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CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSO's) AS A TOOL FOR DEMOCRATIC SUSTENANCE IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined civil society organizations as a tool for democratic sustenance, drawing on evidence from Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopts a cross-sectional research survey design and used primary data collected through structured questionnaires distributed to four hundred (400) respondents across Kwara State. The quantitative data collected were presented and analyzed using frequency distribution tables and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The findings show that policy advocacy programmes adopted by CSO's such as policy engagement and civic education significantly influence democratic sustenance in Kwara State. The study concludes that Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) play a significant role in sustaining democracy in Kwara State through policy advocacy and other democratic engagements and established that challenges confronting CSO's, such as inadequate funding, political interference, weak institutional support, and operational limitations, significantly affect their effectiveness in promoting democracy. The study recommends that the government and policymakers should ensure there is effective institutionalization and protective mechanisms to reduce the barriers of politics and structures that will ensure CSO's autonomy, their non-interference by the government, and accountability activities to build credibility and resilience for operations in hostile political climates.

Keywords: Democratic Sustenance, Civil Society Organization, Policy Advocacy, Challenges and Third Sector

Introduction

The establishment and development of civic institutions are closely tied to the construction and development of a sustainable and stable democratic system. Beginning with the Enlightenment period in 18th-century Europe, civil society has grown into an independent entity between the family and the feudal state (Wondwosen, 2009). Over the years, civil society organizations have emerged as crucial pillars of democratic sustenance. They have actively contributed to deepening democracy by promoting accountable governance, advocating for human rights, and fostering

socioeconomic development. Their efforts to mobilize citizens, hold public institutions accountable, and create platforms for inclusive dialogue have significantly shaped political participation and policy reform. The development and strengthening of civil society organizations have not only supported democratic transitions but have also been recognized as essential pathways toward the establishment and sustainability of democratic systems (Kawu, 2019).

Globally, United Nations (2007), views democratic sustenance as participatory, transparent, and accountable. It encompasses state institutions and their operations, as well as private-sector and civil society organizations. In practice, such principles should translate into “strengthening democratic institutions” (Nzongola, 2002) by free, fair and frequent elections, a representative legislature, some judiciary and media independence from the State, the guarantee of human rights, transparent and accountable institutions, local governments that possess decentralized authority, a civil society which sets priorities and defends “the needs of the most vulnerable people”. The United Nations (UN, 2017) has recognized good governance as an essential component of global politics because it establishes a framework for addressing poverty, inequality, and many of humanity's other shortcomings. In sum, good public governance also underpins good corporate governance.

The inception of democracy in Nigeria brought with it an increase in regional or community-based civil society movements, with a keen interest in securing their separate interests. These groups were perceived as more powerful than pro-democracy NGO's like the Transition Monitoring Group, Constitutional Rights Project, and Civil Liberties Organization, all of which received dubious amounts of funding from foreign aid. State-run media also publicized them (Matthew, 2021). Essentially, achieving democratic sustenance requires nurturing democratic values and principles, and institutions in a mature sense that prevent a return to a hitherto authoritarian regime. It also rests upon strong and dynamic CSO's whose responsibility is to check repeated abuses of power, hold public officials accountable for their actions and inaction in the management of public resources, and mitigate political conflicts. A vibrant CSO's is probably more essential for consolidating and maintaining democratic sustenance than for initiating it (Diamond 1994).

Statement of the Problem

According to the 2024 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), Nigeria ranked 33rd out of 54 African countries, scoring 45.7 out of 100, which is below the African average. The report

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highlights a decline in Nigeria's good governance agenda over the past decade, with the country being listed among 11 nations experiencing the worst good governance deterioration since 2014, the key areas of weakness identified include security and rule of law, accountability, transparency, and anti-corruption, with particularly poor performance in managing armed conflict and institutional governance (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2024).

