Evaluating The Operational Effectiveness of The Nigerian National Identity Management Commission (NIMC)

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Abstract
The National Identification Number (NIN) is a unique number assigned to every Nigerian and legal resident of the country. A robust identity management system is crucial for delivering social and economic services effectively. This study evaluated the operational effectiveness of the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) and provided recommendations for improvement. Data was collected using a self-administered survey and open-ended interviews. Seventy-two participants responded to the survey, while ten individuals, including both NIMC staff and clients, were interviewed. The survey responses were analyzed using statistical tools. Results indicated widespread dissatisfaction with the current operational state and effectiveness of the NIMC. Key challenges identified included bribery, corruption, and inefficient bureaucracy. To address these issues, the study recommends reorienting NIMC staff in client management, enhancing collaboration with the National Population Commission (NPC) and the National Electoral Commission (NIEC) for data synergy, and adopting up-to-date digital technology for identity enrollment and management amongst others. However, it was also recommended that further studies in this area can explore digital technologies NIMC can adopt for identity management to reduce inefficiencies in its operations.
Keywords: Identity, Operational Effectiveness, National Identity, Management, Adminstration

Introduction

Prior to Western colonial rule, Nigeria comprised over 450 independent ethnic groups, each with distinct cultures, religions, and economic activities. The British consolidated these diverse entities into the nation of Nigeria, imposing their customs and culture. This cultural imposition led to identity conflicts (Nnoli, 1978; Eze, 2014). Identity encompasses distinctive traits defining an individual, while identity administration refers to managing these traits for identity verification (Landahl, 2007; NIMC, 2007). Identity management systems regulate individual data, crucial in enterprise IT for controlling access to sensitive information (Claub *et al.,* 2001; Kohn *et al.,* 2001; David, 1985).

Poor identity management hinders growth, contributing to various issues, including crime, terrorism, and ethnic conflicts (Pang and Lips, 2008; Adjei, 2013; Ayamba, 2016). Nigeria faces challenges with fragmented identity systems across government organizations, hindering service delivery (NIMC, 2007). Effective identity management is vital in public administration for providing services and conducting population censuses (Anderson *et al.,* 2016). Nigeria initiated identity management structures post-independence, but earlier systems faced challenges such as poor coverage and lack of standards (Musa, 2000; Ayamba and Ekanem, 2016; Aliyu, 2017).

In 2007, Nigeria implemented a national identity management framework aiming to harmonize and establish a reliable system (NIMC, 2013). However, challenges remain, including inadequate data infrastructure, hindering development programs (Shangodoyin and Lasisi, 2011). The World Bank reported progress in issuing National Identifying Numbers (NINs) but highlighted disparities in coverage (World Bank, 2015). The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) oversees registration infrastructures, aiming to enhance accessibility (NIMC's Official Release, 2017). This research project focuses on evaluating the operational effectiveness of the NIMC. Employing evidence-based methods, the study aims to identify areas for improvement within the NIMC. The expected outcomes include highlighting the need for process changes, evaluating current practices, identifying best practices, and preparing for positive impacts on agency operations. Conducted within the geographic and operational scope of the NIMC, the research aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation and recommendations for improvement. Utilizing internal documents and other sources, the study seeks to support its findings and recommendations.

This study's objective is to evaluate the National Identity Management Commission's operational effectiveness. Specifically, the objectives are;

1. To evaluate the National Identity Management's present degree of operational effectiveness
2. To examine the difficulties applicants, have while applying for a National Identification Number (NIN) and to pinpoint the underlying reasons of these difficulties.
3. To explore best practices for enhancing NIMC operations and eliminating bottlenecks in the NIN registration process.
4. to investigate how to enhance NIN applicants' overall user experience, including methods to make it less burdensome instances of extortion by NIMC personnel.
5. To offer suggestions for practical change management techniques that enhance the efficacy of NIMC's operations, with an emphasis on enhancing NIN registration process and reducing inequality.

Literature Review

According to Alubo (2009), identity is a synthesis of socio-cultural characteristics that a person possesses or assumed to be sharing, with other people on the presumption that a specific group could be distinguished. Ethnicity, religion, gender, class, and other factors combine to form identity other elements that all refer to the same person as they define themselves or are seen by others to be (Alubo, 2009). Thuan (2007), defined identity management as the process, strategies, and innovations used to oversee the full life cycle of client personalities over a framework and to control client access to the framework assets by associating their rights and restrictions and centered on the idea of national security to defend the country and its interests (Obiunu and Ebunu, 2013). As a result, various strategies have been used by nations all over the world in order to configure their identity administration systems. Al-Khouri (2012) claims that the goal of such efforts is to improve techniques for identity validation and verification to lessen crime, fight insurgency, stop identity fraud, manage immigration, stop financial scam, and give both citizens and legal residents better service (Kenyatta, 2015; King, 2012). Every nation has a different system of identification and uses it for different things. While some nations issue national ID cards made of plastic, while other nations only issue e-ID numbers, which are typically given to lawful residents and nationals following the biometric and demographic registration procedures (Wang, 2003; Obi, 2006). Even though numerous studies on identity management programs in various countries have been conducted worldwide, it is only recently that researchers began to pay attention to the fact that identity management is an important segment in national administration (Al-Khouri, 2012; Anderson *et al*., 2015; Omoniyi, 2012; Hickock, 2013).

Conceptual Clarification

Identity, as Mostov (1994) suggests, reflects how others perceive an individual. Hogg and Abrams (1988) define it as one's self-conception and relationships with others. Deng (1995) adds that identity encompasses race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture. These factors influence tailored services on the internet, at work, and through mobile devices. Identity involves shared characteristics, including size, height, form, and temporal and spatial context. Verba (1968) posits that nationalism and identity correlate with individuals' belief in their cultural belonging or national citizenship. National identity extends beyond physical location, encompassing self-identity and psychological bonds. Residing within a nation's borders and feeling affinity toward it are crucial for a sense of national identity. Verba distinguishes two aspects: vertical identification, relating to political groups and governmental symbols, and horizontal identification, concerning societal integration and trust among citizens. This analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of national identity, emphasizing both individual perception and societal cohesion within the political structure (Scorer, 2007; Crompton, 2004).

Summary of The 2007 National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) Act

The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) Act 2007, No 23 contains 34 Sections. The primary aim of establishing the National Identity Management Commission was to develop a database, maintain the database, carry out registration of citizens and issue general multipurpose identity cards to Nigerians both at home and abroad.

Part 1 of the Act dealt with establishing the body known and called the National Identity Management Commission, which shall have under its corporate name, seal, and may be sued in such name. The Act allowed the commission for holding, purchasing, or selling any

property, either moveable or immovable, to enable the Commission to achieve policy thrust. Part I of the Act consist of the members of the Board, which include the Federal Road Safety Commission, the Federal Inland Revenue Service, the National Pension Commission, the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigerian Immigration Service, the Office of the National Security Adviser, the National Population Commission, the Central Bank of Nigeria, the State Security Service, the Economic and Finance Crime Commission, the Chief of Defense Staff, the Corporate Affairs Commission, and the Independent National Electoral Commission. The Act states that the President shall appoint the chairman of the Commission, and all of the members of the Board shall be part-time except the Director General, who works full-time. The Act spelt out that the tenure of the chair shall be in four years and maybe reappointed if the President deem it fit.

The Part II of the Act disclosed the power and functions of the Commission, which include: creating, maintaining, managing and operating the commission database; registering all Nigerian citizens into the National Identity Database; registering non-citizens of Nigeria who reside in Nigeria legally; issue of a General Multipurpose ID Cards to persons who have registered; keep communications secured considering end users in both private and public establishment, agency including Government Service Centres, Card Acceptance Devices; also collaborate with other agencies and bodies in setting principles and technical specifications of telecommunications connecting between establishments; responds to verification enquiries in respect to identification of individuals; register both birth and death in Nigeria; carry out research and monitor development in the Commission; among others.

The Part 2(6) of the Act defined the power of the Commission. Some of the important aspects of these clauses are that the Commission cannot deny any person access to information on data under this Act. The Commission is empowered to create and run administrative and oversight of the States, local government councils and Area Council.

The Part III of the Act stated the functions of the Commission's Staff. The Act clearly stated that the Commission should have a Director General who is also the Chief Executive Office and accountable for the daily administration of the Commission. The Director General term of office shall be four years, and they may be reappointed if the President deem it fit. The Act also stated the condition of service of other staffers of the Commission.

Part IV of the Act defined how a fund will be created and maintained by the Commission, comprising, among other things, of the federal government's yearly allocation and initial takeoff funds.

