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MARITIME SECURITY CHALLENGES AROUND LAGOS AREA AND NIGERIA'S BLUE ECONOMY: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Maritime insecurity remains a persistent threat to Nigeria's blue economy, and for this study, Lagos maritime area, which hosts the country's busiest ports, is the focus. Despite multiple national security frameworks, challenges such as piracy, oil theft, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and smuggling continue to disrupt maritime activities. Nigeria reportedly loses an estimated \$1.5 billion annually to crude oil theft and other infractions. These security lapses hamper shipping, fisheries, tourism, and offshore oil operations, thus limiting the nation's ability to harness its projected \$296 billion blue economy potential. This study is anchored on Governance Theory, which provides insight into how the coordination, capacity, and accountability of institutions influence the effectiveness of maritime security policies and stakeholder collaboration. The study employed a descriptive survey design using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 400 respondents, while qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with key maritime stakeholders, including the Nigerian Navy, NIMASA, NPA, and Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression, and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that over 60% of respondents identified inter-agency rivalry, lack of operational coordination, and outdated legal frameworks as key impediments to effective maritime security governance. Furthermore, maritime crimes such as piracy and oil theft were found to have significantly disrupted logistics, deterred investment, and reduced government revenue in the Lagos maritime zone. However, stakeholders affirmed that enhanced surveillance, cross-agency collaboration, and stronger regulatory enforcement could reverse these trends. The study concludes that weak institutional coordination and fragmented policy implementation undermine maritime security efforts in Lagos Area thereby threatening the sustainability of Nigeria's blue economy. The study recommends the harmonization of outdated laws and policies to align with current realities. The new legislation should include jointness amongst security agencies in training, data sharing and collaborative enforcement in the maritime domain. Also, Nigeria should develop a national strategy that balances economic development with ecological preservation within an integrated governance framework.

Keywords: Security Maritime Security, Blue Economy, Deep Blue Project, Lagos Area.

Introduction

The oceans have been a source of economic development to mankind due to their resourcefulness. The Global Ocean Commission (GOC, 2014) reveals that ocean resources contribute 5 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), secure jobs

for about 3 billion people, and sustain the livelihood of another 350 million. Furthermore, the ocean, which covers 70 per cent of the Earth, contains immense harvestable resources and serves as the highway for freight, carrying 80 per cent of the international trade (National Ocean Service, 2020). However, the oceans are characterized by numerous maritime threats and

vulnerabilities. Some of these threats include piracy and armed robbery at sea, maritime terrorism, crude oil theft, and illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing (IUU), smuggling, and illicit trafficking in drugs and humans. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was established as a basic legal instrument for oceanic affairs and as an offer of corollary rights for coastal states to ensure, amongst others, sustainable use and defence of the marine environment and to guarantee the security of sea lines of communication (Jesus, 2003). In addition, the UN established the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) to regulate activities of the oceans and seas through the enactment of laws, conferences, and publications of Articles and Protocols. The (UNCLOS, 1982) and Safety of Lives at Sea (SOLAS) are examples of such laws, conferences, and articles (Lundqvist, 2013).

Regions around the world periodically review strategies to ameliorate maritime security threats and blue economy vulnerabilities in their domains. In Africa, for example, the African Union Commission (AUC) formulated the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy (African Union, 2012). At the sub-regional level, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) also formulated their maritime strategies for Central and West Africa, respectively. Nigeria, being a member of the ECOWAS has keyed into the outlined strategies of the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy (EIMS, 2014) and that of the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC, 2013). She is also a member of Maritime Organisation of West and Central Africa (MOWCA) and the Yaounde Code of Conduct (YCC).

There have been different definitions given to the blue economy (BE). The World Bank defines it as the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs, while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem. The UN defines the blue economy as a range of economic activities related to oceans, seas, and coastal areas, and whether these activities are sustainable and socially equitable. It was given a wider view by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2016) with the definition of the blue economy as a 'green'

economy in a blue world that adopts a novel strategy for economically utilising the resources of oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water. In the blue economy, as the oceans and seas are being exploited, their health and sustainability are taken into consideration. Australia came up with a clear vision to create a blue economy in 2014 (Maritime Executive, 2019). Expectedly, the BE sectors of Australia recorded a substantial increase from USD 29 billion in 2014 to USD 41 billion in 2017. Also, the Australian fishing sector grew by 27 per cent in 2018 (Safety4Sea, 2019). The BE has gained prominence as a panacea for ameliorating the constant economic flux in the global space, especially with the estimated \$1.5 trillion that it is presently contributing to the global economy (Okunomo, 2023).

