religious authorities rather than against them, treating those authorities as constituent elements of the social environment within which gender reform must operate rather than as obstacles to be overcome. This is not an apology for traditional patriarchal authority but a strategic recognition that the structural reproduction of gender inequality through customary and religious institutions is unlikely to be reversed by frontal legal confrontation alone. The implication for policy reform is that the legislative dimension must be supplemented by community-level, religiously and culturally grounded engagement that operates at the registers in which patriarchal norms are reproduced.

Mohanty's caution against the development-deficit narrative also applies here, at a methodological-discursive register. The temptation, in writing about gender governance in postcolonial states, is to frame the analytical task as the explanation of the gap between

universal gender-equality norms and a deficient national context. This framing reproduces the colonial-developmental discourse in which non-Western societies are positioned as backward and Western liberal frameworks are positioned as the universal norm. The discussion advanced here resists that framing. The argument is not that Nigeria has failed to implement Western gender norms but that Nigeria's gender governance, under the specific historical, constitutional, and institutional conditions of the postcolonial federal state, exhibits patterned disconnects that are intelligible in their own terms. The reform agenda that emerges from this analytical framing is correspondingly different: not the imposition of an external standard, but the reform of the specific institutional and constitutional architecture that produces the patterned disconnects.

Theme 8 (WRAPA's policy papers on women's land and economic rights) describes customary inheritance customs which show how constitutional frameworks interact with cultural and economic elements to create many disadvantages. Where the deceased husband of a widow died intestate, the customary law of her community may prevent her from inheriting land and property. The protection of customary law in the Constitution under Section 42(3) means that this practice cannot be challenged directly under the Constitution. The economic reality is that women leaving abusive relationships are always less able to support themselves and their dependents independently so it can be concluded that the legal protections afforded by the VAPP Act against domestic violence are in effect dependent on having the economic means to leave. The analytical chain, constitutional preservation of customary law, customary inheritance disadvantage, economic dependence, vulnerability to GBV, illustrates how the postcolonial constitutional architecture connects to the operational reality of gender governance through multiple intervening institutional and economic dimensions.

5.6 The WPR Synthesis: Problem Representations and What Is Left Unproblematic

Returning to Bacchi's WPR framework allows the synthesis of the discussion advanced in Sections 5.2–5.5. The first WPR question, what is the problem represented to be?, receives, in the Nigerian gender governance context, a layered answer. Officially, the problem of GBV is represented as a behavioural problem of individual perpetrators, addressable through the criminal-law architecture of the VAPP Act, the social-services infrastructure (where it exists),

and public awareness campaigns. This representation is intended to demonstrate the seriousness of the state's commitment but also operates to circumscribe the policy-relevant terrain. By framing GBV as a behavioural problem, the official representation foregrounds individual prosecution and excludes from the policy-relevant terrain the structural and institutional conditions under which GBV is reproduced including patriarchal institutional cultures, women's political under-representation, the educational and economic marginalisation of girls, and the constitutional architecture that preserves personal-law matters from gender-equality scrutiny.

The second and third WPR questions, what presuppositions underlie this representation, and how has it come about?, invite analytical engagement with the political and discursive conditions of the dominant problem representation. The behavioural-individualist framing presupposes a sharp separation of the legal-criminal domain from the cultural and social domain a separation that, on the evidence presented in Section 4.7, is structurally untenable. It also presupposes the operational adequacy of the existing institutional architecture (police, prosecutorial, judicial, social-services) a presupposition the findings under Theme 2 directly contradict. Historically, this representation has been shaped by the political compromises required to secure the VAPP Act's passage, by the structural marginality of gender governance within the federal cabinet, and by the institutional preferences of the international development partners (UN agencies, donors) whose framing has informed Nigeria's adoption of the SDG indicator architecture.

The fourth WPR question, what is left unproblematic in this representation?, is, for the purposes of this dissertation, the analytically generative question. What is left unproblematic in the dominant Nigerian representation of GBV is the institutional architecture itself, the constitutional architecture itself, the demographic composition of the legislative chambers, the fiscal allocation of state resources, and the social-political substrate of attitudes and norms. The findings of this study are intended to demonstrate that all of these dimensions are constitutive of GBV outcomes and, accordingly, must be made problematic that is, must be brought within the policy-relevant terrain if substantive progress on gender governance is to be achieved. The reform agenda articulated in Chapter Six is structured around this analytical conclusion.

The fifth WPR question, what effects are produced by this representation?, receives a multi-layered answer at this discussion-level register. The dominant representation produces,

first, an under-allocation of state resources to GBV response infrastructure, since the framing of GBV as a behavioural problem locates the policy response primarily in the criminal-law architecture rather than in the cross-sectoral institutional reform that the structural analysis would imply. It produces, second, a survivor experience of formal protection without substantive support, in which survivors who navigate the formal pathway of report, prosecution, and adjudication encounter a sequence of attrition points that effectively withdraw the protection that the law nominally provides. It produces, third, a discursive marginalisation of structural reform proposals including quota mechanisms, gender-responsive budgeting, and constitutional reform that fall outside the criminal-law framing of the dominant representation. The sixth WPR question, how and where has this representation been produced, disseminated, and defended?, connects the analytical work of this dissertation back to the political dynamics interrogated in Section 5.3, in which the representational effects of the institutional architecture are themselves intended to be demonstrated as a structurally reproduced pattern.