The Part V of the Act stated clearly making a national identity database official. Nigerian and non-Nigerian citizens who may register will be included in the database. Any individual who entered their information into the database is referred to as a registered person, according to Act clause 2. The database's objectives include, among others: using fingerprints and other biometric data as a distinctive method of identifying the individual; enabling harmonization of the registered Nigerians' current identities. The registration and issuing of Multipurpose Identity Cards were also covered in Part V. Part V also included the assignment of national identity cards. It also mentioned the third party's disclosure of information. The clause defined the cancellation and withdrawal of the Multipurpose Identity Cards as well as the change in circumstances and mistakes, as well as the safety and maintenance of the Multipurpose Identity Cards.

Part VI clearly stated the Offences and Penalties. The Act outlined the penalties for violators, including anybody who unauthorized access to the database or the material inside or who refused to give the Commission the information it required; provided false information,

among others, is liable to ten years' imprisonment with the option to pay a fine. However, depending on the degree of the offence, may be liable to not less than three years' imprisonment or a fine option less than N250,000.00.

The identity management act, as discussed in the study by Agwor *et al* (2021)
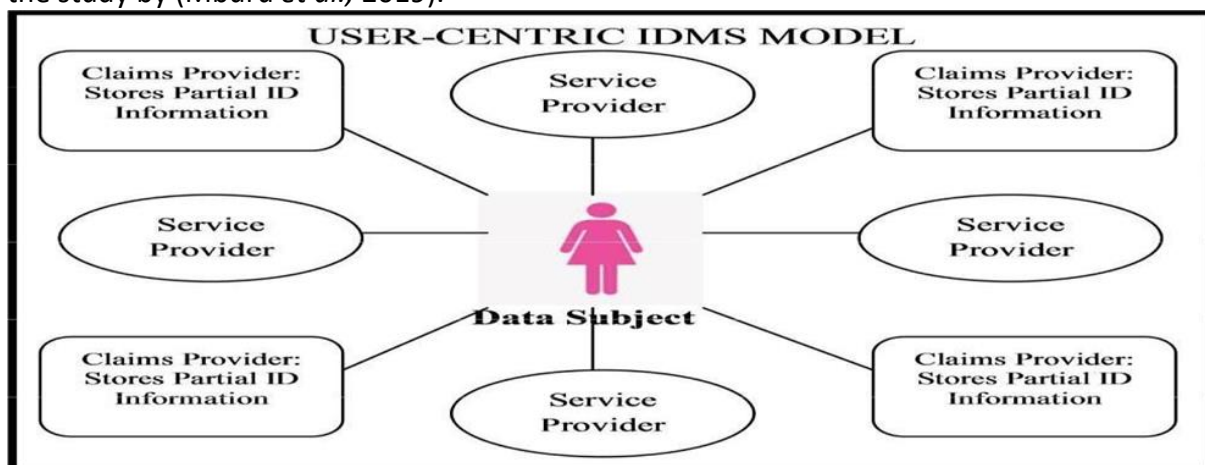
Theory of Identity Administration System
Researchers Lips and Pang (2008); Oxford Internet Institute (2006); OECD (2007) identify three identity management models: federated, user-centric, and organization-centric. While each facilitates single sign-on for public interactions, they differ in handling identity data, offering users diverse options for managing their identities.

Theory for Organization-Centric Identity administration: The centralized identity management theory operates on an interdisciplinary basis, allowing organizations to store and manage user data efficiently. This design synchronizes user identities and implements hierarchical rules based on algorithms (OECD, 2007; Greenwood, 2007). Businesses prefer this model for its swift handling of identity and access issues, reducing the need for extensive assistance (Hansen et al., 2004). However, criticisms abound, including concerns over data concentration, potential errors, increased exposure to data breaches, and unidentified victimization, highlighting the model's drawbacks despite its apparent benefits.

The identity management theory that is user-centric: The user-centric identity management theory empowers users with full control over their identity data, allowing them to manage interactions across multiple personal data logs. While ongoing scholarly research continues to evaluate its effectiveness, the model prioritizes user interests in data ownership and privacy (Lips and Pang, 2008). It comprises identity providers, enabling users to create separate accounts, dependent parties granting access, and identity selectors allowing user choice (Lips and Pang, 2008). When integrated with organization-centric and federated theories, it promises enhanced data sharing within organizations. However, users bear responsibility for privacy breaches, highlighting the model's potential benefits and risks in safeguarding user data and privacy (Hansen et al., 2003).

Table 1
The pictorial representation of the federated identity management model as presented from the study by (Mburu *et al.,* 2019).


Federated identity administration theory: The Federated theory allows users to grant access to their codified personal information, controlling which identity management companies can access it. Authentication precedes access configuration, enabling collaboration between

identity service providers and public or private service providers. This trust-driven model operates based on current interpersonal connections, with shared ownership and operational decisions among parties. While the principal user retains privacy rights, decisions are governed by collectively agreed relational rules and protocols (OECD, 2007). Academically, the Federated model is lauded for its defense against management, security, and cost risks, and its promotion of inter-agency cooperation. However, criticisms include concerns about duplicate identities and trust issues. The model is seen as advantageous for enhancing government coordination and cooperation, albeit with inherent challenges to be addressed (Liberty Alliance Project, 2004).

Table 2
The pictorial representation of the federated identity management model as presented from the study by (Mburu et al., 2019).
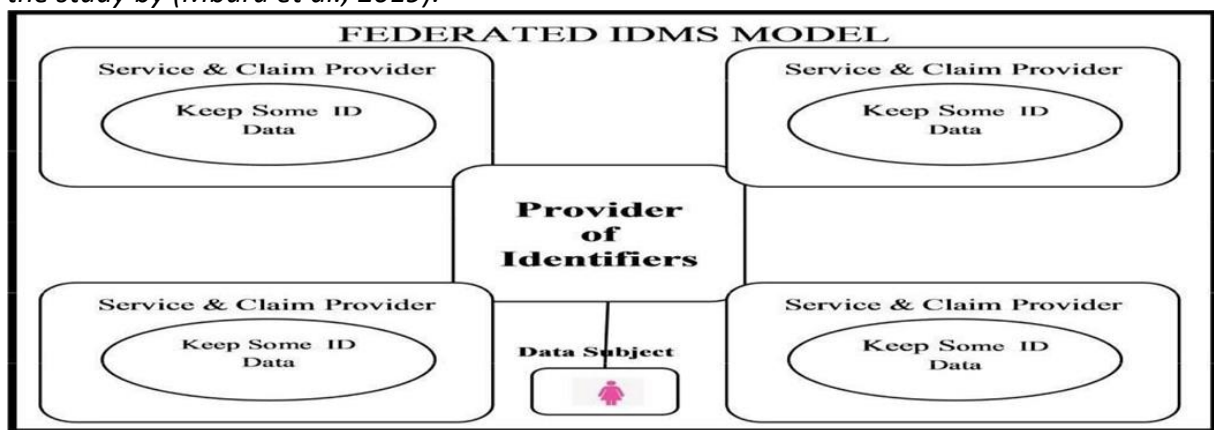
Elements of Identity Management Solution
The components of a potential solution are identified and explained for a few typical identity management failures in this section. The three components of the options for identity management are addressed in the paragraphs that follow:
Authentication, the process of verifying a user's identity, involves various techniques such as credentials, biometrics, and unique identifiers like the National Identification Number (NIN) in Nigeria. Ensuring trustworthy identification systems is crucial for granting authorized access to resources and facilitating law enforcement use (Crompton, 2004; Thuan, 2007).
Integration, defined as systems' ability to exchange and utilize information efficiently, is vital for interoperability. Achieving interoperable identity management standards and policies remains a challenge in Nigeria due to trust issues and institutional responsibilities within the identity ecosystem (Miller, 2000; Moen, 2000; Udunze, 2015).
Data dissemination and storage entail managing data in a manner enabling its retrieval and utilization for future operations, crucial for law enforcement and security organizations. An efficient identity management system should facilitate real-time access to usable data for incident commanders and law enforcement to respond effectively to critical situations (Landahl, 2007).
Despite acknowledging the necessity of robust identity management solutions, Nigeria faces hurdles such as institutional resistance, legal disputes, and slow adoption of harmonized identity and biometric databases. Overcoming these challenges is imperative for realizing the potential benefits of integrated and secure identity management systems in Nigeria's context.

Evaluation of The National Identity Management Commission and National Development in Nigeria

Electronic databases are structured collections of data accessed through computer systems, managed by database management systems (DBMS). These systems encompass software tools for data analysis and interact with users and applications. Database systems combine management systems, databases, and associated applications. Experts categorize DBMS by the databases they support, such as relational or non-relational databases. Managing databases involves designing, implementing, and maintaining data to maximize its value (Halder and Cortesi, 2001; NADRA, 2016).