The African continent, with its vast coastline of 25,000 nm, is not left out in the quest to go 'blue' because international trade is very critical to African economies. The AUC's (2050, AIMS) is a tool to address Africa's maritime challenges for sustainable development and competitiveness while significantly reducing marine environmental risks as well as ecological and biodiversity deficiencies. South Africa adopted the blue economy concept called 'Operation Phakisa' and invested about USD 100m. The investment has recorded substantial gains since its inception. Similarly, the ECOWAS sub-region has adopted the BE initiative in order to improve the livelihood of its people as well as keep the environment healthy. The sub-region is blessed with the Gulf of Guinea, lagoons, deltas, wetlands, rivers, and lakes. Collectively, 11 of the 15-member states of ECOWAS have a coastline of 2868 nautical miles.*

Nigeria has a coastline of 420 nm, and when combined with the 200 nm Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), this amounts to about 840 nm² (Brammah, 2023). About 80% of the coastline is blessed with oil and biodiversity-rich Niger Delta. Nigeria has one of the largest wetlands in the world, and the ecosystems are abundant in fish and other aquatic life. Given these potentials, Nigeria is estimated to have an untapped BE resource of over \$296 Bn. In order to fully harness the benefits that the concept of BE offers, the present administration has established the Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy in August 2023.

In Nigeria, the agency constitutionally empowered to manage maritime issues is the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and she performs these functions, relying on the NIMASA Act 2007, the Coastal and Inland waters (Cabotage) Act 2003, the Suppression of Piracy and other Maritime Offences (SPOMO) Act 2019 and the Merchant Shipping Act 2007. With these legal instruments and the numerous studies carried out by researchers on maritime security and blue economy in Nigeria, her blue economy continue to suffer setbacks. The motivation for this study is based on the belief that with a potential endowment of USD 296 billion, Nigeria has no business being poor. It is on this basis that this study is set to examine the maritime security challenges around Lagos Area and Nigeria's blue economy. This study is unique in the sense that the setting is in Lagos Area which is the commercial and shipping hub of Nigeria and houses the two biggest Ports. Moreover, it has a deep sea port at Ibeju-Lekki. All the stakeholders' operational headquarters are in Lagos and it has viable coastal tourism and aquaculture demography. Therefore, getting it right in Lagos could resonate in other coastal region of the country. It is on this basis that the study is set to examine the maritime security challenges and Nigeria's blue economy with reference to Lagos area.

There is no doubt that a number of scholars have written widely about maritime security challenges. Yet, an important gap continue to exist in the area of blue economy with Lagos Area. In view of the above, this study deemed it necessary to interrogate the shortfall that constituted the problematique in this regard. The maritime security challenges facing Nigeria, particularly in the Lagos area, have significant implications for the country's BE. These threats hinder economic development and exacerbate poverty in coastal communities. The intersection of maritime security and the blue economy is a pressing issue, as the health of marine ecosystems directly correlates with economic opportunities for local populations and the nation at large (Voyer, Schofield, Azmi, Warner, McIlgorm, & Quirk, 2018; Agbai, 2023; Eke, Aliogba, & Baban'umma, 2023).

The economic ramifications of maritime insecurity in Nigeria are profound. The pervasive threats of piracy and oil theft result in substantial revenue losses, which

reverberate through the economy, particularly affecting the livelihoods of residents in coastal areas (Agbai, 2023). This situation is compounded by the structural conflict theory, which posits that the exploitative nature of capitalism exacerbates the vulnerabilities of these communities, leading to increased unemployment and poverty levels (Agbai, 2023). The nature of these maritime security threats not only impedes economic development but also stifles trans-boundary cooperation among littoral states, which is essential for effective maritime governance and security (Eke et al., 2023).

The Nigerian maritime domain is characterized by a complex interplay of local and international security dynamics. The literature suggests that the security-development nexus is particularly salient in the maritime context, where secure seas are viewed as a prerequisite for positive economic trajectories stemming from the blue economy (Otto, 2020). This perspective aligns with the findings of Bueger (2015), who argues that maritime security is increasingly recognized as a vital component of international relations, necessitating collaborative efforts among nations to address shared challenges (Bueger, 2015).