The cumulative analytical move accomplished by the WPR-informed reading of the Nigerian gender governance system is to denaturalise the prevailing problem representation and to bring within the policy-relevant terrain the structural dimensions that the prevailing representation has placed outside it. This denaturalisation is the principal contribution of the WPR framework to the discussion advanced here, and it is methodologically and politically consequential. Methodologically, it shifts the analytical focus from the question of why the existing policy instruments have failed to produce the intended outcomes to the prior question of why the existing policy instruments take the form that they do a shift that opens for analytical scrutiny the political-discursive processes through which the dominant representation has been constructed and maintained. Politically, it locates reform possibility not solely in improved implementation of the existing instruments but also in contestation of the dominant representation itself that is, in the political-discursive work of bringing the structural dimensions into the policy-relevant terrain.

The named civil society organisations whose documentation underpins this study are themselves engaged in this political-discursive work. WRAPA's two-decade advocacy on women's economic and land rights has, over time, brought the economic dimension of gender equality into more explicit policy discussion than was the case in the 1990s; CFHI's recent institutional barriers analysis has brought the institutional culture dimension into more explicit policy discussion than was the case in the early VAPP-Act period; the femicide

tracking by DOHS Cares and Document Women has constructed femicide as a policy-relevant category in Nigerian discourse where it had previously been subsumed under generic categories of homicide or domestic violence. The cumulative effect of this civil society work is to expand the policy-relevant terrain in ways that the WPR analytical framework allows us to recognise as politically and discursively significant. The reform agenda articulated in Section 6.3 builds explicitly on this cumulative civil society work, treating its expansion of the policy-relevant terrain as analytically and politically presupposed rather than as a separate object of advocacy.

5.7 SDG 5 and the International Gender Accountability Architecture

The findings of this dissertation have direct implications for Nigeria's progress toward SDG 5 and for the broader international gender accountability architecture. UN Women's 2023 Gender Snapshot halfway review shows that none of the individual SDG 5 targets are on track to be met globally by 2030 and Nigeria is among the lowest performers globally. In Section 4.7 we give findings on the structural dimensions of this shortcoming. Target 5.1 (the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls) is undermined by the constitutional carve-outs documented under Theme 10. Target 5.2 (the elimination of violence against women and girls) is undermined by the institutional culture problem documented under Theme 2. Target 5.3 (the elimination of harmful practices) is undermined by the structural reproduction of harmful practices documented under Theme 4 and the partial state-level domestication of relevant legislation documented under Theme 1. Target 5.5 (women's full and effective participation in political and economic decision-making) is undermined by the representational deficit documented under Theme 5 and the fiscal marginalisation documented under Theme 8.

The implication is that Nigeria's underperformance on SDG 5 is not a transient lag in implementation that will resolve under steady current policy direction; it is a structural outcome of the architecture documented across the ten themes. The discussion advanced here is therefore intended to demonstrate that the SDG accountability architecture is itself analytically inadequate where it operates at the level of national aggregate indicators without attention to the sub-national, institutional, and constitutional dimensions of the underlying gender governance system. UN Women's call for accelerated action toward 2030 will be empty unless the structural dimensions documented here are made the explicit object of the reform agenda.

The international gender accountability architecture is itself implicated. CEDAW's Concluding Observations to Nigeria have repeatedly identified the need for nationwide VAPP Act domestication, for measures to address child marriage and FGM, and for the strengthening of institutions for gender justice; yet the structural mechanisms for translating those observations into binding domestic action remain weak. The persistent failure of Nigeria to submit periodic CEDAW reports on time and the limited domestic legal force of international treaties not incorporated into domestic law as provided for in Section 12 of the Constitution, demonstrates the limitations of an accountability framework that relies on state self-reporting and lacks the constitutional basis for direct domestic enforcement. Thus the reform strategy in Chapter Six encompasses the global and the national dimension.

The global accountability dimension also intersects with internal political dynamics in ways that the dissertation's findings illustrate. International development partners the UN system, the World Bank, bilateral donors have consistently identified Nigeria as a priority country for gender programming, channelling substantial resources through both governmental and civil society implementing partners. The findings of this study are intended to demonstrate that this resource flow has not been adequately calibrated to the structural dimensions of Nigeria's gender governance failure. Programming has tended to fund advocacy, training, and pilot interventions rather than the institutional, fiscal, and constitutional reforms that the structural analysis identifies as the binding constraints on substantive progress. The implication is not that international resources should be withdrawn but that their allocation should be re-calibrated to the structural reform agenda supporting institutional culture change in the police and judicial services, financing the state-level infrastructure required to make domesticated VAPP Acts operational, and underwriting the political-coalition work required to advance constitutional reform. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy's twelve-state assessment, drawn upon under code C02, illustrates the kind of substantive structural analysis that international support can productively underwrite when it is directed toward the binding constraints rather than toward continuation of the existing programmatic patterns.

