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IDENTIFYING THE DRIVERS OF POLITICAL STABILITY IN SUB –SAHARAN AFRICA

Oluwagbenga Emmanuel Adebayo

Department of Economics, Modibbo Adama University Yola

Mary Momsisuri Boteso

Independent Researcher, Yola, Nigeria

Abstract

The study examined the factors that affect political stability and absence of violence /terrorism (PSAV) in sub-Saharan Africa. The study employed Biased-Corrected Method of Moments (BCMM) with Random Effects and Robust Standard Errors to examine the effects of unemployment, GDP per capita, Inflation, Government Effectiveness, and Voice and Accountability (VOA) on PSAV across 34 sub-Saharan African countries, over a period of 7 years (2017-2023). The study hinged on the Relative Deprivation Theory. The results revealed that GDP per capita had a positive non-significant effect on PSAV. Unemployment had a negative significant influence on PSAV. Inflation had a negative non-significant effect on PSAV. Government effectiveness had non-significant influence on PSAV. The effect of Voice and accountability on PSAV is negative and significant. Based on the results, the study recommends that governments at all levels should provide employment, and all recruitments should be fair and transparent. To combat inflation, policy makers should ensure that there are consumer protection agencies and price control agencies that effectively moderate prices of goods and services. Governments at all levels must reinforce human rights. Law enforcement agencies and security agencies must be free from all forms of bias.

Keywords: Political Stability, Sustainable Development, Relative Deprivation, BCMM

1. Introduction

Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism (PSAV) is a very crucial institutional variable that gives insight into the condition of investment climate of a nation, the state of development of a nation, and the attractiveness of that nation. Moreover, it can be either a push factor of migration or a pull factor of migration. This implies that political stability could determine the net migration, economic growth and sustainable development of a nation.

Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (PSAV) connotes perceptions and views of the possibility that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, as well as politically-motivated violence and terrorism. To define political stability, the concepts of politics and

political structure must be clarified. Political behaviour includes any act by any member of a society that influences the allocation of power to choose for that society. Political behaviour is general (Ake, 1975).

The course of governance in African countries right from the 21st century indicates that the first decade of the millennium witnessed encouraging growth and poverty drop in much of the continent. However, Sub-Saharan Africa has also been plagued with reform disappointments and policy setbacks. Moreover, the adverse effects of poor governance are bedeviling many nations (Isser, et al. 2024). Political stability is crucial in ensuring continuity in governance and harmony in the society (Tchamyou, 2021).

Some studies have examined political stability from various angles. For example, Adebayo and Boteso

(2024) employed fixed effects model with cluster robust standard errors to examine the effect of political stability and absence of violence/terrorism on net migration. Other studies such as Alkhalaf (2025) employed OLS regression to examine the influence of governance on political stability in Jordan.

Based on data from World Bank (2023), political stability and absence of violence and terrorism (PSAV) had a negative value across many Sub-Saharan African nations. Many African nations have been experiencing coups, violence and terrorism in recent times. Moreover, unemployment is plaguing many sub-Saharan African countries, thus escalating the relative deprivation. Many studies that addressed the issue of unemployment, government effectiveness, and their effects on political stability focused on individual countries. Moreover, a number of these studies employed static models. Hence, this study will employ dynamic model, specifically, the two-step systems GMM model to analyse the effects of GDP per capita, unemployment, government effectiveness, and voice and accountability (VOA) on political stability and absence of violence/terrorism across 34 sub-Saharan countries. The main objective of this paper is to identify the factors that affect political stability and absence of violence and terrorism (PSAV) in sub-Saharan Africa.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Review

This section includes clarification of various concepts used in the study, including political stability,

Political Stability

Political stability is defined as 'a phenomenon characterized by flexibility (relative adaptation), and refers to the ability of the political system to employ official institutions and contain conflicts without resorting to violence except when necessary. That is, the ability of the political system to formulate the right policies to deal with crises.' (Mahdi, 2022, as cited by Baqer et al., 2024). It is also explained 'the extent of the political system's ability to deal with crises by investing in circumstances in order to absorb conflicts and struggles that occur within society without using

violence and force, as the use of violence is one of the main outcomes of instability.' (Sajid & Nouri, 2022).

Hansson and Helgesson (2003), as cited by Perlikowski (2021) stated 'It turned out that all or nearly all of the references that we found to the concept of stability belong to three major categories, that we have chosen to call constancy, robustness, and resilience. By constancy is meant that some variable or aspect is not changed or is not changed much. By robustness is meant that some variable or aspect does not tend to change, or does not tend to change much, when exposed to certain disturbances. By resilience is meant that if a variable or aspect changes due to certain disturbances, then it returns to the original state or to some state close to it'. This explains the multidimensional nature of stability and highlights the point that the key classification for stability is a change. The response to the change that decides the type of stability that can explain particular cases. Furthermore, the constancy is viewed as one of the numerous facets of stability. However, robustness and resilience the characteristics of the object that is 'dynamic' (Perlikowski, 2021).

Hassan (2014) highlighted the following items as indicators of political stability: the pattern of transfer of power in the state; the strength of the political system and capacity to protect society and the sovereignty of the state; legitimacy of the political system; political participation; success of economic policies; and light flow of internal and external migration.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Relative Deprivation Theory

This study hinges on the Relative Deprivation Theory. Relative deprivation theory and research posits that individuals assess their current circumstances, based on comparisons with other individuals, groups, or themselves at different points in time. If these comparisons result in people believing that they do not have what they merit, they are most likely to embrace anger and resentment. Relative deprivation (RD) describes these subjective evaluations (Smith & Pettigrew, 2011) According to Smith and Huo (2014), relative deprivation happens when people compare themselves with others who they perceive to be in better

condition, and come to conclusion that their disadvantage is unwarranted. These upward comparisons (which could be forced or selected), can destroy individuals' feelings, behavior, psychological and physical health.

Theoretical Linkage

Relative Deprivation Theory models the effect of GDP per capita and unemployment on political stability and absence of violence/terrorism. GDP per capita and unemployment represent objective indicators of common resources, of which relative disadvantage of some individuals, when matched with rights or anticipations, make up the cognitive aspect of deprivation. Government effectiveness; and voice and accountability act as vital appraisals, by defining the perceived legitimacy of the prevailing social organization and the firmness of the deprivation, as lower values of these variables indicate highlight the subjective experience of unwarranted, long-lasting detriment, defining the affective aspect (that is, resentment/anger) of relative deprivation.

2.3. Empirical Review

Effect of Unemployment on Political Stability and Absence of Violence and Terrorism (PSAV).

Demeke (2022) investigated the effect of youth unemployment on political instability. The study employed fixed effect model, instrumental variable fixed effect model and one step system GMM estimation to analyse dynamic panel data. The findings of the study indicated that youth unemployment has significant effect on political instability in IGAD member countries.

Apolte and Gerling (2015) examined the link between armed insurrection and large youth cohorts. Cross-country panel data from 169 countries were analysed. The study revealed that the certainty of large youth populations facing significant unemployment that corresponds with insurrection.

Effect of Government Effectiveness on Political Stability and Absence of Violence and Terrorism (PSAV).

A number of studies have investigated the effect of government effectiveness on economic development and on world development indicators such as political

stability and absence of violence/terrorism. Kurtaj, et al. (2024) examined the impact of good governance on economic development and growth in Albania. The findings revealed significant relationship between good governance and sustainable economic development. This is in consonance with Kaufmann et al. (2010) which indicated a strong causal relationship between good governance and enhancement in economic development.

Kartiko (2024) used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to examine the relationship between government effectiveness, corruption control, and political stability, across 66 countries from 2017 to 2022. The findings revealed that increase in government effectiveness lead to increase in political stability. In agreement with this, Isser, et al. (2024) revealed that failure of institutions to respond to social expectations and political mobilization tend to change liberal civic engagement to suspicion, populism, and radicalization.

Alkhalwaldeh (2025) used OLS regression to analyse the influence of governance on political stability in Jordan from 2002 to 2022. The results revealed that government performance exerted had positive but weak effect on political stability.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The research design employed in this study is quantitative research design.

3.2 Data and Sources

Panel data on political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, GDP per capita, unemployment, inflation, government effectiveness, and voice and accountability, across 34 sub-Saharan African countries, for a period of seven years (2017 to 2023), were collected. These countries include: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia.

3.3. Model Specification

The models to be used in this study is specified as:

$$PSAV_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GDPPCAP_{it} + \beta_2 UNEMP_{it} + \beta_3 INF_{it} + \beta_4 GOE_{it} + \beta_5 VOA_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \dots \dots \dots 1$$

Where,

PSAV = Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism

GDPPCAP = GDP per capita

INF = Inflation

UNEMP =Unemployment

GOE = Government Effectiveness

VOA = Voice and Accountability

ϵ = Error term

$i = 1, 2, 3 \dots N$ (Cross sections)

$t = 2017, 2018, 2019, \dots, 2023$ (time periods).

3.4. Measurement of Variables

Table 1: Measurement of Variables

S/N	Variable name	Abbreviation	Description	Source	A-priori Expectation
1	Political Stability and absence of violence/terrorism (Estimate)	PSAV	Political Stability and absence of violence/terrorism	World Bank Indicators (2024)	
2	GDP per capita	GDPPCAP	Gross Domestic Product Per Capita	World Bank Indicators (2024)	Positive (+)
3	Unemployment	UNEMP	Unemployment defines the share of the labor force that is without work but available for and seeking employment.	World Bank Indicators (2024)	Negative (-)
4.	Inflation (CPI)	INFL	Inflation as measured by the consumer price index reflects the annual percentage change in the cost to the average consumer of acquiring a basket of goods and services that may be fixed or changed at specified intervals, such as yearly.	World Bank Indicators (2024)	Negative (-)

5.	Government Effectiveness	GOE	Government effectiveness measures the perceptions and views of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies	Kaufmann and Kraay (2024).	Positive (+)
6.	Voice and Accountability	VOA	Voice and Accountability measures 'perceptions and views of the extent to which a country's citizens can participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.'	Kaufmann and Kraay (2024).	Positive (+)

