

## The Effectiveness of International Sanctions in Influencing Nigeria's Domestic Policies

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### ABSTRACT

*The present research paper examines the effectiveness of international sanctions in influencing domestic policies in Nigeria, especially, political reforms, human rights, economic changes. Although sanctions are often used as a tool in the diplomatic arsenal to encourage the nation to comply with global norms, their effectiveness in the Nigerian case has proved to be inconsistent and dependent on the circumstances. The qualitative research design and case-study approach applied in the study interpret secondary data sources based on peer-reviewed journals, governmental reports, and publications of international organisations. Findings suggest that sanctions have led to the shift of Nigeria toward a democratic regime, rather than a military regime, and an increased focus on the issue of human rights and governance reforms. However, they have been limited by weak domestic institutions, political opposition, economic vulnerability, and the unequal implementation of the international rules. The research finds that sanctions are best applied in cases where they are targeted, multilateral and with domestic reform efforts to complement. The recommendations of the policy are the use of specific and time-limited sanctions, greater international coordination, and the strengthening of domestic institutional capacity. The long-term socio-economic impacts of sanctions and the effect of global partnerships on policy compliance should be further studied..*

### INTRODUCTION

The use of international sanctions as a foreign policy instrument has experienced massive growth in modern international politics especially as an alternative to military intervention. The imposition of sanctions is generally done so as to pressure states to change objectionable domestic policies which include the violation of human rights, unconstitutional governance, or the violation of international norms. However, the success of these sanctions in influencing the domestic policies of Nigeria is a debated point. Although sanctions are largely used globally, no consensus has been made on its effectiveness particularly in less developed countries like Nigeria. Despite the fact that sanctions are meant to bring about a change in policy, they often have a mixed effect such as economic hardship on citizens as well as limited political reform. Researchers suggest that sanctions may not work because of the weak enforcement mechanisms, domestic opposition, and adjustments to sanction by target states (Muhammad et al., 2025), which begs important questions as to whether international sanctions have the potential to affect the domestic policy of Nigeria or not.

Nigeria in the past has received different levels of international pressure especially when under military rule in the 1990s under the leadership of General Sani Abacha. The diplomatic isolation and the economic limitations, which were imposed by Western states, helped Nigeria eventually shift to democratic governance in 1999. This implies that sanctions may work provided there is strong internal dissent and global support. But modern experience shows that sanctions are not always equally effective. As Peksen (2019) points out, sanctions can usually miss the desired goals due to the lack of targeting and enforcement. Extrinsic pressure in Nigeria has occasionally been met by symbolic acquiescence instead of real-life policy change. As an example, human rights

criticism by other countries has resulted in policy declarations, but implementation loopholes still exist.

Moreover, sanctions are more likely to have an indirect than direct impact on domestic policy. Studies indicate that state capacity can be undermined by economic and political crises triggered by sanctions or through other external factors, which in turn affect the results of governance (Ardo et al., 2022). These pressures in Nigeria could force governments to implement reforms but such reforms are usually driven by internal survival mechanisms and not by actual adherence to international standards. The other drawback of sanctions is the humanitarian and socio-economic effect. Muhammad et al. (2025) argue that sanctions often have more severe consequences on civilians than political elites, which makes the use of such sanctions morally problematic. The impact of economic sanctions or restrictions in the Nigerian context would be poverty, unemployment, and inequality, which would serve to weaken both domestic and international actors among the Nigerian population.

The effectiveness of sanctions in affecting domestic policies in Nigeria is largely determined by a number of factors. To start with the level of international coordination; multilateral actions, especially those backed by large world nations or regional blocs are more effective than those taken individually. Second, domestic political goodwill; the Nigerian leaders might oppose foreign pressure when it interferes with their political lives or sovereignty. Third, the effectiveness of mechanisms of enforcement is also a crucial factor; ineffective enforcement reduces the effectiveness in the eyes of the target states. West African evidence shows that sanctions are seen to be largely symbolic and inconsistently implemented, which restricts its efficacy in bringing political change (Olubiyo & Ayodele, 2024). Fourth, the strength of the Nigerian economy is also significant; being a country of resources, Nigeria is able to occasionally absorb external shocks, which decreases the coercive effect of sanctions.