5.8 Comparative Perspectives and Implications

The discourse in this chapter has implications beyond the Nigerian context, as seen in the comparative African literature discussed in Section 2.6. The examples of Rwanda, South

Africa and Senegal show, in different ways, that the systematic gap between formal commitments and practical implementation is not inevitable; it is the result of specific institutional, political and socio-cultural configurations that differ from country to country. The Rwandan example demonstrates that a constitutional promise of gender equality, reinforced via institutional rebuilding after conflict, can result in considerable representation gains, which is crucial to substantive gender legislation. The Senegalese case shows that gender equality rules, applied to electoral lists, can change the composition of the legislature in a number of political cycles. The South African example shows the significance of committed institutional structures (e.g. Domestic Violence Act 1998 and the Commission for Gender Equality), and the limits of legal reform without cultural and economic transformation.

The Nigerian scenario differs in certain respects from each of these. The federal structure produces vertical implementation challenges that the unitary cases do not face; the legal pluralism preserved under Section 42(3) produces constitutional limitations that the more uniformly secular cases do not face; the demographic scale produces operational reach challenges that smaller national contexts do not face; the regional disparities particularly the North/South divide produce sub-national variation that masks meaningful pattern in national aggregate data. The implication is that Nigeria's reform agenda must be tailored to the specific institutional and constitutional architecture of the Nigerian federal state, rather than transplanted from comparator contexts whose structural conditions differ. The findings are intended to demonstrate that the analytical work of identifying which institutional and constitutional reforms would be effective in the Nigerian case is itself a substantive contribution to the comparative literature.

The discussion advanced in this chapter is also intended to demonstrate the analytical value of the integrated theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two. Feminist institutionalism alone could not adequately explain the geographic and constitutional dimensions documented under Themes 1, 4, and 10; postcolonial feminism alone could not adequately explain the institutional culture dimensions documented under Themes 2 and 5; the WPR framework alone could not adequately explain the structural-material dimensions documented under Themes 6 and 8. The integrated framework feminist institutionalism applied to the institutional dimensions, postcolonial feminism applied to the constitutional and customary dimensions, hegemonic masculinity applied to the social-discursive dimensions, and the WPR framework providing the synthesising analytical method is, on the evidence of

the discussion advanced here, adequate to the complexity of the empirical case in a way that no single theoretical framework would be. This is the dissertation's principal theoretical contribution: not the development of a new framework, but the demonstration that an integrated framework is required for the analytical work of understanding gender governance failure in postcolonial federal states with plural legal systems.

5.9 Cross-Thematic Policy Intersections and the Logic of Reform

The discussion advanced in Sections 5.2–5.8 has interpreted the thematic findings sequentially, attending in turn to the institutional, masculine-cultural, postcolonial, discursive-WPR, international, and comparative dimensions of Nigeria's gender governance. A final analytical move is to attend to the intersections among the themes the points at which the analytically distinct dimensions interact and produce compound effects that no single dimension would predict on its own. Three cross-thematic intersections merit specific attention because they have direct implications for the logic of the reform agenda articulated in Chapter Six.

The first intersection is between educational deprivation (Theme 6), child marriage (Theme 4), and women's political representation (Theme 5). The geographic concentration of out-of-school girls, of child marriage, and of attitudinal contestation of women's substantive equality is not coincidental: it tracks the same regional pattern of weak state infrastructure, religious-traditional authority, and economic marginalisation. Girls who do not complete primary schooling are systematically less likely to acquire the literacy, the numeracy, and the political resources required for political participation in adulthood; women who marry as girls are systematically less likely to develop independent civil-society networks; communities with high concentrations of these patterns systematically produce fewer women candidates for political office and systematically produce electorates with attitudinal patterns less supportive of women's substantive equality. The reproductive cycle is intergenerational: the child marriage of one generation becomes the political marginalisation of the next. The reform implication is that interventions targeting any single dimension girls' education, harmful practices, or political representation will produce limited gains if they are not accompanied by parallel interventions across the other dimensions of the cycle. The Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE) programme model, drawing on the multi-state intervention design documented under Theme 6, illustrates the kind of integrated multi-dimensional approach that the cross-thematic analysis recommends.

The second intersection is between fiscal allocation (Theme 8) and institutional culture (Theme 2). The under-funding of GBV response infrastructure documented through DRPC's gender-responsive budgeting analyses is not analytically separate from the institutional culture of frontline implementers; the two dimensions reinforce one another. A police division that is under-resourced for GBV case investigation cannot effectively investigate even where the institutional culture is reform-oriented; an institutional culture that does not prioritise GBV cases will not generate the internal advocacy required to secure additional fiscal allocation. The compound effect is that the institutional dimension and the fiscal dimension reinforce one another in ways that make either dimension difficult to address in isolation. The implication for reform is that fiscal allocation increases must be accompanied by institutional culture change, and vice versa, with the pacing of the two reform tracks calibrated to ensure that additional fiscal allocation does not simply pass through to existing institutional patterns and that institutional reform is not undermined by chronic under-funding.

