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Civil-Military Relations and Collaboration in Educational Policy Formulation in Nigeria, 2010 – 2025

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Abstract

Civil-military relations constitute a critical component of democratic governance, national security, and sustainable development. The nature of interactions between military institutions and civilian populations significantly influences political stability, social cohesion, and the effectiveness of national security policies. Education serves as a strategic instrument for promoting mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation between military personnel and civilians. This paper examines the concept of civil-military relations and explores the role of education in fostering healthy interactions between military institutions and society. It further analyses the contributions of education to democratic governance, national integration, conflict prevention, and security awareness. The Nigerian experience is examined to highlight historical developments, challenges, and prospects of civil-military relations in contemporary society. It was stressed that educational initiatives significantly improve public confidence in military institutions, strengthen democratic values, and contribute to peaceful coexistence. The paper recommends the integration of civic and security education into educational curricula, enhanced military-community engagement, and increased investment in educational programs that promote democratic culture and national unity.

Keywords: Civil-military relations, education, national security, democracy, military professionalism, Nigeria.

Keywords: civil-military, relations, collaboration, educational policy, formulation in Nigeria

Introduction

Civil-military relations are essential component of governance, political stability, and national development in modern societies. They describe the nature of interactions, cooperation, and the distribution of power between civilian authorities, military institutions, and the wider society. In every nation, the military plays a crucial role in safeguarding national sovereignty,

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defending territorial integrity, maintaining peace, and protecting citizens from both internal and external threats. However, the effectiveness of the military in performing these responsibilities depends largely on the quality of its relationship with civilian authorities and the public it is meant to serve.

The military is often regarded as one of the most influential institutions in any state because it possesses the legitimate authority to use force in the defence of national interests. For this reason, the control and management of military power have remained major concerns in governance and political development. In democratic systems, the military is expected to remain professional, politically neutral, and fully subordinate to elected civilian authorities. Such an arrangement helps to ensure accountability, prevent abuses of power, and strengthen adherence to constitutional principles. Where this balance is maintained, civil-military relations contribute significantly to democratic consolidation, political stability, and national progress.

The history of civil-military relations across the world reveals varying experiences. While some countries have successfully maintained harmonious relationships between civilian governments and military institutions, others have experienced military interference in politics, coups d'état, authoritarian rule, and persistent tensions between military and civilian actors. These situations have often weakened democratic institutions, undermined public confidence in government, and slowed socio-economic development. Consequently, scholars, policymakers, and development practitioners increasingly recognize that healthy civil-military relations are indispensable for peace, security, and sustainable national development.

Education plays a vital role in fostering positive civil-military relations. As a powerful tool of socialization and nation-building, education equips citizens with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for responsible citizenship and democratic participation. Through formal and informal educational processes, individuals learn about constitutional governance, civic responsibilities, national security, human rights, and the functions of military institutions within society. Such knowledge helps reduce misconceptions, stereotypes, and distrust that may exist between civilians and military personnel. More importantly, education encourages tolerance, dialogue, mutual respect, and understanding, which are essential ingredients for social harmony and national cohesion.

The relevance of education to civil-military relations extends beyond the civilian population. Military personnel themselves require continuous education and professional training to effectively discharge their duties within democratic environments. Military education programs emphasize discipline, professionalism, ethical conduct, leadership, respect for human

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rights, and loyalty to constitutional authority. These educational experiences help prepare military officers and soldiers to interact positively with civilian populations while maintaining the highest standards of professionalism. In addition, partnerships between military institutions and educational organizations create opportunities for knowledge exchange, research collaboration, and community engagement, thereby strengthening relationships between the armed forces and society.

In recent years, emerging security challenges have further underscored the importance of strong civil-military relations. Threats such as terrorism, insurgency, cybercrime, banditry, communal conflicts, kidnapping, and humanitarian emergencies have become increasingly complex and require coordinated responses from both military and civilian actors. Military strength alone is often insufficient to address these challenges effectively. Rather, success depends on public cooperation, community participation, effective governance, and widespread security awareness. Education therefore serves as a bridge between security institutions and citizens by promoting awareness, encouraging civic engagement, and fostering collective responsibility for national security.

