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Evaluating the Perceived Economic, Social, and Environmental Impacts of Key Legislative Policies on Nigerian Industries

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of key laws on the economy, society, and environment of industries in Nigeria. Researchers sought to understand how government policies influence sustainable practices in a rapidly growing economy. They employed a descriptive survey method to collect data from 385 participants across various industrial sectors. To analyse the information, they applied frequency distribution and percentage analysis. The results show that legislative policies have had mixed effects: economically, they boosted profits (33.8%) and created investment chances (23.4%), but some industries faced higher operational costs (16.9%); socially, these policies helped secure jobs (26.0%) and improved worker welfare (20.8%), yet fairness issues still existed; environmentally, there were advancements in reducing pollution (29.9%) and managing waste (23.4%), although smaller businesses struggled with compliance costs. The study concludes that while these laws help promote sustainability in industries, their effects are uneven due to weaknesses in institutions and the burdens of compliance. It suggests enhancing institutional capacity, offering specific incentives, and ensuring all stakeholders are involved in creating and implementing policies. This research adds to our understanding by providing solid evidence on the various impacts of legislative policies in Nigeria and suggesting a framework that considers both institutional roles and stakeholder views. Future research could focus on long-term studies and analyses specific to different sectors to understand policy outcomes over time better.

INTRODUCTION

Industrial laws are a key tool that governments use to influence the economy, social welfare, and environmental outcomes. In Nigeria, a nation facing rapid population growth, changing global supply chains, and severe environmental challenges (Magaji et al., 2024), recent legislative actions have aimed to encourage industrial growth while also addressing its social and ecological impacts (Abubakar et al., 2025). These actions include export limits designed to enhance local value chains, such as the temporary ban on raw shea-nut exports in 2025, which promotes local processing. They also involve environmental regulations focused on reducing plastic waste and promoting sustainable practices (Mukhtar et al., 2025). However, these policy decisions come with complicated trade-offs: they can create more local jobs and increase value (Akpan et al., 2025). Still, they may also lead to short-term challenges for producers and new compliance requirements for industries (AP, 2025).

Experts in African industrial policy note that the effectiveness of these laws depends not only on their content but also on the ability of institutions, financial support, and how well public incentives align with market capabilities (Odijie, 2024). Additionally, research into Nigeria's manufacturing and resource sectors shows that different industries respond differently to the same policies—sectors with stronger connections or foreign partnerships adapt in ways distinct from those reliant on smallholder production. These insights suggest that the effects of policies—how businesses, workers, and communities perceive changes—can vary significantly from what

macroeconomic data indicates. Therefore, it is important to evaluate these effects through both qualitative experiences and quantitative measures.

Studies on environmental policy and climate finance add complexity to the situation: Nigeria's climate and environmental finance system shows significant gaps between its declared policy goals and the funding available for mitigation and adaptation efforts (Al-Amin et al., 2025). This leaves many industrial shifts without enough financial support, even when regulations are in place (Climate Policy Initiative, 2024). As a result, well-meaning green or circular regulations, such as bans on single-use plastics and incentives for cleaner production, may not provide consistent environmental benefits unless they are paired with targeted financial resources and technical help for industries to reduce carbon emissions or adopt cleaner practices (Bilyaminu, 2024).

Considering this context, this study calls for a thorough evaluation that focuses on the perceived economic, social, and environmental effects among industry stakeholders. Feedback from managers, workers, smallholders, and affected communities can uncover challenges in implementation, distribution effects, and unintended social costs (or benefits) that are not visible in overall statistics. By comparing perception data with policy documents, sector performance information, and recent policy events, researchers and policymakers can gain a clearer understanding of which legislative measures support sustainable industrialisation and which require redesigning, capacity building, or compensatory actions (Ononuju, Wasurum, Nwachukwu, & Malchiah, 2024).

This introduction sets up the research questions and supports a mixed-methods approach: (1) How do various industry players view the economic results (profits, investments, jobs) of recent legislative policies? (2) What social impacts (livelihoods, fairness, working conditions) do stakeholders report? (3) How do stakeholders see environmental outcomes and regulatory fairness? Addressing these questions will help policymakers adjust laws to ensure that Nigeria's industrial transformation fosters economic resilience while promoting social inclusion and environmental sustainability simultaneously (Anyaogu, 2024).