In Lagos, the implications of maritime insecurity are particularly pronounced, given the city's status as a major economic hub. The interplay between local livelihoods and maritime security is evident, as many residents depend on fishing and other marine-related activities for their sustenance (Ayilu, 2023). However, increased security measures often result in restricted access to fishing grounds, exacerbating the vulnerabilities of local fishers and leading to conflicts over resource access (Kalina, Mbereko, Maharaj, & Botes, 2019). These dynamic highlights the importance of inclusive governance frameworks that take into account the voices and needs of marginalized communities in the development of maritime security policies (Childs & Hicks, 2019).

The persistent threats of piracy, IUU fishing, and oil theft undermine economic development and exacerbate poverty in coastal communities. Effective governance, robust legal frameworks, and international cooperation maybe crucial for addressing these challenges and promoting a secure maritime environment that supports sustainable economic

growth. As Nigeria navigates these multifaceted issues, it is imperative to adopt an integrated approach that prioritizes both security and the sustainable use of marine resources, ensuring that the blue economy can thrive in the face of adversity.

In line with the above, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. How effective are stakeholders' role in addressing maritime security issues around Lagos Area and Nigeria's blue economy?
- ii. What are the strategies that can mitigate maritime security challenges in Lagos Area to develop blue economy of Nigeria?

The study comes up with the following objectives:

- i. Evaluate the effectiveness of stakeholders' role in addressing maritime security issues in Lagos Area and Nigeria's blue economy.
- ii. Determine the strategies that can mitigate maritime security challenges in Lagos Area to develop blue economy of Nigeria

This study is significant as it sheds light on the critical challenges facing maritime security in Nigeria's blue economy, focusing on Lagos area. The findings of this research will have implications for various stakeholders:

The study would provide invaluable insights into the security threats affecting Nigeria's maritime sector and their ripple effects on the blue economy. This knowledge will help policymakers design effective strategies and frameworks to mitigate these challenges and enhance socio-economic development in Nigeria.

By highlighting the socio-economic implications of maritime security challenges, the study underscores the importance of protecting Nigeria's waters, not just for economic growth but for national security, job creation, and overall societal well-being. Specifically, the study would be relevant to stakeholders such as NIMASA, Federal Department of Fisheries (FDF), Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR), NPA, NSC, (NN, Nigerian Customs Service NCS and the Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy (FMM\$BE). The

application of the findings and recommendations of this study could be utilized for the benefit of the newly ministry. The study could be useful as an information tool for the public on the relevance of BE for optimal exploitation of blue resources. The study provides a premise for further research in areas of perceived gaps.

Operators within the maritime sector, such as shipping companies, port authorities, and other logistic providers, can benefit from understanding the nature and scope of maritime security threats. The findings will guide them in implementing appropriate safety measures, improving operational efficiency, and reducing risks.

This study serves as a valuable reference for scholars and researchers interested in maritime security, blue economy, or socio-economic development. It will contribute to the body of knowledge by identifying gaps and providing a foundation for further studies in this area.

For communities and businesses dependent on maritime activities in the Lagos area, the study highlights how security issues impact their livelihoods and opportunities. It emphasizes the need for inclusive approaches to address these challenges, ensuring that economic benefits from the blue economy reach grassroots levels.

As Nigeria's maritime industry plays a vital role in global trade, international stakeholders would find the study useful in terms of collaboration. It will help foster stronger partnerships to enhance maritime security and create sustainable blue economy policies in alignment with global standards.

Theoretical Framework

Governance Theory (GT) RAW Rhodes

Governance Theory proponent RAW Rhodes (1996) reveals that GT promotes the values of capacity, coordination, participation, transparency, and accountability, which are vital for effective maritime governance. However, in practice, Nigeria's maritime governance has often sidelined critical stakeholders such as local fishing communities, dockworkers, and civil

society organizations. According to Walker (2018), an inclusive governance models that empower local actors and ensure participatory decision-making lead to more legitimate and effective security outcomes. Applying this principle to the Lagos Area, the study explores how engaging community stakeholders and the private sector could improve intelligence-sharing, policy compliance, and enforcement capacity.

