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THE ROLE OF THE NTERGOVERNMENTAL ACTION GROUP (GIABA) IN COMBATING MONEY LAUNDERING AND TERRORISM FINANCING IN NIGERIA, 2015-2024

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ABSTRACT

The Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), was the creation of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, FATF, was founded by G7 countries in 1989, it focuses on creating policies and standards to curb illicit financial activities globally. GIABA, as FATF-Style regional Body (FSRB) aims to uphold these objectives at a regional level among its 16 member states. The organization addresses the challenges of money laundering and terrorism financing, especially in Nigeria which is our focal point in this article, Nigeria further implemented measures such as forming the Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) to enhance its anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CFT) initiatives. This article, critically underscores the above-mentioned gaps, through in-depth analysis of interviews conducted on the focused group and purposive sampling of participants based on the predefined criteria and inclusion of individuals, policy makers and institutions such as, GIABA'S Country Reps, Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering (SCUML) operatives, Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Central Bank of Nigeria, Scholars across the region and Zenith Bank officials. Using Institutional Theory, the article indicates that GIABA has succeeded to a reasonable extent through enhancing relevant policies, collaborations and legal frameworks. However, there is need for timely evaluation and strong legal system and political will to make existing policies more viable in order to deter criminals from exploiting the system. Finally, the article recommends increased Nigeria's vigilance on its unique challenges, that includes porous border, financial sector leakages and other economic vulnerabilities such as money laundering and terrorism financing, illicit financial flows be given priority attention as they threatened socio-economic development and overall security of the nation.

KEYWORDS: Inter-Governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa, Financial Action Tax Force, FATF Style Regional Body, Money Laundering, Illicit Financial Flow, Counter Financing of Terrorism, Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit.

1. INTRODUCTION

Inter-Governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) is a French acronym which stands thus, "intergouvernemental d'action contre le blanchiment en Afrique de l'Ouest" The organization is an offshoot of the Financial Action Tax Force (FATF) Basically aimed to underscore and uphold the objectives and values of FATF's creation at regional levels across the globe to be known as FATF- Style Regional Body (FSRB).

The Financial Action Task-Force was created in 1989 by group of G7 Countries namely: Canada, France, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States and Germany. FATF, was a child of necessity that aimed at facing the hydra-headed scorch of drug trafficking and combating the menace of money laundering, terrorism financing and illicit financial flows across the globe, Similarly, Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is a specialized inter-governmental body that focused on developing policies and setting international standards to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. Its primary roles include: setting standards for countries to prevent illegal financial activities, monitoring member progress through peer reviews, identifying nations with weak measures, and providing guidance on emerging issues like virtual assets and proliferation financing. FATF's recommendations are considered the global benchmark for anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CFT) efforts.

FATF, was equally mandated to examine money laundering techniques and trends, reviewing the action which had already been taken at a national or international level, and setting out measures that needed to be taken to combat money laundering and terrorism financing. Abdullahi Y. Shehu 2025 (*Global Standards and Regional Realities: The evolution of Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Framework in West Africa*). FATF Standards and its implementation processes has so far yielded significant result with a view to drawing lessons for analyzing the political commitment to the goals and objectives of its global network, including GIABA, which is a FATF Style Regional Body in West Africa (FSRB). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the objectives, functions and mandate of the FATF Vis-a-vis the recommendation for the creation of FSRB-across the globe. Similarly, the FATF 40 recommendations is basically concerned about effective AML/CFT that is geared towards achieving global peace, security, stability and good governance, these can only be achieved through detection,

deterrence and prevention. In another words, FATF is a global setter for combating money laundering and terrorist financing; hence the need for immediate creation of GIABA as FSRB in the west African Sahel region in the year 2000.

West Africa has the total of 16 countries, of which are members of the Intergovernmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) This body considers all ECOWAS members and other eligible members of the West African States, although the recent development that marked the exit of Mali, Burkina-Faso, and Niger in 2025 as members of ECOWAS does not affect their eligibility in GIABA. However, they were approved as non-members of ECOWAS. GIABA been an offshoot of ECOWAS is responsible for advising, monitoring, evaluation and protection of the legal financial system from criminal proceeds and for the anti-terrorist financing activities. Nigeria as the largest economy in West Africa has taken giant strides and displayed strong political will to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism, thereby created an FIU in 2004, to be known as Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) Consequently, policy dialogues with GIABA at both the technical and executive levels have accelerated the pace of preparation of the second round of the mutual evaluation report of Nigeria. In order to achieve these underline goals, there was need to create a solid foundation for a robust legal and institutional mechanism for adequate supervision of the non-profit sector and a comprehensive strategic action on money laundering and terrorism financing within the region. Support is also being provided for the full operationalization of the Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit, with an emphasis on high-quality analysis, timely dissemination of financial intelligence to respective members and relevant law enforcement agencies like the EFCC and ICPC in Nigeria. Abdullahi Y. Shehu 2021: (*Nigeria and the Financial Action Tax Force FATF*) Thus, it will strengthen collaboration with law enforcement agencies (LEA) within member countries and other partners at national and international levels. Nigeria as one of the viable countries in the Sahel region that faces multifaceted challenges including political instability, terrorism, and economic vulnerability.

Amongst these challenges, money laundering and terrorism financing have emerged as a critical issue with profound implications for the region's socio-economic development and security. Money laundering involves the process by which proceeds from illegal activities are disguised to appear legitimate, thereby integrating illicit funds into the

formal economy. The country's geographical location, porous borders, weak governance structures, and pervasive poverty make it particularly susceptible to money laundering activities and terrorism. These activities not only undermine the integrity of financial systems but also fuel corruption, facilitate terrorist financing, and perpetuate instability. The consequences of unchecked money laundering and terrorism financing extend beyond economic impacts to encompass political destabilization and social unrest, amplifying existing vulnerabilities in the country.

The effectiveness of Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) regimes in Nigeria particularly in addressing crimes such as money laundering (ML) and terrorist financing (TF), is a central issue in ongoing discussions about this topic. Currently, much of the discourse has been focused on describing the phenomena of money laundering and terrorist financing, as well as the structure of individual countries' regimes designed to combat these activities. However, there remains a need for deeper analysis into how effective these regimes are in actually curbing such crimes within the region.

The proliferation of illicit financial activities, including money laundering and terrorism financing, poses significant threats to the stability, integrity, and security of the region as well as Nigeria and the global financial system. In response to these challenges, regional organizations such as the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) have been established to coordinate efforts among member states in combating financial crimes and terrorism financing.