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Perceived Impacts (Understanding Impacts): Recent studies in Nigeria view perceived impacts as how stakeholders personally assess the outcomes of policies—whether economic, social, or environmental. These perceptions influence behaviours and political reactions. They are not just simple opinions; they provide valuable insights into gaps in policy implementation and how benefits are shared (Salako, 2023; customer-perception research in Cross River State, 2025). Research on perceptions reveals that they often highlight the short-term costs of adjustments, the burdens of compliance, and informal ways people cope that official statistics might overlook (Jafaru et al., 2024).

Legislative Policies (In Industry): Experts describe important legislative policies for industry as rules or regulations—such as trade bans, local-content requirements, waste management laws, tax incentives, and import limits—that aim to change the way businesses produce, invest, and operate. Recent analyses of Nigeria's industrial laws have revealed that the same law can have varying effects across different sectors, due to factors such as connections between industries, available resources, and financial support. Odijie's recent research views industrial laws as part of a larger government strategy that connects with foreign investment and value-chain activities.

Economic Impacts: Economic impacts refer to changes in production levels, job opportunities, investments, prices, and added value that can be linked to a specific policy (Yakubu et al., 2025). Studies in Nigeria examine both large-scale indicators (such as total output and exports) and individual company results (including survival rates, profit margins, and capital growth) (Magaji et al., 2023). They note that while short-term protectionist actions can yield quick benefits in local processing industries, they may also increase costs for inputs and create challenges to competitiveness.

Social Impacts: Social impacts involve changes in people's livelihoods, fairness among groups, working conditions, gender outcomes, and community well-being (Ismail et al., 2019). Recent evidence from Nigeria suggests that industrial policies focused on adding value—such as restrictions on shea-nut exports or sugar production plans—can generate local jobs but may also lead to an uneven distribution of benefits along the value chain. This unevenness could lead to resistance from communities if there is insufficient support for those affected.

Environmental impacts refer to the effects of activities on waste management, pollution levels, resource consumption, and outcomes related to adaptation and mitigation (Ibrahim et al., 2025). Recent discussions around single-use plastics and climate finance show a significant gap between regulations and available resources. While environmental laws may be in place, their success relies on how well they are enforced, the funding available, and the presence of alternative solutions (Tanko et al., 2025).

Industries include manufacturing, agro-processing, oil and gas, plastics and packaging, as well as small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These firms vary in size, formality, and their ability to adapt to changes in laws. Recent studies from Nigeria emphasise that there is considerable diversity: larger companies and foreign branches adjust differently compared to SMEs and informal micro-processors.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURES

Salako (2023) examined how stakeholders view Nigeria's cashless banking policy through a survey and interviews conducted in various states. Many people noted that the policy made banking easier but also raised concerns about excluding certain groups,

particularly older individuals and those living in rural areas. Additionally, cash-dependent traders faced some short-term negative impacts on their livelihoods. Access to digital infrastructure influenced how people perceived the economic benefits of this policy. The study emphasises that understanding people's perceptions is essential for creating effective policies: digital financial initiatives need support and infrastructure to prevent social exclusion.

In a study titled "Customer Perception & Consumption of Made-in-Nigeria Products" conducted in Cross River State (ResearchGate preprint, 2025), researchers surveyed consumers. They conducted focus groups to understand how perceptions of quality, pride, and price affect the consumption of local products. Positive views on government campaigns and local content incentives linked to higher purchase intentions; however, concerns over low quality and inadequate after-sales service limited wider acceptance. The findings suggest that industrial policies promoting 'Made in Nigeria' should combine incentives with support for improving quality to shift consumer perceptions and boost demand.

Odijie (2024) performed a policy analysis using documentary reviews and case studies to track changes in Nigeria's industrial policies. This paper demonstrates a shift towards targeted state-led support for strategic sectors, such as sugar and agro-processing. It examines how foreign investments, particularly from China, and value chain connections impact domestic policy decisions. The research highlights that different local abilities to benefit from value-added activities result in winners and losers among policymakers. It emphasises the need for policymakers to consider the impact on distribution and provide compensatory measures, such as skills training and financial support, for those who may be adversely affected or vulnerable groups.

Once again, Odije (2024) conducted a case study on the Sugar Master Plan, interviewing industry players and utilising secondary data. While the plan aims to enhance local production and refining, it failed to consider the impact on smallholders and traders, who were negatively affected by import limits and changes in land use. Industrial plans must include clear social support measures to prevent causing hardship and resistance in local communities.