The third intersection is between constitutional pluralism (Theme 10) and legislative architecture (Theme 1). Section 42(3) of the Constitution preserves personal-law matters from constitutional gender-equality scrutiny; this preservation is the constitutional foundation on which the differential state-by-state domestication of the VAPP Act rests, since states with strong customary or religious authority structures can rely on the constitutional carve-out to limit the substantive reach of any state-level domestication. The relationship is mutually reinforcing: the constitutional preservation of personal-law matters makes the differential state domestication politically defensible, while the differential state domestication makes the constitutional preservation operationally consequential. The analytical implication is that the legislative reform agenda completing nationwide VAPP Act domestication, securing implementing regulations, reinforcing the substantive provisions has structural limits unless the constitutional dimension is addressed in parallel. This is the analytical case for constitutional review, articulated as a high-priority recommendation in Section 6.3, even where its political viability is recognised to be contested.

The cross-thematic analysis is intended to demonstrate that the reform agenda must be designed as a coordinated, multi-dimensional intervention rather than as a sequence of single-dimension reforms. The conventional policy-implementation framework, which treats institutional reform, legislative reform, fiscal reform, and educational reform as distinct policy

tracks, is structurally inadequate to the analytical reality documented here. Effective reform of Nigerian gender governance requires the simultaneous engagement of multiple dimensions, with attention to the intersections among them. This is the analytical case for the integrated reform agenda articulated in Chapter Six, and it is the principal practical implication of the dissertation's central argument concerning the stratified policy/practice gap.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Answering the Research Questions

This dissertation set out to answer one overarching research question — why do progressive gender policies in Nigeria fail to produce substantive gender equality outcomes, and what are the principal mechanisms of policy incoherence sustaining this failure in relation to SDG 5 implementation — and four subsidiary questions. The overarching conclusion, supported by the systematic thematic analysis of Chapter Four and the discussion of Chapter Five, is that Nigeria's gender governance failure is structurally reproduced through a stratified policy/practice gap operating across vertical, horizontal, constitutional, and discursive registers. Gender-based violence (GBV) is the empirical landscape in which this failure is most concretely visible, and it is the primary lens through which the policy incoherence documented in this dissertation is observed and analysed. The systematic thematic analysis of the documentary corpus presented in Section 4.7, together with the discussion advanced in Chapter Five, supports the following analytically grounded answers.

Regarding the first research question, what inconsistencies exist within Nigeria's gender and GBV policy frameworks, and what are their origins? the evidence is that Nigerian gender policy is characterised by a stratified pattern of inconsistency operating across vertical, horizontal, constitutional, and discursive registers. The vertical inconsistency is the gap between federal enactment and state-level implementation; the horizontal inconsistency is the gap between formal statutory commitment and the institutional cultures of frontline implementers; the constitutional inconsistency is the contradiction between formal anti-discrimination provisions and the personal-law carve-out under Section 42(3); the discursive inconsistency is the gap between the official problem representation of GBV (a behavioural problem of individual perpetrators) and the structural reality (a patterned outcome of institutional, constitutional, and social-political conditions). These inconsistencies originate in the specific political compromises that secured statutory enactment, in the colonial inheritance of the constitutional architecture, in the institutional marginality of gender governance within the federal state, and in the contested social-political substrate within which gender legislation operates.

Regarding the second research question, how do social and political factors shape the implementation and effectiveness of gender policies? the evidence is that the social-political dimension is constitutive rather than supplementary. Patriarchal institutional cultures,

attitudinal contestation of women's substantive equality, the geographic concentration of harmful practices, and the customary and religious legal regimes that govern much of everyday life in Nigeria are not 'context' for the operation of formal law; they are the substrate in which formal law operates and which mediates its effective meaning. The findings under Themes 2, 4, 7, 9, and 10 are jointly intended to demonstrate that any reform agenda that addresses only the formal-legal dimension is structurally incomplete.

Regarding the third research question, in what ways do these factors affect Nigeria's progress toward SDG 5? the evidence presented in Section 5.7 is that Nigeria's underperformance on SDG 5 is a structural outcome of the architecture documented across the ten themes, not a transient implementation lag. Targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.5 are each undermined by specific dimensions of the structural architecture documented in the findings. Acceleration toward the 2030 horizon will require structural reform across the institutional, constitutional, and fiscal dimensions, not merely intensified application of the existing policy instruments.

Regarding the fourth research question, what strategies could strengthen policy coherence and improve gender equality outcomes? the recommendations articulated in Section 6.3 below provide a structured response. The strategy advocated by this dissertation operates across multiple registers: legislative completion (nationwide VAPP Act domestication with implementing regulations), institutional reform (police, prosecutorial, and judicial culture change supported by dedicated SGBV response infrastructure), structural-representational reform (passage of HB 1349 and complementary quota mechanisms), fiscal reform (gender-responsive budgeting with binding allocation thresholds), constitutional reform (review of Section 42(3) and full domestication of CEDAW under Section 12), and community-level engagement (nego-feminist work with religious and traditional authorities).

6.2 Theoretical Contributions

The dissertation makes three theoretical contributions to the literature on gender governance in postcolonial federal states. The first is the demonstration that an integrated theoretical framework combining feminist institutionalism, postcolonial feminism, hegemonic masculinity theory, and Bacchi's WPR analytical method is required to capture the complexity of gender governance failure in contexts characterised by federal structure, legal pluralism, and contested social-political substrate. No single framework, on the evidence assembled here, is adequate to the analytical task.

