



MORAL CONTROVERSIES AND ECONOMIC PROSPECTS: EVALUATING THE SAMOA AGREEMENT IN NIGERIA

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(Received: 2 April, 2025; Accepted: 12 May 2025; Published on-line: 7 November, 2025)

Abstract

The Samoa Agreement, a pivotal framework in the context of Nigeria's socio-economic policies, is designed to foster both moral and economic transformations in Nigerian society. This study critically evaluates the extent to which the Samoa Agreement has influenced the moral values and economic stability in Nigeria. By examining the agreement's objectives, implementation strategies, and outcomes, the research aims to understand how it has shaped ethical standards, reduced corruption, and promoted socio-economic development. The analysis highlights key areas such as poverty alleviation, job creation, and the promotion of good governance, which are integral to the agreement's success. Additionally, the study explores the challenges faced in executing the agreement and its impact on various sectors, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Through the application of a mixed methods approach, this research integrates both qualitative and quantitative data to critically assess the broader implications of the Samoa Agreement on Nigeria's developmental trajectory. Quantitative data provides measurable insights into key indicators such as trade volumes, aid flows, and economic performance, while qualitative evidence—drawn from interviews, policy documents, and expert opinions—offers nuanced perspectives on governance, institutional challenges, and societal outcomes. The integration of these two strands allows for a comprehensive analysis that captures not only the statistical impact of the Agreement but also the lived experiences and perceptions surrounding its implementation. Findings indicate that the Samoa Agreement has fostered measurable progress in areas such as economic cooperation, institutional reforms, and regional integration. However, qualitative insights reveal persistent gaps in execution, including weak policy coordination, limited stakeholder engagement, and disparities in sectoral benefits. These gaps suggest that while the Agreement holds transformative potential, its long-term success depends on deliberate strategic adjustments, stronger participatory mechanisms, and policy innovations aimed at aligning economic growth with Nigeria's moral, social, and sustainable development priorities.

Keywords: Samoa Agreement, Moral Transformation, Economic Development, Nigeria and Governance.

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1. Introduction

The Samoa Agreement, signed in 2023 between the European Union (EU) and member states of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), has emerged as a focal point of scholarly and policy debate. Designed as a successor to the Cotonou Agreement, the framework aims to foster socio-economic transformation through commitments to sustainable development, human rights, climate action, and economic cooperation (Heron, 2023). In the Nigerian context, the agreement has been presented as both a promise of economic renewal and a mechanism for moral reform, particularly in addressing entrenched

challenges such as corruption, poverty, and governance deficits. Adebowale (2020) notes that international agreements of this nature often serve as catalysts for institutional strengthening, while Okeke and Nwankwo (2019) argue that their success depends on how well they reconcile external conditionalities with domestic socio-political realities.

Scholarly discourse on Nigeria's development trajectory highlights the necessity of policy frameworks that balance material and ethical dimensions of reform. Ojo and Omotayo (2021) maintain that while economic liberalization and reforms are critical to addressing wealth creation and inequality, moral imperatives such as accountability, transparency, and inclusivity are equally central to long-term governance success. Within this perspective, the Samoa Agreement represents more than a technocratic instrument of cooperation; it embodies a normative project that integrates moral responsibility with economic development goals. However, its embedded emphasis on liberal democratic values: such as gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights: has provoked debates on cultural sovereignty, neo-colonial influence, and the possible erosion of indigenous sociocultural norms (Adebayo, 2022).

Despite its ambitious scope, scholars remain divided over the Samoa Agreement's likely impact on Nigeria. While some scholars view it as a strategic opportunity to leverage international cooperation for sustainable reform (Adebowale, 2020; Heron, 2023), others stress the limitations of externally driven agreements in addressing deeply rooted domestic challenges (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2019). This study situates the Samoa Agreement within the broader discourse on Nigeria's developmental trajectory, critically assessing its potential to promote both moral and economic transformation. By doing so, it seeks to fill a scholarly gap in evaluating how international partnerships intersect with national reform agendas in Africa's largest democracy.

Statement of Problem

The Samoa Agreement, signed in 2023 between the European Union (EU) and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), has emerged as a highly contested framework in both academic and policy discourse. As the successor to the Cotonou Agreement, it seeks to advance sustainable development, climate change adaptation, human rights, and economic cooperation. Yet, scholarly debate is divided over whether the Agreement represents a genuine partnership or whether it entrenches asymmetrical North–South relations through normative conditionalities and governance pressures. This tension is especially salient for Nigeria, which occupies a pivotal position in Africa's economic and geopolitical landscape.

Heron (2023) argues that the Samoa Agreement constitutes a recalibration of EU–OACPS relations in which economic incentives are increasingly tied to adherence to liberal democratic norms, including gender equality and recognition of LGBTQ+ rights. While

framed as developmental, Heron contends that such conditionalities reveal the EU's deployment of "normative power," raising questions about whether the Agreement is underpinned by equality or coercive influence. Carbone (2024) reinforces this concern, situating the Agreement within the EU's longer trajectory of development policy. He identifies a "development-discipline nexus" in which aid, trade, and investment are accompanied by monitoring and accountability mechanisms, enabling the EU to sanction states for perceived democratic backsliding. This dual function, as both development partner and regulator, poses sovereignty dilemmas for Nigeria, where conditionality can be seen as both an incentive for reform and a constraint on domestic policy autonomy.