There are several factors that hinder the operation of Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) in Nigeria. CSO's face structural impediments that likely constrain their ability to achieve good-governance agendas, including resistance to information access, political interference, limited financial capacity, a weak institutional framework, and limited access to information. Evidence from Nigeria indicates that civic space is shrinking, hampering CSO's effectiveness and sustainability (Fagbadebo, 2023). Many CSO's remain urban-based, with limited geographical or grassroots coverage, weakening legitimacy and reach. Resource constraints, capacity gaps, and lack of funding further limit operations; for example, watchdog organizations have been handicapped by inadequate resources and manpower. Bureaucratic and legislative delays such as inconsistent Freedom of Information responses and incomplete domestication of FOI laws by states delay or dilute advocacy impact. These impediments collectively lower the probability that CSO's monitoring triggers corrective action at scale. Identifying and ranking these bottlenecks is therefore necessary to design effective, context-appropriate remedies for governance in Kwara State (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2021).

Objectives of the Study

- i. Examine the impact of policy advocacy programmes employed by CSO's in promoting democratic sustenance in Kwara State.
- ii. Investigate the challenges hindering CSO's towards achieving democratic sustenance in Kwara State.

Research Questions

- i. What are the policy advocacy programmes employed by CSO's in promoting democratic sustenance in Kwara State?
- ii. What are the challenges hindering CSO's towards achieving democratic sustenance in Kwara State?

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between policy advocacy programmes employed by CSO's and democratic sustenance in Kwara State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between challenges hindering CSO's and democratic sustenance in Kwara State.

Literature Review

Civil Society Organizations (CSO's)

Civil society organizations are frequently described as a collection of groups that are not owned or controlled by the government, and they do not have an interest in profit-making but rather in what will benefit their members and others in their society. According to Sule et al., (2021), in the modern era, the term "civil society" refers to nonprofit and individual self-help groups, institutions, and agencies recognized as key tools for advancing democracy, good governance, and civil rights. However, it is crucial to note that the growing influence of civil society in development has called into question the fundamental notion of mainstream development, which places the state at the center and places a heavy emphasis on infrastructure development.

Besides, civil society is also defined as the arena outside of the family, the state, and the market where people associate to advance common interests. The essence of civil society is to advance the interests of a group of people with a common socio-economic, political, or cultural interest, with the objective of not capturing political power or making profits, but to promote and advance the course of good governance and the common good of its members (Ghaus-Pasha, 2004). Civil society refers to associational activity that occurs in political space outside the state, an ideology that gained renewed momentum in the 1980 and 1990s as organizations and activists struggled to challenge dictatorships and illiberal regimes.

Democratic Sustenance

Democracy is a system of government in which power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or through freely elected representatives. In this study, democratic sustenance is the continuous strengthening, and effective functioning of democratic principles, institutions, and processes within a society over time. It involves maintaining democratic values such as rule of law, accountability, transparency, political participation, respect for human rights, free and fair elections, and good governance in order to ensure political stability and citizen inclusion in governance.

Democratic sustenance also entails protecting democracy from threats such as corruption, electoral malpractice, abuse of power, political violence, and authoritarian practices that may weaken democratic institutions. According to Edu, (2021) the following processes have been identified through which democratic sustenance can be achieved: ensuring free and fair elections, public campaigns, promoting justice and fairness, being truthful and loyal to party members, adequate representation of citizens and encouraging unity among the citizens. In the same vein, Palmer, (2021) identified what he referred to as “five habits of the heart” necessary to heal and nurture the heart of democracy. They includes: valuing our differences, drawing inspiration and greater understanding from contradictions, honoring the voice and will of the individual and celebrate the power of community building. Democratic sustenance can therefore be attained when none of the major political actors, parties, organized interests, forces or institutions considers any other alternative outside the formal democratic process to gain access to any political position, and no political institution has a claim to the actions of democratically elected decision makers. (Azu, 2019).