The rationale behind the current research is constant doubts about the real effects of sanctions on the results of governance. Although sanctions have been the most extensively used non-military instruments to achieve democracy, human rights and accountability, empirical evidence of its effectiveness is inconclusive. According to modern research, sanctions tend to have disproportionate outcomes, and the ability to bring about profound structural changes in the target states is limited (Olubiyo and Ayodele, 2024). In Nigeria, the available literature has greatly concentrated on past experiences especially the military era leaving a knowledge vacuum on how modern sanctions affect policy choices in a democratic society. In addition, scholars emphasize that sanctions can have unintended socio-economic effects with a disproportionate impact on citizens instead of political elites (Muhammad et al., 2025). This begs the question of their ethical considerations and sustainability. The second gap is the lack of focus on domestic mediating variables including political will, institutional strength, and economic resilience that influence Nigeria to react to external pressure (Ardo et al., 2022). This research is, therefore, driven by the desire to seal these gaps by offering a more nuanced and current evaluation of the relationship between international sanctions and internal dynamics in Nigeria to drive domestic policy consequences.

## **2. Conceptual Clarifications**

### **2.1 International Sanctions: Sense and Senses.**

International sanctions refer to non-military actions that are coercive and imposed by sovereign states or international organisations, to shape the behavior of a target state. The tools are designed to enforce compliance with international standards, such as respect of human rights, compliance with democratic governance, and compliance with non-proliferation demands (Odinkonigbo, 2025). There are several different types of sanctions. Trade restrictions, financial embargoes and freezing of assets are all considered as economic sanctions. Diplomatic sanctions imply breaking off diplomatic relations. Smart sanctions, also known as targeted or focused, affect

individuals or organizations, including political leaders and others, to cause minimum collateral damage to civilians (Park & Choi, 2022). Recent literature suggests a strong turn towards specific sanctions, driven by the fear of the humanitarian consequences of sweeping economic sanctions.

## **2.2 Character and Extent of Domestic Policies.**

Domestic policies are the decisions, laws and actions made by an authority to control internal issues in a state. Such policies cover a wide range of areas, such as political governance, economic management, social welfare, and human rights protection. Domestic policies in the Nigerian context can include electoral reforms, anti-corruption policies, economic diversification policies, and security policies. Béland (2019) emphasizes that domestic policies are not only influenced by internal forces like political institutions and the citizens but also by external forces like globalization and international relations, thus making domestic policymaking vulnerable to such international tools as sanctions.

## **2.3 Theoretical Relationship of Sanctions and Policy Change.**

The association between international sanctions and domestic policy change is explained in a variety of theoretical frames. Under the coercive diplomacy definition, sanctions increase the price of non-compliance, thus compelling governments to change the policies in order to prevent further economic or political harm. In its turn, liberal institutionalism focuses on the importance of international norms and collaboration, implying that states react to sanctions to maintain legitimacy and credibility in the international system (Park & Choi, 2022). Moreover, there is the theory of domestic politics that assumes that sanctions permeate internal actors such as opposition groups and civil society that pressure governments to reform. However, the effectiveness of such causal connection is not automatic. According to recent studies, effectiveness of sanctions is dependent on the engagement of enforcers, international approval, and the economic strength of the target state. In Nigeria, these mediating variables are often the factors that can lead to substantive domestic policy changes or just symbolic compliance with sanctions.