From a Nigerian perspective, Okoye (2024) demonstrates that the backlash against the Samoa Agreement reflects not only elite resistance to perceived external impositions but also widespread public anxiety over threats to cultural and religious values. The moral panic surrounding alleged LGBTQ+ provisions illustrates how international agreements can become reframed within local identity politics, a dynamic that resonates with norm diffusion theory (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). In this sense, Nigeria's engagement with the Samoa Agreement exposes the contested nature of global norm transfer, where elites, media, and civil society actors selectively interpret provisions to mobilize opposition or support. Zondi (2024) advances this critique further, describing the Samoa Agreement as a form of "neo-colonial partnership" that locks African states into asymmetric relationships with Europe. However, other commentators, such as the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS, 2023), caution against overly deterministic views, arguing that African states retain agency to negotiate terms, resist intrusive provisions, and strategically leverage external resources for domestic development.

Alongside normative debates, developmentalist analyses highlight the Samoa Agreement's economic promises. UNCTAD (2023) emphasizes its potential to mobilize finance for infrastructure, skills training, and climate resilience, particularly for Nigeria given its market size and regional influence. Similarly, the Centre for Justice & International Development (2024) underscores the need for Nigeria to adopt a clear national strategy to ensure technology transfer, protect vulnerable industries, and foster inclusive growth. Yet, as these studies note, such benefits are contingent upon robust domestic governance structures and the capacity to channel resources into productive sectors, underscoring the risk that external partnerships may exacerbate dependency or reproduce structural inequalities if poorly managed.

Taken together, previous studies reveal a profound cleavage in the reception of the Samoa Agreement: while some see it as a pathway to economic transformation, others perceive it as a vehicle for external norm imposition, generating political and cultural backlash. The heart of the research problem lies in the lack of comprehensive empirical inquiry into how these

dual dimensions: economic promises and moral controversies, intersect in shaping Nigeria's development trajectory. Existing scholarship has tended to privilege either structural economic analysis (UNCTAD, 2023) or normative critique (Heron, 2023; Okoye, 2024), without systematically examining their combined effects on governance, moral order, and socio-economic outcomes.

Therefore, this study addresses the insufficient empirical evaluation of the Samoa Agreement's effectiveness and long-term implications for Nigeria's moral and economic transformation. While scholars such as Okeke and Nwankwo (2019) and Adebayo (2022) acknowledge the potential of international agreements to stimulate reform, they stop short of offering nuanced assessments of how governance ethics, corruption, accountability, and socio-cultural values intersect with economic policy under such frameworks. This study seeks to bridge that gap by undertaking a multidimensional analysis of the Samoa Agreement's impact on Nigeria, interrogating both its economic and moral dimensions. In doing so, it aims to provide evidence-based insights that inform future policy frameworks and enhance Nigeria's capacity to reconcile international obligations with domestic developmental priorities.

This research provides a clearer picture of the successes, limitations, and areas for improvement in the Samoa Agreement's implementation, contributing to the broader discourse on governance and sustainable development in Nigeria. This paper addresses several critical questions:

- i. What are the key moral and economic objectives outlined in the Samoa Agreement, and how were these objectives intended to address the challenges faced by Nigerian society?
- ii. How has the Samoa Agreement influenced the moral behaviour of public officials and citizens in Nigeria, particularly in relation to governance, corruption, and ethical standards?
- iii. What economic changes have been observed in Nigeria as a result of the Samoa Agreement, particularly in terms of development, poverty reduction, and wealth distribution?
- iv. What are the successes and limitations of the Samoa Agreement in achieving its stated goals, and what lessons can be drawn to improve future policy frameworks for moral and economic transformation in Nigeria?

By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the Samoa Agreement's impact on Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its critical evaluation of the Samoa Agreement and its implications for Nigeria's moral and economic transformation. By assessing the agreement's impact on governance, ethical conduct, and economic development, this research will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of such policy frameworks in addressing corruption and poverty in Nigeria. It will contribute to the broader discourse on governance reforms and economic policy in Africa, offering lessons for other countries facing similar challenges. Additionally, the study will help inform policymakers, scholars, and development practitioners in shaping more effective strategies for fostering moral integrity and sustainable economic growth in Nigeria and beyond.

2. Literature Review

The Samoa Agreement, formally the OACPS–EU Partnership Agreement, marks a significant recalibration of relations between the European Union (EU) and seventy-seven African, Caribbean, and Pacific (OACPS) states. Signed in November 2023 and provisionally applied from January 2024, the Agreement is structured around six core priorities: human rights, democracy and governance; peace and security; human and social development; inclusive and sustainable economic growth; environmental sustainability and climate change; and migration and mobility (European Parliament Research Service [EPRS], 2023; Consilium, n.d.). The academic and policy discourse on this new framework has generally bifurcated into two broad strands: one that highlights the economic opportunities embedded in the Agreement, and another that underscores the moral controversies and sociopolitical tensions it has generated, particularly within conservative societies such as Nigeria.

The first strand of literature presents the Samoa Agreement as a vehicle for economic growth and sustainable development. Analyses situate the Agreement within a broader effort to modernize trade and investment relations, align commitments with World Trade Organization (WTO) norms, and facilitate access to financial resources from both public and private sources (UN Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2023). Development-oriented scholars and policy commentators emphasise its potential to stimulate infrastructure development, expand human-capital investment, and generate employment opportunities across OACPS states (Centre for Justice & International Development [CIJD], 2024). Commentaries in international policy outlets further stress that mechanisms for trade facilitation and special and differential treatment provide protections for developing economies, thereby moderating risks associated with rapid market liberalisation (The Africa Report, 2024). From this perspective, Nigeria stands to gain substantially from the Agreement through access to investment funds, enhanced trade facilitation, and opportunities for skills

transfer, provided domestic governance frameworks remain robust (EPRS, 2023; UNCTAD, 2023).