National development, a holistic process encompassing economic, social, political, and cultural aspects, involves institutions' expansion and providing opportunities in health, education, and employment. Failures in national development are attributed to insufficient public consultation, corruption, poor governance, and mono-economic policies (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011; Ogwumike, 1995). Despite political independence, Nigeria's economy remains neo-colonial, hindering comprehensive national development (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011).

Nigeria's population, the largest in Africa, faces challenges with census data accuracy and reliability. Disagreements and controversies surround census figures, affecting development planning and growth projections (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) plays a vital role in improving Nigeria's database accuracy by managing the National Identification Number (NIN) enrollment process. The Commission's efforts reduce government spending on citizen data collection and facilitate political sector needs (Ayamba and Ekanem, 2016).

However, NIMC encounters challenges, including underfunding and inadequate resources. Its effectiveness relies on strong political commitment and adequate funding from the government (Vanguard, 2019). Despite challenges, NIMC's initiatives signify progress toward an advanced and accurate database for Nigeria, crucial for national development planning and efficient governance.

The Relationship Between Identity Management Policy and National Development

Identity administration policies play a pivotal role in the social and economic development of low- and medium-income countries. The adoption and implementation of robust identity management systems are essential for these nations to progress globally (Adjei, 2013). However, many developing countries, including Nigeria, still lag in fully embracing identity management policies, primarily due to governmental disinterest and inadequate investments in technology (Olesen, 2011). The government's inclination to control the population often hampers progress in identity management, with cost considerations overshadowing the numerous benefits such systems could bring (Al-khouri, 2012). Despite hosting seminars and workshops, tangible outcomes remain elusive.

While some developing countries have made strides in producing national identity cards, these efforts fall short of establishing comprehensive identity management systems. Countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan have adopted strategies for handling personal data consistently and securely, emphasizing biometric-linked identity codes (NIMC, 2021a). These systems have unlocked various opportunities for socioeconomic development by facilitating fast electronic data exchange and reducing fraudulent activities, fostering economic growth and efficiency (Trevidic, 1983). The economic benefits of identity management policies are manifold. Effective identity management enhances security,

enables faster data exchange, and transforms communication and business transactions. Studies by Birrell and Shneider (2013); Pang and Lips (2008) highlight a positive correlation between national investments in identity administration infrastructure and economic activity. Reduced business costs, improved accessibility, and enhanced service delivery are among the many advantages identified (LBS Breakfast Club Meeting, 2015). Identity management also fosters community cohesion, supports self-employment, and facilitates cross-border transactions, essential for economic growth and development (NIMC, 2021a).

Also, identity management policies benefit society by enhancing service delivery and reducing identity-related fraud. The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) in Nigeria, for instance, issues National Identification Numbers (NINs) to citizens, aiming to eliminate duplicate identities and improve service delivery efficiency (Ayamba and Ekanem, 2016). The integration of various governmental databases under the NIN umbrella streamlines verification processes across public and private sectors, enhancing overall governance and citizen services (NIMC, 2021a).

Nigeria's digital identity system, centered around the National Identity Number (NIN), aims to unify diverse identity databases and streamline verification processes across government organizations (NIMC, 2015). The system, launched in 2012 and made mandatory in 2019, seeks to provide a unique identity for each citizen, facilitating access to governmental and private services (Vanguard, 2018; World Bank, 2016). While the digital ID system offers convenience and efficiency, concerns about privacy, surveillance, and exclusion have prompted scrutiny from civil society organizations globally (Centre for Internet and Society, 2020). Despite challenges, digital ID systems remain crucial for achieving sustainable development goals, including ensuring legal identity for all by 2030 (Centre for Internet and Society, 2020).

Figure i: A blog review post by Meroz and Deggendorf (2018) discussed the benefits of having a digital identity and provided the figure above to show the benefits and characteristics of a more secure digital identity system.

Law Enforcement and National Security in Focus: Identity Management Program Functions

An effective national identity management system encompasses civic registration processes, cooperative regulations across institutions, privacy protection measures, and economic application frameworks (Adjei, 2013). Such programs serve various purposes, including legal, medical, agricultural, and law enforcement tasks, as well as facilitating cross-jurisdictional travel, government services, surveillance, and security, ultimately bolstering national security and public trust.

The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) oversees Nigeria's national identification database, serving as a centralized hub for identity validation and verification. This database integrates with other key agencies like Immigration, Road Safety, Customs, and Police, using fingerprint biometrics to uniquely identify individuals and share their identification number across databases (NIMC, 2015). Harmonizing databases enhances security, simplifies access to services, and combats issues like immigration, illegal employment, and human trafficking, while protecting citizens from identity fraud.

Integration with the NIMC's database offers numerous benefits to agencies like the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), enabling quick verification of driver information, reducing processing time for licenses, and enhancing accountability by providing access to drivers' traffic histories. Similarly, requiring a National Identification Number (NIN) for passport applications streamlines processes for the Nigeria Immigration Service, facilitating border clearance, reducing illegal immigration, and improving security screening (The Nation Newspaper, 2017).

Prison administrators also benefit from integrating biometric data with the national identification database, eliminating duplicate bookings, preventing identity theft, and enhancing visitor identification and prisoner tracking, ultimately improving facility management and security (NIMC, 2015). Likewise, law enforcement agencies like the police gain invaluable tools for identifying individuals and monitoring criminal activity in real-time, bolstering public safety and security.

Research Methodology

This study utilized the research onion model (Figure ii) developed by Saunders et al. (2019) as a comprehensive framework, encompassing research philosophy, method, approach, strategy, sampling, data analysis, and ethics. This model facilitated a systematic explanation of the chosen approaches and philosophical foundations, as well as the detailing of data collection and analysis methods.
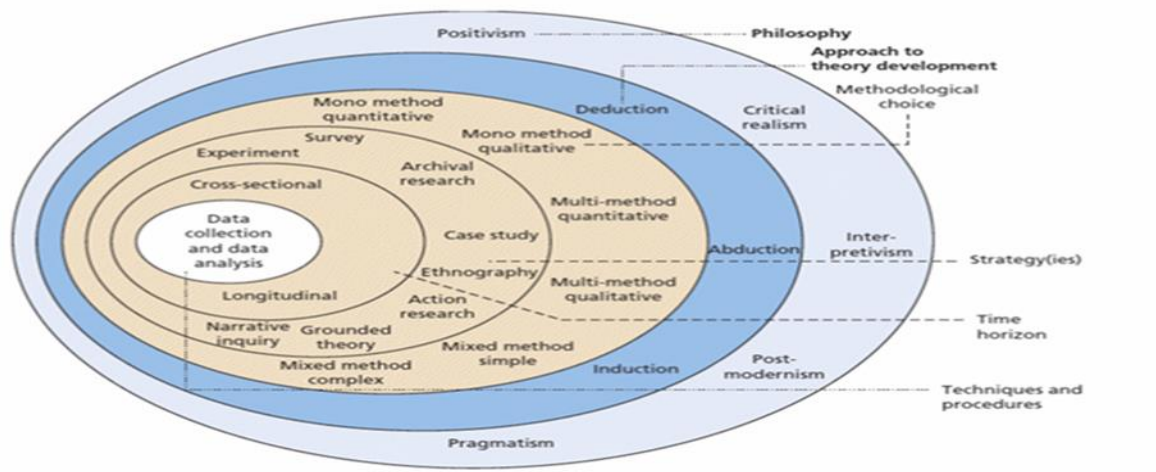

Figure ii: Research Onion Model (Saunders et al., 2019, p.124)

Philosophical Perspective and Approach: This study was based on a pragmatic philosophical perspective which prioritizes practical consequences and real-world applications over abstract theories (Babbie, 2010; Saunders et al., 2019). Researchers use pragmatism for its systematic problem-solving approach, emphasizing empirical evidence and practical outcomes (Saunders et al., 2019). It was deemed appropriate for this study because of its emphasis on practical outcomes, adaptability, and systematic problem-solving, which enable researchers to address issues under study effectively and generate innovative solutions (Howell, 2013).

Furthermore, an abductive approach to theory development was employed which involves generating hypotheses or theoretical explanations that best fit observed phenomena or empirical data, even if not definitively proven, aiming to provide the most plausible explanation. It allows for creativity and intuition to inform theoretical evolution and to understanding the generalisable and the specifics of the observed phenomena (Graue, 2015; Saunders et al., 2019; Creswell, 2014).

Research Strategy and Data Collection: This study employed a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. One hundred closed-ended questionnaires were administered to individuals undergoing NIMC registrations, while ten NIMC staff members were purposively interviewed using open-ended questionnaires. This methodological diversity facilitated a comprehensive evaluation of the operational effectiveness of the Nigerian National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), capturing various perspectives, experiences, and contextual factors influencing its performance (Denscombe, 2017; Pandey and Pandey, 2021). Data analysis utilized Chi-square and regression analysis conducted with IBM SPSS software (Tjora, 2018), enabling examination of opinions, attitudes, and preferences within the demographic population.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical issues were rigorously addressed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants, emphasizing their right to withdraw and their awareness of the study objectives and potential risks. Measures were taken to ensure no harm was inflicted on participants, adhering to ethical standards. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to foster honest responses and protect participants' identities, promoting trust, professionalism, and integrity in the study.