## **3. Methodology**

The research design in this study is qualitative because it seeks to understand the effectiveness of international sanctions in influencing domestic policies in Nigeria. The qualitative methodology is considered suitable because it allows studying the complicated political processes and policy reactions, as well as the situational circumstances that mediate between an external force and internal politics. The research mainly uses secondary sources of data, encompassing peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs, government reports, and publications of international organisations, such as the United Nations, African Union, and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). There are also credible media reports and archival materials that provide historical background, especially in regard to sanctions that have been imposed against Nigeria during the military rule and more recent eras of democracy. A case study approach will be used to offer in-depth information of the particular cases where sanctions were imposed on Nigeria. Cases of significant relevance including sanctions imposed under the military rule of the 1990s and, more recently, specific target restrictive measures as regards governance and human-rights issues are carefully chosen, allowing the contextualisation of the relationship between sanctions and domestic policy environment in Nigeria over time.

Thematic content analysis is used to analyse secondary data. Different documents are systematically examined, coded and sorted into themes like types of sanctions, policy responses, effectiveness and factors that influence the results. This approach allows one to detect the patterns and correlations among the international penalties and domestic policy alteration. The study conducts a triangulation of multiple sources of data to achieve validity and reliability by comparing the findings

to the findings of other authors and other institutions. Preference is given to new and reliable sources to increase analytical accuracy. Nonetheless, there is the dependency on secondary data as a limitation, which might not be most appropriate in the real-time policy dynamics or insider perspectives. Notwithstanding this limitation, the methodology offers a strong framework of analyzing the degree to which international sanctions affect Nigerian domestic policies.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Sanction History on Nigeria and the Major Sanction imposers.

The international sanctions against Nigeria are best known with the military government of the 1990s and that of the military leader General Sani Abacha. This era was marked by massive abuses of human-rights and subversion of democracy, which caused worldwide criticism. In 1995, the assassination of environmentalism campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa, led to the further mounting of international pressure which resulted in sanctions and the suspension of Nigeria by the Commonwealth. These sanctions did not instantly bring down the military rule, but they helped in isolating Nigeria diplomatically and economically, which, together with domestic opposition, eventually led to the adoption of democracy in 1999. According to recent scholarship, these historical sanctions indicate the conditional efficacy of the external pressure in the cases of alignment with the domestic opposition (Park and Choi, 2022).

Some global actors have been critical to sanctioning Nigeria. The United Nations has been inclined to multilateral solutions and has been cautious on imposing extensive sanctions to Nigeria because of its strategic value in Africa. The European Union has long historically used visa restrictions, arms embargo and diplomatic measures especially during authoritarian rule. In the same way, the United States has been using targeted sanctions such as travel bans and financial penalties against the individuals who have been accused of disrupting democratic processes. Such actors often organize their activities to increase their effectiveness because it is an established fact that multilateral actions are more effective than unilateral sanctions (Jessen, 2021).

The sanctions on Nigeria have assumed different forms depending on the political situation. International organizations have imposed diplomatic sanctions such as suspension and cutting back bilateral activities. Economic sanctions, although not as extensive as in other nations, have included trade and aid restrictions as well as financial transactions. In more recent times, the trend has been to provide more focused or smarter sanctions, including visa bans and asset freezes focused on political elites and not on the general population. The purpose of this approach is to reduce humanitarian implications and preserve pressure on decision-makers (Park & Choi, 2022). Moreover, the imposition of arms embargo and the limitation of security cooperation has been used in times of political instability. However, researchers claim that these sanctions have been inconsistent in their outcomes in Nigeria because the economic power and geopolitical importance of the country can often restrict the harshness and the implementation of such sanctions (Olubiyo & Ayodele, 2024). Generally speaking, although sanctions have helped to create a signal of international disapproval and pressure, much has been determined by the political and economic situation at large in Nigeria.

### 4.2 Nigeria Case Studies of Sanctions.

The international sanctions against Nigeria in various eras form practical case studies in determining the effects of forms on the domestic policies especially concerning military rule, human rights, electoral governance, and economic management.