The second contribution is the development of the concept of the stratified policy/practice gap, articulated across vertical, horizontal, constitutional, and discursive dimensions. The conventional implementation literature treats the policy/practice gap as a single, generalised phenomenon; the analysis presented here is intended to demonstrate that the gap is in fact stratified and operates differently across institutional registers, with corresponding implications for reform design. The stratified-gap concept is offered as a contribution to the comparative governance literature on postcolonial federal states more broadly.

The third contribution is methodological: the demonstration that civil society-derived counter-data, when systematically appraised under Scott's (1990) four criteria and integrated into a coded thematic analysis, can compensate for state data deficits in ways that are analytically and politically significant. The femicide data documented under Theme 3, the survivor-pathway data under Theme 2, and the gender-responsive budgeting analysis under Theme 8 are all dependent on civil society monitoring; the recognition of civil society as a constitutive component of the country's gender data infrastructure is, in itself, a contribution to the literature on documentary research methodology in low-data postcolonial contexts.

6.3 An Agenda for Gender Governance in Nigeria

The recommendations that follow are organised across the registers identified in Section 6.1 and are intended to provide an analytically grounded reform agenda for Nigerian gender governance. They are addressed to the federal and state governments, the National Assembly, the justice system, civil society, and international development partners.

First, on the legislative and constitutional dimension, the highest-priority action is the completion of nationwide VAPP Act domestication, including in Kano State, accompanied in every state by implementing regulations specifying operational procedures, dedicated state-level budgets for SGBV response, and an institutional locus of accountability for implementation. The 2024 repeal-and-reenact bill warrants careful scrutiny to the extent that it may dilute the substantive provisions of the existing Act. The domestication of CEDAW under Section 12 of the Constitution to give the Convention direct domestic legal effect; the Maputo Protocol should be similarly incorporated. A review of Section 42(3) of the Constitution merits serious consideration with a view to bringing personal-law matters within the scope of constitutional gender-equality scrutiny, recognising the political sensitivity of this reform but also its analytical centrality to the structural reform agenda. The case for amending the Penal Code to include a femicide-specific offence is analytically grounded with

appropriately calibrated sentencing, drawing on CDD West Africa's policy framing under Theme 3.

Second, on the institutional dimension, the police, prosecutorial, and judicial services represent priority targets for structural reform aimed at institutional culture change. The reform agenda includes mandatory in-service training on the VAPP Act and on gender-sensitive case handling; performance evaluation criteria that include effective response to GBV cases; the establishment in every state of dedicated SGBV response teams modelled on the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency; and the creation of formal mechanisms for civil society organisations to refer cases and to participate in case oversight. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development should be reconstituted with substantially increased fiscal and political authority, recognising its role as the federal locus for cross-sectoral gender governance.

Third, on the structural-representational dimension, HB 1349 (the Bill for Special Legislative Seats for Women) could be advanced as a priority by the National Assembly. Drawing on the Senegalese and Rwandan comparative experience, complementary quota mechanisms should be considered, including gender parity provisions for political party electoral lists, candidate nomination quotas for state-level elections, and reserved seats for women on local government councils.

Fourthly, on economic concerns, there is need for gender responsive budgeting with defined allocation requirements for Women's Economic Empowerment, the infrastructure addressing SGBV and education of girls. The DRPC's annual evaluation should be included in the federal budgeting process.

Fifth, in the socio-political sphere, it is important to institutionalize continuous collaboration with religious and traditional leaders, using the nego-feminist paradigm suggested by Nnaemeka and adopted by EVA Nigeria, WRAPA and other Nigerian civil society organizations. Well-funded public education campaigns on women's substantive equality that are tailored to the cultural and religious contexts of Nigerian communities should be undertaken. Investing in the education of girls, particularly in the north, is an investment in the long-term basic conditions for true gender equality.

Sixth, on monitoring and accountability, the analytical findings of this dissertation suggest the need for a much stronger gender data framework that can sufficiently capture the sub-national and institutional components that are typically overlooked by national indicators. The National Bureau of Statistics, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and state statistical agencies, should produce and publish quarterly statistics on reporting, progression and conviction outcomes of GBV cases by state and case type. DOHS Cares and Document Women have created a methodology for a national femicide register that should be institutionalized in the Federal Ministry of Health or Office of the Inspector General of Police with legal endorsement and funding. The supervisory role of civil society should be recognized in official terms as a component part of the national gender data system and be supported with continued financial aid to enable the documentation and analysis that has so far been instrumental in correcting the deficiencies in government statistics to a substantial extent.

Seventh, concerning the international participation, there is a need to reorientate Nigeria's engagement with the global gender accountability framework from only being compliant and reportative to active participation in the structural reform project. The CEDAW review process needs support with the institutional resources required for effective Nigerian engagement, including the role of civil society in drafting state reports and the development of institutional capacity to translate Concluding Observations into effective domestic actions. Financial deliveries by development partners should be aligned with the structural priorities outlined in this research: institutional reform, structural representational change, fiscal strengthening and constitutional review.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to the dissertation that must be acknowledged. The main methodical limitation of the study is the absence of the original empirical data collection. No interviews, focus groups, or direct fieldwork with participants were conducted. This means that the lived experiences of Nigerian women — GBV survivors, frontline implementers, civil society advocates, and policymakers — are accessed exclusively through their textual representation in documentary sources. The findings therefore reflect what institutions and organisations have recorded and published, not what individuals may have experienced but not reported.