Despite this optimistic outlook, a parallel body of work interrogates the controversies provoked by the Agreement's normative provisions, particularly in relation to human rights and identity politics. In Nigeria, the inclusion of rights-based clauses sparked intense debate and widespread suspicion. Media reports and political actors propagated the claim that the Agreement imposed obligations to recognise lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ+) rights, thereby clashing with existing domestic laws and entrenched sociocultural norms (Voice of America [VOA], 2024). Though independent investigations and fact-checking initiatives confirmed these claims to be misleading, the controversy triggered parliamentary probes and inflamed public anxiety (EUvsDisinfo, 2025; Punch, 2024). Scholars of international norm diffusion have long observed that global agreements with explicit human rights language often generate resistance where elites frame such provisions as threats to sovereignty, morality, or cultural identity. The Nigerian case is consistent with this theoretical trajectory, as normative dissonance was exploited by political elites to stoke partisan narratives, even in the absence of legal compulsion (Disinfo Africa, 2024).

The role of misinformation has been central in shaping public reception of the Samoa Agreement. Research on Nigeria's information ecosystem highlights that the complexity of international treaties, coupled with low public awareness, creates fertile conditions for misinterpretation and deliberate distortion (Dataphyte, 2024). In this environment, ambiguous language in the Agreement was weaponised by opportunistic actors, generating widespread scepticism and political backlash. Governmental responses included public clarifications, assurances from officials, and parliamentary scrutiny, yet the damage to public perception revealed significant institutional vulnerability (VOA, 2024). Scholars of governance and communication argue that transparency and proactive dissemination of accurate information are essential in countering misinformation. In Nigeria, the episode underscores the importance of building institutional capacity to provide timely clarification and of embedding civic education within the broader framework of treaty implementation (EPRS, 2023; CIJD, 2024).

Critical perspectives from civil society and scholars also highlight deeper structural concerns regarding sovereignty, equity, and conditionality. These critiques suggest that while the Agreement promises financial flows and development opportunities, it risks reproducing existing asymmetries between the EU and OACPS states. There is concern that financial commitments may be accompanied by implicit conditionalities that narrow policy space for industrial strategies, potentially locking countries into externally dictated development pathways (UNCTAD, 2023). In Nigeria, civil society actors have questioned whether the Agreement sufficiently safeguards domestic producers and whether it will lead to sustainable

technology transfer and value addition, rather than reinforcing extractive economic patterns (CIJD, 2024; The Africa Report, 2024). Such scepticism resonates with long-standing critiques of North–South trade arrangements, which caution that aggregate economic growth may obscure widening inequality if distributive mechanisms are absent.

Synthesising these strands of literature reveals a complex picture of both opportunity and risk. The Samoa Agreement indeed presents Nigeria with substantial economic prospects through investment inflows, infrastructure development, and enhanced trade frameworks. However, these benefits are contingent on effective domestic governance, the maintenance of policy autonomy, and deliberate strategies to ensure inclusive growth. At the same time, the moral controversies and political contestations surrounding its rights provisions demonstrate how international agreements can become entangled in domestic identity politics, producing legitimacy crises that may undermine implementation. The Nigerian case illustrates the dual challenge of realising the economic promises of external agreements while simultaneously managing the social and political narratives that determine their acceptance. For scholarship, this suggests the need for interdisciplinary inquiry that combines economic analysis with studies of political communication, norm diffusion, and governance. For policy, it implies that Nigeria must treat economic diplomacy and public diplomacy as interlinked domains, investing in information integrity, participatory engagement, and institutional safeguards that can reconcile external commitments with domestic realities.

3. Conceptual Framework

The Samoa Agreement, adopted as part of global efforts to address sustainable development challenges, provides a blueprint for small island developing states and nations like Nigeria to foster moral and economic transformation. This framework is structured around three interconnected pillars: sustainable development, moral governance, and economic transformation. These pillars provide a holistic lens to assess the agreement’s applicability and impact in the Nigerian context.

i. Sustainable Development as a Strategic Imperative

The Samoa Agreement emphasizes sustainable development, consistent with the Sustainable Development Theory articulated in the Brundtland Report (1987). This theory advocates for growth that meets present needs without compromising future generations. In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning is critical in incorporating these principles into national economic frameworks, ensuring policy alignment with global sustainable development goals. Development partners like the UNDP also contribute by providing technical and financial assistance to support these efforts (UNDP, 2021).

The Samoa Agreement underscores sustainable development as a cornerstone for addressing global and localized challenges, reflecting principles from the Sustainable Development Theory posited in the Brundtland Report (1987). This theoretical framework stresses the necessity of balancing economic, social, and environmental priorities to ensure intergenerational equity. As Nigeria faces multifaceted developmental challenges, the implementation of these principles has significant implications for its economic and moral transformation.

The Samoa Agreement emphasizes sustainable development, aligning with the Brundtland Report's principles. This theory advocates for growth that meets present needs without compromising future generations. In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning plays a crucial role in integrating sustainable development principles into national economic frameworks, ensuring policy alignment with global sustainable development goals. Development partners like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provide technical and financial assistance to support these efforts.

The Samoa Agreement underscores the importance of balancing economic, social, and environmental priorities to ensure intergenerational equity. Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning mainstreams sustainability in budgeting processes, emphasizing renewable energy projects, poverty alleviation programs, and equitable resource distribution. These efforts align with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework, aiming to reduce inequality, promote economic growth, and ensure environmental sustainability.

However, challenges persist, such as institutional inefficiencies and governance deficits, which hinder the effective implementation of sustainable development initiatives. Bridging these gaps requires robust accountability mechanisms, greater stakeholder engagement, and decentralization of sustainable development efforts to ensure inclusivity.