Across Africa, civil-military relations have attracted considerable attention due to the continent's historical experiences with military rule and political instability. Following independence, many African countries witnessed repeated military coups and prolonged periods of military governance. These experiences often disrupted democratic development and created varying degrees of mistrust between military institutions and civilian populations. However, the gradual return to democratic governance in many African states has renewed efforts to build professional armed forces that operate within constitutional frameworks and remain accountable to civilian authority. Educational reforms, civic enlightenment campaigns, and institutional capacity-building initiatives have become important mechanisms for promoting democratic civil-military relations across the continent.

Nigeria presents a particularly significant case for examining the relationship between civil-military relations and education. Since attaining independence in 1960, the country has experienced both democratic administrations and military regimes, with military governments ruling for a substantial portion of its post-independence history. These experiences have shaped public perceptions of the military and influenced the development of political institutions. Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, successive governments have undertaken various reforms aimed at strengthening military professionalism, democratic accountability, and constructive engagement between the armed forces and civilian society. Educational initiatives,

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civic education programs, and public awareness campaigns have contributed significantly to these efforts.

Furthermore, the Nigerian military has increasingly assumed responsibilities beyond conventional defence roles. In addition to protecting the nation's territorial integrity, the military now participates in peacekeeping operations, counter-terrorism campaigns, disaster management, humanitarian assistance, and community development initiatives. These expanded functions have increased contact between military personnel and civilian populations, making effective civil-military relations more important than ever before. Consequently, educational institutions, civil society organizations, government agencies, and community leaders continue to promote dialogue and cooperation aimed at strengthening mutual trust and understanding.

The rapid advancement of information and communication technologies has also transformed the dynamics of civil-military relations in contemporary societies. Citizens now have greater access to information regarding government policies, military operations, and national security issues. While this development has enhanced transparency and accountability, it has also increased the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and public misunderstanding of security matters. Education therefore remains essential in helping citizens critically assess information, understand complex security challenges, and participate meaningfully in discussions relating to national defence and security governance.

Against this backdrop, understanding the relationship between civil-military relations and education has become increasingly important for governments, educators, security professionals, and researchers. Educational initiatives can serve as powerful instruments for building trust, strengthening democratic values, promoting national unity, and enhancing cooperation between military institutions and civilian populations. As societies continue to face evolving security challenges, the need for strong and constructive civil-military relations becomes even more critical.

This paper therefore examines the nexus between civil-military relations and education, with particular emphasis on their implications for democratic governance, national security, social cohesion, and sustainable development. It explores relevant theoretical perspectives, highlights the role of education in promoting positive civil-military interactions, discusses the challenges affecting civil-military relations in Nigeria, and proposes strategies for strengthening cooperation between military institutions and the wider society.

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Concept of Civil-Military Relations

Civil-military relations refer to the interaction between military organizations and civilian authorities, institutions, and populations. These interactions encompass political, social, economic, and cultural dimensions that influence national governance and security.

The concept gained prominence following the publication of Huntington's seminal work, *The Soldier and the State* (1957), which emphasized the importance of professional military institutions operating under civilian control. Civil-military relations involve balancing military effectiveness with democratic accountability.

Scholars generally agree that successful civil-military relations require:

i. Military professionalism.
ii. Civilian supremacy.
iii. Democratic accountability.
iv. Mutual trust and respect.
v. Constitutional governance.

The quality of civil-military relations often determines whether military institutions contribute positively to national development or become sources of political instability.

Concept of Education

Education is widely recognized as one of the most important instruments for individual empowerment, social transformation, and national development. It refers to the systematic process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that enable them to function effectively within society. Education is not limited to the activities that take place within the walls of a classroom; rather, it encompasses all forms of learning experiences that contribute to the intellectual, moral, social, emotional, and physical development of an individual throughout life. Scholars view education as a continuous process of learning and adaptation through which individuals are prepared to contribute meaningfully to the progress of society. It enables people to understand their environment, develop critical thinking skills, solve problems, and participate actively in social, political, and economic activities. Education also serves as a means of transmitting cultural values, norms, traditions, and collective aspirations from one generation to another. Through this process, societies preserve their identities while simultaneously equipping citizens with the knowledge required to address contemporary challenges.

Education can be categorized into formal, informal, and non-formal forms. Formal education refers to structured learning that takes place in schools, colleges, universities, and other

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recognized institutions under a prescribed curriculum. Informal education occurs through daily interactions within families, communities, religious organizations, and social groups, while non-formal education involves organized learning activities conducted outside the formal school system. Together, these forms of education contribute significantly to personal growth, civic awareness, and social responsibility.