GT underscores the need for legal and institutional reform to address capacity gaps and overlapping responsibilities. In the case of Nigeria, maritime governance is constrained by outdated laws, weak institutional frameworks, and limited inter-agency collaboration. The introduction of initiatives such as the Deep Blue Project reflects attempts to overcome these constraints through integrated operational platforms involving NIMASA, the Navy, and private security providers (Onuoha, 2021). Governance Theory provides the analytical tools to assess whether such initiatives represent genuine institutional synergy or merely reinforce fragmented governance.

Governance Theory enables this study to critically assess the governance architecture, stakeholder roles, and coordination mechanisms that affect maritime security and blue economy outcomes in Nigeria. It highlights that sustainable maritime development cannot be achieved through isolated state action but through inclusive, coordinated, and adaptive governance frameworks. This aligns with the core objectives of the study, which investigates how maritime security challenges can be addressed through improved stakeholder collaboration and institutional effectiveness in Lagos Area.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey design to investigate maritime security challenges and their impact on Nigeria's blue economy, with a specific focus on Lagos, a key maritime hub hosting major ports such as Apapa and Tin Can Island. The target population includes key stakeholders from agencies such as the Nigerian Navy (NN), NIMASA, NPA,

NCS, NSC and FMM&BE with an estimated population size of 39,826. A sample size of 400 was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. The study employed a combination of purposive and stratified sampling techniques to ensure inclusivity and representativeness. Data were gathered using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, complemented by secondary sources such as reports from NIMASA, the Nigerian Navy, UNCTAD, and IMO.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and percentages) and inferential techniques like correlation and regression to examine relationships among variables, while qualitative data from interviews were subjected to thematic analysis. The research methodology is justified due to its ability to offer both breadth and depth in understanding stakeholder perspectives and policy implications, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the research problem. Ethical considerations included informed consent, anonymity, and the right to withdraw, while reliability was confirmed through pilot testing and a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 or higher. Validity was ensured via expert reviews and alignment of instruments with research objectives, enhancing the study's internal consistency and empirical relevance.

Data presentation

This section presents the data collected from respondents on maritime security challenges and their impact on Nigeria's blue economy in the Lagos area. The results are organized based on the study's objectives and include both quantitative responses and key qualitative insights.

Demographic Information

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents to provide context for interpreting their views on maritime security and the blue economy in the Lagos Area.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demography	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	309	84.2
	Female	58	15.8
	Total	367	100.0

Age Group	36–45 years	74	20.2
	46–55 years	259	70.6
	56 years & above	34	9.3
	Total	367	100.0
Educational Background	Diploma/National Diploma	12	3.3
	Bachelor's Degree	86	23.4
	Postgraduate (Master's/PhD)	269	73.3
	Total	367	100.0
Occupation	Maritime Industry Worker	156	42.5
	Government Official	142	38.7
	Security Personnel	53	14.4
	Researcher/Academic	16	4.4
	Total	367	100.0
Years of Experience	6–10 years	42	11.4
	More than 10 years	325	88.6
	Total	367	100.0

Source: *Fieldwork, 2025*

The majority of the respondents were male (84.2%), while females represented only 15.8% of the sample. Most participants were aged 46–55 years (70.6%), indicating a mature and experienced workforce. In terms of education, a large proportion held postgraduate qualifications (73.3%), suggesting a highly educated respondent pool. The dominant occupational group was maritime industry workers (42.5%), followed closely by government officials (38.7%). Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents (88.6%) reported having more than 10 years of experience in their respective fields, underscoring a high level of professional exposure and expertise among the participants. The demographic profile suggests that the study's respondents were predominantly male, middle-aged, and highly educated, with extensive experience in their fields.

This composition implies a knowledgeable and professionally mature sample, capable of providing informed and credible responses regarding maritime security challenges and the development of Nigeria's blue economy.

Objective 1: Effectiveness of Stakeholders' Role in Addressing Maritime Security Challenges around Lagos Area

This section examines the roles played by key stakeholders in tackling maritime security challenges within the Lagos maritime domain. Stakeholders such as the Nigerian Navy, NIMASA, NPA, Nigeria Customs Service, and maritime unions are central to securing Nigeria's coastal waters and promoting the blue economy.