Nwankwo (2022) conducted an analysis using data from individual firms and interviews in the oil and gas sector to evaluate the outcomes of local content laws. These laws led to a significant increase in the sourcing of engineering services locally, helping some domestic suppliers expand their capabilities. However, most benefits went to a few firms that already had resources or access to capital, leaving smaller firms at a disadvantage without specific support for building their capacity. While local content can lead to structural change, it requires additional financial support and skills training to ensure equitable benefits for all.

In a working paper titled "The Effect of Government Policies on the Survival of Small Businesses in Nigeria" (2024/2025), researchers performed a quantitative analysis of how factors like taxation, licensing, credit, and other government policies influence small business survival through surveys and econometric models. When government credit policies are well-targeted, they can help small businesses survive; however, some tax and licensing rules create compliance costs that make it harder for tiny firms to thrive. Additionally, how fair businesses perceive these policies plays a crucial role in their investment choices. Policy design should consider the varying sizes of firms and communicate effectively about perceptions to promote compliance and engagement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The work is anchored on the following theories:

1. New Institutionalism / Institutional Theory (Scott, 2008; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) — This theory explains how formal rules like laws interact with social norms and beliefs that influence how businesses act and the results for different sectors. It helps us understand why various industries react differently to the same law based on their institutional abilities, social expectations, and similar pressures.

2. Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) — This theory focuses on the many different groups involved (businesses, employees, communities, regulators, consumers) whose views are important. It supports the idea of measuring the perceived economic, social, and environmental effects because successful policies in changing industries need to balance the different expectations and compromises of stakeholders.

3. Policy-feedback theory (Pierson, 1993) — This theory looks at how policies create feedback loops: they not only have immediate effects but also generate resources, incentives, and interpretations that can change how political and economic actors behave and shape future policies. This helps explain how initial views (whether good or bad) can have significant political impacts and affect the sustainability of policies (for example, a ban viewed as unfair may lead to non-compliance and pushback).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a convergent mixed-methods design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand the diverse range of stakeholder views and the underlying reasons behind them. A structured survey will collect quantitative data to assess how different industry players perceive the economic, social, and environmental impacts of the project. Meanwhile, qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) will look into how and why these perceptions develop, as well as how institutional contexts influence responses. By combining these findings, the study aims to enhance validity and relevance for policy-making.

The research focuses on specific industries in Nigeria that have been impacted by recent legislative changes, including agro-processing (such as shea and sugar), manufacturing (including plastics and packaging), oil and gas local content, and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in manufacturing. The target population includes managers and owners of firms, production supervisors, frontline workers, smallholders or contractors in the supply chain, regulatory officials, and community representatives within relevant industrial clusters across three geopolitical zones: North Central, South West, and South South. This approach aims to capture a diverse range of perspectives.

For the quantitative part of the study, using Cochran's formula for proportions along with practical field considerations, we plan to gather a minimum sample of 385 respondents to achieve a 95% confidence level with a ±5% margin of error for large unknown populations. Sampling is organised based on industry sector and firm size (large, medium, small, informal). Within each category, it uses proportionate stratified random sampling to select firms; then, purposive sampling will be used within those firms to choose managers and workers, ensuring that everyone is represented.

Qualitative Sample: This approach utilises purposeful sampling to select 30–40 key informants, including regulators, leaders of industry associations, managers from large companies, small business owners, and community leaders. Additionally, we will conduct 6–8 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 6–10 participants each who are workers or smallholders. We will continue sampling until we reach saturation in terms of the number of interviews.

Quantitative Instrument

The questionnaire has five parts:

1. Demographics & Firm Characteristics: This includes age, gender, education level, firm size, years in operation, and sector.
2. Exposure to Policy: Here, we assess awareness of policies, how long they have been known, and any compliance actions taken.
3. Perceived Economic Impacts: Respondents will share their views on changes in revenue, investments made, jobs created or lost, and input costs.
4. Perceived Social Impacts: This section focuses on impacts related to livelihoods, fairness, working conditions, and overall community welfare.
5. Perceived Environmental Impacts: Participants will evaluate issues like pollution levels, waste production, resource usage, and access to clean technology.

For the perception items, we will use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Example statements include:

- "The recent legislation has increased my firm's revenue."
- "Following the law significantly raised my operating costs."
- "The law improved job opportunities in our community."
- "The regulation reduced environmental pollution from our operations."

It creates composite indices for Economic Impact, Social Impact, and Environmental Impact by averaging the relevant responses.

It also prepared a semi-structured interview guide for key informants that focuses on policy implementation issues, such as capacity challenges, distribution effects, supportive measures in place, and observed outcomes.

FGD guide for workers and smallholders to examine real-life effects, coping methods, and views on fairness.

Pilot Testing, Validity, and Reliability: First, conduct a pilot test of the questionnaire with 30 participants from a different group to check for clarity and timing, and make any necessary adjustments. Ensure content validity by having 2-3 experts in industrial policy and survey methods review the material. Use exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the survey data to confirm that items relate correctly to the Economic, Social, and Environmental areas for construct validity. To measure reliability, apply Cronbach's alpha; aim for a threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ for each composite scale. If the alpha is below 0.70, review item-total correlations and make changes. Trained research assistants will distribute questionnaires in person (using paper or tablets) and collect consent forms. Where possible, provide online survey options for managers who have internet access. Interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) will be recorded with consent and transcribed word-for-word. Field notes will document nonverbal signals and context.

Schedule data collection during times that avoid peak production periods to improve response rates.

Data Management and Analysis: Use descriptive statistics (such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations) to summarise perceptions by sector and stakeholder group. Conduct a thematic analysis using Braun & Clarke's method (2006): code transcripts to develop themes, then review and refine those themes. Utilise tools such as NVivo or ATLAS.ti for coding and organising the data. Finally, connect the qualitative themes with the quantitative findings to explain the differences and illustrate the perceived mechanisms.

DATA ANALYSIS, DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS, AND THEORY–FINDINGS LINKAGE

Data Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 385)

Variable Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	245	63.6
Female	140	36.4
Age		
18–30 years	105	27.3
31–40 years	140	36.4
41–50 years	90	23.4
51 years & above	50	13.0
Education Level		
Secondary	75	19.5
Tertiary (Dipl./B.Sc.)	210	54.5
Postgraduate	100	26.0

Explanation: The sample primarily consisted of men, accounting for 63.6%, which highlights the male-heavy nature of Nigerian industrial jobs. Many of the people surveyed were between the ages of 31 and 40 years (36.4%) or 18 and 30 years (27.3%). A large number of respondents (80.5%) had completed tertiary or postgraduate education, indicating that they were generally educated and capable of assessing policies.

Table 2: Perceived Economic Impacts of Legislative Policies (N = 385)

Response Option	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Increased revenue/profit	130	33.8
Increased investment opportunities	90	23.4
Increased employment opportunities	75	19.5
Increased operating costs	65	16.9
No noticeable change	25	6.4

Explanation: Most people surveyed (33.8%) believed that policies helped increase profits, while 23.4% saw more investment opportunities. On the other hand, 16.9% reported that their operating costs increased, suggesting that the benefits were not uniform for everyone. Only 6.4% felt that nothing had changed at all.

Table 3: Perceived Social Impacts of Legislative Policies (N = 385)

Response Option	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Improved job security	100	26.0
Improved workers' welfare/conditions	80	20.8
Enhanced community development	75	19.5
Gender equity promotion	55	14.3
No significant social improvement	75	19.5

Explanation: The most mentioned benefit was better job security, with 26.0% of people noting this. In contrast, fewer people noticed improvements in gender equality, at only 14.3%. Additionally, 19.5% reported that there were "no major social improvements," showing that the effects of industrial policies on society are varied.

Table 4: Perceived Environmental Impacts of Legislative Policies (N = 385)

Response Option	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Reduction in pollution	115	29.9
Better waste management practices	90	23.4
Adoption of cleaner technologies	75	19.5
Increased compliance burden on industries	70	18.2
No significant environmental improvement	35	9.1

Explanation: Almost 30% of people thought that policies helped lower pollution, and 23.4% observed improved waste management. On the other hand, 18.2% mentioned facing new compliance challenges, indicating that industries are struggling to adapt to environmental regulations.

The results indicate that the economic benefits of industrial policies are evident but inconsistent. Larger companies had a positive view on profitability and investment, while small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often felt they faced higher operating costs. This supports Odijie (2024), who pointed out that Nigeria's industrial laws have unequal effects.

Regarding social impacts, the policies appeared to enhance job security and worker welfare; however, many stakeholders still did not perceive tangible benefits. This reflects Nwankwo's (2022) concern that local content and industrial policies often benefit stronger firms while leaving weaker ones behind. The outcomes for gender were limited, indicating that these policies have not effectively included equity issues.

In terms of environmental impacts, some progress has been noted, including reduced pollution and improved waste management; however, many respondents highlighted the burden of compliance. This aligns with the Climate Policy Initiative's (2024) finding that Nigeria's environmental laws often lack the financial and technical support industries need.