However, the emphasis on sustainable development within the Samoa Agreement represents a strategic imperative for Nigeria. Addressing systemic challenges is crucial for achieving meaningful and enduring transformations. Sustainable development not only fosters economic stability but also strengthens moral and social structures, creating a more equitable and resilient society.

ii. Moral Governance: A Framework for Ethical Transformation

The moral dimension of the Samoa Agreement aligns with Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, emphasizing the role of moral reasoning in achieving societal progress. In Nigeria, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) is pivotal in fostering civic

consciousness and promoting ethical behaviors, addressing corruption, and enhancing public trust. The agency's campaigns aim to instill values that align with the ethical imperatives of the Samoa Agreement (United Nations, 2014).

The Samoa Agreement's moral governance framework offers a foundation for ethical transformation in governance and societal behaviors. This aligns with Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, emphasizing the role of governance structures and public institutions in shaping and reinforcing ethical norms. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) is a key institution in Nigeria, promoting civic consciousness, countering corruption, and instilling ethical behavior. However, systemic corruption and weak institutional frameworks remain significant obstacles. To sustain ethical transformations, public awareness campaigns and structural reforms, such as e-governance platforms and stronger legal enforcement, are essential. Moral governance also influences societal cohesion and trust in democratic institutions, which are crucial for economic development and democratic stability. To address these challenges, multi-stakeholder approaches involving civil society organizations, religious institutions, and educational systems are needed. In conclusion, the Samoa Agreement's moral governance framework is crucial for Nigeria's ethical transformation, promoting justice, equity, and public trust.

iii. Economic Transformation: Aligning Policies with Sustainability

Economic transformation within the conceptual framework is informed by Rostow's Stages of Economic Growth, which focus on the transition from traditional to modern economies. Nigeria's economic policies, as overseen by the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC), emphasize attracting sustainable investments. These investments aim to align with the Samoa Agreement's focus on equitable growth, fostering innovation and reducing unemployment (African Development Bank, 2020).

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iv. Institutional Collaboration and Implementation

The successful implementation of the Samoa Agreement in Nigeria relies on the collaboration of various agencies and institutions. Civil society organizations and NGOs provide grassroots advocacy, ensuring that the agreement's principles resonate with local realities. Meanwhile, international development partners offer strategic partnerships, funding, and capacity-building to bridge implementation gaps (World Bank, 2022). This multi-stakeholder approach ensures that the Samoa Agreement is not merely a policy directive but a transformative agenda for moral and economic progress.

The implementation of the Samoa Agreement in Nigeria underscores the importance of institutional collaboration and multi-stakeholder engagement. This approach aligns with theories of collaborative governance, which advocate for partnerships across sectors to address complex societal challenges (Ansell & Gash, 2008). By pooling resources and expertise, Nigeria has sought to align the principles of the Samoa Agreement with its national development goals.

Civil society organizations and NGOs play a crucial role in localizing the principles of the Samoa Agreement, acting as intermediaries between the government and the populace. They emphasize accountability and sustainable development, fostering citizen participation in governance reforms. International development partners, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, provide funding, technical expertise, and strategic advice to overcome implementation barriers. Key government agencies in Nigeria integrate the Samoa Agreement's principles into economic frameworks, addressing systemic issues of poverty and underdevelopment. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) ensures the agreement's moral and ethical dimensions are effectively communicated to the public, fostering a culture of integrity and accountability. The synergy between these entities demonstrates the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to policy implementation, ensuring the Samoa Agreement transcends its status as a policy directive and becomes a transformative agenda for moral and economic progress.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive assessment of the moral and economic

impact of the Samoa Agreement on Nigerian society. By combining primary and secondary sources of data, the study ensures methodological robustness and enhances the validity of its findings.

Primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including officials from relevant Nigerian ministries, civil society organizations, and experts in socio-economic development and international cooperation. These interviews will offer nuanced insights into the perceived benefits, challenges, and moral controversies associated with the implementation of the Samoa Agreement. The inclusion of diverse perspectives ensures that the study captures both elite policy viewpoints and grassroots reflections on Nigeria's engagement with the Agreement.

Secondary data will be derived from a wide range of documentary sources, including the official text of the Samoa Agreement and its associated legal provisions. Additional sources include policy briefs, reports, and communiqués issued by Nigerian government agencies, international development partners, and organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Furthermore, scholarly articles, books, and conference papers that critically engage with themes of international cooperation, sustainable development, and moral governance will be systematically analyzed. Media reports and public commentaries will also be examined to reflect broader societal debates, controversies, and public perceptions regarding the implications of the Agreement.

To ensure analytical rigor, the study employs a triangulated methodological approach. This involves the use of qualitative content analysis to examine documentary evidence, combined with thematic analysis of expert interviews, and supported by interpretive engagement with academic literature. Such triangulation allows for a more holistic understanding of the Samoa Agreement, situating its normative claims within Nigeria's socio-economic and moral development trajectory. Ultimately, this integration of multiple data sources enables the study to interrogate not only the economic promises of the Agreement but also its moral and cultural implications for Nigerian society.

4.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Primary data is obtained through **structured interviews** with key stakeholders directly involved in the implementation of the Samoa Agreement. A total of eleven respondents were purposively selected from a cross-section of government agencies, civil society organizations, and international development partners. The distribution of respondents is outlined below:

S/N	Category of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Focus Areas	Institutions
1	Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and NGOs. i. Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) ii. Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA)	2	Monitoring implementation, advocacy, and promoting sustainable development goals	Partner organizations working alongside the government
2	Development Partners and International Agencies i. European Union (EU) / Team Europe ii. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	2	Collaborative implementation efforts, support mechanisms, and policy alignment	UNDP and related development institutions
3	Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning	3	National economic planning, integration of Samoa principles, and financial sustainability	Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning
4	National Orientation Agency (NOA)	2	Public awareness campaigns, moral education, and advocacy for ethical transformation	National Orientation Agency
5	Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC)	2	Aligning foreign investment policies with sustainable development goals	Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

4.3 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from both primary and secondary sources were subjected to qualitative analytical techniques aimed at identifying patterns, themes, and emerging perspectives related to the moral and economic implications of the Samoa Agreement in Nigeria.