Results

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of survey questionnaire.

Seventy-two (72) participants responded to the survey questionnaires. The data collected from the survey is presented in the Table 1 below. The data is presented in simple percentile and histograms, showing the difference in the perception of the study participants to the operational effectiveness of the NIMC. The data is presented in composite charts and Histograms to compare the responses of the respondents to the survey questions, as well as generate numerical data, which can be used to draw conclusions on the operational effectiveness of the NIMC.

The collected data was analyzed using the Chi-square test of best fit at the p-value ≤ 0.05. The statistical analysis shows that there is significant difference in the perception and opinion of the study participants, the calculated p-value is shown in table 1.

Interviews conducted for NIMC staff and clients

Four (4) NIMC staff were interviewed on the nature of the task assigned to them within the NIMC organization, open-ended questions were asked, and responses were recorded. In addition to the client survey questionnaire, six (6) clients were interviewed using open-ended questions to understand their perspective on the operational effectiveness of the NIMC. Their responses were recorded and discussed in chapter five of this research work. Check the appendix for questions asked during the interview.

The information obtained through the interviews of the participants indicated the processes involved in the registration of the client and the duration it takes for the issuance of a NIN to the client.

On the issue of the client registration process, the participant responds thus:

> "An enrollment form is issued to the client seeking to be registered onto the NIMC database. The form requires information such as BVN. The BVN is used to generate the NIN for the registering client. Even though the organization is sometimes faced with certain challenges that include the disparity in names or date of birth, with these challenges coming up, the client must go back to the bank and rectify the issue of either disparity in names or date of birth. With the disparity rectified and corrected, the client is required to undergo biometric capturing. After the biometric capturing, a tracking number and slip are generated and issued to the client, which will be used for the receipt of the NIN."

On the issue of duration for the generation and issuance of the NIN, the respondent responded thus:

> "For the issuance of a new NIN, it takes an average of 1-2 days. While for correction and modifications. It takes about a couple hours and up to about 24 hours."

While responding to the question of people saying that it takes longer for them to be issued the NIN, the respondent said:

> "That can mean there is an issue with their BVN or there is an issue with the system at the headquarters in Abuja. They do have issues with their systems in Abuja, but they do call us to inform us. For example, we have an issue with the one we call DOB, which is the date of birth from the Abuja HQRS. The ones we sent 4 weeks ago for approval, we have not gotten it back. But on a good day, it shows up within one week."

The respondents pointed out a major challenge, which they have at their office,

> "We just do the application and send it to the headquarters. However, sometimes their response time is too long. The people who verify for us at our offices have their own clients that they attend to as well, so sometimes it causes them not to respond on time."

Clients were interviewed and shared their experiences during the registration process for enrollment into the NIMC database. Their response is as follows:

> "We had to come very early in the morning to join a very long queue, with the NIMC staff coming in late and attending to the clients with great laxity; the process

is chaotic and marred with the maltreatment and shunting of the queue by the NIMC direct client or clients that are willing to pay money to get express attention."

A respondent said:
"It took me about 3 years to get the NIN permanent card."

A respondent said:
"They got the information on the requirements for the registration from their parents, as they registered for their NIN prior."

A respondent made a statement on how the process is not efficiently handled:
"When we complained about the issue of making payments for express, we were told that if we are not willing to pay for the express service, we should go home."

Table 1. showing the responses of the study particpants based on the survey questionnaire

| Questions	Variables	N(72)	N %	p-value
Gender	Male	42	58.3	0.1590
	Female	30	41.7	
To what extent do you agree that applying for a Nigerian national identity card is a straightforward process?	Strongly Agree	9	12.5	0.0044
	Agree	22	30.6	
	Neutral	13	18.1	
	Disagree	22	30.6	
	Strongly Disagree	6	8.3	
How long did it take you to obtain your NIN number?	1-2 Days	12	16.7	0.1231
	1-2 weeks	24	33.3	
	1-2 months	14	19.4	
	> 2 months	22	30.6	
How Satisfied are you with the amount of time it took to complete the application process?	Very Satisfied	7	9.7	0.0155
	Satisfied	13	18.1	
	Neutral	19	26.4	
	Dissatisfied	23	31.9	
	Very dissatisfied	10	13.9	
To what extent do you agree that the NIMC staff were knowledgeable and competent in assisting you during the application process?	Strongly Agree	6	8.3	0.0000
	Agree	29	40.3	
	Neutral	19	26.4	
	Disagree	12	16.7	
	Strongly Disagree	6	8.3	
To what extent do you agree that the requirements for the application process were clearly communicated to you?	Strongly Agree	9	12.5	0.0000
	Agree	30	41.7	
	Neutral	20	27.8	
	Disagree	10	13.9	
	Strongly Disagree	3	4.1	
How Strongly Agreetisfied are you with the clarity of the requirements for the application process?	Very Satisfied	10	13.9	0.0000
	Satisfied	28	38.9	
	Neutral	22	30.6	
	Dissatisfied	9	12.5	
	Very dissatisfied	3	4.1	
To what extent do you agree that the overall application process was efficient and effective?	Strongly Agree	8	11.1	0.0204
	Agree	22	30.6	
	Neutral	15	20.8	
	Disagree	19	26.4	
	Strongly Disagree	8	11.1	
To what extent do you agree that the process of obtaining a Nigerian national identity card is transparent and fair?	Strongly Agree	6	8.3	0.0600
	Agree	13	18.1	
	Neutral	19	26.4	
	Disagree	20	27.8	
	Strongly Disagree	14	19.4	
Have you ever been prompted to pay more money to accelerate the processing of your application?	Yes	37	51.4	0.0000
	No	32	44.4	
	Decline to answer	3	4.2	
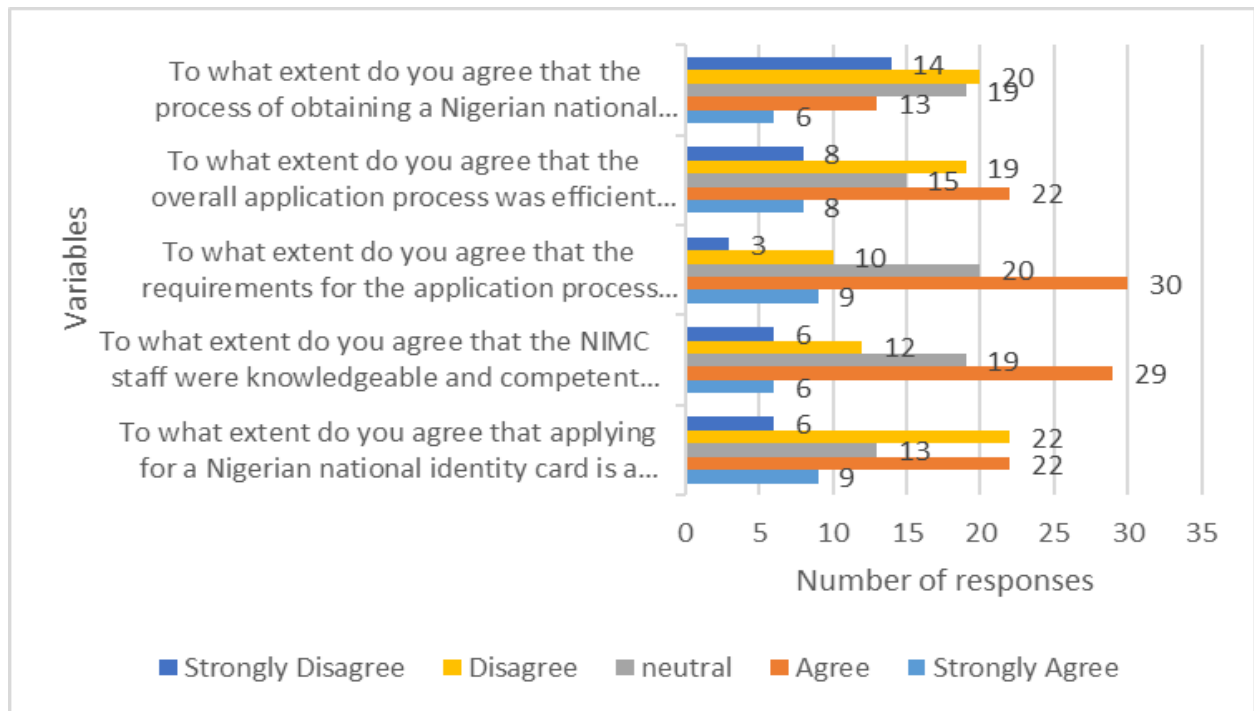
Fig iii. A composite chart showing the number of responses based on the questionnaire survey on the operational effectiveness of the NIMC

The findings of this study revealed the perception and opinion of the study participants based on the response they provided to the survey questions, the data collected showed that 12.5%(9) of the study participants strongly agree with the opinion that the application process for NIN is straightforward, 30.6%(22) of the study participants agree with the opinion that the process was straightforward, 18.1%(13) of the study participants were neutral to whether the process was straightforward or not, while 30.6%(22) and 8.3%(6) of the study participants respectively disagreed to the opinion that the process was straightforward.