Table 2: Respondents' view on the Role of Stakeholders in Addressing Maritime Security Challenges around Lagos Area

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	\bar{x}	σ	Decision
Government agencies play a crucial role in combating maritime insecurity.	219 (59.7)	124 (33.8)	12 (5.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.53	.842	Neglected
Collaboration between the Nigerian Navy, NIMASA, and private security firms improves maritime security.	246 (67.0)	95 (25.9)	26 (7.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.40	.619	Neglected
Port security and customs enforcement need to be strengthened to address security challenges.	145 (39.5)	185 (50.4)	24 (6.5)	0 (0)	13 (3.5)	1.78	.855	Supported

The involvement of local communities and fishermen can enhance maritime security efforts.	160 (43.6)	182 (49.6)	12 (3.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.67	.708	Supported
Public-private partnerships can provide effective solutions to maritime security challenges.	172 (46.9)	158 (43.1)	37 (10.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.63	.660	Neglected
More deep-seaports are required in Nigeria to cater to the blue economy.	192 (52.3)	114 (31.1)	61 (16.6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.64	.751	Supported
Shipbuilding facilities and dockyards are critical infrastructure for the blue economy.	218 (59.4)	96 (26.2)	41 (11.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.58	.815	Neglected
Stakeholders should be encouraged by enforcing the Cabotage regime in the Lagos Area.	137 (37.3)	171 (46.6)	59 (16.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.79	.700	Supported
More engagement and collaboration are canvassed amongst stakeholders.	155 (42.2)	123 (33.5)	89 (24.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.82	.796	Supported
Ship owners, trawler owners, and maritime workers' unions' rights should be protected.	209 (56.9)	132 (36.0)	14 (3.8)	12 (3.3)	0 (0)	1.53	.723	Neglected

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Note: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), Mean score (\bar{X}), Standard deviation (σ), Weighted Mean: $16.37/10 = 1.64$

Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents' opinions on the role of various stakeholders in addressing maritime security challenges in the Lagos maritime area. The analysis shows that the statement "Government agencies play a crucial role in combating maritime insecurity" had a mean score of 1.53 (SD = .842), indicating moderate agreement but statistically neglected. Similarly, the statement "Collaboration between the Nigerian Navy, NIMASA, and private security firms improves maritime security" received a high percentage of agreement (92.9%) yet was also rejected based on the mean score of 1.40 (SD = .619), which fell below the weighted average. However, respondents supported the statement that "Port security and customs enforcement need to be strengthened" with a mean of 1.78 (SD = .855), suggesting that improved enforcement is perceived as essential for security enhancement. Likewise, the involvement of local communities and fishermen in maritime surveillance was supported ($\bar{x} = 1.67$, SD = .708), reflecting recognition of grassroots engagement in addressing insecurity. Additionally, statements such as "More deep-seaports are required to cater for the blue economy" ($\bar{x} = 1.64$, SD = .751), "Stakeholders should be encouraged by enforcing the Cabotage regime" ($\bar{x} = 1.79$, SD = .700), and "More engagement and collaboration among stakeholders" ($\bar{x} = 1.82$, SD =

.796) were all supported. Conversely, although many respondents agreed that public-private partnerships can provide effective solutions ($\bar{x} = 1.63$, SD = .660) and that shipbuilding facilities and dockyards are critical infrastructure for the blue economy ($\bar{x} = 1.58$, SD = .815), both statements were neglected due to scores falling slightly below the cutoff. Additionally, the statement on protecting the rights of ship owners, trawler owners, and maritime workers' unions was also neglected despite receiving strong agreement ($\bar{x} = 1.53$, SD = .723).

The results suggest that while respondents acknowledge the importance of stakeholder roles in addressing maritime security, statistically significant support was given only to certain interventions, particularly those involving enforcement, grassroots involvement, collaboration, and infrastructure expansion. The findings underscore the need for stakeholder-centered strategies that emphasize enforcement capacity, community participation, and inter-agency synergy. The support for increased port security, deeper engagement with coastal communities, and enforcement of maritime laws like the Cabotage regime indicates that respondents believe practical, localized, and inclusive interventions are

more effective than broader policy-level or institutional declarations.