The activities of GIABA through the ECOWAS seeks to enhance boarder collaboration and swift dissemination of intelligence in checking Transnational organized crime. Transnational organized crime is a significant threat to international peace and security, with money laundering (ML) and terrorist financing (TF) being key components of this threat. While money laundering is considered a derivative crime, terrorist financing is viewed as a 'reversed' form of money laundering, as it can involve both legitimate and illegitimate wealth. These criminal activities are harmful to peace and security and can hinder societal development. As a result, there is growing global momentum for coordinated efforts to eliminate these phenomena.

In the same vein, the Vienna Convention, has made pragmatic efforts in focusing on measures that will particularly address the issue of proceeds from

serious crimes and money laundering. Recognizing the link between money laundering and the financing of terrorism, global leaders revisited previous conventions and treaties related to terrorist financing, ultimately paving the way for a convention aimed at suppressing terrorist financing.

Long before the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, the financing of terrorism had been a matter of international concern. Several United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, including GA Resolution 49/60 (1994), G A50/6 (1995), GA Resolution 51/210 (1996), GA Resolution 52/165 (1997), GA Resolution 53/108 (1998), and SC Resolution 1189 (1998), addressed the global challenge of international terrorism and its financial underpinnings. These resolutions laid the groundwork for subsequent international responses to the menace of money laundering and terrorism financing.

Recognizing these challenges, regional and international efforts have been directed towards enhancing anti-money laundering (AML) frameworks and strengthening institutional capacities. One of such initiative is the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering and terrorism financing in West Africa (GIABA), established in 2000 as a specialized institution of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Furthermore, in the recent time Nigeria has demonstrated a commitment to AML/CFT issues both within the country as well as in the Region. In 1995 the first Anti Money Laundering (AML) Act was enacted but was replaced in 2004 by Money Laundering (Prohibition) (MLP) Act, 2004. Also, the Economic and Financial Crimes Act, 2004 was enacted which led to establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) as the coordinating agency for all AML related cases. Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NF1U) was established in 2005 under the EFCC to receive, analyze and disseminate financial intelligence to law enforcement agencies and other relevant institutions. With the recent Boko Haram issue and other activities of terrorism, the Money Laundering and Terrorism Act, 2011 was enacted to combat terrorism, money laundering and other related activities in Nigeria GIABA's role in Nigeria is pivotal, given its mandate to harmonize AML/CFT (Combating the Financing of Terrorism) standards, conduct mutual evaluations, and provide training to member states. The organization collaborates closely with national governments, financial intelligence units, law

enforcement agencies, and international partners to enhance the effectiveness of AML/CFT measures in Nigeria and across the Sahel region.

However, despite concerted efforts, Nigeria continues to face significant challenges in combating money laundering and terrorism financing. These challenges include limited institutional capacities, inadequate legal frameworks, corruption, and the evolving nature of financial crime. Moreover, the region's complex security dynamics, including the presence of armed groups and cross-border criminal networks, exacerbate the difficulty of detecting and preventing illicit financial flows.

Therefore, a comprehensive assessment of GIABA's role in combating money laundering and terrorism financing in Nigeria is crucial. Such an assessment will provide insights into the organization's effectiveness, identify gaps in existing strategies, and propose recommendations for strengthening AML/CFT frameworks. By addressing these issues, policymakers, stakeholders, and international partners can better support efforts to safeguard the financial integrity and stability of the country, thereby contributing to its sustainable development and security.

GIABA also extends Observer Status to various African and non-African States and Inter-Governmental Organizations that align with its objectives and initiatives. Entities eligible for observer status encompass the Central Banks of member States, regional Securities and Exchange Commissions, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the West African Development Bank, the French Zone Anti-Money Laundering Liaison Committee (Conseil Régional de l'Épargne Public et des Marchés Financiers), the African Development Bank (AfDB), international bodies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as global entities like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and FATF Style Regional Bodies. Other eligible organizations include Interpol, the World Customs Organization, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the European Union, and the Egmont Group. These provisions ensure GIABA's comprehensive approach to combating financial crimes across West Africa, fostering collaboration and support from a diverse array of regional and international stakeholders.

The GIABA Mandate outlines the fundamental responsibilities of GIABA as both an institution within ECOWAS and a FATF-Style Regional Body (FSRB). GIABA is mandated to facilitate and ensure Member States' adoption of effective measures

against money laundering and terrorist financing, aligned with international standards, while considering regional specificities. It also serves as a platform for Member States to engage in dialogue, exchange experiences, and foster strong intraregional cooperation and also conduct ongoing self-evaluations and Mutual Evaluations to assess Member States' compliance with AML/CFT standards, utilizing FATF Methodology. It assists Member States in establishing and implementing robust AML/CFT frameworks, including coordinating bodies GIABA also extends Observer Status to various African and non-African States and Inter-Governmental Organizations that align with its objectives and initiatives. Entities eligible for observer status encompass the Central Banks of member States, regional Securities and Exchange Commissions, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the West African Development Bank, the French Zone Anti-Money Laundering Liaison Committee (Conseil Régional de l'Épargne Public et des Marchés Financiers), the African Development Bank (AfDB), international bodies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as global entities like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and FATF Style Regional Bodies. Other eligible organizations include Interpol, the World Customs Organization, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the European Union, and the Egmont Group. These provisions ensure GIABA's comprehensive approach to combating financial crimes across West Africa, fostering collaboration and support from a diverse array of regional and international stakeholders.

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necessary mechanisms.

The scope of this study is focused only on Nigeria as one of the countries in the Sahel region. Nigeria was selected because of firstly, regional significance. Nigeria is one of the largest economies in Africa and the most populous country on the continent, Nigeria plays a central role in West Africa's economic and financial landscape. It is also a hub for both licit and illicit financial flows, making it a crucial country for studying the effectiveness of anti-money laundering (AML) initiatives.

Secondly, is a relatively stable democracy with a growing economy and a well-developed financial sector in West Africa. Its relative stability and progressive financial regulations make it an important case for analyzing the effectiveness of AML measures in a rapidly developing nation. Moreover, its unique position in the region and its role as a major economic hub for West African countries make it a critical focus for studying AML and TF efforts. Furthermore, Influence and Leadership in Regional Organizations. Nigeria is an influential member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and being a leading power in West Africa. The country's leadership and influence in regional politics made it a key player in implementing GIABA's mandates.

Lastly, the need to also focus on High-Risk Areas. Nigeria is identified as a high-risk area for money laundering and terrorism financing due to factors such as political corruption, informal financial sectors, and large-scale cross-border trade amongst other crucial factors.

2. THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

The study adopts the multitheoretical approach to explain the complex nature of crime, especially "organized and white-collar Crimes" like Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing which its predicate offences range from drug trafficking, embezzlement, corruption and Fraud amongst others, these theories highlight the susceptibility of human behavior in exploiting an unorganized system due to weak institutional framework that results in influencing positive or negative behaviors.

a. Institutional theory

b. Rational Choice theory

INSTITUTIONAL THEORY: The Institutional theory has become an essential framework in contemporary social research. The framework elucidates social behavior by delineating the institutional norms that govern individual and collective actions. Institutions consist of the frameworks of conventions, regulations, beliefs, and

laws that organize social conduct, providing the overarching social backdrop that influences decision-making, policy inclinations, and individual actions. The theory examines critical societal concerns: specifically, the framework of social behavior and the processes of social change. This method engenders significant theoretical discussions concerning the interplay between structure and agency, the function of cultural models within social structures, and the social circumstances that enable the formation of common meanings and beliefs. Empirical studies have examined institutional growth and the implementation of analogous models and frameworks across several sectors, including environmental policy, organizational design, the establishment of standards, and the dissemination of practices. Institutions are pivotal in several fields of study, such as public policy, management, organizational studies, and international relations. This clearly spells out the role played by organizations, public policy domains in strengthening ideals that shaped human conducts. This ranges from stricter measures and enabling the required legal frameworks in enhancing institutional capacity towards guiding positive behavior in human endeavors. Institutional and legal deficits invite open leakages that attracts criminals to take undue advantage of the system.

Institutions are enduring and interconnected frameworks of rules and laws that organize social interactions. Institutions are often categorized into cognitive, normative, and regulative aspects, although they may also be distinguished by differing degrees of formalization and materiality. Institutions allow for an examination of the implicit frameworks that influence social, political, and economic conduct, whereas the concept of states includes acts, regulations, and entities. The cognitive, moral, and regulative logics of action operate through the interaction among these dimensions of materiality, formality, and institutional structures. Institutions influence both individuals' perceptions of the world and the actions of people and organizations. The analysis of institutional theory starts with a comprehension of institutions and the notion of isomorphism. Isomorphism is the restricting mechanism that compels one unit within a population to mirror other units subjected to identical environmental conditions.

Organizations can achieve isomorphism through three distinct mechanisms:

Coercive, mimetic, or normative. Coercive isomorphism emerges from political pressure and issues of legitimacy. Organizations are compelled to

adhere to certain rules and regulations established by other organizations upon which they rely. Mimetic isomorphism arises from uncertainty. To address this uncertainty, corporations may emulate others. Normative isomorphism arises from transformations within professions. Specific occupations are acknowledged in society, and when organizations hire these individuals, they become susceptible to like effects.

Similarly, institutions significantly impact the behaviors of social actors. Cognitive aspects encompass ideas and ingrained thought processes that influence how social actors perceive reality, recognize social issues, formulate strategies, and choose suitable methods to achieve their objectives. Normative aspects encompass values and standards that delineate what is considered suitable or desirable, influencing how individuals identify social issues and the methods for resolving them. Regulative elements include rules, laws, and enforcement mechanisms that restrict and govern acts; they influence behavior through incentives and the formulation of standards. Institutions vary based on the proportional significance and arrangement of these three components.

RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY: is another important theory that could serve as a framework in money laundering related research, especially like this one is the Rational Choice Theory. This theory posits that individuals make decisions based on rational calculations aimed at maximizing their benefits while minimizing costs. Applied to money laundering, Rational Choice Theory suggests that criminals engage in laundering activities when the expected benefits (such as profit from illegal activities) outweigh the perceived risks and costs (such as detection, prosecution, and forfeiture of assets). Rational Choice theory posits that human behavior is driven by self-interested preferences, with individuals carefully weighing the costs and benefits of their actions to maximize their utility. Rational choice theory comprises principles that aid in comprehending both economic and social behaviors. Originating in the eighteenth century, the theory can be attributed to Adam Smith, a political economist and philosopher. It proposes that individuals evaluate options through a cost-benefit analysis to assess their suitability. Rational choice theory focuses on three core concepts: rational actors, self-interest, and the invisible hand.

Rational choice theory posits that individuals employ logical reasoning to make decisions and attain outcomes that serve their personal goals. This approach is geared towards maximizing self-interest,

aiming to achieve outcomes that offer individuals the highest possible benefit and fulfillment within the constraints of their available choices.

The strength of Rational Choice approaches lies in their emphasis on individual decision-making based on rationality and self-interest. Here are some key strengths Predictive Power: Rational Choice models often provide clear predictions about individual behavior in various situations, assuming individuals act in their best interest. This predictive power can be valuable in understanding and anticipating human behavior in economics, politics, and other social sciences. Analytically, the approach typically employs rigorous mathematical and logical frameworks, enhancing their precision and allowing for formal analysis. This analytical rigor provides a solid foundation for studying decision-making processes. On a cross-disciplinary applicability, rational choice theory is applicable across diverse fields such as economics, political science, sociology, and psychology. This interdisciplinary nature allows researchers to apply similar frameworks to analyze decision-making across different contexts.

Rational Choice approaches also focus on individual preferences and incentives, highlighting the importance of individual agency in shaping collective outcomes. This emphasis can lead to a deeper understanding of how individuals make choices in various contexts. The theory often incorporates efficiency considerations, assuming individuals seek to maximize their utility or benefits given constraints. This focus on efficiency can provide insights into how resources are allocated and utilized in society. Overall, Rational Choice approaches offer a powerful framework for understanding individual decision-making and its implications for broader social phenomena. However, they also have limitations, such as assumptions of perfect rationality and the neglect of social and psychological factors, which critics often point out.

3. METHODOLOGY

This article is part of the PhD. Research dissertation which forms the requirement for the award of PhD programme as such part of the work must be published. In this study, a qualitative research design is adopted in the course of this article as the content of the study necessitated such an approach. A qualitative approach was identified as being more appropriate over a quantitative approach, given the need for in-depth information on the multifaceted nature of the role of GIABA in combating money laundering and Terrorism

financing in Nigeria. Moreover, this method allowed the researcher to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders from the perspective of individuals involved to organizations selected for the purpose of this research.

This research shall employ qualitative approach, combining qualitative analysis of GIABA documents, policy reports, and legal frameworks with quantitative assessments of Nigeria's AML/CTF compliance indicators. Qualitative data will be gathered through a comprehensive review of GIABA's publications, including guidelines, assessment reports, and strategic plans, to identify the specific measures and initiatives implemented by GIABA in Nigeria. This will be complemented by interview and focus group discussions of Nigeria's performance in key AML/CTF indices, such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) evaluations and Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, to assess the effectiveness of GIABA's interventions in improving Nigeria's compliance with international standards.