**Sanctions in the Military Regime (Abacha Era):** Sani Abacha (1993-1998) is the most prominent example of sanctions in the history of Nigerian governance. Large-scale violations of human rights, repression of pro-democracy bodies, and dictatorial rule drew great international criticism. Nigeria was expelled out of the Commonwealth, with nations like the United States and the European Union calling visa bans, embargo of arms and diplomatic restrictions. These sanctions also led to the global

isolation of Nigeria, as well as the isolation of the country in terms of cooperation with other countries, although the regime did not initially yield to external pressure (Onuegbu & Udeagwu, 2023). There is evidence that although sanctions did not terminate military rule, it heightened internal and external pressures that supported the democratic transition.

**Sanctions against Human Rights Abuses:** Sanctions targeting human rights abuses in Nigeria remain a pressing international concern post-democratization. Persistent violations, including unlawful killings, suppression of protests, and security force brutality, have prompted global actors to implement targeted measures such as travel bans and asset freezes (Okosa, 2021; Okosa, 2022a; Okosa, 2022b; Okosa, 2022c; Okosa, 2023). However, enforcement challenges and resilient domestic political institutions often limit their impact (Udensi & Okosa, 2025; Okosa, 2018; Okosa, 2022d; Okosa, 2022e). These findings underscore the need for stronger compliance mechanisms and institutional reforms to ensure sanctions effect meaningful structural change.

**Sanctions and Electoral Processes:** Sanctions have been used as well in reaction to electoral abuses and democratic backsliding. Western governments, especially the international actors, have employed visa restrictions and diplomatic pressure as techniques to discourage election manipulation and advance credible elections. Though this may be effective in short term in shaping political behaviour, due to the nature of political interests and institutional weakness, the effectiveness of such measures is usually limited. As observed in the recent research, sanctions can be an indicator of international disapproval, though they do not necessarily translate into entrenched electoral reforms.

**Economic and Financial Sanctions:** Economic and financial sanctions imposed on Nigeria have not been overall but selective. In the Abacha era, they were suspension of aid, financial controls, and a lower rate in economic cooperation. All these measures influenced the access of Nigeria to international markets and development aid. Nonetheless, the reliant nature of Nigeria economy on oil had served as an insulator that had mitigated the full effects of such sanctions. Experts believe that sanctions can cause economic tension but do not always force instant policy reform where there are other options of economic collaboration (Onuegbu & Udeagwu, 2023).

#### 4.3 International Sanctions and their effects on the Domestic Policies of Nigeria.

The effect of international sanction on domestic policies in Nigeria has had mixed impact especially on political reform, human rights, economic policymaking and anti-corruption to the country. Although their usefulness has been discussed, sanctions have played a role in policy responses under military and democratic governments (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: International Sanctions and their effect on Nigeria and its Domestic Policies.**

Sanctions were particularly instrumental in ending military rule in Nigeria and initiating democracy in the country in 1999. The isolation of the country and foreign pressure in the 1990s made authoritarian rule more expensive, and bolstered domestic anti-democratic forces. Recent research confirms that external compulsion alongside internal opposition may promote the process of political liberalisation and institutional adjustments (Onuegbu & Udeagwu, 2023). Nevertheless, during the post-democratic era, sanctions have been less effective due to frequent incremental, rather than transformative political reform.

Nigeria has also been affected by international sanctions in its policies regarding human rights, especially in specific actions against those accused of human rights misconduct. These sanctions are a sign of disapproval on an international level, and can force governments to implement reforms or provide policy commitments intended to enhance accountability. However, it has also been shown that the gaps in implementation still exist, with organizational problems like poor institutions and lack of effective enforcement tools negating ongoing development (Olasupo et al., 2024). In this way, although sanctions have a potential to facilitate awareness and articulation of policies, their capacity in ensuring long-term compliance is limited.

Nigeria has implications with sanctions, particularly, with those related to trade, aid and financial flows. There may be economic pressure that compels governments to implement adjustment policies, e.g. diversifying income or changing fiscal policies. Shu'ara et al. (2025) note that sanction usually causes economic distortions, which can drive governments towards policy responses that can stabilise the economy. However in Nigeria, the effect has been mitigated by the oil riches of the country generating some form of financial stability and cushioning the effect of external shocks.