In contemporary societies, education performs numerous functions beyond the transmission of academic knowledge. It promotes social integration, national unity, economic productivity, political participation, and peaceful coexistence among diverse groups. Through education, individuals develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, learn to respect diversity, and acquire the capacity to contribute positively to national development. Education also fosters values such as honesty, discipline, tolerance, respect for the rule of law, and commitment to the common good, all of which are essential for maintaining social order and democratic governance.

Within the context of civil-military relations, education occupies a particularly significant position because it serves as a bridge between military institutions and civilian society. One of the primary functions of education is the promotion of civic awareness. Civic education helps citizens understand the structure of government, the principles of democracy, the importance of constitutional governance, and the specific roles performed by various national institutions, including the military. When citizens possess adequate knowledge of these institutions, they are more likely to appreciate the legitimate functions of the armed forces and support national security efforts within democratic frameworks.

Education also contributes to the enhancement of democratic values. Democratic societies depend on informed citizens who understand the principles of accountability, transparency, participation, justice, and respect for human rights. Through educational programs, individuals learn the importance of civilian control over the military, constitutionalism, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Such knowledge strengthens democratic institutions and reduces the likelihood of military interference in political affairs. By fostering democratic culture, education helps establish healthy relationships between military institutions and civilian authorities.

Another important contribution of education to civil-military relations is the development of patriotism and national loyalty. Educational institutions provide opportunities for citizens to learn about their country's history, cultural heritage, national symbols, and collective aspirations. This knowledge fosters a sense of belonging and commitment to national

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development. Patriotic citizens are more likely to support legitimate security initiatives, cooperate with military authorities when necessary, and contribute to efforts aimed at protecting national interests. At the same time, educational programs encourage military personnel to view themselves as servants of the nation whose primary responsibility is to safeguard the welfare of all citizens.

Education also contributes significantly to the development of national consciousness. National consciousness refers to a shared sense of identity, purpose, and responsibility among citizens. Through educational experiences, individuals develop an appreciation for the collective interests of the nation and understand the importance of working together to achieve common goals. This sense of shared identity strengthens social cohesion and encourages collaboration between civilian populations and military institutions in addressing national challenges.

In addition to educating civilians, education remains an essential component of military professionalism. Modern armed forces invest heavily in education and training programs designed to equip military personnel with technical expertise, leadership skills, ethical values, and strategic thinking abilities. Military education emphasizes discipline, professionalism, respect for human rights, adherence to international humanitarian law, and loyalty to constitutional authority. These qualities are crucial for ensuring that military personnel perform their duties effectively while maintaining positive relationships with civilian populations.

Educational institutions also serve as important platforms for dialogue, research, and knowledge exchange on issues related to security and governance. Universities, research centres, and policy institutes frequently conduct studies on national security challenges, peacebuilding strategies, and civil-military cooperation. Such research contributes to informed policymaking and provides evidence-based solutions to security-related problems. Collaborative engagements between academic institutions and military organizations further strengthen mutual understanding and promote constructive relationships.

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, the role of education in civil-military relations has become even more significant. The widespread availability of information through digital media presents both opportunities and challenges. While access to information enhances transparency and public participation, it can also facilitate the spread of misinformation and negative stereotypes about security institutions. Education equips citizens with critical thinking skills that enable them to evaluate information objectively and engage responsibly in discussions concerning national security and governance.

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Therefore, education remains a powerful tool for promoting effective civil-military relations. By fostering civic awareness, democratic values, patriotism, peaceful coexistence, and national consciousness, education helps build trust between military institutions and civilian populations. It creates an informed citizenry capable of supporting democratic governance while encouraging military professionalism and accountability. Ultimately, education contributes to the establishment of stable, peaceful, and secure societies where both military and civilian actors work together toward the achievement of national development goals.

Roles of Military on Civilians and Education

According to Samuel Huntington proposed Theory, military professionalism and civilian supremacy are essential for stable civil-military relations. Huntington argued that military officers should possess specialized expertise while remaining politically neutral.

The theory advocates clear separation between military and political spheres. Civilian leaders determine national policies, while military professionals execute those policies.

This theory remains highly influential in contemporary democratic systems and provides a useful framework for understanding military professionalism in Nigeria,

Morris Janowitz challenged Huntington's strict separation model by suggesting that military and civilian institutions increasingly share common values and responsibilities.

Janowitz argued that modern military organizations engage in peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and community development activities, thereby increasing interaction with civilian populations. This perspective highlights the importance of education and socialization in fostering cooperation between military personnel and civilians.

Civil-Military Relations and Education

Education contributes significantly to strengthening civil-military relations through various mechanisms. Civic education promotes understanding of constitutional governance and democratic principles. Students learn about the roles of government institutions, including the military, thereby reducing misconceptions and mistrust. Educational institutions facilitate dialogue between military personnel and civilian populations. Public lectures, seminars, and outreach programs create opportunities for interaction and knowledge exchange. Security education enhances public awareness of national security challenges such as terrorism, insurgency, cybercrime, and transnational crime. Informed citizens are better equipped to support national security efforts. And military educational institutions contribute to professional development and ethical conduct among military personnel. Training programs emphasize respect for human rights, democratic accountability, and civilian authority.

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Furthermore, universities and research institutions contribute to defence policy formulation through academic research and policy analysis. Such collaborations strengthen evidence-based decision-making in security governance.

Benefits of Effective Civil-Military Relations

Effective military-civil relations exist when the armed forces and civilian population/ government institutions work with mutual trust, respect and clear boundaries to bring gains across security, governance and development. This brings about improve national security and stability, enhanced human security and community resilience, better access to education and social services, stronger democratic governance and civilian control, economic development and resource utilization, positive public perception and national unity and efficient crisis and disaster response.

Nigerian Experience in Civil-Military Relations and Education

Nigeria's civil- military relation in education through military rule 1966- 1999, democratic transition in 1999, military educational outreach, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC}, Insurgency responses 2009- present, emergency education collaboration and trust and policy gaps.

Challenges of Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria

When civil-military want stability, the relations often breakdown due to structural, cultural and historical factors. However, the main challenges are role ambiguity and mission creep, mistrust and historical baggage, human right concerns, weak civilian oversight and control, communication and coordination gaps, resource competition, political interference, social and cultural distance and legal and policy gaps.

Conclusion

Civil-military relations remain a critical pillar of democratic governance, national security, and sustainable development in contemporary societies. The nature of the relationship between military institutions and civilian populations significantly influences political stability, social cohesion, and the effectiveness of governance structures. A healthy and cooperative civil-military relationship fosters mutual trust, strengthens democratic institutions, promotes accountability, and enhances the capacity of a nation to respond effectively to both traditional and emerging security challenges. Conversely, strained relations between the military and civilians can undermine public confidence, weaken democratic processes, and hinder national development efforts.

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It can be seen that that education plays a central role in shaping and strengthening civil-military relations. Through civic education, citizenship education, peace education, and professional military training, individuals acquire the knowledge, values, and attitudes necessary for promoting cooperation, respect, and understanding between military personnel and civilian communities. Education helps citizens appreciate the constitutional roles of the armed forces while simultaneously encouraging military personnel to uphold democratic principles, respect human rights, and remain accountable to civilian authority. In this way, education serves as a bridge that connects military institutions with the society they are mandated to protect.

The Nigerian experience provides valuable insights into the importance of education in promoting effective civil-military relations. Following decades of military involvement in governance, the country's transition to democratic rule has necessitated deliberate efforts to rebuild public trust, strengthen military professionalism, and reinforce democratic norms. Educational reforms, civic enlightenment programmes, public awareness campaigns, and institutional capacity-building initiatives have contributed to improving interactions between the military and civilian populations. Although significant progress has been made, challenges such as insecurity, misinformation, historical distrust, and limited public understanding of security matters continue to require attention.

The promotion of effective civil-military relations should remain a priority for governments, educational institutions, security agencies, and civil society organizations. Sustained investment in civic education, democratic values, military professionalism, and public engagement programmes will contribute significantly to building trust, enhancing national unity, and strengthening democratic governance. By fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between military institutions and civilian populations, societies can create a more secure, stable, and prosperous future for all citizens.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made;

1. Strengthen civic and citizenship education.
2. Promote military-community engagement programs.
3. Enhance democratic accountability.
4. Increase funding for security education.
5. Encourage university-military research collaborations.
6. Improve transparency and public communication.
7. Strengthen human rights training within military institutions.

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