On the opinion of the NIMC staff being knowledgeable and competent to assist the NIMC clients, the study showed that 8.3%(6) and 40.3%(29) of the study participants respectively strongly agree and agree with the opinion that the NIMC staff are knowledagble and competent to handle the registration process. While, 26.4%(19) of the study participants remain neutral to the opinion. 16.7%(12) and 8.3%(6) of the study participants agree and strongly disagree to the opinion of the NIMC staff being competent to assist the clients during the registration process.

The opinion of study participants was assessed on the requirements of the registration process being clearly communicated for to the clients: 12.4%(9) and 41.7%(30) of the study respectively strongly agree and agree with the opinion that the requirements of registration was clearly communicated. While, 4.1%(3) and 13.9%(13.9) of the study participants respectively strongly disagree and disagree with the opinion. However, 27.8%(20) were neutral and neither agree nor disagree with the opinion that the registration requirements was properly communicated. Statistical analysis revealed that there is significant difference in the response of the study participants on the opinion that the requirement for NIMC registration was clearly communicate to the client. 11.1%(8) and 30.6%(22) of study participants respectively strongly agree and agree with the opinion that the NIMC registration process was effective and efficient, 20.8%(15) had a neutral response to the effectiveness and efficiency of the NIMC registration process. While, 11.1%(8) and 26.4%(19) of the study

participants respectively strongly disagreed and disagrees with the registration process being effective and efficient.

On the opinion of the NIMC registration process and obtaining the NIN being transparent and fair, 8.3%(6) and 18.1%(13) of the study participants respectively strongly agree and agree with the opinion that the process of obtaining a NIN was transparent and fair. 27.8%(20) and 19.4%(14) of the study participants disagree and strongly disagreed, while 26.4%(19) are neutral to the opinion that the process of obtaining the NIN is transparent and fair. The statistical difference was insignificant as the calculated p-value is greater than the tabulated value.
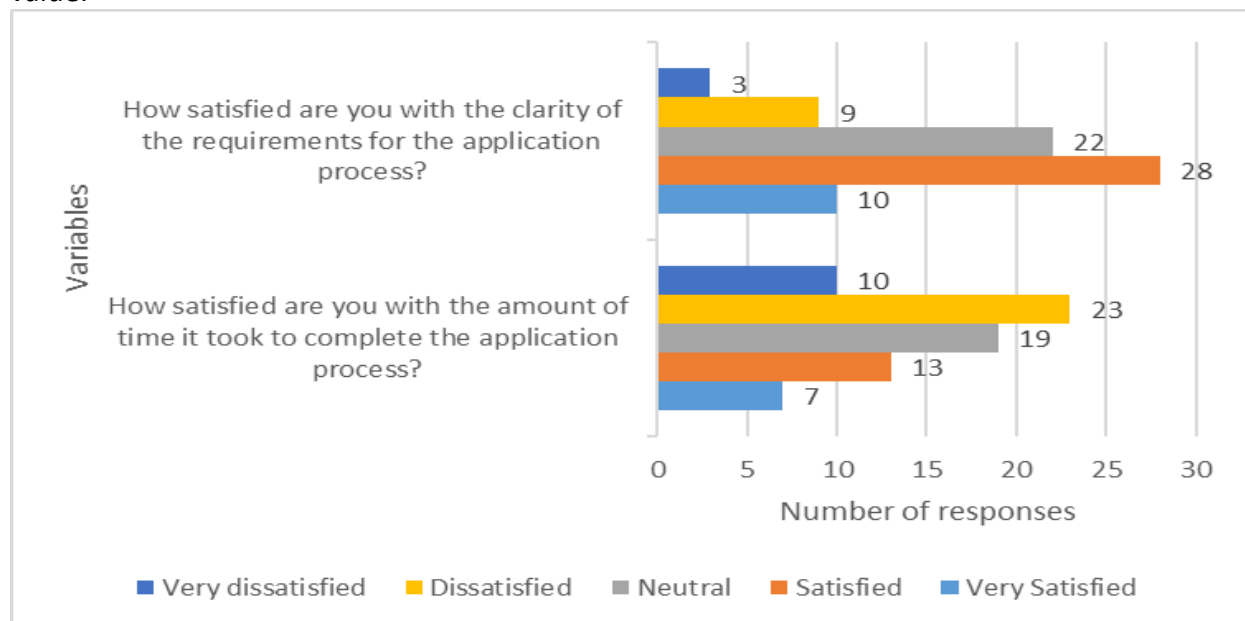
Fig iv. A composite chart showing the responses of the study participants on the level of satisfaction they have in their dealings with the NIMC.

The fig 2 shows the data on the perception based on the satisfaction of the study participants based on the responses provided to the survey questions. 9.7%(7) and 18.1%(13) of the study participants are very satisfied and satisfied respectively of the duration it took for the issuance of the NIN, 13.9%(10) and 31.9%(23) were very dissatisfied and dissatisfied with the duration of time for the issuance of the NIN. While, 26.4%(19) of the study participants were neutral on the opinion about the duration for the issuance of the NIN to the client.

On the opinion of the clarity of the requirement for the application process, 13.9%(10) and 38.9%(28) of the respective participants responses were very satisfied and satisfied, 12.5%(9) and 4.1%(3) were dissatisfied and satisfied respectively of the clarity of the application process. While, 30.6%(22) of the study participants response was neutral.
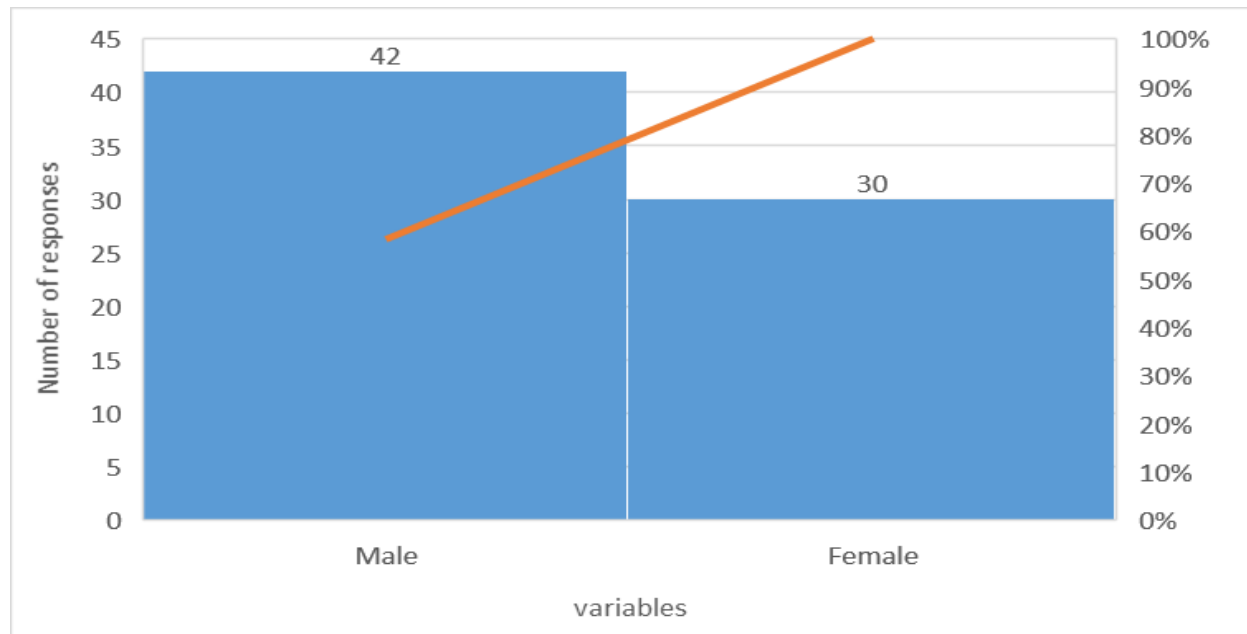
Fig v. Histogram showing the disaggregation of the study participants across gender.
There gender segregation of the study participants is presented in the fig 3, it was observed that 58.3%(42) and 41.7%(30) were males and females respectively.
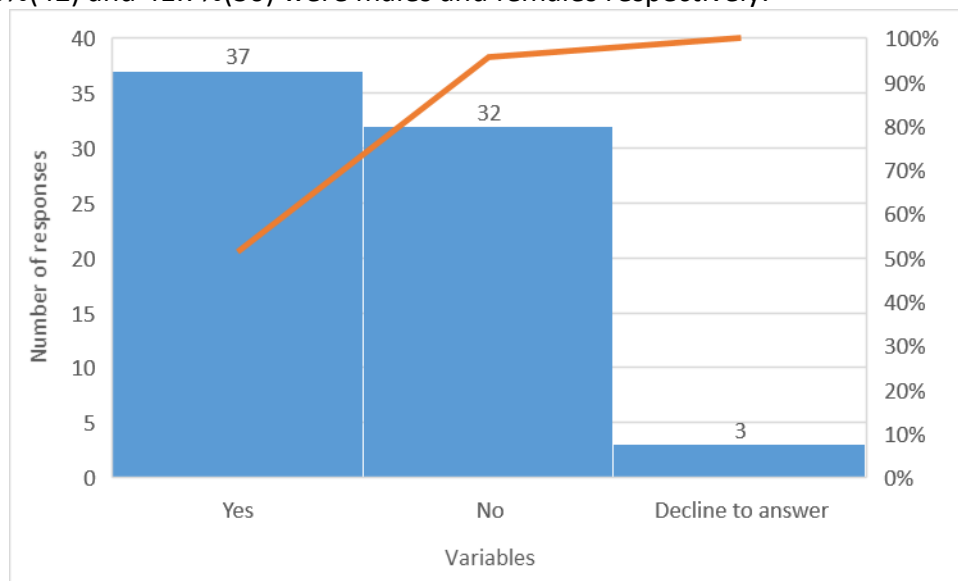