Primary empirical research through interviews and focus groups would extend and deepen the findings advanced here, particularly in relation to the qualitative texture of institutional cultures (Theme 2) and survivor experiences of the formal justice pathway. The single-case design supports theoretical rather than statistical generalisation; comparative work across multiple postcolonial federal states would strengthen the wider applicability of the stratified-gap concept. The temporal window of the documentary corpus is concentrated on the post-VAPP-Act period; longer historical analysis of the colonial and early post-independence periods would deepen the postcolonial-feminist analysis. The thematic coding, while systematic, reflects the analytical judgement of a single researcher; multi-coder reliability checks would strengthen the procedural rigour of the coded analysis.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the dissertation is intended to demonstrate that systematic documentary analysis, theoretically grounded, can produce analytically substantial conclusions on gender governance in postcolonial federal states. The reform agenda articulated in Section 6.3 is grounded in the empirical findings presented in Section 4.7 and in the theoretically informed discussion advanced in Chapter Five; it is offered not as a comprehensive policy blueprint but as a structurally coherent analytical contribution to the ongoing reform conversation.

6.5 Future Research

Several lines of future research follow from the analysis advanced here. Primary empirical research with Nigerian GBV survivors, with frontline implementers in the police and judicial services, and with civil society advocates would extend the documentary findings with direct testimony and would deepen the analysis of institutional culture in particular. Comparative analysis across multiple Nigerian states, designed to test the stratified-gap concept against the sub-national variation documented in Section 5.2, would refine the concept and identify its boundary conditions. Longitudinal analysis tracking the trajectory of Nigerian gender governance from the 2015 enactment of the VAPP Act forward incorporating the periodic CEDAW review cycles, successive National Gender Policy iterations, and the post-HB 1349 trajectory of women's representation would generate a richer evidentiary base for the structural-reform agenda. Comparative analysis across other postcolonial federal states with plural legal systems including India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Ghana would test the wider applicability of the analytical framework and the stratified-gap concept developed here.

Above all, future research should attend to the political conditions under which the structural reforms identified in Section 6.3 might become institutionally viable. The repeated rejection of gender bills by the National Assembly is intended to demonstrate that the structural-political conditions for reform are themselves the analytical problem: how can a legislative chamber that is institutionally hostile to gender legislation be reformed in ways that produce substantive change? The answer to that question which lies at the intersection of feminist institutionalism, comparative gender politics, and political-economy analysis is, in many respects, the most important open question in the field, and one to which subsequent research can productively contribute.

6.6 Closing Reflection: Knowledge, Politics, and the Possibility of Reform

The dissertation closes with a reflection on the relationship between scholarly knowledge and the political possibility of reform. The structural analysis advanced in Chapter Five and synthesised in this conclusion identifies a reform agenda whose elements are individually intelligible but whose collective implementation would require political conditions that are not, on the current evidence, present in the Nigerian federal political environment. The repeated rejection of gender bills by the National Assembly, the structural underrepresentation of women in the legislative chambers that would have to enact reform, the political marginality of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, the constitutional preservation of personal-law matters under Section 42(3), and the institutional cultures of frontline implementers each represent a binding constraint on the reform agenda. The analytical question is whether the recognition of these constraints is itself a contribution to reform by clarifying the political and institutional work that the agenda requires or whether it is, in the first instance, a recognition of the structural difficulty of the task.

This dissertation takes the position that analytical clarity about the structural dimensions of the reform task is, in itself, a contribution to the political work that the agenda requires. The advocacy strategies of the named civil society organisations whose documentation underpins this study WRAPA, CFHI, EVA Nigeria, STER, the Mirabel Centre, DOHS Cares, Document Women, Partners West Africa Nigeria, PLAC, DRPC, the NorthNormal collective, and others, have been calibrated by these organisations themselves to the institutional and political conditions of contemporary Nigerian governance. Their work is not an attempt to wish away the structural difficulties but to operate within them, building coalitions,

accumulating evidence, and pressing incrementally for the reforms that are politically achievable in successive moments. The dissertation's contribution is to provide an analytical framework within which their disparate efforts can be understood as elements of a structurally coherent reform programme a framework that, in turn, may inform the strategic calibration of future advocacy and policy work.

The deeper claim of the dissertation is that the structural analysis of gender governance failure is not analytically separable from the political work of gender governance reform. The more structural aspects are addressed the more strategically sophisticated the political involvement and the more political participation is built up the more empirical facts on which to undertake the structural analysis, the two are mutually constitutive. Feminist civic society and feminist academia in Nigeria reinforce each other. The analytical work of academic feminism is dependent on the documentation work of civil society organizations and the documentation work of civil society organizations is informed by the analytical frameworks of feminist scholarship. It therefore positions itself within this common knowledge-political agenda rather than as an external analytical critique of it.

The fate of Nigerian women is not a product of the situations they find themselves in. The increasing rates of gender-based violence, regional patterns of harmful practices, persistent underrepresentation in political institutions, sustained economic marginalization and constitutional exemptions that cement patriarchal legal systems. They are the historical and institutional products of certain political and constitutional actions, and can be modified by particular political and constitutional acts. As a contribution to the ongoing reform discourse, Section 6.3 uses the extensive topic analysis of Section 4.7 and the analytical framework developed in Chapter Five and presents a reform plan. The dissertation argues that Nigerian women and girls are entitled to real equality; that the structural conditions for such equality are theoretically identifiable; and that the political work to achieve it is both necessary and achievable even in a political landscape where structural constraints appear to pose a heavy burden on such work.