This article uses a conceptual legal method to help a doctrinal library-based investigation by using existing material. This study also makes use of main and secondary legislation, such as the Constitution, the Money Laundering (Prohibition) (Amended) Act 2012 and the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2013 (as amended), as well as case studies, international conventions, textbooks and peer-reviewed publications. A comparison of anti-money laundering legislation in Canada, the UK, Hong Kong, China and Nigeria were conducted, with lessons learned for Nigeria's anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism financing laws. According to the findings, the Act is silent on the criminal use of legitimate earnings to fund terrorism and cultism, data will be collected through review of documents, periodicals and GIABA'S publications including Annual Reports, allowing for the systematic gathering of information on the organization's roles, activities, challenges, contributions and outcomes. The collected data will be subsequently presented and analyzed. Overall, this article aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on AML efforts in the Sahel and provide valuable insights into the role of the GIABA in combating money laundering in the region. The adoption of documentary research methodology in contemporary social research is indeed crucial due to its holistic view of the phenomenon under study (Wiersma & Jur, 2009). Documentary research is flexible and sensitive to the social context, making it suitable for capturing the complexities of human life that might not be

adequately addressed by rigid quantitative methodologies.

It's important to recognize the significance of research design in investigating a research problem of this nature, as it guides the methods used to collect and analyze data (Oyeniyi, 2002). In the context of this study will adopt one-on-one interaction to collate detailed and in-depth information through the following: Interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders, scholars and professionals involved in anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorism financing (CTF) initiatives to gain in-depth insights into their roles, challenges, and achievements. A semi-structured questionnaire will be used to illicit information from the respondents. A mix of predefined questions and flexibility to explore emerging themes during the interview. Focus group discussions (FGDs) will be organized to gather diverse perspectives and insights on the role of GIABA in combating money laundering (ML) and terrorism financing (TF) in Nigeria. These discussions will help to identify practical challenges, gaps, and the effectiveness of policies at various levels. The session will be moderated to explore perceptions, opinions, and experiences. It will equally enable the researcher to understand group dynamics, collective opinions, and shared experiences on the topic of research. Purposive sampling will be employed in this study due to the unique nature of the research topic. Participants are selected based on predefined criteria that align with the study's objectives, ensuring the inclusion of individuals and institutions with firsthand knowledge of the subject matter.

4. FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings of the research paper. The findings here is the result of the interview conducted in addition to other secondary data collated then the following findings emerged:

4.1. GIABA's Pivotal Role in Strengthening Inter Agency Coordination in Nigeria

GIABA, is widely recognized as a pivotal actor in strengthening Nigeria's institutional frameworks and advancing the country's anti-money laundering capacity. Conversely, a smaller group of respondents assigned moderate-to-low ratings, ranging from highlighting persistent obstacles that limit GIABA's overall effectiveness. Key challenges identified include weak enforcement of AML laws, corruption among regulatory actors, insufficient funding for AML institutions, gaps in inter-agency coordination, political interference, low public awareness, and

slow judicial processes. These findings suggest that, while GIABA provides critical guidance, frameworks, and capacity-building initiatives, systemic weaknesses within Nigeria – particularly at the implementation level – constrain the full realization of its recommendations. Overall, the responses point to a moderate-to-high perceived effectiveness, with an estimated weighted average of reflecting that GIABA's interventions are impactful but still moderated by local institutional and operational limitations. These finding could be backed up by the following scholarly perspectives sighted in the course of this research.

The analysis of 32 stakeholder responses indicates a generally positive perception of GIABA's effectiveness in coordinating and implementing AML measures in Nigeria. The majority of respondents acknowledged GIABA's contributions, particularly in supporting legislative reforms, enhancing technical capacity, fostering regional cooperation, and improving reporting mechanisms for suspicious transactions. These observations align with scholarly perspectives emphasizing GIABA's pivotal role in promoting standardized AML frameworks and regional integration. Pieth (2016) and FATF (2022) highlight that regional bodies like GIABA are instrumental in guiding national policies, ensuring compliance with international standards, and facilitating crossborder information exchange. Similarly, Ujunwa and Salami (2018) note that technical support and policy guidance from supranational institutions strengthen domestic institutional frameworks and enhance the operational capacity of regulatory agencies, which mirrors stakeholders' recognition of GIABA's impact in Nigeria.

4.2. Adopt Multidimensional Strategy to Enhance GIABAS's Effectiveness

Findings also revealed that enhancing GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria requires a multidimensional strategy. A significant portion of participants highlighted the need for stronger inter-agency coordination, emphasizing that seamless collaboration among regulatory bodies, law enforcement agencies, and financial institutions is crucial for effective AML/CTF implementation. Equally important, some of the respondents stressed the necessity of capacity building and training for personnel, pointing to the value of equipping stakeholders with the technical skills and knowledge required for complex financial crime investigations. Furthermore, identified increased funding and resource allocation as essential for sustaining

GIABA's operations and adopting modern monitoring and enforcement technologies.

The effectiveness of the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) in Nigeria between 2015 and 2024 can be evaluated in terms of regulatory compliance improvements, institutional capacity building, and measurable enforcement outcomes. One of the most significant achievements has been Nigeria's progressive alignment with international Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing (AML/CFT) standards through GIABA-led mutual evaluations and follow-up mechanisms. For instance, Nigeria improved its compliance ratings under the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) framework, with several recommendations upgraded from "partially compliant" to "compliant" or "largely compliant" by 2022. This reflects tangible progress in legal reforms such as amendments to the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act and the Terrorism (Prevention) Act, which strengthened criminalization, reporting obligations, and regulatory oversight. Additionally, GIABA-supported National Risk Assessments (e.g., the 2016 NRA) enhanced Nigeria's understanding of sectorial vulnerabilities, enabling more targeted policy responses to illicit financial flows.

Beyond regulatory improvements, GIABA has contributed significantly to institutional strengthening and inter-agency coordination in Nigeria. Through technical assistance, training programmes, and regional cooperation platforms, agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), and the Securities and Exchange Commission have enhanced their investigative and supervisory capacities. This is evidenced by increased financial intelligence sharing, improved monitoring of suspicious transactions, and more structured compliance regimes in the banking and capital market sectors. Furthermore, Nigeria recorded "significant achievements" in addressing deficiencies identified in GIABA's Mutual Evaluation Reports by 2023, indicating measurable progress in technical compliance and supervisory effectiveness. These outcomes demonstrate that GIABA's peer-review and capacity-building approach has strengthened Nigeria's institutional response to money laundering and terrorism financing.