Challenges of Civil Society in Promoting Democratic Sustenance in Nigeria

Despite the contributions of civil society organizations on democratic sustenance, the CSO's continue to face obstacles that hinder their operations and sustainability in Nigeria.

Some CSO's were unable to oppose the government's authoritarian beliefs due to funding constraints. The democratic features of civil society and their capacity to foster and strengthen democracy in Nigeria have been called into question by this development. As a result, there are important questions about civil society's capacity to advance democratic governance and ensure its irreversibility. It is against the interests of the people and goes against their democratic principles for civil society to have sided with the oil cabal robbing the nation dry (Akogba et al., 2022). Furthermore, by developing a new political and economic culture in Africa, civic societies have failed to modernize their operational methods. However, due to funding constraints, some CSO's were unable to oppose the government's authoritarian beliefs.

The inadequate structural and organizational foundations of the majority of civil society organizations are to be blamed for this outcome. All of these have a significant effect on their ability to gauge popular sentiment and respond to it in a way that supports the democratic course. The majority of their offices are staffed by handpicked employees who lack the necessary

qualifications and experience to manage such businesses, and they are housed in temporary structures in urban areas. Youths frequently turn into easy weapons for unrestrained disputes that endanger Nigeria's democracy and business life when poverty, unemployment, discontent, marginalization, and abuse of fundamental human rights are visible. CSO's face the challenge of creating new mechanisms of international cooperation that enable common people to protect their interests and identities against powerful, often impassable global forces (Gersham, 2000).

Government interference and intimidation constitute a major challenge confronting Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) in Nigeria, particularly those involved in governance, human rights, and anti-corruption advocacy. The Nigerian government, at various levels, often perceives CSO's as political opponents rather than development partners. This interference weakens CSO's watchdog role, restricts civic space, and discourages active citizen participation in governance processes, thereby undermining transparency and accountability. (Akindele & Ayoola, 2017). Furthermore, legislative and regulatory interference has been used as a tool of intimidation. The proposed NGO Regulation Bill (popularly known as the "NGO Bill") sought to give the government excessive control over the registration, funding, and operations of CSO's. Although the bill faced strong resistance, it highlighted the state's intention to constrain independent civil society action. In practice, bureaucratic delays in registration, selective enforcement of regulations, and threats of deregistration remain common. This hostile environment weakens CSO's effectiveness in promoting good governance in Nigeria and limits their ability to hold the government accountable to democratic norms and the rule of law (Nigeria Civil Group, 2018).

This is another major challenge confronting Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) in Nigeria, despite the enactment of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act in 2011. Access to public information is crucial for CSO's to effectively monitor government activities, track public expenditure, and advocate for transparency and accountability. However, Nigeria's public sector continues to exhibit a strong culture of secrecy rooted in decades of military rule, where government information is treated as confidential rather than a public right. Scholars argue that this secrecy significantly undermines CSO's capacity to perform their watchdog and advocacy roles in promoting good governance (Akinwale, 2020).

Many public institutions in Nigeria show widespread non-compliance with the FOI Act by ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). Either ignore FOI requests or deliberately delay responses, while others provide incomplete or misleading information. According to Ogbodo

(2019), CSO's such as SERAP and PPDC have repeatedly reported difficulties in accessing information on budget implementation, procurement processes, and public contracts, often resorting to litigation to enforce compliance. This persistent denial of information limits evidence-based advocacy and weakens civil society's ability to expose corruption and inefficiencies in public governance. Furthermore, weak institutional enforcement mechanisms and low awareness of the FOI Act at both the federal and state levels exacerbate the problem. This lack of transparency creates an imbalance of power between the state and civil society, reduces citizen trust, and constrains democratic participation. Limited access to information undermines CSO's effectiveness in promoting accountability, transparency, and adherence to the rule of law in Nigeria (Agbo & Okoye, 2021).

Furthermore, low public trust in CSO's contributes to both limited awareness and weak collaboration. Some segments of the Nigerian public perceive CSO's as elitist, donor-driven, or aligned with political interests, thereby undermining their credibility and discouraging citizen engagement (Ibrahim, 2016). This mistrust also affects inter-CSO collaboration, as ideological differences, leadership rivalries, and concerns about transparency hinder partnership-building (Obi & Oche, 2021).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual review identifies the relationships between the variables in the study and operationalizes them. The relationship of the variables is as follows:

Independent Variable

Civil Society Organizations

Dependent Variable

Democratic Sustenance

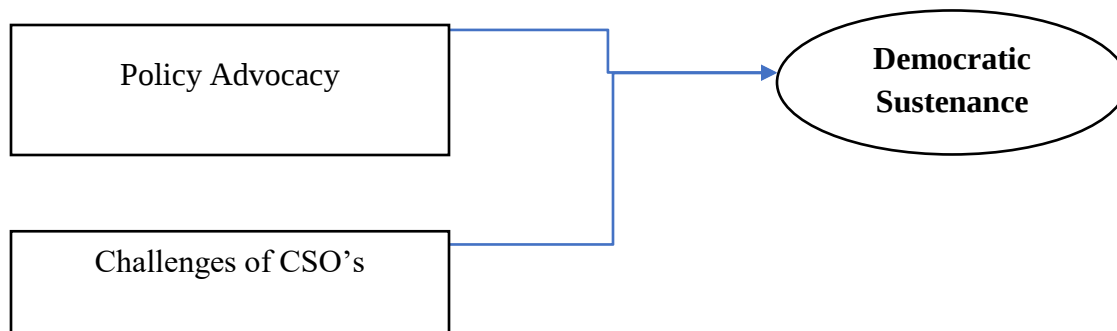


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's Framework (2026)

Figure 1 above shows the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. The dependent variable is democratic sustenance. The independent variables are civic education programmes and challenges hindering CSO's.

Theoretical Review

Theory of Civil Society as a Third Sector

The theory has its roots in the support of the Kettering Foundation in 1987 in the United States. The Kettering Foundation funded programmes to study civil society and its role in society (Salamon et al., 1997). One of the major assumptions of the Third Sector theory is that civil society is a third sector in governance or an independent sector different from the government and private/business sectors. The assumption is that civil society is a voluntary, non-governmental organization that plays a critical role in democratic processes worldwide. Thus, the state is perceived as the first sector, the second sector comprises businesses, families, schools, universities, mosques and churches, and all forms of voluntary organizations and professionals. Civil society is thus seen as the third sector, which plays an important role distinct from those of the first and second sectors (Salamon et al., 1997).

The second assumption is that society is not composed only of political order, but it also consists of the social order of voluntary groups and their own orders. These social orders of civil society include diverse networks of organizations, ranging from alliances, unions, federations, and confederations of interest groups. Through this mode, a civil order is established (Sriskandarajah, 2016). Thus, succinctly, it can be understood from the two major assumptions of the Third Sector Theory that civil society is distinct from the government and a private enterprise sector making it another independent body for social order and that, it is not only the government or the political aspect of the society that can provide regulations, order, needs, and social norms for individuals in the society since civil societies too can do the same (Sriskandarajah, 2016).

Within the context of theory of Civil Society as third sector, civil society acts as a watchdog between the state and citizens, upholding the terms of the mediator. Civil society organizations are therefore seen as the third sector because they stand between the state, business, and family. Besides, given the exercise and location of all powers and authority within the state, a third party is needed to ensure accountability and respect for the constitution. Within this theoretical plank, this study adopts this theory. The reasons for adopting this theory are that it will help explain the changes and continuities in civil society and democratic sustenance in Nigeria by laying bare the

ideological trajectories of the Nigerian state and the extent to which the third sector has, since the emergence of the fourth republic, performed its responsibilities within the ambit of the law.

Empirical Review

Chinyeaka, et al., (2014), civil society organizations and democratic consolidation in Nigeria: Issues, challenges and the way forward. Civil society organizations (CSO's) in Nigeria have played crucial roles in restoring the country to civil rule. The CSO's in the country are more reactive than proactive due to daunting challenges in leadership, internal democracy, autonomy, finance, and cohesion, which have affected how they collaborate and/or cooperate with the state and society at large. Drawing on experience from the globalized era, the paper argues that to make reasonable contributions towards democratic consolidation in Nigeria, CSO's should, as key indicators of democratic audit, ensure effective internal democracy, improve their capacity, funding, and autonomy, and maintain the cohesion necessary for collective action, among other measures.

Victoria (2019), the challenges of civil society organizations in democratic Sustenance in Nigeria. The study adopted the Marxian Political Economy Approach, which views the economic condition of society as the primary determinant of its other structures, to explain the dilemma CSO's face in influencing the electoral process. Findings showed that most of the civil society organizations have either been politicized, intimidated by repressive government or destabilized by internal crises that deviate their attention from their roles as watchdogs on political events. The study recommend that the ruling class should as a matter of expediency uphold the tenets of democracy to bear on the electoral process, by strengthening the democratic institutions to exist exclusively as state institutions rather than personalized structures; while the CSO's should consciously understand their role, and assume their rightful place to lay foundation for sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

Lambert (2020), an analysis of the nexus between civil society organizations and good governance Nigeria. This paper analyzes the nexus between civil society organizations and good governance in Nigeria. The paper predicates its analysis on some propositions extracted from the structural functional theory. The paper relies substantially on secondary method of data collection which it analyzes using content analysis. However, the paper also reveals that civil society organizations in Nigeria face numerous challenges, problems, and constraints that

impede their ability to play effective roles in promoting good governance. The paper therefore recommends, among other things, that all concerned persons and bodies in the country should come together to help rescue civil society groups from their acute constraints and weaknesses, and accordingly empower them with more efficient and effective facilities, resources, skills, and methods of operation.

Abah & Adihikon (2020), civil society and democratic governance in Nigeria's fourth republic: a historical reflection. Civil society groups in Nigeria have been indispensable actors in the democratization process, especially since the return to civil rule in 1999. As agents of social change germane to mass reorientation and mobilization, they have helped sustain and deepen democratic governance by providing critical socio-economic and political services to Nigerians in both urban and rural areas. The paper discovers that the dynamics inherent in the Nigerian state and its brand of democracy tend to stymie and inhibit the growth and effective functioning of civil society. The study also offers tentative recommendations for strengthening and repositioning civil society and democratic governance in Nigeria's fourth republic. The social contact theory is adopted as a framework of analysis, while an interdisciplinary approach to historical research is also adopted. Oral interviews with civil society groups, experts, and 'ordinary' Nigerians were conducted, critically analyzed, and integrated with the extant literature to address the problems of this paper.

Oke & Atufe-Musa (2021), the role of civil society organizations (CSO's) in Deepening Democratic Tenets in Nigeria. The need to enhance the role of civil society organizations (CSO's) to engage government better and foster democratic tenets and development in Nigeria has become ever more necessary as its democracy is increasingly confronted with recurrent challenges of flagrant disregard for the rule of law, human rights abuses, arbitrariness, and political impunity. Against this background, this paper examines the role of CSO's in bridging the gap between the people and the government. The paper adopts liberal democracy theory as its analytical framework. The findings reveal that CSO's face numerous internal and external challenges, which make them less effective. It recommends that CSO's build their structures from the grassroots to create public awareness and ensure proper funding and accounting systems.