Fig vi. Have you ever been prompted to pay more money to accelerate the processing of your application?
As shown in fig 4. 51.4%(37) study participants responded in the affirmative that they were asked to pay money to be enrolled into the NIMC database, while 44.4%(32) were not asked to pay for the NIN registration. 4.2% (3) of the study participants declined to provide response on being asked to pay money to be registered for the NIN. Statistical analysis showed no significant difference in the opinion of the study participants on the opinion of being charged a fee for registration for their NIN.
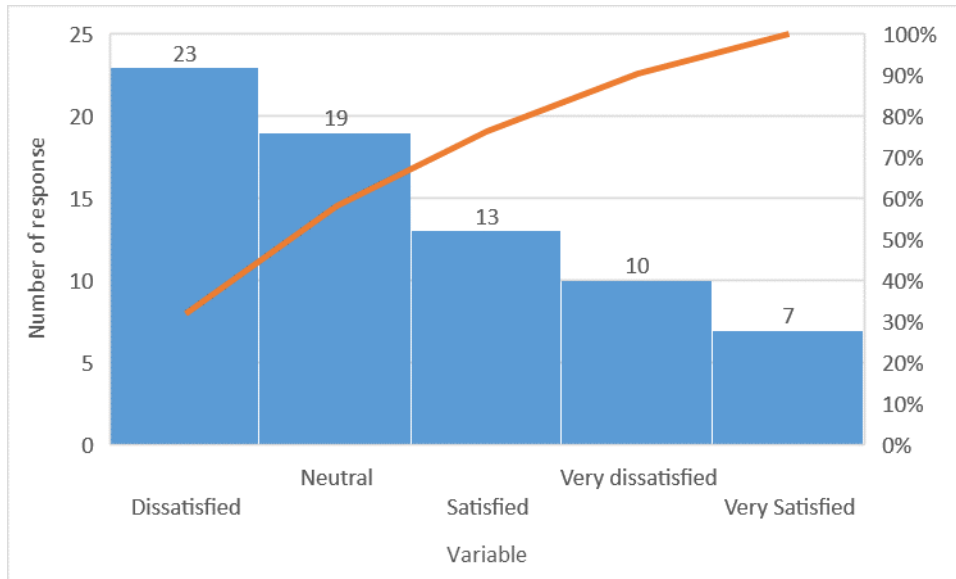
Fig vii. How satisfied are you with the amount of time it took to complete the application process?
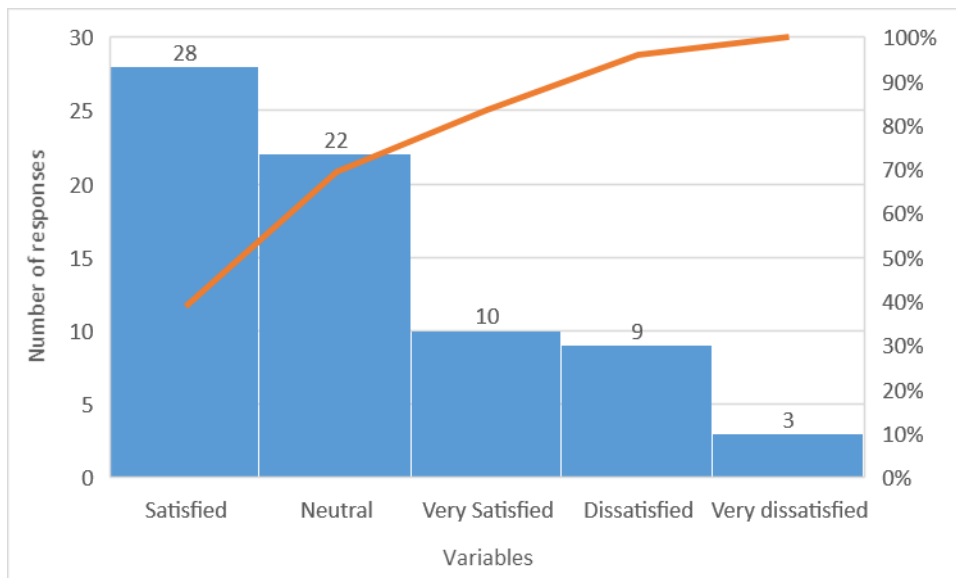

Fig viii. How satisfied are you with the clarity of the requirements for the application process?
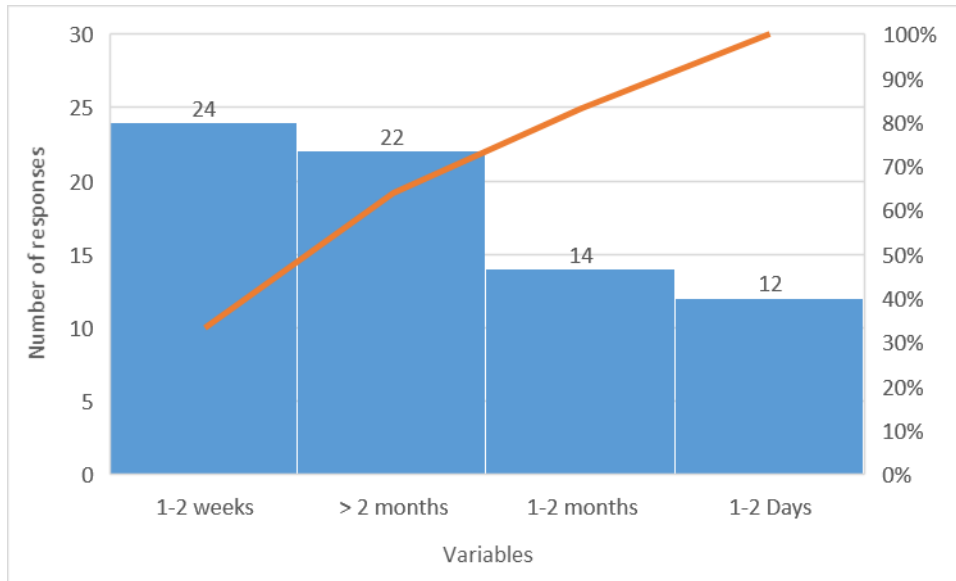
Fig ix. How long did it take you to obtain your NIN number?