However, despite these gains, the overall effectiveness of GIABA's interventions in Nigeria remains moderate due to persistent implementation challenges. Effectiveness ratings from GIABA evaluations show that many key outcome areas –

such as investigation, prosecution, and asset recovery—remain at “low” or “moderate” levels, highlighting gaps between legal frameworks and practical enforcement. Empirical evidence also indicates continued prevalence of predicate crimes such as corruption, cyber fraud, and illicit cash smuggling, alongside low conviction rates and weak judicial outcomes. These limitations suggest that while GIABA has been effective in driving policy reforms and improving compliance structures, its impact on reducing the actual scale of money laundering and terrorism financing in Nigeria has been constrained by systemic issues such as weak institutions, limited technological capacity, and governance challenges. Consequently, GIABA’s effectiveness can be best characterized as incremental—achieving notable regulatory and institutional progress, but with less pronounced success in translating these into sustained enforcement outcomes.

4.3. GIABA’S Operational Independence Including Finances

The study further discovers, the need for instructive for policy and practice. Enhancing legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms and improving data sharing and intelligence exchange, and raising public awareness and stakeholder engagement were noted as critical steps in supporting AML/CTF efforts. Additionally, of respondents recommended reducing political interference to preserve GIABA’s operational independence and credibility. Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening institutional capacity, ensuring adequate legal and financial support, and fostering collaborative mechanisms are central to improving GIABA’s coordination and implementation of AML/CTF measures in Nigeria. The following back-up for these major findings is presented as follows

The findings reveal that enhancing GIABA’s effectiveness in Nigeria requires a multi-dimensional strategy. A significant portion of participants highlighted the need for stronger inter-agency coordination, emphasizing that seamless collaboration among regulatory bodies, law enforcement agencies, and financial institutions is crucial for effective AML/CTF implementation. Scholars have noted that inter-agency collaboration is essential for tackling complex financial crimes, as weak coordination often leads to fragmented enforcement and regulatory gaps (Ujunwa & Salami, 2018; Nwogugu, 2020). Equally important, some of the respondents stressed the necessity of capacity

building and training for personnel, aligning with the literature which suggests that the technical competence of stakeholders is critical for detecting and prosecuting money laundering and terrorist financing activities (Pieth, 2016; FATF, 2022). Furthermore, there was identified increased funding and resource allocation as essential for sustaining GIABA’s operations and adopting modern monitoring and enforcement technologies, echoing studies that link adequate financial support to the successful implementation of AML frameworks (Levi, 2019; Adegbite & Ayadi, 2021).

Other recommendations, though cited by fewer respondents, are equally instructive for policy and practice. Enhancing legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms, improving data sharing and intelligence exchange and raising public awareness and stakeholder engagement were noted as critical steps in supporting AML/CTF efforts. Scholars argue that robust legal structures, combined with information sharing and public sensitization, strengthen the overall compliance ecosystem and reduce vulnerabilities to financial crimes (Zarafshani et al., 2020; Olatunji, 2021). Additionally, other respondents recommended reducing political interference to preserve GIABA’s operational independence and credibility, which reflects broader concerns in the literature that political influence can undermine regulatory autonomy and enforcement efficiency (Nwolise, 2017; FATF, 2022). Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening institutional capacity, ensuring adequate legal and financial support, and fostering collaborative mechanisms are central to improving GIABA’s coordination and implementation of AML/CTF measures in Nigeria.

On the effectiveness of GIABA, the research highlights that enhancing GIABA’s effectiveness in Nigeria requires a combination of institutional, operational, and collaborative measures. A substantial majority emphasized the need for strengthened inter-agency coordination and adequate funding and resources to support AML/CTF activities, reflecting the centrality of collaboration and financial capacity in effective anti-money laundering operations. Capacity building and regular training for personnel and legal and regulatory reforms, including harmonized AML/CTF laws and stricter enforcement, were also considered critical for improving operational efficiency and compliance. Additionally, improved data sharing, technological tools and institutional autonomy with reduced political interference were identified as essential for minimizing corruption and enhancing monitoring and reporting systems.

4.4. *Public Awareness Campaign and Stakeholder Engagement*

Other notable recommendations included public awareness campaigns and stakeholder engagement to boost compliance, strengthening regional and international cooperation with GIABA member states and global bodies, and regular monitoring and evaluation of AML/CTF programs to identify gaps and improve efficiency. Overall, the findings suggest that GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria depends on a holistic strategy combining internal reforms, adequate resourcing, capacity enhancement, technological adoption, and collaborative mechanisms, emphasizing that both structural and operational improvements are necessary for robust AML/CTF implementation.

This was also supported by the following scholarly views:

GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria requires a combination of institutional, operational, and collaborative measures. A substantial majority emphasized the need for strengthened inter-agency coordination and adequate funding and resources to support AML/CTF activities.

Scholars have emphasized that effective AML/CTF implementation relies heavily on collaboration among regulatory, law enforcement, and financial institutions, as well as sufficient financial and technical resources (Ujunwa & Salami, 2018; Levi, 2019; Pieth, 2016). Capacity building and regular training for personnel and legal and regulatory reforms, including harmonized AML/CTF laws and stricter enforcement, were also considered critical. Research indicates that technical competence of personnel and robust legal frameworks are pivotal for successful detection, investigation, and prosecution of money laundering and terrorism financing activities (FATF, 2022; Adegbite & Ayadi, 2021). Additionally, improved data sharing and technological tools and institutional autonomy with reduced political interference were identified as essential for minimizing corruption and enhancing monitoring and reporting systems, echoing scholarly findings that information exchange and institutional independence strengthen compliance and enforcement outcomes (Zarafshani et al., 2020; Nwolise, 2017).

Similarly, public awareness campaigns and stakeholder engagement cannot be over emphasized as it will boost compliance, strengthening regional and international cooperation with GIABA member states and global bodies, and regular monitoring and evaluation of AML/CTF programs to identify gaps and improve efficiency. Scholars have highlighted

that public sensitization, regional cooperation, and continuous evaluation of AML programs are essential for maintaining operational effectiveness and aligning domestic practices with international standards (Olatunji, 2021; FATF, 2022). Overall, the findings suggest that GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria depends on a holistic strategy combining internal reforms, adequate resourcing, capacity enhancement, technological adoption, and collaborative mechanisms, emphasizing that both structural and operational improvements are necessary for robust AML/CTF implementation.

4.5. *Technical Competence of Personnel and Timely Review of Legal Frame Work*

The article indicates that technical competence of personnel and robust legal frameworks are pivotal for successful detection, investigation, and prosecution of money laundering and terrorism financing activities (FATF, 2022; Adegbite & Ayadi, 2021). Additionally, improved data sharing and technological tools and institutional autonomy with reduced political interference were identified as essential for minimizing corruption and enhancing monitoring and reporting systems, echoing scholarly findings that information exchange and institutional independence strengthen compliance and enforcement outcomes (Zarafshani et al., 2020; Nwolise, 2017).