Lawerence & Kingsley (2021), the role of civil society organizations in the public financial management process of sub-nationals in Nigeria. A qualitative research approach and a thematic

research design were used in this paper. The study population included all civil society organizations registered in Plateau State, one of the 36 states in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. A census sample approach was used, and 10 civil society organizations with a public financial management thematic focus were identified using the state authorities' register. Data were collected from civil society organizations using a semi-structured interview guide and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings suggest that the inclusion and participation of CSO's in the public financial management process help entrench transparency and accountability of sub-nationals in Nigeria. The paper concludes that civil society organizations can play a critical role in entrenching accountability and transparency in the public finance process in developing countries. The paper proposes a comprehensive and robust framework for public financial management among subnational governments, including civil society organizations as key actors.

Mulunesh & Sewmehon(2022), contribution of civil society organizations to women's political participation in Ethiopia: the case of Amhara women's association. Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) must connect the government to the public and fill gaps in government policies across a wide range of dimensions. Thus, this study assessed the experience of the Amhara Women's Association (AWA) and its contribution to enhancing women's political participation and gender equality. The study used a case study design and a qualitative research approach. Data was gathered from primary and secondary sources via key informant interviews and document analysis. The main data, which was largely gathered through interviews, was analysed using thematic analysis. The study included 18 key informants (the chairperson of the Amhara Women's Association, members, and experts from BOWCYA and CSO's). The study's results show that AWA seeks to play a vital role in promoting gender equality and democracy in the region. This is done by encouraging and empowering women to be active participants and beneficiaries of the country's leadership and democratization process. The goal is to enable CSO's to participate more effectively and efficiently by strengthening or establishing independent, autonomous organizations. Accordingly, a 2019 review of CSO law opens the political arena.

Ukah, & Egbe (2023), effect of civil society organizations on sustainable development in Nigeria. Civil society groups are agents of development in any nation. Civil society

organizations play a vital role in social, political, and economic development activities. The paper also examined factors that hinder the performance of civil society groups in relation to national development. The secondary method of data collection was used to source information. The paper recommends that civil society groups be sanitized and strengthened to ensure effective service delivery by creating an enabling environment for their operations and maintaining a high degree of independence from the government.

Gap in Literature

One major gap is the limited scholarly focus on particular local CSO's in Kwara State. Moreover, a research gap exists due to the lack of contextual research on democratic sustenance indicators at the state and local government levels. The federal system in Nigeria means governance practices and problems vary across states. Therefore, this study seeks to fill these gaps by critically analyzing CSO's role in promoting democratic sustenance in Kwara State. It aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on how localized civil society efforts can influence accountability, transparency, and citizen participation, especially in environments where state institutions are often weak or unresponsive.

Methodology

This study adopted a cross sectional approach. The study focused on the population of registered Civil Society Organizations (CSO's), which are responsible for policy advocacy in Kwara State. A representative sample of 400 respondents was selected based on staff availability and willingness to participate, and Krejcie and Morgan's sampling technique was used to determine the sample size. The study employed a simple random sampling technique in selecting respondents for participation in the study because the population shared relatively similar characteristics relating to policy advocacy activities, making equal probability selection suitable for the study. The study employed both primary and secondary data, the primary data was through the use of questionnaire while the secondary data were from journals, government publications and Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) annual bulletin.

Finding and Results

Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha)

S/N	Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Policy Advocacy	6	0.79
2	Challenges	6	0.82

Source: *Researcher Computation, 2026*

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis I

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between policy advocacy programmes employed by CSO's and democratic sustenance in Kwara State.

Table 1.1 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.762	.580	.579	1.309

a. Predictors: (Constant), Policy Advocacy Programmes

The correlation coefficient ($R=0.762$) indicates a strong positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The coefficient of determination ($R^2=0.580$) implies that the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable included in the model, adjusted R^2 value of 0.579 shows that after adjusting for sample size and the number of predictors, the model still explains approximately 0.579 of the variation in the dependent variable, indicating that the model is stable and reliable. The standard error of estimate of 1.309 suggests a relatively low level of prediction error, meaning the regression model has a good fit and acceptable predictive accuracy.