As shown in the fig 7. The study revealed that 33.3%(24) of the study participants had to wait for a period of 1-2 weeks to be issued the NIN, 30.6%(22) of the study participants waited for a period of month than 2 months to be issued the NIN, while 16.7%(12) waited 1-2 days and 19.4(14) of the study participants had to wait for a period of about 1-2 months to get the NIN issued to them. The calculated p-value is less than the tabulated p-value, which indicates that there is no significant difference in the duration of the issuance of the NIN among the study participants as presented in Table 1.
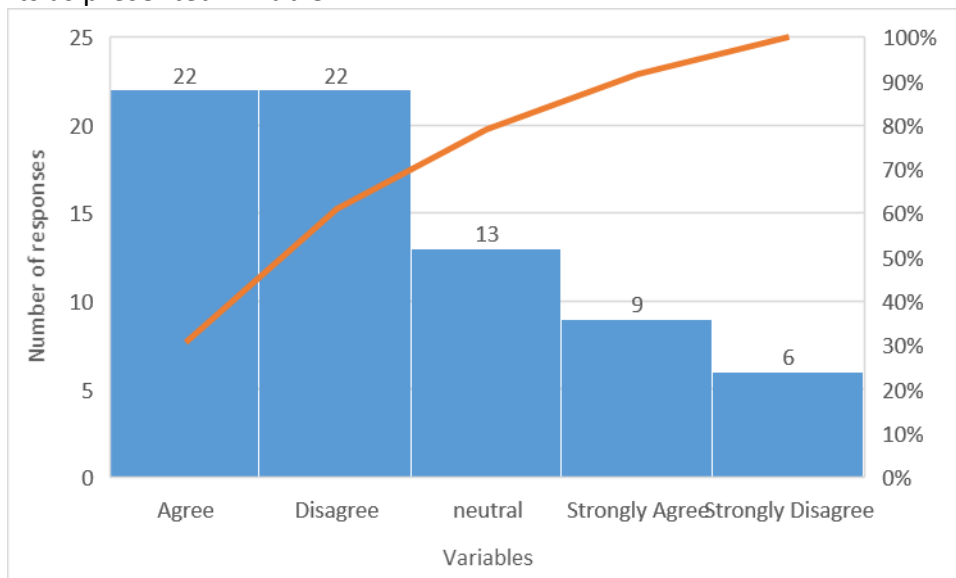

Fig x. To what extent do you agree that applying for a Nigerian national identity card is a straightforward process?
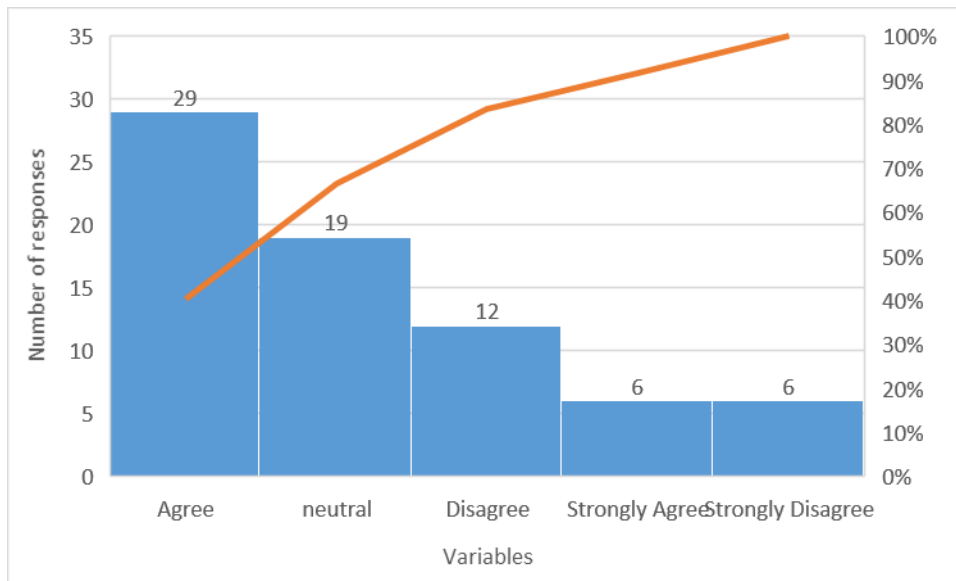
Fig xi. To what extent do you agree that the NIMC staff were knowledgeable and competent in assisting you during the application process?
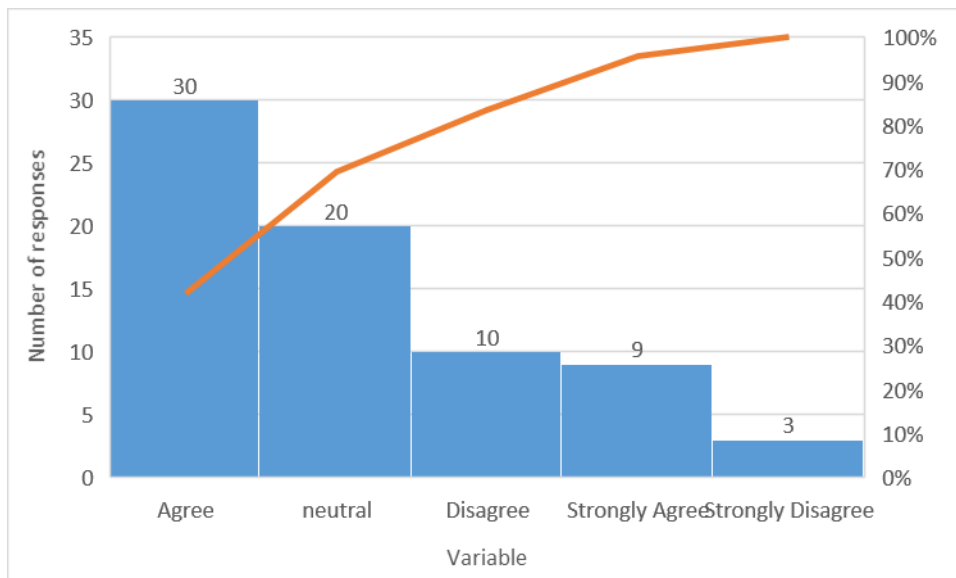

Fig xii. To what extent do you agree that the requirements for the application process were clearly communicated to you?
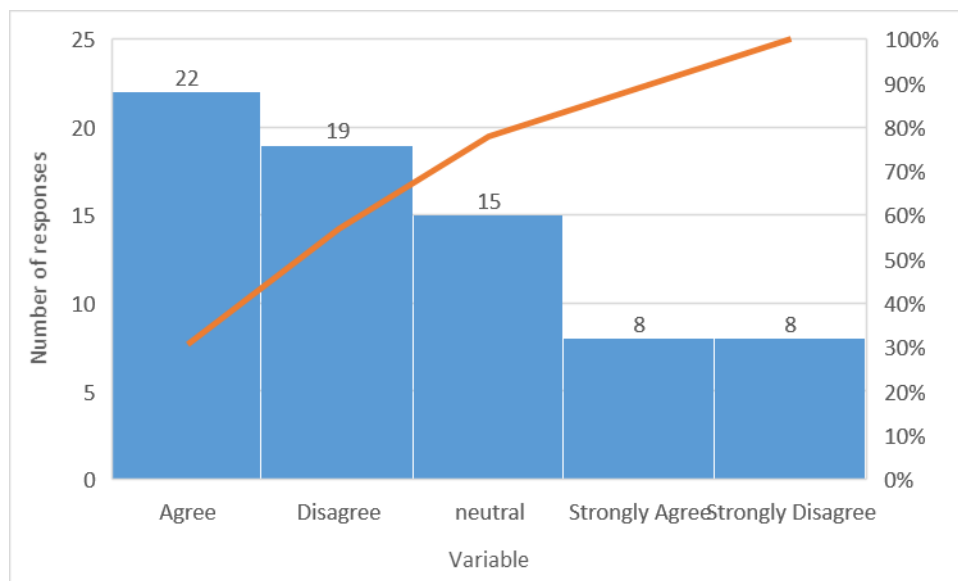
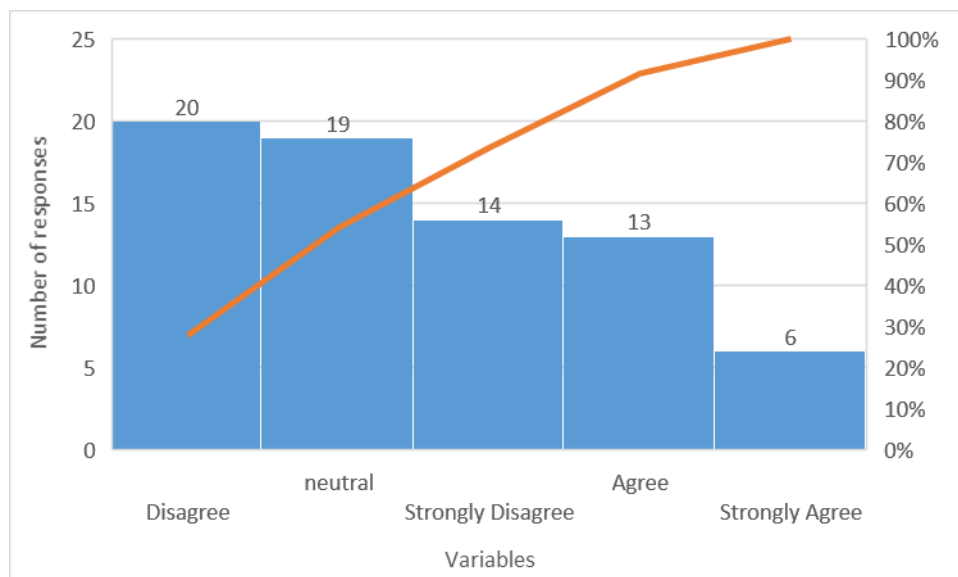Fig xiii. To what extent do you agree that the overall application process was efficient and effective?