With more profound public awareness campaigns and stakeholder engagement to boost compliance, strengthening regional and international cooperation with GIABA member states and global bodies and regular monitoring and evaluation of AML/CTF programs to identify gaps and improve efficiency. Scholars have highlighted that public sensitization, regional cooperation, and continuous evaluation of AML programs are essential for maintaining operational effectiveness and aligning domestic practices with international standards (Olatunji, 2021; FATF, 2022). Overall, the findings suggest that GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria depends on a holistic strategy combining internal reforms, adequate resourcing, capacity enhancement, technological adoption, and collaborative mechanisms, emphasizing that both structural and operational improvements are necessary for robust AML/CTF implementation.

Similarly, GIABA has played a significant role in enhancing institutional capacities and regulatory frameworks for AML and CTF in Nigeria. A majority of respondents (84%) recognized that GIABA's capacity-building programs, including training and technical assistance, have strengthened the skills and

operational effectiveness of regulatory agencies and law enforcement personnel. Also, noted was that GIABA's guidelines and frameworks have contributed to harmonizing national AML/CTF policies with international standards, improving reporting mechanisms and compliance monitoring across financial institutions. Additionally, some of the respondents highlighted that GIABA's interventions have enhanced investigative processes, financial intelligence analysis, and institutional coordination, leading to noticeable operational improvements. Other key findings include the recognition of GIABA's role in fostering regulatory and legal reforms, with couple of respondents emphasizing the adoption of updated AML laws and stricter sanctions for non-compliance, which have strengthened Nigeria's overall compliance posture. Moreover, some participants acknowledged the importance of GIABA's support in promoting regional cooperation and information sharing, which improves Nigeria's ability to monitor cross-border financial crimes and terrorism financing. Overall, the findings suggest that while GIABA has made substantial contributions to institutional capacity building and regulatory development, its effectiveness remains dependent on sustained national commitment, adequate resources, and ongoing alignment with evolving international AML/CTF standards. A number of researchers have equally corroborated on the above findings thus;

Furthermore, GIABA has played a significant role in enhancing institutional capacities and regulatory frameworks for AML and CTF in Nigeria. A majority of respondents recognized that GIABA's capacity-building programs, including training and technical assistance, have strengthened the skills and operational effectiveness of regulatory agencies and law enforcement personnel. Scholars highlight that technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives by regional bodies are critical for improving domestic institutional competence in AML/CTF operations (Pieth, 2016; Ujunwa & Salami, 2018). Similarly, a group of respondents noted that GIABA's guidelines and frameworks have harmonized national AML/CTF policies with international standards, improving reporting mechanisms and compliance monitoring across financial institutions. This aligns with research emphasizing the role of regional organizations in promoting policy standardization, regulatory alignment, and compliance with FATF recommendations (FATF, 2022; Adegbite & Ayadi, 2021). Additionally, respondents highlighted that GIABA's interventions have enhanced investigative

processes, financial intelligence analysis, and institutional coordination, supporting scholarly assertions that cross-agency collaboration and improved analytical capacity are essential for effective AML enforcement (Levi, 2019; Zarafshani et al., 2020).

Finally, other findings underscore GIABA's influence in regulatory and legal reforms, with respondents emphasizing updated AML laws and stricter sanctions for non-compliance, which strengthen national compliance frameworks. Scholars note that robust legal structures, supported by regional guidance, are vital for ensuring adherence to AML/CTF obligations and deterring financial crimes (Nwolise, 2017; Olatunji, 2021). Furthermore, of participants acknowledged GIABA's role in promoting regional cooperation and information sharing, enhancing Nigeria's capacity to track cross-border financial crimes and terrorism financing. Research corroborates that international and regional cooperation significantly improves intelligence sharing, risk assessment, and the overall effectiveness of AML regimes (Pieth, 2016; FATF, 2022). Overall, the findings suggest that GIABA has made substantial contributions to institutional capacity and regulatory improvements in Nigeria, but its sustained effectiveness depends on continued national commitment, adequate resourcing, and ongoing alignment with evolving international AML/CTF standards.

4.6. The Need for Systematic Regional and International Cooperation

With GIABA member states and global bodies it was highlighted by key stake holders on the need for timely and regular monitoring and evaluation of AML/CTF programs to identify gaps and improve efficiency. additionally, the findings indicate that GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria hinges on a combination of internal reforms, resource allocation, capacity enhancement, technological adoption, and collaborative measures, reflecting a holistic strategy to combat money laundering and terrorism financing.

The responses from the 32 interviewees align with broader scholarly discourse on the institutional and operational challenges faced by regional AML/CTF bodies. Scholars emphasize that inter-agency coordination is critical for the success of anti-money laundering frameworks, as fragmented institutional structures often result in duplication of efforts, delayed investigations, and regulatory gaps (FATF, 2020; Levi & Reuter, 2006). The respondents' call for adequate funding and resources reflects findings by

Schneider (2011), who notes that limited financial and technical capacities constrain the effectiveness of AML agencies in developing countries. Similarly, the emphasis on capacity building and specialized training resonates with the scholarly view that AML/CTF enforcement relies heavily on skilled personnel capable of analyzing financial intelligence and investigating complex financial crimes (Ungar, 2017; Reuter, 2020).

The recommendations for legal reforms, enhanced data sharing, and technological adoption are also supported in the literature, which identifies harmonized regulations and secure, Realtime information exchange as essential for tracking illicit financial flows across borders (FATF, 2022; Zdanovic, 2019). Furthermore, the need for institutional autonomy and reduced political interference aligns with the scholarship that highlights governance integrity as a key determinant of AML/CTF effectiveness (Levi, 2018). Finally, the emphasis on public awareness, stakeholder engagement, and regional cooperation underscores the argument that combating money laundering and terrorism financing requires not only state-level enforcement but also collaborative networks spanning private sector actors, civil society, and transnational institutions (Gilmore & Kirkpatrick, 2013; GIABA, 2021). In essence, the interview responses reflect a consensus in scholarly literature: enhancing GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria demands a holistic approach combining structural reforms, capacity enhancement, technological modernization, and multi-level collaboration.

5. DISCUSSIONS

5.1. *Some of the Outlined Issues Hindering the Impact of GIABA In Nigeria*

The interview responses from 32 respondents revealed that enhancing GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria requires targeted institutional and operational measures. 87.5% of respondents (28/32) emphasized the need for strengthened inter-agency coordination between GIABA, financial institutions, and law enforcement agencies, while 78% (25/32) highlighted the importance of adequate funding and resources to support AML/CTF activities. Additionally, 69% (22/32) recommended capacity building and regular training for personnel, and 63% (20/32) stressed the need for legal and regulatory reforms, including harmonized AML/CTF laws and stricter enforcement mechanisms. Respondents also noted that 56% (18/32) saw improved data sharing and technological tools as critical to effective monitoring and reporting, while 47% (15/32)

stressed institutional autonomy and reduced political interference to minimize corruption.