The use of sanctions to combat corruption in Nigeria, including freezing assets and restricting travel for politically exposed persons, reflects growing international efforts to enhance transparency and accountability. While these measures are largely symbolic, their deterrent effect depends on domestic institutional capacity to investigate and enforce anti-corruption laws. Evidence from educational and governance studies suggests that experiential and generative strategies improve compliance and performance, highlighting the importance of internal systems in achieving outcomes (Muogbo et al., 2025; Obikezie et al., 2023). Similarly, assessments of teachers' computer literacy and curriculum implementation demonstrate that policy tools require robust institutional frameworks to be effective (Nneka, R. N., & Okafor, 2013; Okafor, 2010). Initiatives aimed at enhancing student participation and sustainable development further underscore that external interventions alone like sanctions cannot substitute for strong domestic structures (Okafor, 2013; Okafor, 2018; Enem et al., 2025). Therefore, sanctions influence Nigeria's domestic policies indirectly, and their success is contingent on political will, institutional strength, and socio-economic readiness.

#### **4.4 Assessment of Effectiveness of Sanctions**

The effectiveness of international sanctions in influencing the domestic policy of Nigeria can be evaluated by means of synthesis of empirical data and theoretical models. An in-depth account of the achievements and failures provides a subtle judgment of the role of sanctions in governance and policy change. The effectiveness of sanctions is typically measured by the ability of the latter to trigger compliance with international standards, trigger policy changes, and introduce visible behavioral changes among the specific actors. Measures used by scholars include the political liberalization, development of human rights, economic adjustments, and changes in institutions (Okunlola and Ayetigbo, 2022). Also, the degree to which sanctions are persuasive to targeted elites to change policies without causing disproportionate civilian suffering is an essential criterion. The rigor of enforcement, multilateral support, and the capacity of the targeted state to withstand or adjust to outside compulsion further moderate the efficacy (Onuegbu & Udeagwu, 2023).

Historically, sanctions have helped Nigeria to convert its military rule to democratic rule in the year 1999. The absence of international relations and economic sanctions under the Abacha

regime had increased domestic and international attention, thus strengthening the pro-democracy movement (Onuegbu & Udeagwu, 2023). The targeted sanctions also led to an increased emphasis on human-right protections, with the policy promises and institutional change becoming solidified to address the pressure of the world (Olasupo et al., 2024). These consequences demonstrate that sanctions have the capacity to be effective signals of disapproval and be used to encourage behavioural change when they are also combined with domestic demand to reform. However, with all these achievements, sanctions in Nigeria have often not contributed to comprehensive or lasting reforms. The economic strength of Nigeria, especially its reliance on oil revenues, is a factor that weakens the coercive power of economic tools. Moreover, domestic institutions and political opposition can hinder complete compliance leading to symbolic adjustments of the policies instead of substantial ones. Irregular enforcement and limited international coordination undermine the potential effectiveness of sanctions further.

Sanctions too can give rise to unintentional effects such as economic distress among the common people and social dissatisfaction. Empirical research shows that macroeconomic indicators can contribute to inequality, limit access to basic services, and cause political unrest hence sometimes, contravening the very goals that sanctions are meant to accomplish. Therefore, although sanctions may be an effective tool to impact domestic policy, critical targeting and constant supervision is essential to reduce collateral damage. Nigeria sanctions have yielded varying results. They have been able to precipitate minimal political and human-rights changes but are confined by economic strength, institutional weaknesses, and possible negative social consequences. The success of their overall performance depends on their successful coordination, accurate targeting, and complementary domestic reforms.