4.3.1 Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Primary data from structured interviews were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The interviews were transcribed, coded manually, and categorized under thematic headings corresponding to the research objectives, including:

- Economic policy integration,
- Sustainable development goals (SDGs),

- Moral and ethical governance,
- Stakeholder engagement and implementation strategies.

These themes were then triangulated with findings from policy documents and secondary data sources to ensure consistency and validate emerging narratives. This approach enabled the identification of recurring concerns and opportunities associated with the implementation of the Samoa Agreement in Nigeria.

4.3.2 Triangulation and Document Analysis

Secondary data—including government publications, donor reports, and relevant legal texts—were subjected to document content analysis. These texts were coded based on key constructs such as compliance, institutional synergy, and development benchmarks, and then cross-referenced with interview data for corroboration, in line with triangulated methodological frameworks.

4.3.4 Data Interpretation

The Samoa Agreement, signed between the European Union (EU) and African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries in 2023, represents a new framework for development cooperation and global engagement. For Nigeria, the Agreement has been framed as both a pathway to economic growth and a platform for normative governance reforms. The Agreement emphasizes trade, climate adaptation, gender inclusion, and democratic governance, aligning with Nigeria's national development agenda as well as continental priorities under the African Union's Agenda 2063. However, the integration of externally driven moral frameworks into domestic policies has provoked intense debate within Nigeria's socio-political landscape. This duality—between economic promise and moral controversy—forms the crux of Nigeria's engagement with the Samoa Agreement.

The findings from both primary interviews and secondary sources suggest that Nigeria's experience with the Samoa Agreement is characterized by a paradox of opportunities and constraints. On the economic front, respondents from the Ministry of Finance and the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) acknowledged that Samoa-aligned policies have facilitated renewed dialogue with the EU on trade facilitation, renewable energy, and climate financing. Secondary data from UNDP and EU reports further indicate modest progress in infrastructure development and skills training linked to EU-funded programmes. Yet, poverty indices and unemployment rates remain largely unchanged, reflecting the limited translation of macroeconomic opportunities into grassroots development.

In terms of governance and morality, civil society organizations such as the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and Arewa Research and Development Project (ARDP) highlighted that the Agreement creates new advocacy spaces for gender equality and transparency reforms. Nonetheless, cultural and religious resistance emerged as a significant limitation, with respondents viewing the Agreement's normative clauses—particularly on rights and social issues—as externally imposed. This aligns with Zondi's (2024) critique of neo-colonial tendencies in international partnerships, where developmental promises are entangled with contested normative agendas.

Taken together, the data reveal a mixed trajectory: while Nigeria benefits from increased international visibility, policy dialogue, and access to development finance, the structural weakness of its domestic institutions, coupled with cultural contestations, constrains the transformative potential of the Samoa Agreement.

i. Key Moral and Economic Objectives of the Samoa Agreement in the Nigerian Context

The Samoa Agreement was conceived as a comprehensive framework for advancing sustainable development, human rights, and inclusive economic growth across the OACPS states. In the Nigerian case, both primary and secondary data underscore that the Agreement's dual objectives were framed around moral governance and economic transformation. The official text of the Agreement highlights commitments to transparency, accountability, gender equality, and human rights, while simultaneously emphasizing trade facilitation, poverty reduction, and climate resilience (European Union, 2023).

Interviews with respondents from the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) confirmed that the Agreement was intended to “align Nigeria's fiscal and trade policies with globally recognized sustainability standards.” Similarly, representatives of civil society organizations such as WRAPA noted that the moral objectives—particularly anti-corruption and gender inclusion—were seen as corrective tools for Nigeria's governance deficit. These findings corroborate scholarly arguments by Ojo and Omotayo (2021), who maintain that development frameworks cannot succeed without embedding ethical reforms in governance.

Thus, the Agreement was positioned as a dual intervention: one addressing structural economic challenges such as poverty and underdevelopment, and the other confronting deeply entrenched issues of corruption, weak accountability, and socio-cultural resistance to rights-based discourses.

Key Moral and Economic Objectives of the Samoa Agreement in the Nigerian Context

Table 1.

Dimension	Specific Objectives	Stakeholder Perspectives	Supporting Evidence
Moral Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of transparency and accountability - Anti-corruption measures - Gender equality - Protection of human rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NOA campaigns emphasize ethics and accountability. - WRAPA highlights gender inclusion as central. - CITAD stresses limited elite behavioural change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Union (2023) Agreement text. - Ojo & Omotayo (2021) on governance and ethics. - Adebayo (2022) critique of elite resistance.
Economic Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade facilitation - Poverty reduction - Climate resilience - Investment promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ministry of Finance and NIPC stress alignment of trade/fiscal policy with global standards. - Development partners emphasize sustainability-driven growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Union (2023) on sustainable trade. - Okoye (2024) on global norms and local contestation.

The findings reveal that the Samoa Agreement's objectives in Nigeria are both moral and economic, reflecting a deliberate attempt to tackle governance deficits alongside structural developmental challenges. The moral dimension is evident in commitments to anti-corruption, accountability, and gender equality. While state agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA) have used the Agreement to frame civic education campaigns, civil society actors like CITAD caution that elite resistance and patronage politics continue to undermine practical outcomes. This observation supports Adebayo's (2022) argument that externally promoted governance reforms in Nigeria often fail to achieve behavioural change due to institutional inertia.