Table 1.2 ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	119.953	1	119.953	550.243	.000b
Residual	86.637	398	0.218		
Total	206.590	399			

a. Dependent Variable: Democratic Sustenance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Policy Advocacy Programmes

The ANOVA table above presents the regression sum of squares of 119.953 indicates the proportion of variation in the dependent variable that is explained by the predictor variable included in the model. On the other hand, the residual sum of squares of 86.637 represents the unexplained variation attributed to other factors outside the model. The total sum of squares of 206.590 shows the overall variation observed in the dependent variable. The regression degree of freedom of 1 indicates that only one predictor variable was used in the model, while the residual

degree of freedom of 398 reflects the remaining observations after accounting for the predictor and intercept term. The mean square regression value of 119.953 is considerably higher than the residual means square value of 0.218, indicating that the explained variation is much larger than the unexplained variation in the model.

Furthermore, the F-statistic value of 550.243 demonstrates that the regression model is highly significant in explaining the relationship between the variables under investigation. The F-value measures the ratio of explained variance to unexplained variance, and such a large value implies that the predictor variable has a strong influence on the dependent variable. The significance probability value of 0.000, which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05, confirms that the regression model is statistically significant and reliable for analysis.

Table 1.3 Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	T	Sig.
(Constant)	.396	.181		2.188	.000
<i>Policy Advocacy Programmes</i>	.415	.058	.762	7.155	.000

a. Dependent Variable: *Democratic Sustenance*

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The regression coefficient for the constant term is 0.396, indicating the baseline level of the dependent variable when the independent variable is held constant. The t-value of 2.188 and significance level of 0.000 show that the constant term is statistically significant. Furthermore, the independent variable has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.415, implying that a one-unit increase in the independent variable leads to a 0.415-unit increase in the dependent variable. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.762 indicates a strong positive relationship between the variables. The t-statistic of 7.155, which is far greater than the critical value at 5% significance level, confirms that the independent variable significantly affects the dependent variable. The significance probability of 0.000 further indicates that the relationship is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between the variables.

Hypothesis II

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between challenges hindering CSO's and democratic sustenance in Kwara State.

Table 1.4 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.781	.610	.608	1.184

a. Predictors: (Constant), Challenges of CSO's

The model summary reveals a strong positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables, as indicated by the correlation coefficient ($R=0.781$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2=0.610$) implies that the dependent variable is explained by the predictor variable included in the model, while other variables was not captured in the study. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.608 confirms that the model maintains substantial explanatory power even after adjusting for sample size and the number of predictors. Furthermore, the lower standard error of estimate (1.184) indicates that the regression predictions are closer to the observed values, suggesting a better model fit.

Table 1.5: ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	244.000	1	244.000	622.449	.000b
Residual	156.000	398	0.392		
Total	400.000	399			

a. Dependent Variable: Democratic Sustenance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Challenges of CSO's

The ANOVA table shows that the regression model is statistically significant in explaining the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The regression sum of squares of 244.000 indicates that a substantial proportion of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the predictor variable. The residual sum of squares of 156.000 represents the unexplained variation caused by other factors outside the model. The F-statistic value of 622.449 is very high, indicating a strong overall model fit. Furthermore, the significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, confirms that the regression model is statistically significant. This

implies that the independent variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis.

Table 1.6: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.402	.165		2.436	.000
<i>Challenges of CSO's</i>	.438	.049	.781	8.939	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Democratic Sustenance

The coefficients table indicates that the independent variable has a positive and statistically significant effect on the dependent variable. The unstandardized coefficient value of 0.438 implies that a one-unit increase in the independent variable leads to a corresponding increase of 0.438 units in the dependent variable. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.781 reveals a strong positive relationship between the variables. Furthermore, the t-statistic value of 8.939 is considerably high, indicating that the predictor variable makes a substantial contribution to the model. The significance value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance, confirms that the relationship between the variables is statistically significant. In addition, the constant term of 0.402 suggests the baseline level of the dependent variable when the independent variable is held constant.