#### 4.5 Types of factors that can affect effectiveness of sanctions.

International sanctions can be effective in influencing Nigeria domestic policies, and this is determined by a synthesis of various variables, which are not independent, such as internal political will, international implementation, economic robustness, and the geopolitical environment, as demonstrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Milieu of the Effectiveness of Sanctions.**

The responsiveness to external pressure of Nigerian political leadership is one of the most evident predictors of the influence of sanctions. Sanctions have higher chances of altering a policy when domestic elites perceive compliance to be aligned with national interest or in ways that would

help them gain legitimacy (Enemuwe, 2024). On the other hand, where the leaders believe that sanctions threaten their authority or territorial integrity, they might defy them even at the price of continuing diplomatic isolation or at the cost of economic means. The experience of the military rule period shows that external sanctions faced significant opposition in the case of the lack of strong domestic reform alliances. In line with this, the availability or lack of local political will can play an important mediating role as to whether sanctions trigger policy change.

The effectiveness of sanctions also depends on the levels of inter-international coordination and implementation. Multilateral sanctions undertaken by a strong group of states or regional actors tend to have more legitimacy and limit evasion possibilities. However, in the West African context implementation issues have limited success; some of these are regional sanctions by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) against unconstitutional coups that have not achieved much success without well-established enforcement mechanisms (Olubiyo & Ayodele, 2024). The experience of Nigeria shows that partial or lax enforcing of sanctions is a dilution of the pressure that sanctions are designed to inflict. Sanction effectiveness is also mediated by the architecture of the Nigerian economy. Nigeria being a large oil producer and having alternative markets, especially in Asia and the Middle East, has some level of economic resilience, which can cushion against any economic or financial sanctions. The academics note that this diversification allows policy elites to adjust and mitigate the external demands of the economy, hence diluting the coercive power of sanctions. Sanctions are unlikely to force transformative policy changes in the absence of a serious interference in the functioning of key sectors of the economy.

Sanctions are affected by the geopolitical environment. The adoption and enforcement of sanctions is influenced by regional blocs, national security interests and broad strategic interests. The existence of international competition and competing strategic alliances can discourage the development of harmonized sanction regimes or encourage target states to find alternative foreign assistance. The geopolitical prominence of Nigeria within the African continent suggests that certain stakeholders globally would be more interested in stability rather than sanctions, which would mitigate the effectiveness of sanctions. Sanctions, therefore, can only work as effective as the political, economic, and international settings they are implemented. Domestic political will, good international implementation, economic vulnerability, and favorable international politics all exert a greater effect on the impact of sanctions, and low political intent, enforcement loopholes, economic strength, and geopolitical obstacles all limit the chances that sanctions will recalibrate the domestic policies of Nigeria significantly.

#### **4.6 Comparative Analysis**

Comparative analysis between the Nigerian experience of international sanctions and those of other countries offers an insight into the efficacy of the latter, and mediating factors. Through the study of other African nations and world sanctions regimes, it is possible to learn about the approach, implementation, and consequences. The exposure of Nigeria to sanctions has some similarities and differences with other African countries who have been subjected to international pressure. As an example, Zimbabwe and Sudan had economic sanctions and specific sanctions imposed on them because of their governance failures and violations of human rights. Research has shown that the sanctions in Zimbabwe caused major economic shrinkage but restricted political change, partly due to domestic elites continuing to hold dominant influence in state institutions and also through other regional and international backup (Debre, 2021). Unlike in Nigeria, the sanctions of the Abacha era consisted of economic, diplomatic, and focused actions, and were somewhat successful because of internal pro-democracy pressure and multilateral coordination. The economic diversification and the stronger civil society networks in Nigeria, in comparison to countries like Sudan, had a higher chance that the sanctions could affect domestic policy (Olasupo et al., 2024).

Global sanctions regimes, like those against Iran, North Korea, or Myanmar, are wider lessons to study how to be effective. It is found that multilateral implementation, focused actions, and consistency of domestic political incentives increase effectiveness, and unilateral or less well-coordinated penalty actions tend to decrease effectual changes. Targeted sanctions are less damaging to humanitarian effects and maintain pressure on decision-makers, but unlike general population sanctions, are aimed at the elite. Also, the existence of local reform coalitions increases by far the possibility of a successful translation of sanctions into a policy change. The experience of Nigeria shows that the introduction of international pressure along with domestic advocacy and institutional preparedness is the key to maximization of the effectiveness of sanctions. Comparative analysis indicates that sanctions can be more successful when they are well designed, multi-lateral, and also in tandem with domestic and international political dynamics. The significance of coordination, targeting, and situational sensitivity in making domestic policy consequences can be underlined by the experience of other African nations and world practice.