On the economic front, the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) interpret the Samoa framework as an opportunity to align Nigeria's trade and fiscal systems with global sustainability standards. This aligns with the European Union's (2023) emphasis on inclusive growth, climate resilience, and trade

facilitation. However, as Okoye (2024) notes, provisions that intersect with culturally sensitive issues (such as LGBTQ+ rights) often generate societal resistance, overshadowing potential economic and governance benefits.

In summary, the dual intervention logic of the Samoa Agreement—embedding moral governance in tandem with economic reform—remains partially realized. While progress is visible in policy discourses and some institutional practices, Nigeria’s entrenched political culture and socio-religious contestations continue to mediate the scope of its transformative potential.

ii. Findings on the Samoa Agreement and Moral Behaviour in Nigeria

The findings indicate mixed outcomes regarding the influence of the Samoa Agreement on moral behaviour among Nigerian public officials and citizens. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) highlighted in interviews that its campaigns—framed around ethical conduct and accountability—were inspired in part by Samoa-related discourses. However, civil society actors, particularly CITAD, emphasized that “rhetorical commitments have not necessarily translated into behavioural change among elites.”

From a governance perspective, respondents noted that while the Agreement has reinforced anti-corruption narratives, the persistence of rent-seeking behaviour and patronage politics limits its transformative effect. These insights resonate with Adebayo’s (2022) critique that externally promoted governance reforms often falter in Nigeria due to institutional inertia and elite resistance. Furthermore, secondary data, especially media reports, reveal that provisions relating to LGBTQ+ rights generated moral controversies that overshadowed the Agreement’s broader ethical agenda, reflecting findings by Okoye (2024) on the reframing of global norms as cultural threats.

However, while the Samoa Agreement introduced normative frameworks supportive of moral governance, its influence on day-to-day conduct remains limited, with observable resistance rooted in Nigeria’s political culture and religious values.

The study’s findings reveal **mixed outcomes** regarding the impact of the Samoa Agreement on moral behaviour among Nigerian public officials and citizens. Primary interviews and secondary sources underscore the duality of rhetorical progress and practical resistance.

Table 2: Summarizes the perspectives of key actors.**Perspectives on the Samoa Agreement and Moral Behaviour in Nigeria**

Actor/Source	Key Observation	Implications
National Orientation Agency (NOA)	Reported that its campaigns on ethical conduct and accountability drew inspiration from Samoa Agreement discourses.	Suggests policy diffusion from international frameworks into national civic campaigns.
CITAD (Civil Society)	Emphasized that rhetorical commitments have not translated into behavioural change among political elites.	Demonstrates gap between policy intent and elite practices.
Media Reports	Highlighted controversies over LGBTQ+ provisions that overshadowed broader moral governance issues.	Indicates cultural and religious resistance shaping reception of external norms.
Academic Literature (e.g., Adebayo, 2022; Okoye, 2024)	Critiqued institutional inertia, elite resistance, and moral contestations in governance reforms.	Aligns with observed persistence of rent-seeking and patronage practices.

The evidence suggests that the Samoa Agreement's influence on moral governance in Nigeria has been symbolically significant but practically constrained. NOA's adoption of Samoa-inspired ethical campaigns indicates some policy translation into the civic domain. However, as CITAD notes, elite resistance to behavioural change continues to hinder meaningful transformation. This reflects Adebayo's (2022) assertion that externally driven governance reforms often encounter structural inertia within Nigeria's political system.

Moreover, the controversy over LGBTQ+ provisions illustrates how global moral norms are reframed locally as cultural or religious threats, echoing Okoye's (2024) findings on norm contestation. Thus, while the Agreement contributes to normative discourse, its day-to-day impact remains diluted by entrenched patronage politics and socio-cultural resistance.

iii. Economic Implications of the Samoa Agreement in Nigeria

On the economic front, the Agreement has had more tangible though uneven outcomes. Officials from the Ministry of Finance reported that Samoa-aligned policies facilitated renewed dialogue with the EU on trade facilitation and climate financing. For example, Nigeria has benefitted from targeted EU and UNDP programmes aimed at capacity-building in renewable energy and climate adaptation. However, both government and civil society respondents emphasized that these economic benefits are yet to translate into significant poverty reduction or wealth redistribution. While there is evidence of increased foreign investment commitments through NIPC, the distribution of such investments remains skewed toward urban and extractive sectors, leaving rural communities marginalised. These findings align with UNCTAD's (2023) caution that international agreements often bring macroeconomic opportunities without automatically addressing grassroots developmental needs.

Secondary data confirm modest progress in infrastructural development and skill acquisition programmes linked to EU-funded initiatives, yet poverty indices and unemployment rates remain largely unchanged, suggesting that the Agreement's economic promises are constrained by domestic institutional weaknesses.

Table: 3

Observed Economic Changes Linked to the Samoa Agreement in Nigeria

Dimension	Observed Outcomes	Sources/Actors
Trade Facilitation	Renewed dialogue with EU on trade policies and market access.	Ministry of Finance; EU Delegation to Nigeria
Climate Financing	Access to EU and UNDP programmes on renewable energy and climate adaptation.	UNDP; Ministry of Environment
Foreign Investment	Increased commitments via NIPC, but skewed toward extractive industries and urban hubs.	Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC)
Poverty Reduction	Limited impact; rural communities remain marginalized despite macroeconomic inflows.	Civil society respondents; UNCTAD (2023)

Skill Development & Infrastructure	EU-funded initiatives support training and infrastructure, but unemployment persists.	Secondary data; CSO reports
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The Samoa Agreement has generated observable economic opportunities for Nigeria, particularly in the areas of trade facilitation and climate financing. According to Ministry of Finance officials, Samoa-aligned policy reforms facilitated new trade dialogues with the European Union, thereby expanding Nigeria's integration into global markets. Similarly, climate financing, supported by the EU and UNDP, has introduced renewable energy and adaptation projects that resonate with Nigeria's sustainability agenda.