Annex A. Domestication of the VAPP Act 2015 by State

Compilation of the VAPP Act's implementation in several states, mostly utilizing Partners West Africa Nigeria's VAPP Tracker (PWAN, 2024) and supporting references mentioned in Chapter Five.

Geopolitical Zone	States	Domestication Status
South-West	Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti	All six SW states have domesticated the VAPP Act.
South-South	Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross River, Akwa Ibom	All six SS states have domesticated the VAPP Act.
South-East	Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, Imo, Abia	All five SE states have domesticated the VAPP Act.
North-Central	FCT, Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau	All seven NC jurisdictions have domesticated the VAPP Act.
North-East	Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe	All six NE states have domesticated; Borno's modified 2022 version has been the subject of CSO commentary regarding cultural-traditional accommodations.
North-West	Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Jigawa	As of early 2024, all six NW states except Kano have domesticated the VAPP Act, with Kano remaining the lone hold-out and continuing to operate under the colonial-era Penal Code.

Source: Compiled from PWAN VAPP Tracker (2024); WFD (2023); allAfrica / NorthNormal (2024); HumAngle (2022).

Annex B. Nigeria SDG 5 Indicator Dashboard

Selected SDG 5 indicators and Nigeria's reported performance versus the 2030 horizon from the most current available NDHS, MICS, IPU and UN Women data used in Chapter Five.

SDG 5 Target	Indicator	Nigeria Value (most recent)	Status
5.1 End discrimination	Legal frameworks promoting non-discrimination	VAPP 35/36 states; CEDAW not domesticated; §42(3) carve-out	Off-track
5.2 Eliminate violence	% women 15–49 ever experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) (lifetime)	≈30%–34% (NDHS 2023–24)	Off-track
5.2 Eliminate violence	% women 15–49 ever experiencing sexual violence	≈9% (NDHS 2018; 2023–24 forthcoming)	Off-track
5.3 Eliminate harmful practices	Child marriage rate (women 20–24 married before 18)	30.3% (NDHS 2018)	Off-track
5.3 Eliminate harmful practices	FGM prevalence (women 15–49)	19.5% (NDHS 2018) → 15.1% (MICS 2021)	Improving but off-track
5.5 Women's leadership	Women in National Assembly (Senate)	≈2.8% post-2023	Off-track
5.5 Women's leadership	Women in National Assembly (House)	≈3.9% post-2023	Off-track
5.5 Women's leadership	Women in cabinet (full ministers)	≈19% post-2023	Off-track
5.a Equal economic rights	Women's land rights (formal title)	Severely under-realised (WRAPA briefs)	Off-track
5.6 Reproductive health	Modern contraceptive prevalence (married women)	≈12% (NDHS 2018)	Off-track

Source: Compiled from FMoHSW, NPC & ICF (2024); NPC & ICF (2019); NBS & UNICEF (2022); IPU (2024a, 2024b); UN Women (2023); UNFPA (2023).

Annex C. Coding Frame and CSO × Theme Matrix

This appendix introduces the methodological coded theme analysis discussed in Section 4.5 and presents the basic coding system and the matrix connecting civil society groups to the ten subjects. The full functioning iteration of the coding framework, with all formulaic summaries and interconnections, is available as a separate Excel document submitted along with this dissertation: Dissertation Coding Workbook by Catherine Isaac Mina. Excel spreadsheet. The Excel workbook contains four sheets: (i) Codebook with 36 codes, organizational source, document, year, descriptive category, and justification; (ii) CSO_x_Theme matrix; (iii) Theme_Summary with definitions, frequencies, and sample findings; (iv) CSO_Profiles, which refines the category ‘civil society’ on the basis of the operational criteria set out in Section 4.4.

Coding Frame, Codebook (Summary)

Code	Theme	Organisation / Document	Year	Descriptive Category
C01	T1: Legislative Coverage	PWAN VAPP Tracker	2024	Federal–state diffusion
C02	T1: Legislative Coverage	WFD Impact of VAPP and Related Laws (12-state)	2023	Implementation regulations gap
C03	T1: Legislative Coverage	allAfrica / NorthNormal Gender Matters Across Nigeria	2024	Kano hold-out / Penal Code residual
C04	T1: Legislative Coverage	Tribune Online VAPP domestication six years on	2022	Religious / cultural opposition
C05	T2: Enforcement & Institutional Cultures	CFHI Institutional Barriers to Eliminating GBV	2025	Police, prosecutorial, judicial cultures
C06	T2: Enforcement & Institutional Cultures	Premium Times gender bills coverage	2022	Legislative discretion and attrition
C07	T2: Enforcement & Institutional Cultures	LSDSVA Annual Report on GBV in Lagos State	2024	State response infrastructure (best case)
C08	T2: Enforcement & Institutional Cultures	Mirabel Centre programme reports	2015–2024	Survivor-centred service delivery gap