Fig xiv. To what extent do you agree that the process of obtaining a Nigerian national identity card is transparent and fair?

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation
Summary of the Research Findings and Discussion
Despite establishing the NIMC over a couple of decades ago, there are still concerns about the Commission's operational effectiveness. Many Nigerians have expressed dissatisfaction with the NIMC's performance, citing issues such as long waiting times, poor customer service, and difficulties in obtaining their NINs and ID cards. Additionally, there have been reports of corruption and a lack of transparency in the Commission's operations (Onifade and Akindele, 2018). The findings of this study confirm and affirm the claims in the study by Onifade and Akindele (2018), as the participants of this study are not satisfied with the customer service and operations of the national identity management commission as participants had to wait for long periods of time to get the national identity number, as well as the fact that the

information and requirements needed for the registration of citizens unto the national database were not straightforward. 30.6% of the study participants disagreed that the national identity management commission enrolment process was not straightforward, whereas 33.3% of the study participants had to wait for a period of about 1-2 weeks to get their national identification number, whereas 31.9% were not satisfied with the duration of the enrolment process.

The study participants were stratified into male and female gender, represented by 58.3% and 41.7%, respectively. Among the study participants, 40.3% agree with the opinion that the NIMC staff are knowledgeable and competent in assisting in the enrolment process. However, 13.9% do not agree with the fact that the requirements for the enrolment process were clearly communicated to them, whereas 12.5% were dissatisfied with the clarity of the need for the enrolment process as it was communicated to them. 26.4% of the study participants disagree with the effectiveness and efficiency of the overall enrolment process, whereas 27.8% of the study participants disagree with the opinion that the enrolment process is fair and transparent.

Among the study participants, a fair percentage of the study participants strongly disagree with certain opinions on the operational effectiveness of the NIMC in regards to the application being straightforward: 8.3% of the study participants responded to reveal that the process was not straightforward, whereas 31.9% are very dissatisfied with the duration of the application as it took them quite a period of time to access the national identity number which was supposed to be an instantaneous activity. In addition, 19.4% of the study participants strongly disagree with the opinion that the application process was fair and transparent.

The findings of this study reflect the position of Agwor et al (2021), in the study which they highlighted a lack of bureaucracy and understaffing as part of the challenges that bedevil the NIMC. In the study by Ekanem (2016), it was pointed out that there is a growing lack of trust among the citizens in the ability of the NIMC to effectively enrol the nation's populace in the national identity database, which is effectively fueled by the government's indifference in handling any issues pertaining to the operational effectiveness of the NIMC. The findings of this study have revealed certain problems that pose a great challenge in building or restoring the trust of the citizenry in the enrolment process. 51.4% have been prompted to pay money to smoothen the enrolment process, which translates to the corruption claims that researchers have made with the NIMC; this response indicates and agrees on the issue of bribery, favoritism and corruption as stated in the blog post by Quadri (2020) within the NIMC system and organization. Even though the general objective of this study is to assess the operational effectiveness of the NIMC, it is worth noting that among the study participants, there are people who are satisfied with the current operational state and capacity of the NIMC.

The challenges identified in this study and reviewed by other researchers, academics and professionals need to be addressed to provide an avenue for implementing a functional identity management system, which plays a vital role in ensuring economic growth, social capital and political development in a developing country such as Nigeria (Ibrahim and Abubakar, 2016).

However, the objective of this study is to assess the operational effectiveness, while scrutinizing the challenges that pose a significant threat to the success of the implementation of the NIMC policies and programs. This study revealed that among the study participants, there a people whom are satisfied with the current state of the operational effectiveness of the NIMC. The findings of this study shows that 12.5% of the study participants strongly agree

with the opinion that the process of applying for the national identity card is straightforward, 9.7% are satisfied with the application time and duration, 8.3% of the study participants responded in the affirmative saying that the NIMC staff are knowledgeable and provide competent assistance to those applying for the national identity card. In addition, 12.5% and 13.9% of the study participants strongly agree and are very satisfied with the requirements presented for the application of the national identity card, which was clearly communicated to those interested in applying for the national identity card. On the opinion that the application process was transparent and efficient, 8.3% and 11.1% of the study participants strongly agreed that the process was transparent, fair, efficient, and effective. These findings shows that there are people among the study participants that are satisfied with the current state of the NIMC operational effectiveness.

The data analysis conducted on the collated data from the survey indicated that, there is a significant difference in the perception and responses of the study participants with respect to the operational effectiveness of the NIMC, even though perceptions and opinions may vary across the study population. It is worth noting that there is always room for improvement, even if it might not seem important or significant among the study population that a few persons hold certain perceptions. It is very important to note that a few persons not satisfied with the services of the NIMC can affect the general overview of the operational effectiveness of the NIMC. Given the critical role of the NIMC in Nigeria's identity management system, it is important to evaluate the Commission's operational effectiveness to identify areas for improvement.

The findings of this study clearly indicate that a large percentage of the study participants are not impressed and satisfied with how the Nigerian identity management commission operations are handled.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the NIMC work closely with other government agencies, such as the National Population Commission and the National Independent Electoral Commission, to coordinate data collection efforts and improve the overall data collection process. NIMC should also partner with private sector organizations such as telecommunications companies and financial institutions to leverage their resources and expertise in identity verification and authentication. In addition, civil society groups can play an important role in defending civil rights and holding NIMCs accountable for their performance in identity management systems. Other recommendations include the following;

To improve the operational effectiveness of the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), several specific recommendations are proposed:

1. Staff Training and Competence Development: The NIMC should invest significantly in training its staff to ensure they can competently assist enrollees throughout the enrolment process. This training should cover customer service skills, technical aspects of identity management, and ethical standards. Regular workshops and refresher courses should be conducted to keep staff updated on best practices and technological advancements.

2. Enhanced Communication and Public Awareness: The quality and clarity of information shared with citizens about the importance of the enrolment process and the requirements for registration must be significantly improved. This includes simplifying the language used in informational materials and ensuring these materials are accessible through various media channels. Furthermore, it is crucial to translate these materials into Nigeria's diverse

languages to reach a broader audience and ensure inclusivity. This approach will help in reducing confusion and increasing participation in the enrolment process.

3. Implementation of Anti-Corruption Measures: To combat bribery and corruption, the NIMC should establish strict penalties for staff found receiving bribes or gifts from enrollees. This could include termination of employment, legal action, and blacklisting from public service. Additionally, a robust monitoring and reporting system should be implemented to detect and address corrupt practices promptly. This will help in maintaining the integrity of the enrolment process and building public trust.

4. Establishment of Feedback Mechanisms: Instituting suggestion boxes or a functional complaint stand or officer at all registration centers is essential. These mechanisms will allow citizens to voice their grievances and provide feedback on the enrolment process. The NIMC should ensure that these complaints are reviewed regularly, and corrective actions are taken promptly. Transparency in addressing grievances will enhance public confidence in the NIMC.

5. Expansion of Registration Outlets: To ensure that more people, especially those in remote areas, have access to registration services, the NIMC should increase the number of registration outlets. Mobile registration units could be deployed to reach underserved regions. Collaborating with local community leaders and organizations can also help in setting up temporary registration centers during community events.

6. Development and Maintenance of a Functional Identity Database: A comprehensive and functional identity database is crucial for effective identity management. The NIMC should prioritize developing a secure, reliable, and scalable database system. Regular maintenance and updates should be performed to ensure data integrity and security. This database should integrate seamlessly with other government databases to facilitate efficient data sharing and verification processes.

7. Adoption of Digital Identity Enrolment and Management: Leveraging technological advancements in data handling and management, the NIMC must transition to digital identity enrolment and management systems. This includes implementing biometric data collection, online enrolment portals, and secure digital identity verification methods. Investing in cutting-edge technology will streamline the enrolment process, reduce human errors, and enhance overall efficiency. Furthermore, digital systems can provide real-time updates and analytics, aiding in better decision-making and resource allocation.

By implementing these recommendations, the NIMC can improve its operational effectiveness, enhance service delivery, and build a more robust identity management system in Nigeria. The findings and recommendations of this study may inform the development of policies and strategies to enhance identity management in Nigeria and contribute to the country's social and economic development.

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