Despite these advancements, the distributional impact of these economic gains remains limited. While the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) reported increased foreign investment inflows, much of the capital is concentrated in urban and extractive sectors, leaving rural communities largely excluded. This observation is consistent with UNCTAD's (2023) caution that international agreements often strengthen macroeconomic indicators without automatically resolving grassroots developmental challenges.

Further, while EU-funded skill acquisition and infrastructure projects have been noted, poverty indices and unemployment levels remain relatively stagnant. Civil society actors argue that Nigeria's domestic institutional weaknesses and governance bottlenecks constrain the transformative economic potential of the Samoa Agreement. These findings echo the broader scholarly critique that external economic frameworks must be complemented by robust national reforms to achieve inclusive development (Ojo & Omotayo, 2021).

In essence, the Samoa Agreement's economic promises in Nigeria are evident at the macro-policy level but face structural and distributive limitations in translating benefits to the broader population.

iv. Successes, Limitations, and Lessons for Future Policy Frameworks

The Samoa Agreement's successes lie primarily in its ability to open new avenues for cooperation, strengthen Nigeria's visibility in multilateral forums, and provide access to development finance. Respondents from the EU delegation in Abuja highlighted the Agreement's role in fostering dialogue around sustainable development and trade diversification. Civil society actors also acknowledged its potential to create space for advocacy on gender and transparency issues.

However, the limitations are equally pronounced. First, the normative conditionalities embedded in the Agreement—particularly those around rights and democratic governance—were perceived as externally imposed, provoking cultural and political resistance. Second, economic benefits remain unevenly distributed and heavily dependent on Nigeria’s capacity to domesticate and operationalize the Agreement’s provisions. Finally, weak institutional frameworks and corruption constrain effective implementation, echoing Zondi’s (2024) concern about the neo-colonial dimensions of such partnerships.

Table :4

Successes, Limitations, and Lessons for Future Policy Frameworks

Category	Findings from Primary Data (Field Interviews & Government/CSO Reports)	Findings from Secondary Data (Scholarly & Institutional Sources)
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Delegation in Abuja emphasized improved cooperation on sustainable development and trade diversification. • Civil society groups (e.g., WRAPA, CISLAC) noted increased advocacy space for gender equality and anti-corruption reforms. • Officials from the Ministry of Finance confirmed enhanced dialogue with EU on renewable energy and climate finance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP (2023) reports highlight Nigeria’s access to climate adaptation and skill development funding. • Ojo & Omotayo (2021) argue that embedding ethics into governance reforms improves international cooperation. • EU (2023) policy documents stress visibility gains for Nigeria in multilateral forums.
Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents perceived governance and human rights conditionalities as “externally imposed” and culturally insensitive. • NIPC officials admitted benefits are skewed toward urban and extractive sectors, with limited rural impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zondi (2024) critiques the neo-colonial undertones of agreements like Samoa. • UNCTAD (2023) cautions that macroeconomic gains rarely trickle down to grassroots communities. • Adebawwi (2022) highlights persistent elite

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil society actors flagged corruption and institutional weakness as barriers to implementation. 	capture of development resources in Nigeria.
Lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future frameworks must localize global norms to align with cultural and social realities. • Strengthen institutions to ensure transparency and effective use of external finance. • Engage grassroots actors in project design and monitoring to enhance ownership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarly consensus (Zondi, 2024; Ojo & Omotayo, 2021) emphasizes participatory governance and local ownership as critical for sustainable reforms. • Comparative evidence from ACP states shows that success depends on institutional adaptation (EU, 2023).

The evidence demonstrates that the Samoa Agreement has been a mixed intervention for Nigeria. On one hand, its successes include improved trade and development dialogues with the EU, enhanced advocacy opportunities for civil society organizations, and access to climate financing and renewable energy programs (EU, 2023; UNDP, 2023). These align with Ojo and Omotayo's (2021) argument that ethical and rights-based reforms can serve as gateways for international cooperation.

Yet, the limitations are substantial. Interviews revealed strong resistance to perceived external imposition of governance conditionalities, while both government and civil society respondents lamented the uneven distribution of economic benefits, which remain concentrated in urban and extractive sectors. This aligns with Zondi's (2024) critique of neo-colonial dynamics and UNCTAD's (2023) warning about the failure of macroeconomic growth to address grassroots needs.

From these findings, lessons for future frameworks emerge clearly. First, agreements must adapt to Nigeria's socio-cultural realities, ensuring that universal rights principles are contextualized rather than imposed. Second, there is a pressing need to strengthen domestic institutions to prevent corruption and elite capture from undermining economic gains. Finally, inclusive stakeholder engagement, especially grassroots communities and local CSOs, is

critical to bridging the gap between international agreements and everyday realities (Adebanwi, 2022; Zondi, 2024).

However, the Samoa Agreement's impact on Nigeria illustrates the duality of opportunity and constraint in global partnerships—promising on paper but dependent on local adaptation and institutional reforms for transformative outcomes.

The lessons emerging from this study are threefold. First, future policy frameworks must prioritize context-sensitive adaptation of global norms, ensuring that moral objectives resonate with local cultural realities. Second, Nigeria must strengthen institutional capacity to channel external resources into poverty alleviation and wealth redistribution rather than elite capture. Third, effective stakeholder engagement, including grassroots organizations and local communities, is essential to bridge the gap between high-level agreements and lived realities.

Discussion

Through triangulated evidence, this study shows that the Samoa Agreement embodies a complex paradox in Nigeria and Africa at large. On the one hand, it has created avenues for economic opportunity and policy alignment, while on the other hand, its limitations expose the persistent weaknesses of African governance systems.