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

This study employed Biased-Corrected Method of Moments (BCMM) with Random Effects and Robust Standard Errors. This method is robust to heteroskedasticity and is suitable for a dataset with $N > T$. According to Breitung, et al. (2022), the BCMM permits both fixed-effects and random-effects assumptions, heteroskedastic errors, and higher order autoregressive

models. Moreover, Monte Carlo experiments reveal that following the assumption of strictly exogenous regressors, the bias corrected method of moment estimator is superior to the GMM estimators in the aspect of effectiveness and correctly sized tests.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 2 Results of Biased-Corrected Method of Moments (BCMM) with Random Effects and Cluster Robust Standard Errors

Dependent Variable: POLITICAL STABILITY AND ABSENCE OF TERRORISM/VIOLENCE

	BCMM with Fixed Effects and Robust Standard Errors	BCMM with Random Effects and Robust Standard Errors
Constant	0.1417255 (1.01)	0.0298093 (0.90)
PSAV L1.	0.6453051 (6.33)***	1.111668 (26.93)***
GDPPCAP	3.34e-06 (0.11)	-9.99e-08 (-0.01)
UNEMP	-0.0219657 (-1.73)*	-0.0029151 (-2.05)**
INF	-0.0033855	-0.0013653

	(-2.66)***	(-1.11)
GOE	0.1588632	-0.02524
	(1.94)**	(-0.73)
VOA	0.1515151	-0.0825657
	(1.46)	(-1.93)**
Observations	204	204
Multicollinearity (vif)	-	-
Heteroscedasticity (χ^2 – stat)	-	-
Serial Correlation	0.8417	0.9336
(F-Stat)		
Hansen J Test	-	0.5777
(p-value)		

Figures in the parenthesis are t-statistics, except for Sargan Test and Auto-covariance tests, which are p-values. ** and *** indicate the respective 5% and 1% significance levels, respectively.

Source: Author's Computation (2026).

Table 2 depicts the summary of two models: BCMM model with Cluster Robust Standard Errors and Fixed Effects; and BCMM model with Cluster Robust Standard Errors and Random Effects. However based on the result of the Hansen J test with showed a p value greater than 0.05, the BCMM model with Cluster Robust Standard Errors and Random Effects will be interpreted. The results reveal that GDP per capita has a positive non-significant effect on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence.

Unemployment had a negative significant effect on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence (PSAV), at 5% significance level, that is, $p < 0.05$. This implies that unemployment has a connection with political instability. This finding is in consonance with Demeke (2022) which revealed that unemployment had significant effect on political instability in IGAD member countries. It also agrees with Apolte and Gerling (2015) which indicated that there is a nexus between large population of young individuals facing significant unemployment, and insurrection.

Inflation had a negative influence on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence (PSAV). This result is in consonance with Salma and Khan (2023) which examined the relationship between political stability and inflation in four South Asian countries. The study used dynamic ordinary least square (DOLS) and fully modified ordinary least square (FMOLS) methods to

analyse panel data from 2001 to 2021. The results indicated that increase in political stability is linked to lower inflation, while decrease in political stability is connected to higher inflation.

Government effectiveness had a negative non-significant on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence (PSAV). This result differs from Kartiko (2024), Isser, et al. (2024), Alkhaldeh (2025) which discovered a positive significant effect of Government Effectiveness on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence (PSAV).

Voice and accountability had a negative significant effect on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence (PSAV). This can be explained by the fact that in this digital age voice and accountability can raise awareness, magnify conflicts, and stir up the hearts of relatively deprived populations to engage in violence. Moreover, it can lead to conflict between opposing political groups.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study utilised Biased-Corrected Method of Moments (BCMM) with Random Effects and Robust Standard Errors to analyse the effects of unemployment, GDP per capita, Inflation, Government Effectiveness, and Voice and Accountability (VOA) on political stability and absence of violence /terrorism (PSAV) across 34 sub-Saharan African countries. These

countries include Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia. The study data covered a period of 7 years (2017-2023).

The study was pinned on the Relative Deprivation Theory. The results indicated that Unemployment had a negative significant influence on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence (PSAV) that is $p < 0.05$. Inflation had a negative non-significant effect on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence (PSAV). Government effectiveness had a non-significant on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence (PSAV). The effect of Voice and accountability on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence (PSAV) is significant and negative.

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Based on the finding that Unemployment had a negative significant influence on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence (PSAV), the government at all levels should provide employment, and all recruitments should be transparent and fair. Moreover, various there should be punishment for job racketeering.

Considering the finding that Inflation had a negative effect on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence (PSAV), policy makers should ensure that there are consumer protection agencies and price control agencies that effectively moderate prices of goods and services.

Based on the finding that Voice and Accountability had negative significant effect on political stability and absence of terrorism/violence, governments at all levels must reinforce human rights. Moreover, the judicial systems, security agencies, and law enforcement agencies must be free from any form of bias and negative manipulation.

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