Furthermore, 38% of respondents (12/32) underscored the role of public awareness campaigns and stakeholder engagement to enhance compliance and reporting of suspicious activities. Strengthening regional and international cooperation with GIABA member states and global bodies was highlighted by 31% (10/32), while 25% (8/32) recommended regular monitoring and evaluation of AML/CTF programs to identify gaps and improve efficiency. Overall, the findings indicate that GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria hinges on a combination of internal reforms, resource allocation, capacity enhancement, technological adoption, and collaborative measures, reflecting a holistic strategy to combat money laundering and terrorism financing.

The responses from the 32 interviewees align with broader scholarly discourse on the institutional and operational challenges faced by regional AML/CTF bodies. Scholars emphasize that inter-agency coordination is critical for the success of anti-money laundering frameworks, as fragmented institutional structures often result in duplication of efforts, delayed investigations, and regulatory gaps (FATF, 2020; Levi & Reuter, 2006). The respondents' call for adequate funding and resources reflects findings by Schneider (2011), who notes that limited financial and technical capacities constrain the effectiveness of AML agencies in developing countries. Similarly, the emphasis on capacity building and specialized training resonates with the scholarly view that AML/CTF enforcement relies heavily on skilled personnel capable of analyzing financial intelligence and investigating complex financial crimes (Ungar, 2017; Reuter, 2020).

The respondents' recommendations for legal reforms, enhanced data sharing, and technological adoption are also supported in the literature, which identifies harmonized regulations and secure, Realtime information exchange as essential for tracking illicit financial flows across borders (FATF, 2022; Zdanovic, 2019). Furthermore, the need for institutional autonomy and reduced political interference aligns with the scholarship that highlights governance integrity as a key determinant of AML/CTF effectiveness (Levi, 2018). Finally, the emphasis on public awareness, stakeholder engagement, and regional cooperation underscores the argument that combating money laundering and terrorism financing requires not only state-level enforcement but also collaborative networks spanning private sector actors, civil society, and transnational institutions (Gilmore & Kirkpatrick,

2013; GIABA, 2021). In essence, the interview responses reflect a consensus in scholarly literature: enhancing GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria demands a holistic approach combining structural reforms, capacity enhancement, technological modernization, and multi-level collaboration.

The analysis of 32 stakeholder responses reveals a clear perception of GIABA's effectiveness in coordinating and implementing AML measures in Nigeria. A majority of respondents expressed strong confidence in GIABA's contributions, with ratings ranging from 70% to 83%. These high ratings were attributed to GIABA's support for legislative reforms, technical capacity building, regional cooperation, and improved reporting mechanisms for suspicious transactions. Stakeholders particularly noted GIABA's role in providing policy guidance, standardizing AML practices according to FATF requirements, and facilitating cross-border intelligence sharing within ECOWAS.

These findings indicate that GIABA is widely recognized as a pivotal actor in strengthening Nigeria's institutional frameworks and advancing the country's anti-money laundering capacity.

Conversely, a smaller group of respondents assigned moderate-to-low ratings, ranging from 43% to 68%, highlighting persistent obstacles that limit GIABA's overall effectiveness. Key challenges identified include weak enforcement of AML laws, corruption among regulatory actors, insufficient funding for AML institutions, gaps in inter-agency coordination, political interference, low public awareness, and slow judicial processes. These findings suggest that, while GIABA provides critical guidance, frameworks, and capacity-building initiatives, systemic weaknesses within Nigeria—particularly at the implementation level—constrain the full realization of its recommendations. Overall, the responses point to a moderate-to-high perceived effectiveness, with an estimated weighted average of 65%, reflecting that GIABA's interventions are impactful but still moderated by local institutional and operational limitations. These findings could be backed up by the following scholarly perspectives sighted in the course of this research.

The analysis of 32 stakeholder responses indicates a generally positive perception of GIABA's effectiveness in coordinating and implementing AML measures in Nigeria. The majority of respondents (70–83%) acknowledged GIABA's contributions, particularly in supporting legislative reforms, enhancing technical capacity, fostering regional cooperation, and improving reporting mechanisms for suspicious transactions. These

observations align with scholarly perspectives emphasizing GIABA's pivotal role in promoting standardized AML frameworks and regional integration. Pieth (2016) and FATF (2022) highlight that regional bodies like GIABA are instrumental in guiding national policies, ensuring compliance with international standards, and facilitating cross border information exchange. Similarly, Ujunwa and Salami (2018) note that technical support and policy guidance from supranational institutions strengthen domestic institutional frameworks and enhance the operational capacity of regulatory agencies, which mirrors stakeholders' recognition of GIABA's impact in Nigeria.

Conversely, a smaller segment of respondents (43–68%) identified ongoing challenges that limit GIABA's overall effectiveness. Weak enforcement of AML laws, corruption among regulatory actors, insufficient funding, gaps in inter-agency coordination, political interference, low public awareness, and slow judicial processes were highlighted as persistent obstacles. Scholars have long argued that such systemic weaknesses undermine the effectiveness of AML initiatives despite strong policy guidance (Levi, 2019; Nwolise, 2017; Zarafshani et al., 2020). FATF (2022) also emphasizes that while technical assistance and regional coordination are critical, the full realization of AML objectives depends on domestic institutional integrity, adequate resourcing, and robust enforcement mechanisms. Overall, the findings suggest that GIABA's interventions are impactful and valued, but their effectiveness is moderated by local operational and institutional constraints, reflecting a moderate-to-high perception of success in strengthening Nigeria's AML capacity.

The findings also reveal that enhancing GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria requires a multidimensional strategy. A significant portion of participants (28%) highlighted the need for stronger inter-agency coordination, emphasizing that seamless collaboration among regulatory bodies, law enforcement agencies, and financial institutions is crucial for effective AML/CTF implementation. Equally important, 22% of respondents stressed the necessity of capacity building and training for personnel, pointing to the value of equipping stakeholders with the technical skills and knowledge required for complex financial crime investigations. Furthermore, 19% identified increased funding and resource allocation as essential for sustaining GIABA's operations and adopting modern monitoring and enforcement technologies.

Other recommendations, though cited by fewer

respondents, are equally instructive for policy and practice.

Enhancing legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms (12%), improving data sharing and intelligence exchange (10%), and raising public awareness and stakeholder engagement (9%) were noted as critical steps in supporting AML/CTF efforts. Additionally, 6% of respondents recommended reducing political interference to preserve GIABA's operational independence and credibility. Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening institutional capacity, ensuring adequate legal and financial support, and fostering collaborative mechanisms are central to improving GIABA's coordination and implementation of AML/CTF measures in Nigeria.