C09	T2: Enforcement & Institutional Cultures	STER advocacy briefs on case attrition	2018–2024	Reporting and case pathway attrition
C10	T3: Femicide	DOHS Cares Foundation Femicide Tracker	2024	CSO femicide registry (counter-knowledge)
C11	T3: Femicide	Document Women One-Year Report on Femicide	2024	Cross-national comparative ranking
C12	T3: Femicide	Naija Feminist Media Femicide in Focus	2025	Femicide reportage and advocacy framing
C13	T3: Femicide	CDD West Africa Rising Tide of Femicide	2025	Policy framing, femicide-specific offence
C14	T4: Harmful Practices	UNFPA Nigeria FGM Country Snapshot	2023	FGM prevalence and medicalisation
C15	T4: Harmful Practices	UNICEF State of Nigeria's Children Updated	2024	Child marriage prevalence and geography
C16	T4: Harmful Practices	28 Too Many FGM/C Country Profile Update	2023	Sub-national FGM heterogeneity
C17	T5: Political Representation	IPU Parline (Senate & House)	2024	Descriptive representation (federal)
C18	T5: Political Representation	PLAC Bill for Special Legislative Seats (HB 1349)	2024	Quota mechanism advocacy
C19	T5: Political Representation	Carnegie Why Women Haven't Been Successful	2023	Structural barriers for women candidates
C20	T5: Political Representation	The Republic Political Progress for Nigerian Women	2025	Longitudinal women, politics analysis
C21	T5: Political Representation	Africa Renewal Women in Parliament	2024	Comparative African ranking
C22	T6: Education	UNICEF Education Nigeria / GEP3 reporting	2022	Out-of-school girls and GEP3 outcomes
C23	T6: Education	Marie Claire Nigeria / CGCE Silent Education Crisis	2025	Northern educational deprivation
C24	T6: Education	Reliefweb / World Bank AGILE expansion	2023	Targeted girls' education programming
C25	T7: Public Attitudes	Afrobarometer Round 9	2022	Attitudes on women's

		(Duntoye & Mbaegbu)		rights and equality
C26	T7: Public Attitudes	V-Dem Women's Political Empowerment Index v14	2024	Structural conditions for women's autonomy
C27	T7: Public Attitudes	Voices for Change NiMAGES	2015	Male attitudes toward IPV and authority
C28	T8: Economic Marginalisation	DRPC Gender-Responsive Budgeting 2025	2025	Federal budget allocation to WEE
C29	T8: Economic Marginalisation	ActionAid Nigeria VNR critical analyses	2020–2024	SDG reporting vs operational reality
C30	T8: Economic Marginalisation	WRAPA Women's land and economic rights briefs	2018–2024	Women's economic rights advocacy
C31	T9: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence	Amnesty International Violence Against Women in Nigeria	2021	Conflict-related sexual violence
C32	T9: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence	HumAngle Borno's modified VAPP Act	2022	Displacement, IDP camps, modified VAPP
C33	T9: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence	UNICEF Two Million Out-of-School in NE	2024	Insurgency impact on girls' education
C34	T10: Legal Pluralism	CEDAW Committee Concluding Observations on Nigeria	2017	International obligation vs domestication
C35	T10: Legal Pluralism	The Republic VAPP Act Repeal	2024	Repeal-and-reenact bill politics
C36	T10: Legal Pluralism	EVA Nigeria Mobilising Support to Eliminate GBV	2024	Nego-feminist engagement strategies

CSO × Theme Matrix

Each row identifies a civil society or CSO-adjacent organisation; each column identifies one of the ten themes. Cell entries record the codes (from the table above) that link the actor's documentary contribution to the theme. Empty cells indicate no coded contribution from that actor on that theme.

Civil Society / Monitoring Actor	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10
Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN)	C01									
Westminster Foundation for Democracy	C02									
allAfrica / NorthNormal Collective	C03									
Tribune Online	C04									
Centre for Family Health Initiative		C05								
Premium Times		C06								
Lagos State DSV (LSDSV)		C07								
Mirabel Centre		C08								
Stand to End Rape Initiative (STER)		C09								
DOHS Cares Foundation			C10							
Document Women			C11							
Naija Feminist Media			C12							
CDD West Africa			C13							
UNFPA				C14						
UNICEF Nigeria				C15		C22			C33	
28 Too Many				C16						
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)					C17					
Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC)					C18					
Carnegie Endowment					C19					

The Republic (Nigeria)					C20					C35
Africa Renewal (UN)					C21					
Marie Claire Nigeria / CGCE						C23				
Reliefweb / World Bank (AGILE)						C24				
Afrobarometer							C25			
V-Dem							C26			
Voices for Change (NiMAGES)							C27			
Development Research & Projects Centre								C28		
ActionAid Nigeria								C29		
WRAPA								C30		
Amnesty International									C31	
HumAngle									C32	
CEDAW Committee										C34
Education as a Vaccine (EVA Nigeria)										C36

Theme key: T1 Legislative Coverage; T2 Enforcement & Institutional Cultures; T3 Femicide; T4 Harmful Practices; T5 Political Representation; T6 Education; T7 Public Attitudes; T8 Economic Marginalisation; T9 Conflict-Related Sexual Violence; T10 Legal Pluralism / Constitutional. The full coded analysis is provided in the accompanying Excel workbook.

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