The respondent from the Nigerian Navy emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder coordination in maritime security. According to the officer,

“The Nigerian Navy alone cannot secure the waters. Effective collaboration with NIMASA, Customs, port authorities, and even private operators is essential. What we need is not just equipment but integrated intelligence and legal backing.” He noted that while the Deep Blue Project has improved surveillance capacity, the absence of a clearly defined command structure across agencies often results in operational delays. He called for a unified maritime security framework that integrates efforts across federal and local levels. (22nd June 2025, 10:00 AM, Western Naval Command, Apapa, Lagos)

The NIMASA official highlighted the agency’s regulatory and enforcement role, stressing the need for improved stakeholder collaboration. He stated,

“We are responsible for regulating shipping safety and enforcing maritime laws, but our impact is amplified when we work with the Navy, Customs, and the private sector. The Deep Blue Project has shown what coordinated effort can achieve.” However, he acknowledged challenges in information sharing and the overlap of duties with other agencies. He advocated for clearer institutional roles and increased funding for technology-driven monitoring systems to ensure proactive maritime governance. (24th June 2025, 2:00 PM, NIMASA Headquarters, Burma Road, Apapa, Lagos)

Secondary data reveal that maritime security in Nigeria is a multi-stakeholder responsibility involving both public and private actors. Key government agencies, including the Nigerian Navy, the Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), the Nigeria Customs Service, and the

Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), play distinct but interconnected roles in ensuring the safety of maritime operations. According to the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (2022), collaborative security frameworks such as the Integrated National Maritime Surveillance and Security Strategy have improved inter-agency coordination, particularly through initiatives like the Deep Blue Project. The project combines the assets of the Navy, Air Force, and NIMASA with private maritime security companies, enhancing surveillance and response across Nigerian waters.

Furthermore, NIMASA’s 2023 Annual Report emphasized that stakeholder engagement has become a strategic pillar in its maritime security enforcement agenda. The agency has established Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with private shipping operators, fishing cooperatives, and international partners to improve port security, ensure vessel compliance, and expand information-sharing networks. The report noted a measurable decline in vessel attacks in Lagos waters since 2021, attributing this progress to enhanced joint patrols, community engagement, and stakeholder sensitization.

Objective II: Strategies to mitigate Maritime Security Challenges in the Lagos Area to develop Blue Economy of Nigeria.

This section presents an analysis of respondents’ views on practical and policy-driven strategies to address maritime security challenges in the Lagos area. As Nigeria seeks to harness the full potential of its blue economy, the implementation of coordinated and effective security strategies is critical. The section explores recommended measures such as improved inter-agency collaboration, investment in surveillance technology, enforcement of maritime regulations, stakeholder capacity building, and community involvement.

Table 3: Respondents' view on Strategies to Overcome Maritime Security Challenges in the Lagos Area.

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	\bar{x}	σ	Decision
Increased investment in maritime security infrastructure will reduce threats.	294 (80.1)	63 (17.2)	10 (2.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.25	.595	Neglected

The use of technology (e.g., drones, satellite surveillance) can enhance maritime security.	297 (80.9)	70 (19.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.19	.393	Neglected
Strengthening maritime laws and penalties can deter criminal activities.	194 (52.9)	140 (38.1)	0 (0)	33 (9.0)	0 (0)	1.56	.654	Supported
Improved intelligence-sharing among security agencies will help combat maritime crimes.	232 (63.2)	114 (31.1)	0 (0)	21 (5.7)	0 (0)	1.43	.600	Supported
Increased international cooperation amongst stakeholders can enhance the blue economy in Lagos.	212 (57.8)	135 (36.8)	0 (0)	20 (5.4)	0 (0)	1.48	.600	Supported
Improving port administration and security will enhance the blue economy of the Lagos Area.	172 (46.9)	175 (47.7)	0 (0)	20 (5.4)	0 (0)	1.59	.594	Supported
Strategic investment in technology is essential to tap into the global blue economy.	245 (66.8)	122 (33.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.33	.472	Neglected
Public–Private Partnership between entrepreneurs and the government will enhance the blue economy of the Lagos Area.	216 (58.9)	127 (34.6)	0 (0)	24 (6.5)	0 (0)	1.48	.617	Supported
Embracing the coastal governance management concept can enhance the blue economy of the Lagos Area	182 (49.6)	173 (47.1)	0 (0)	12 (3.3)	0 (0)	1.54	.561	Supported
Coastal tourism and renewable energy generation are potential areas that could develop the blue economy in the Lagos Area.	230 (62.7)	124 (33.8)	0 (0)	13 (3.5)	0 (0)	1.41	.560	Neglected

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Note: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), Mean score (\bar{X}), Standard deviation (σ), Weighted Mean: $14.26/10 = 1.43$

Table 3 presents respondents' views on practical strategies for overcoming maritime security challenges in the Lagos Area. The statement that increased investment in maritime security infrastructure will reduce threats received the highest level of agreement (80.1% strongly agree), but was rejected statistically due to a mean score of 1.25 ($SD = .595$), falling below the threshold. Similarly, the assertion that the use of technology (e.g., drones, satellite surveillance) can enhance maritime security also received very strong agreement ($\bar{x} = 1.19$, $SD = .393$), yet was rejected by the decision rule. This outcome suggests that although widely acknowledged by respondents, these strategies did not meet the cutoff for statistical support in this analysis. Conversely, the strategy that strengthening maritime laws and penalties can deter criminal activities was supported, with a mean score of 1.56 ($SD = .654$), indicating a statistically significant level of agreement. Likewise, respondents supported improved intelligence-sharing among security agencies ($\bar{x} = 1.43$, $SD = .600$) and increased

international cooperation ($\bar{x} = 1.48$, $SD = .600$) as effective strategies. Additional strategies that were supported include improving port administration and security ($\bar{x} = 1.59$, $SD = .594$), public–private partnerships between entrepreneurs and the government ($\bar{x} = 1.48$, $SD = .617$), and embracing coastal governance management concepts ($\bar{x} = 1.54$, $SD = .561$). These reflect a preference for institutional, regulatory, and collaborative approaches to tackling maritime insecurity. On the other hand, strategic investment in technology ($\bar{x} = 1.33$, $SD = .472$) and coastal tourism and renewable energy generation as blue economy enablers ($\bar{x} = 1.41$, $SD = .560$) were both rejected, despite substantial agreement, likely due to their lower mean values. While respondents showed general agreement with all proposed strategies, only those that focused on legal enforcement, stakeholder cooperation, intelligence-sharing, and administrative improvements met the criteria for statistical support.

The findings imply that respondents prioritize regulatory reform, inter-agency collaboration, and

administrative improvements over solely technological or capital-intensive interventions in addressing maritime security challenges. The support for strengthening maritime laws, enhancing intelligence-sharing, and expanding international and public-private collaborations underscores the need for integrated governance structures and legal accountability. Although investment in infrastructure and technology was widely agreed upon, its neglect based on statistical criteria suggests a perception that institutional effectiveness and stakeholder coordination are more urgent and immediately actionable.

A senior official from the Nigerian Ports Authority highlighted the need for enhanced infrastructure and security management systems at Lagos ports. According to the respondent,

“Investing in modern port surveillance equipment, such as CCTV coverage, electronic access control, and perimeter fencing, would significantly reduce unauthorized entry and cargo theft.” He emphasized that current port security is reactive rather than preventive, and called for a shift towards technology-driven risk assessment. The official also recommended increased automation of port operations and strict regulatory oversight to improve both security and efficiency. (28th June 2025, 11:00 AM, NPA Headquarters, Marina, Lagos)

The NIMASA representative stressed the importance of legislative reform and international cooperation in maritime governance. He noted,

“Nigeria’s maritime laws need to be updated to reflect emerging security threats, and penalties must be strengthened to deter crimes like smuggling and piracy.” The respondent added that stronger partnerships with international maritime organizations and neighboring coastal states are essential to combat transnational maritime crimes. He also emphasized intelligence-sharing and joint patrols as practical strategies for enhancing national and regional maritime security. (29th June 2025, 2:15 PM, NIMASA Regional Office, Apapa, Lagos)

Addressing maritime security challenges in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos, requires a combination of legislative reforms, technological advancements,

institutional collaboration, and community engagement. According to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB, 2023), coordinated efforts between the Nigerian Navy, NIMASA, and international partners under initiatives such as the Deep Blue Project have significantly reduced piracy incidents in Nigerian waters. The IMB recommends sustained investment in surveillance technology, real-time communication infrastructure, and multinational task force deployment as effective long-term strategies for maritime safety.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2022) also emphasizes the importance of legal harmonization and regional cooperation. It reports that weak enforcement of maritime laws, limited judicial capacity, and outdated penal codes hinder the prosecution of maritime crimes. UNODC advocates for legal reform, intelligence-sharing protocols, and the establishment of specialized maritime courts to deter crimes and ensure swift justice. Their research highlights the effectiveness of such measures in West African coastal states that have adopted integrated maritime law enforcement frameworks.