Discussion of the Findings

The first hypothesis examined whether there is a significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in the study. The regression and ANOVA results revealed a strong positive relationship between the variables, as indicated by the correlation coefficient value of $R=0.781$. The coefficient of determination ($R^2=0.610$) further showed that about 61.0% of the variation in the dependent variable was explained by the predictor variable included in the model. The ANOVA result produced an F-statistic value of 622.449 with a significance probability of 0.000, which is less than the acceptable 0.05 level of significance. Similarly, the coefficients table showed that the independent variable had a beta coefficient of 0.781 and a t-value of 8.939, indicating a strong and statistically significant contribution to the model. The significance value of 0.000 confirmed that the predictor variable significantly influenced the dependent variable. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis

which stated that there is no significant relationship between the variables was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

The second hypothesis focused on determining whether the regression model provides a statistically reliable explanation of the relationship between the study variables. The model summary result showed an adjusted R^2 value of 0.608, indicating that the model possesses substantial explanatory power even after adjusting for sample size and the number of predictors. In addition, the standard error of the estimate value of 1.184 demonstrated that the model has a relatively low prediction error and a good level of accuracy in estimating the dependent variable. The ANOVA findings further confirmed the fitness and reliability of the model, as the calculated F-statistic of 622.449 was very high and statistically significant at a probability value of 0.000. This result signifies that the regression model is appropriate for explaining the relationship among the variables investigated in the study. Furthermore, the positive coefficient values obtained from the regression analysis indicate that the independent variable contributes positively toward predicting the dependent variable. The null hypothesis which stated that the regression model is not statistically significant was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) play a significant role in sustaining democracy in Kwara State through policy advocacy and other democratic engagements. The findings revealed that policy advocacy has a strong positive influence on democratic sustenance, indicating that the activities of CSO's in promoting citizens' participation, accountability, transparency, and good governance contribute greatly to democratic stability. However, the study also established that challenges confronting CSO's, such as inadequate funding, political interference, weak institutional support, and operational limitations, significantly affect their effectiveness in promoting democracy. Despite these challenges, CSO's remain important actors in strengthening democratic governance and ensuring political development in Kwara State.

Recommendations

In light of the findings from this study, the following recommendations were made;

- i. The CSO's should ensure that civic education should remain the foundation of intervention efforts, but it needs to be delivered through inclusive, community-driven

platforms that promote dialogue, critical thinking, and collective problem-solving

- ii. Partnerships with other Civil Society Organizations (CSO's), local leaders, grass-root groups, and the media will play the role of enabling the coverage of wider territories with the messages of governance and influencing wider participation by the citizens, and ensuring that the advocacy programmes result in changes in the policies and better delivery of services.
- iii. The government and policymaker should ensure there is effective institutionalization and protective mechanisms to reduce the barriers of politics and structures. This involves enacting policies and legal protective measures that ensure CSO's' autonomy, their non-interference by the government, and free access to the governmental information they require to conduct transparency and accountability activities to build credibility and resilience for operations in hostile political climates.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study has made contributions to existing literature in various ways. This study contributes to existing knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the role of civil society organizations (CSO's) as catalysts for democratic sustenance at the sub-national level in Nigeria, with a specific focus on Kwara State. From a theoretical perspective, the current study explored this theory to gain an in-depth knowledge of the impacts of civil society organizations (CSO's) in democratic sustenance; theory of Civil Society as a third Sector because it help to explain the changes and continuities in civil society and democratic sustenance trails in Nigeria by laying bare the ideological trajectories of the Nigerian state and the extent to which the third sector had since the emergence of the fourth republic performed its responsibilities within the ambits of the law. Indirectly, the study contributes to the attempt to gain a better understanding of the benefits inherent in civil society organizations (CSO's) on democratic sustenance, and some of the notable challenges associated with civil society organizations (CSO's) were equally identified in the study.

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