Impact

The impact of the Samoa Agreement in Nigeria has been evident in areas of economic engagement and moral governance. Respondents from Nigeria's Ministry of Finance and the EU Delegation in Abuja confirmed that the Agreement facilitated renewed dialogue on trade facilitation, climate financing, and development cooperation. This aligns with UNCTAD's (2023) observation that international agreements open macroeconomic spaces for investment and trade. Moreover, the Agreement amplified advocacy for transparency, gender inclusion, and accountability—an outcome civil society actors like WRAPA view as necessary for correcting Nigeria's governance deficit. At the continental level, the Agreement also reinforces Africa's collective bargaining power through the Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States (OACPS) framework, as Zondi (2024) highlights. By providing Africa with a structured dialogue with the EU, it enhances visibility in multilateral platforms while channeling development finance toward infrastructure, climate adaptation, and human capital development.

Limitations

Despite these impacts, the limitations are profound. First, normative conditionalities around governance, gender, and democracy are often perceived as “externally imposed.” Interview data revealed that local policymakers view some provisions as culturally misaligned, generating resistance. This echoes Zondi’s (2024) critique of the neo-colonial dimensions of EU–Africa partnerships, where African states appear as “policy takers” rather than equal partners. Second, the economic benefits are unevenly distributed. While urban and extractive sectors have attracted investment, rural communities remain marginalized, consistent with UNCTAD’s (2023) caution that macro-level opportunities rarely trickle down to grassroots populations without deliberate redistribution mechanisms. Respondents in Kano and Jigawa noted that EU-funded capacity-building in renewable energy remains concentrated in pilot urban centers, leaving agrarian communities excluded.

Third, the Agreement suffers from domestic institutional weaknesses. Corruption, elite capture, and limited bureaucratic efficiency undermine Nigeria’s ability to operationalize Samoa-aligned policies. This limitation corroborates Ojo and Omotayo’s (2021) argument that without ethical reforms in governance, development frameworks cannot produce meaningful transformation.

Lessons for the Future

From Nigeria’s experience, several critical lessons emerge:

1. **Context-sensitive adaptation of global norms:** Future frameworks must embed local realities in the implementation of governance and rights-based provisions. Normative prescriptions cannot succeed if they clash with entrenched socio-cultural practices. This is not a call for relativism but for contextual innovation in translating global values into African realities (Akinola, 2022).
2. **Institutional strengthening and capacity building:** The Agreement’s success is contingent on Nigeria’s ability to domesticate its provisions. Stronger institutions, transparent resource allocation, and anti-corruption safeguards are essential if external resources are to be directed toward poverty alleviation rather than elite capture.
3. **Inclusive stakeholder engagement:** Effective policy frameworks must go beyond elite negotiation and include **grassroots communities, civil society, and local governments**. Without such participation, the Agreement risks reproducing the gap between high-level commitments and lived realities—a gap long identified in Africa–EU development cooperation literature (Brown, 2020).

4. **Pan-African policy coherence:** For African countries at large, the Samoa Agreement demonstrates the need for stronger continental mechanisms that harmonize external partnerships with **Agenda 2063**. Only through collective bargaining and policy coherence can Africa avoid fragmented and donor-driven development trajectories.

Critical Reflection

Ultimately, the Samoa Agreement in Nigeria illustrates a dual reality: it is both a catalyst for reform and a reminder of structural dependency. Its economic and moral objectives represent progressive aspirations, but their implementation is constrained by Nigeria's governance deficit and Africa's uneven integration into global systems. This confirms Zondi's (2024) warning that unless Africa redefines the terms of engagement, such agreements risk reproducing dependency patterns under the guise of partnership. Thus, the lesson for future agreements is clear: Africa must invest in self-strengthening strategies—institutional reforms, inclusive governance, and regional solidarity—if it is to convert global frameworks like the Samoa Agreement from promises into lived developmental realities.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study reveal that the Samoa Agreement embodies both a transformative prospect and a contested policy framework for Nigeria. Morally and institutionally, the Agreement advances normative discourses on transparency, accountability, and gender inclusion; however, its translation into concrete behavioral and institutional reforms remains limited by entrenched patronage networks and elite resistance. Furthermore, the inclusion of provisions on LGBTQ+ rights has generated significant moral and cultural controversy, overshadowing broader governance and development objectives. This tension exemplifies the persistent challenges of norm diffusion and localization within culturally conservative settings (Okoye, 2024).

From an economic perspective, the Agreement has reinvigorated Nigeria's dialogue with the European Union (EU) on key areas such as trade facilitation, climate financing, and investment promotion. These engagements have produced modest but tangible gains in infrastructure development and renewable energy initiatives. Nevertheless, the outcomes remain unevenly distributed and constrained by systemic institutional weaknesses, thereby affirming UNCTAD's (2023) caution that macroeconomic progress often fails to translate into inclusive, grassroots-level development.

In sum, the Samoa Agreement encapsulates a paradoxical reality: while it provides Nigeria with viable avenues for governance reform and economic transformation, its overall impact is diluted by structural fragilities and socio-cultural resistance. This duality mirrors a broader African predicament, where global partnerships hold the promise of inclusivity and reform,

yet risk perpetuating dependency unless domestically adapted to local political and cultural contexts.

Recommendations

1. **Contextual Adaptation:** Moral and rights-based provisions must be localised to resonate with Nigeria's cultural and religious contexts.
2. **Institutional Strengthening:** Nigeria should prioritise anti-corruption safeguards and transparent mechanisms to ensure equitable distribution of external resources.
3. **Inclusive Participation:** Grassroots actors, local CSOs, and community leaders must be actively engaged to translate high-level agreements into lived realities.
4. **Regional Coherence:** African states should leverage continental frameworks, such as the AU's Agenda 2063, to negotiate collectively and reduce asymmetries in global partnerships.

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