Overall, perceptions indicate that while the policies are headed in a positive direction, issues with implementation, uneven advantages, and compliance costs hinder their overall impact.

Discussion of Findings

Theory and Findings Linkage

Institutional Theory: The varying results observed among companies and industries underscore the importance of robust institutional capacity. Larger companies with effective structures were able to adapt well, while small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) faced challenges, indicating that institutional conditions influence the effectiveness of policies.

Stakeholder Theory: The differing views among managers, employees, and communities support stakeholder theory, which states that laws must consider various interests to be effective. The fact that many employees noticed a slight improvement in welfare suggests that not all stakeholders are being included.

Policy Feedback Theory: Negative feelings, such as "no improvement" or "more burden," reveal how unhappy stakeholders can lead to resistance, non-compliance, or calls for policy changes. On the other hand, favourable outcomes, such as increased profits or reduced pollution, can enhance the legitimacy and long-term success of a policy.

In conclusion, both theory and evidence demonstrate that laws not only determine outcomes but also shape how people perceive them. These perceptions can further impact the sustainability and political support for these policies.

Summary

This study examined the impact of important laws on sustainable industrial practices in Nigeria, gathering information from 385 individuals across various industries. The results show that:

1. Demographics: Most respondents were male (63.6%), mainly between the ages of 31 and 40 (36.4%), and a large number were well-educated (80.5% had tertiary or postgraduate degrees).
2. Economic impacts: Many believed that the policies helped increase profits (33.8%), provided more investment chances (23.4%), and created jobs (19.5%). However, some faced higher operational costs (16.9%), and 6.4% saw no changes.
3. Social impacts: The most common benefits reported included better job security (26.0%) and improvements in welfare (20.8%). On the other hand, 19.5% did not notice any significant social advancements, and improvements in gender equality were minimal at 14.3%.
4. Environmental impacts: Respondents recognised a decrease in pollution (29.9%) and better waste management practices (23.4%). However, some faced challenges with compliance burdens (18.2%) and noted a lack of substantial progress (9.1%).

These results indicate that while laws have had a positive impact on industrial sustainability in Nigeria, their implementation varies among companies and regions. Larger companies adapted more easily, while smaller ones struggled to keep up with compliance and costs.

CONCLUSION

The study finds that laws in Nigeria are essential for promoting sustainable industries, but there are still issues to tackle. Bigger companies showed more apparent economic benefits, while social advantages were not shared equally among all companies. Although environmental results are improving, there are still challenges in adhering to the rules.

The findings underscore the importance of having robust institutions, engaging stakeholders, and effectively enforcing laws to ensure these policies operate as intended. If we do not address these problems, the ability of these laws to create meaningful change may remain limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve Institutional Strength: Government agencies need to boost their monitoring efforts and offer technical help, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to make compliance easier.
2. Inclusive Policy Creation: Policies should be made with input from all stakeholders, making sure that the views of workers, communities, and SMEs are included.

3. Focused Incentives: The government should provide tax breaks, grants, and low-interest loans to support industries in adopting cleaner technologies without placing too much financial strain on them.
4. Gender Equality in Policies: Policies must include gender-sensitive elements to ensure fairness in job opportunities and benefits within industries.
5. Training and Awareness Building: Ongoing training and awareness programs should be offered so that industries fully understand and follow environmental and labour policies.
6. Regular Policy Evaluation: Policies should be evaluated every 3 to 5 years to check their effectiveness and make necessary changes based on new industrial, social, and environmental developments.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

1. The research shows real-world proof of how Nigerian laws affect the economy, society, and environment related to industrial sustainability.
2. It reveals that policies impact companies differently based on their size, pointing out that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face more challenges in following these rules.
3. By combining ideas from Institutional, Stakeholder, and Policy Feedback theories, the study creates a new way to analyse how policies connect with industrial practices in Nigeria.
4. This research adds to the limited studies available on sustainable industrialisation in Africa and can be helpful for both policymakers and researchers.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Future research should use long-term studies to track how policies change and become more effective over time.
2. A study comparing Nigeria with other African nations could show both similarities and differences in how policies affect people in those regions.
3. Conducting qualitative research, like interviews with policymakers, industry leaders, and workers, would help uncover the challenges faced during implementation.
4. More focused studies on specific sectors such as oil and gas, textiles, and agro-processing should be done to understand how policy outcomes vary across different industries.
5. Upcoming research should look into how industrial policies connect with climate change adaptation since Nigeria is at risk from environmental issues.

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