Discussion of Findings

Findings showed that while multiple security agencies, such as the Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), and Marine Police, are deployed to secure the maritime space, there is a general perception that the existing security architecture is fragmented, under-resourced, and compromised by corruption. Respondents pointed to poor inter-agency synergy, inadequate surveillance technologies, and delayed response to distress calls as major limitations. This reflects the argument of Onuoha (2020), who noted that the absence of a unified command and coherent strategic framework undermines Nigeria’s maritime defense. Similarly, Obi (2022) emphasized that overlapping mandates among agencies often lead to turf wars rather than joint operational efficiency. Governance Theory again offers a critical lens to interpret this. The theory stresses the need for accountable, transparent, and participatory decision-making in managing state affairs. In this context, maritime security management must be coordinated through effective institutional

design, improved accountability of security personnel, and participatory engagement with private sector actors like shipping companies and coastal communities. Poor governance in these aspects continues to limit the effectiveness of Nigeria's maritime security architecture.

The respondents proposed several strategies, including increased funding for maritime security, enhanced coordination among maritime agencies, community-based intelligence gathering, investment in satellite surveillance, prosecution of maritime offenders, and institutional reforms within key agencies. Emphasis was placed on leveraging technology and regional cooperation, such as the Deep Blue Project and ECOWAS maritime task forces. This aligns with the recommendations of Adewumi and Alozie (2021), who emphasized the importance of integrated maritime domain awareness and capacity building in naval and customs forces. Similarly, Ukeje and Elaigwu (2023) advocated for a whole-of-society approach involving private sector actors, coastal residents, and traditional rulers in a sustainable maritime security framework. From a Governance Theory perspective, the proposed strategies reflect a demand for more inclusive, responsive, and transparent institutions capable of ensuring maritime safety. Good governance entails that both vertical (state-society) and horizontal (inter-agency) relationships are strengthened, fostering collaborative security management. Addressing maritime threats through improved governance mechanisms is thus essential to unlocking the full potential of Nigeria's blue economy.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the maritime security challenges and the development of Nigeria's blue economy in the Lagos maritime area, using a qualitative approach grounded in Human Security Theory, Systems Theory, and Sustainable Development Theory. The findings provide a compelling narrative that maritime insecurity poses a significant threat to Nigeria's quest for sustainable economic development through its blue economy ambitions. The study concludes that maritime security threats in the Lagos corridor are widespread and

complex, comprising piracy, smuggling, oil theft, illegal fishing, and environmental degradation. These security threats are not only criminal but also systemic, reflecting institutional weaknesses, poor governance, and a lack of strategic coordination among key maritime stakeholders. Furthermore, the impact of these threats on Nigeria's blue economy is substantial. Maritime insecurity has disrupted trade logistics, increased the cost of doing business on the seas, discouraged foreign investment, and undermined the potential growth of critical blue economy sectors such as fisheries, coastal tourism, and marine transportation. These outcomes have direct implications for economic diversification, job creation, and national revenue generation. The study concludes that while some institutional and policy frameworks exist, such as NIMASA's regulatory role and the Nigerian Navy's enforcement capacity, their effectiveness is hampered by duplication of roles, weak inter-agency coordination, outdated legal instruments, and inadequate technological capacity. Based on the foregoing, outdated regulatory instruments could be reviewed to accommodate data sharing, joint training and collaborative enforcement among the agencies operating in the maritime domain. Further, Nigeria could adopt sustainability approach that balances economic development with ecological preservation and a viable governance system. This could include implementing marine spatial planning, encouraging eco-friendly marine investments, and fostering public-private partnerships to develop coastal communities and reduce reliance on illegal maritime activities.

The study recommends the following:

- i. To ensure effective coordination among maritime institutions, there is a need to harmonize existing laws and policies. Outdated regulatory instruments should be reviewed to align with current security realities, while new legislation should mandate data sharing, joint training, and collaborative enforcement among agencies operating in Nigeria's maritime domain.
- ii. For the blue economy to thrive, the government should develop a sustainability-driven strategy that balances economic development with ecological preservation

within an integrated maritime governance framework. This should include implementing marine spatial planning, encouraging eco-friendly marine investments, and fostering

public-private partnerships to develop coastal communities and reduce reliance on illegal maritime activities.

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