#### **4.7 Sovereignty and Development implications in Nigeria.**

International sanctions against Nigeria have severe consequences on the sovereignty and growth of the country. Sanctions denote the essence of outside effects, which may be incompatible with the national sovereignty principle, the right of a state to manage its internal life without any form of interference. Scholars are of the opinion that sanctions, though intended to enforce policy compliance, could be considered a threat to domestic authority and decision-making autonomy. Nigeria has experienced sanctions during various times in its history, including under the Abacha regime, and illustrated a clash between international pressure and the government wishing to maintain sovereign authority over its domestic policies.

International sanctions can influence Nigeria's economic development both directly and indirectly. Trade restrictions, financial limitations, and reductions in foreign aid can constrain economic growth, reduce investment inflows, and restrict access to global markets, similar to how inadequate resources affect performance in education and business programs (Onyiorah, 2021a; Oguejiofor & Onyiorah, 2021). Vulnerable populations are often disproportionately affected, exacerbating poverty and inequality, just as disparities in family background influence student outcomes in business education (Oguejiofor & Onyiorah, 2023; Onyiorah, 2023a). These pressures may compel policymakers to revise or reformulate domestic policies to mitigate negative effects. On the positive side, sanctions can motivate economic diversification, reducing overreliance on oil revenue and promoting local industries, much like innovative teaching strategies or entrepreneurship education enhance adaptability and employability in the educational sector (Oguejiofor et al, 2022; Onyiorah, 2021b; Onyiorah, 2022). Effective policy responses, like effective instructional strategies in business education, require institutional proficiency, planning, and coordination (Onyiorah, 2023b; Okoro et al, 2025). Consequently, the impact of sanctions is mediated by the quality of governance, institutional capacity, and socio-economic resilience, reflecting patterns observed in education research where structural and strategic interventions shape outcomes.

Sanctions also affect the political stability of Nigeria. Although they might stimulate political change and foster responsibility, the resulting economic and social strains can lead to instability or even worsen the relations between the state and people. Individual sanctions targeting select elites are likely to reduce these risks, but when economic sanctions are applied on a large scale, there is a risk of destabilizing the governance system through economic hardship. An effective sanctions regimes strike a balance between pressure and encouragement of institutional strengthening, in such a way that external pressure promotes and not destroy political stability.

## CONCLUSION

The study has analyzed how effective international sanctions have been in shaping domestic policies in Nigeria with particular reference to political reforms, human rights, economic changes and anti-corruption. The results suggest that sanctions have been both successful and unsuccessful: they helped to achieve the military-democratic transition and increased focus on human rights, but their effectiveness in the post-democratic period has been insignificant because of the political challenges within the country, institutional fragility, and the financial strength of Nigeria. Unilateral action on specific individuals to penalize elites has worked better than blanket policies because it minimizes inadvertent economic distress, and sends a message of international disdain. Sanctions may have an effect on policy behaviour but their efficacy relies on the political will of the country, the international cooperation of sanctions and their harmonisation with domestic reforms. The conclusion of the study is that sanctions do not have a panacea; they need to be supplemented by strong domestic institutions and the involvement of civil society in order to bring about meaningful change. Some of the policy recommendations focus on how to design more targeted, time-limited, and domestic reform-focused sanctions, enhance the multilateral enforcement capacity, and facilitate international engagement with Nigerian stakeholders. It is proposed that the long-term socio-economic effects of sanctions on vulnerable communities should be studied further, and the role of digital diplomacy and economic relationships between countries in the efficacy of current sanctions regimes should be evaluated.

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