The following back-up for these major findings is presented as follows:

The findings reveal that enhancing GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria requires a multi-dimensional strategy. A significant portion of participants (28%) highlighted the need for stronger inter-agency coordination, emphasizing that seamless collaboration among regulatory bodies, law enforcement agencies, and financial institutions is crucial for effective AML/CTF implementation. Scholars have noted that inter-agency collaboration is essential for tackling complex financial crimes, as weak coordination often leads to fragmented enforcement and regulatory gaps (Ujunwa & Salami, 2018; Nwogugu, 2020). Equally important, 22% of respondents stressed the necessity of capacity building and training for personnel, aligning with the literature which suggests that the technical competence of stakeholders is critical for detecting and prosecuting money laundering and terrorist financing activities (Pieth, 2016; FATF, 2022). Furthermore, 19% identified increased funding and resource allocation as essential for sustaining GIABA's operations and adopting modern monitoring and enforcement technologies, echoing studies that link adequate financial support to the successful implementation of AML frameworks (Levi, 2019; Adegbite & Ayadi, 2021).

Other recommendations, though cited by fewer respondents, are equally instructive for policy and practice. Enhancing legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms (12%), improving data sharing and intelligence exchange (10%), and raising public awareness and stakeholder engagement (9%) were noted as critical steps in supporting AML/CTF efforts. Scholars argue that robust legal structures, combined with information sharing and public sensitization, strengthen the overall compliance

ecosystem and reduce vulnerabilities to financial crimes (Zarafshani et al., 2020; Olatunji, 2021).

Additionally, 6% of respondents recommended reducing political interference to preserve GIABA's operational independence and credibility, which reflects broader concerns in the literature that political influence can undermine regulatory autonomy and enforcement efficiency (Nwolise, 2017; FATF, 2022). Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening institutional capacity, ensuring adequate legal and financial support, and fostering collaborative mechanisms are central to improving GIABA's coordination and implementation of AML/CTF measures in Nigeria.

On the effectiveness of GIABA, the research highlights that enhancing GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria requires a combination of institutional, operational, and collaborative measures. A substantial majority emphasized the need for strengthened inter-agency coordination (87.5%) and adequate funding and resources (78%) to support AML/CTF activities, reflecting the centrality of collaboration and financial capacity in effective anti-money laundering operations. Capacity building and regular training for personnel (69%) and legal and regulatory reforms, including harmonized AML/CTF laws and stricter enforcement (63%), were also considered critical for improving operational efficiency and compliance. Additionally, improved data sharing, technological tools (56%), and institutional autonomy with reduced political interference (47%) were identified as essential for minimizing corruption and enhancing monitoring and reporting systems.

Other notable recommendations included public awareness campaigns and stakeholder engagement (38%) to boost compliance, strengthening regional and international cooperation with GIABA member states and global bodies (31%), and regular monitoring and evaluation of AML/CTF programs (25%) to identify gaps and improve efficiency. Overall, the findings suggest that GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria depends on a holistic strategy combining internal reforms, adequate resourcing, capacity enhancement, technological adoption, and collaborative mechanisms, emphasizing that both structural and operational improvements are necessary for robust AML/CTF implementation. This was also supported by the following scholarly views;

GIABA's effectiveness in Nigeria requires a combination of institutional, operational, and collaborative measures. A substantial majority emphasized the need for strengthened inter-agency

coordination (87.5%) and adequate funding and resources (78%) to support AML/CTF activities.

6. CONCLUSION

GIABA as a specialized Institution of the ECOWAS, has made huge impact in Combating Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing in Nigeria, despite the ongoing issues with successful implementation and the sustainability of successes, the article concludes that GIABA has significantly contributed to the battle against ML/TF in Nigeria. Taking the first steps to adhere to the FATF 40 recommendations has been made easier by paying attention to the procurement of technical support.

The creation of a national policy or plan in this area is hampered by the lack of a comprehensive evaluation of the national framework similarly, Nigeria's participation in GIABA directly affects its reputation throughout the world community. Considering the many mutual evaluations conducted on the nation since its accession in 2006, it is imperative for Nigeria to adhere to GIABA instructions and execute the recommendations. Such advancements will augment Nigeria's ability to battle crime, facilitate international trade, attract foreign investment, direct remittances through the financial system, and elevate the utilization of banking services. These factors align with the stance taken by GIABA, which advocates for Regional Action to Combat Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing at both regional and national levels.

The country's contemporary history and its role as a regional and global center for finance and trade have rendered it a prime target for money laundering and terrorism financing. The nation is plagued by pervasive corruption. Intricate financial networks

facilitate the movement of substantial sums of money, frequently across borders, associated with drug, arms, and oil trafficking, as well as human trafficking, fraudulent schemes, and irregularities in public-sector procurement. While occasional high-profile economic crimes garner attention, large-scale money laundering and terrorism financing typically elicit minimal public interest.

Furthermore, Nigeria must continue to be resilient against terrorism funding and money laundering on several levels. It is now more strategically important than ever for the nation to successfully address these dangers, according to recent developments, Nigeria's porous border facilitates a wide variety of illegal activities both inside and outside its shores by acting as a crossroads for illicit financial flows. An increase in violent crimes, particularly those committed by terrorists, directly affects national security and threatens social order. The results of GIABA, show a lack of overall efficacy in addressing these dangers, highlighting strategies and processes that are essential for real improvement, such as information sharing and cross-border collaboration as presented in our earlier analysis. In line with these patterns, GIABA, in collaboration with the Central Bank of Nigeria, has made Nigeria's financial integrity a central tenet of its national development strategy for 2021 to 2025. This target's guiding principles and aims are quite similar to GIABA's own strategic goals and priorities, suggesting areas of convergence and synergy that might improve institutional influence and effectiveness. These factors reinforce and supplement the conclusions of this analytical evaluation by supporting the idea that strengthening Nigeria's involvement with GIABA is both an urgent necessity and a huge opportunity.

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INTERVIEW RESPONDENT (PRIMARY SOURCE)

- Respondent:001 (2025) Member GIABA Secretariat, Lagos Nigeria.
- Respondent 002 (2025) Senior Official Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit.
- Respondent 003 (2025) Senior Official Economic and Financial Crimes.
- Respondent 004 (2025) Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering Operatives Levels 9-14.
- Respondent 005 (2025) Central Bank of Nigeria Senior Officials.
- Respondent 006 (2025) Compliance Officers of Zenith Bank Nigeria.
- Respondent 007 (2025) Official of United Nations Office on drugs and Crimes Nigeria.
- Respondent 008 (2025) Senior Research Fellow Department of Political Science University of Maiduguri.
- Respondent 009 (2025) Senior Official Nigeria Police Force.
- Respondent 010 (2025) Senior Official of Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency.