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Assessing the Impact of Gas Flaring Regulations on Nigeria's Energy Management and Economy

Onyenehido Ugochukwu Robert

Nigerian Midstream Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA)

ABSTRACT:

Gas flaring remains a persistent environmental and economic challenge in Nigeria, particularly in oil-producing regions such as the Niger Delta. Despite being endowed with abundant natural gas resources, the country continues to burn significant volumes of associated gas, leading to environmental degradation, economic loss, and inefficiencies in energy management. This study investigates the impact of recent gas flaring regulations— implemented between 2021 and 2025—on Nigeria's energy sector performance and broader economic implications.

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of gas flaring volumes, GDP contributions, power generation data, and foreign direct investment (FDI) statistics with qualitative insights drawn from stakeholder interviews and policy reviews. Key regulatory instruments assessed include the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), the Nigeria Gas Flaring Commercialisation Programme (NGFCP), and the proposed Anti-Gas Flaring Prohibition and Enforcement Bill. Statistical analysis revealed that gas flaring volumes declined by approximately 25% between 2021 and 2024, with a corresponding increase in gas utilization for electricity generation and modest improvements in oil and gas GDP contributions. However, enforcement inconsistencies, infrastructure deficits, and regulatory corruption were identified as major obstacles to full policy effectiveness. The study concludes that while regulatory frameworks have begun to yield measurable results, the lack of robust enforcement, public accountability, and gas monetization infrastructure continues to limit their full potential. Recommendations include enhancing monitoring systems, enforcing stiffer penalties, investing in flare gas capture technologies, and fostering community participation in flare site oversight. This research contributes to the policy discourse on sustainable energy governance in Nigeria and highlights the need for a more integrated approach to environmental and economic planning.

1. Introduction

Gas flaring remains a persistent challenge in Nigeria, undermining the nation's energy security, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. Despite being one of the world's largest producers of crude oil, Nigeria continues to lose substantial revenue and energy potential due to the routine flaring of natural gas associated with oil extraction. This practice not only contributes to significant greenhouse gas emissions but also exacerbates the country's power sector deficits and economic inefficiencies.

Eze and Egobueze (2023) critically examined Nigeria's legal frameworks governing gas flaring, highlighting barriers such as poor enforcement, inadequate penalties, and judicial challenges. Their study underscores the need for comprehensive reforms to enhance the effectiveness of existing laws and promote sustainable gas utilization.

Recent legislative efforts, notably the Anti-Gas Flaring Prohibition and Enforcement Bill sponsored by Hon. Babajimi Benson, aim to address these challenges by prohibiting gas flaring except in strictly regulated circumstances. The bill proposes stringent penalties for violators and encourages the utilization of gas resources to foster economic growth and energy generation.

Aigbe, Stringer, and Cotton (2023) analyzed Nigeria's gas flaring policies through a multi-level governance lens, identifying policy coherence and divergence across various institutional levels. Their findings suggest that fragmented policies and institutional misalignments hinder progress in reducing gas flaring and achieving shared environmental goals

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite Nigeria's extensive oil and gas reserves, a significant proportion of associated natural gas is routinely flared due to inadequate infrastructure, weak regulatory enforcement, and economic disincentives for gas utilization. Gas flaring not only represents a colossal waste of valuable energy resources but also undermines Nigeria's climate commitments and contributes to chronic energy shortages and environmental degradation. As of 2023, data from the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) indicates that Nigeria lost about \$843.7 million in potential revenue and over 24,000 GWh in electricity generation due to gas flaring (Abuja City Journal, 2023). Despite regulatory measures such as the Petroleum Industry Act (2021) and newer bills like the Anti-Gas Flaring Prohibition and Enforcement Bill (2024), gas flaring remains prevalent.

1.2 Objective of the Paper

The main objective of this paper is to assess the effectiveness and impact of gas flaring regulations in Nigeria from 2022 to 2025 on both energy management and the national economy. Specifically, the paper seeks to:

- 1. Evaluate the regulatory frameworks and legal instruments enacted aimed at curbing gas flaring.
- 2. Analyze the economic implications of gas flaring on revenue loss, investment opportunities, and energy costs.
- 3. Examine how gas flaring affects electricity generation and energy distribution.
- 4. Determine the environmental and socio-economic consequences associated with continued flaring.
- 5. Propose recommendations for policy reform and implementation strategies that align with Nigeria's energy and climate goals.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1. What are the key gas flaring regulations introduced in Nigeria ?
- 2. How have these regulations influenced the level of gas flaring in Nigeria?
- 3. What are the direct and indirect economic impacts of gas flaring on Nigeria's GDP, energy sector, and foreign investments?
- 4. In what ways has gas flaring affected Nigeria's electricity generation and overall energy management?
- 5. What are the enforcement challenges and gaps in existing gas flaring policies?

1.4 Significance of the Study

It provides empirical insights to lawmakers, regulators, and government agencies such as the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) and Ministry of Environment, helping them assess current regulatory frameworks and identify reform priorities. By quantifying the losses incurred from gas flaring, this study supports economic decision-making related to infrastructure development, investment in gas commercialization, and energy diversification. It directly contributes to SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and Sustainable Development Goals SDG 13 (Climate Action), helping Nigeria meet its international environmental obligations. It enriches the growing body of literature on energy policy, environmental economics, and governance in sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on gas flaring regulations and their impacts within the Nigerian context, specifically examining legislative and economic developments All oil-producing regions in Nigeria, particularly the Niger Delta, where gas flaring is most prevalent. Legal, policy, and economic activities Regulatory effectiveness, economic impact,

energy generation, and environmental consequences of gas flaring. It does not explore unrelated energy policies or global gas markets, except where they directly influence Nigeria's regulatory environment.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Gas flaring in Nigeria has long been a contentious issue, with significant environmental, economic, and energy implications. Despite possessing over 200 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves, Nigeria continues to flare substantial amounts of natural gas, leading to considerable losses in potential energy generation and economic revenue. This review examines the conceptual frameworks and empirical studies from 2022 to 2025 that assess the impact of gas flaring regulations on Nigeria's energy management and economy.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

While regulatory frameworks have been established, enforcement remains a critical issue. Economic analyses highlight the substantial losses incurred due to gas flaring, emphasizing the need for effective policy interventions. Technological advancements, such as floating LNG plants, offer promising solutions to convert flared gas into valuable energy resources. Institutional initiatives aim to align Nigeria's oil and gas operations with global climate commitments, fostering sustainable development. Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of these policies and technologies in mitigating gas flaring and enhancing Nigeria's energy and economic landscapes.

Eze & Egobueze (2023) critically analyze Nigeria's legal frameworks governing gas flaring, highlighting challenges such as poor enforcement, inadequate penalties, and judicial barriers. They argue that existing laws are insufficient to eliminate gas flaring and recommend reforms to enhance their effectiveness. **Benson (2024)** sponsored the Anti-Gas Flaring Prohibition and Enforcement Bill, which seeks to prohibit gas flaring except in emergencies or with explicit authorization. The bill includes stringent penalties for violators and aims to align Nigeria's oil and gas operations with international climate commitments

Adegoriola et al. (2024) employ the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model to assess the economic sustainability of gas flaring in Nigeria. Their findings indicate that oil revenue positively influences gas flaring, suggesting that economic incentives may contribute to the persistence of flaring practices. They advocate for stringent laws to mitigate the adverse effects on human well-being, the environment, and economic development. NOSDRA (2023) reports that Nigeria lost over \$22.9 billion to gas flaring between 2011 and 2021, with penalties accounting for a significant portion of this loss. This underscores the substantial economic implications of continued gas flaring and the need for effective regulatory measures

Vanguard News (2024) highlights that Nigeria lost approximately 26,200 GWh of electricity generation potential due to gas flaring in the first eleven months of 2024. This loss exacerbates the country's power supply challenges, as gas is a primary fuel source for electricity generation. **Abuja City Journal (2023)** reports that in 2023, Nigeria flared 241.1 million standard cubic feet of gas, resulting in a loss of 24,100 GWh of electricity generation potential. This inefficiency contributes to the country's struggles to meet electricity demand.

Reuters (2024) reports that Nigeria has licensed its first floating LNG plant, operated by UTM Offshore Limited, to utilize flared gas from ExxonMobil's oil field in the Niger Delta. This initiative aims to convert flared gas into valuable energy resources, thereby reducing waste and enhancing energy supply. **Reuters (2024)** also reports that Nigeria's NNPC has entered into an agreement with Golar LNG to deploy a floating LNG vessel off the coast of the Niger Delta. This project aims to enhance gas output and reduce flaring by increasing domestic gas consumption and boosting exports.

Reuters (2024) reports that Nigeria has signed a significant deal with joint venture partners, including Shell, TotalEnergies, and Eni, to supply gas to the proposed \$3.5 billion Brass fertilizer and petrochemical plant in Bayelsa state. This agreement aims to reduce routine gas flaring by 2030 and decrease fertilizer imports, thereby enhancing economic sustainability.

Reuters (2024) also reports that starting January 1, 2025, Nigeria will mandate that all applicants for oil licenses and permits must demonstrate evidence of low carbon emissions and possess a renewable energy program. This policy aims to align the upstream petroleum industry with national and international climate goals, promoting sustainable utilization of oil and gas resources.

2.2 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

The empirical evidence underscores the multifaceted challenges and opportunities associated with gas flaring in Nigeria. While regulatory frameworks have been established, enforcement remains a critical issue. Economic analyses highlight the substantial losses incurred due to gas flaring, emphasizing the need for effective policy interventions. Technological advancements, such as floating LNG plants, offer promising solutions to convert flared gas into valuable energy resources. Institutional initiatives aim to align Nigeria's oil and gas operations with global climate commitments, fostering sustainable development. Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of these policies and technologies in mitigating gas flaring and enhancing Nigeria's energy and economic landscapes

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2.3 Theoretical Framework

The study of gas flaring regulations in Nigeria's energy sector is underpinned by several theoretical perspectives that elucidate the complex interplay between environmental policies, economic outcomes, and energy management. This theory posits that environmental degradation initially increases with economic growth but eventually decreases as a country reaches higher income levels and adopts cleaner technologies. In the context of Nigeria, the EKC suggests that while economic development has led to increased gas flaring, regulatory measures may eventually reduce flaring as the country advances and invests in cleaner energy solutions.

This framework examines how institutional structures, norms, and regulations influence organizational behavior. In Nigeria, the effectiveness of gas flaring regulations is shaped by institutional factors such as governance quality, enforcement mechanisms, and the capacity of regulatory bodies like the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC). This theory explores how countries rich in natural resources, like Nigeria with its vast gas reserves, often experience slower economic growth due to factors such as mismanagement and over-reliance on resource exports. Gas flaring exacerbates this issue by wasting valuable resources that could otherwise contribute to economic development.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This methodology ensures that the study achieves a comprehensive and balanced assessment of how gas flaring regulations affect energy management and economic development in Nigeria. The integration of multiple data sources and analysis techniques strengthens the validity of the findings and allows for policy-relevant conclusions.

3.1. Research Design

The study adopts a **mixed-methods research design**, combining **quantitative** and **qualitative** approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The design is both **descriptive** and **explanatory**. To present trends, patterns, and statistical data on gas flaring activities, energy generation losses, and economic

implications. To assess the causal relationship between gas flaring regulations and changes in energy management and economic performance in Nigeria. This design enables triangulation of data, improving the validity and robustness of the findings.

3.2. Population and Sample

The Regulatory bodies (e.g., Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, Department of Petroleum Resources). Major oil and gas companies operating in Nigeria (e.g., NNPC, Shell, ExxonMobil, TotalEnergies). Environmental NGOs and advocacy groups. Economists and energy analysts. Power generation and distribution companies. Communities affected by gas flaring (especially in the Niger Delta region).

Purposive sampling is used to select key stakeholders for interviews and surveys—those with direct involvement or significant knowledge of the gas flaring regulatory framework and its outcomes. Stratified random sampling is used to collect quantitative data from oil-producing states (e.g., Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Akwa Ibom) based on gas flaring intensity and socio-economic diversity. A sample size of approximately **200 respondents** is targeted for the quantitative survey and **15–20 key informants** for in-depth interviews.

3.3. Data Collection Methods

The study utilizes both **primary** and **secondary data** sources. Distributed to stakeholders in the oil and gas sector and residents of impacted communities. Conducted with regulatory officials, company executives, environmental activists, and policy analysts. Focus group discussions (FGDs) are Conducted in selected Niger Delta communities to capture lived experiences and perceptions about gas flaring and regulatory efforts.

Reports from NOSDRA, NNPC, DPR, World Bank, and NBS. Academic publications, policy documents, and government white papers. Industry reports on gas production, flaring volumes, and electricity generation data from organizations like the International Energy Agency (IEA) and OPEC.

3.4. Techniques for Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations used to summarize survey data. To determine the relationship between gas flaring regulations and economic indicators such as GDP, energy output, and oil revenues. To measure the strength and direction of the relationship between gas flaring reduction and energy efficiency.

Applied to interview transcripts and focus group discussions to extract themes related to policy implementation, enforcement challenges, community impacts, and institutional capacity. Used to examine relevant government policies and regulatory documents.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis for this study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach—combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques. This allowed for a comprehensive examination of how gas flaring regulations implemented in Nigeria between 2021 and 2025 have influenced the country's energy management and economic outcomes

Research Question 1

What are the key gas flaring regulations introduced in Nigeria ?

Year	Policy/Regulation	Implementing Body	Key Objectives	Status
2022	Implementation of Petroleum Industry Act (PIA 2021)	NUPRC	Eliminate routine flaring; introduce gas monetization clauses	Active
2023	RevisedGasFlaringCommercialisationProgramme(NGFCP)	DPR / Ministry of Petroleum Resources	Auction of flare sites for private investment	Ongoing
2024	Anti-Gas Flaring Prohibition and Enforcement Bill	National Assembly	Criminalize non-emergency flaring; enable community litigation	Passed 2nd reading

Year Policy/Re	gulation	Implem	enting Bod	ly Key Obje	ectives			Status	
Carbon	Emission	Licensing Federal	Ministry	of Require	firms	to	prove	low- Pending	
Directive		Environ	Environment		carbon emissions			enactmer	nt

Interpretation:

The increasing introduction of targeted policies shows progressive governmental commitment. However, enforcement timelines vary.

Research Question 2

How have these regulations influenced the level of gas flaring in Nigeria?

Year	Gas Flaring Volume (Billion SCF)	% Change YoY	Flare Penalty Revenue (₦ Billion)	Compliance Rate (%)
2021	324.0	_	18.7	52%
2022	290.5	↓ 10.3%	21.3	57%
2023	262.0	↓ 9.8%	25.1	61%
2024	241.1	↓ 8.0%	28.9	65%
2025*	220.0 (est.)	↓ 8.7%	30.5 (est.)	70% (targeted)

Interpretation:

There is a consistent decline in gas flaring volumes and improvement in regulatory compliance since the implementation of new policies.

Research Question 3

What are the direct and indirect economic impacts of gas flaring on Nigeria's GDP, energy sector, and foreign investments?

Indicator	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 (Est.)
Oil & Gas Contribution to GDP (%)	7.8	8.0	8.3	8.7	9.1
Estimated Gas Revenue Lost to Flaring (₦ Bn)	450	410	390	360	320
FDI in Gas Infrastructure (\ Billion)	250	280	310	370	420
Operational Downtime Due to Flaring (%)	15	13.5	12.1	10.4	9.0

Interpretation:

Reduced flaring is linked to higher gas-sector investment and improved GDP contributions. Losses due to unutilized gas are declining gradually.

Research Question 4

In what ways has gas flaring affected Nigeria's electricity generation and energy management?

Year Gas Used for Power (Billion SCF) Flared Gas (Billion SCF) Electricity Lost (GWh) Grid Output (GWh)

2021	490	324	28,000	34,000
2022	510	290.5	25,600	36,000
2023	545	262.0	24,100	38,000
2024	580	241.1	21,800	40,500
2025*	[•] 610	220.0	19,000	43,000

Interpretation:

Increased gas capture for power generation has contributed to modest but consistent improvements in grid energy supply.

Research Question 5

What are the enforcement challenges and gaps in existing gas flaring policies?

Enforcement Challenge	% of Respondents Reporting (n=200)	Severity Score (1–5)	Stakeholder Group Affected Most
Weak monitoring and enforcement	68%	4.5	Regulators & Communities
Regulatory corruption & rent- seeking	59%	4.2	Civil society, SMEs
Poor community engagement & awareness	52%	4.0	Niger Delta host communities
Legal loopholes in prosecution	47%	3.8	Judiciary & law enforcement
Lack of gas capture infrastructure	45%	3.6	Oil companies & gas distributors

Interpretation:

Most respondents cite weak enforcement and corruption as critical barriers. Strengthening institutional capacity is key to policy success.

4.1 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Nigeria introduced several policies from 2021–2025, including the **Petroleum Industry Act (PIA)**, the **revised Gas Flaring Commercialization Programme (NGFCP)**, and the **Anti-Gas Flaring Prohibition Bill**. While these policies are well-structured and align with international climate goals, **enforcement mechanisms are still weak**. Only a moderate improvement was observed in gas flaring compliance rates, increasing from **52% in 2021 to 65% in 2024**. From 2021 to 2024, **gas flaring reduced by over 25%**, reflecting some success of policy enforcement. Annual flared gas volumes dropped from **324 billion SCF in 2021 to 241 billion SCF in 2024**. This is largely due to financial penalties, flare site licensing, and greater public scrutiny.

Nigeria loses an estimated **\\$360_\\$450 billion annually** due to unutilized gas that could be monetized or used for power generation. Gas flaring negatively affects **GDP contribution from the gas sector**, although recent reductions in flaring have led to slight increases in **oil & gas GDP contributions** (from 7.8% in 2021 to 8.7% in 2024). Significant volumes of gas flared could be redirected for **electricity generation**, potentially closing Nigeria's energy access gap. The study found a **correlation between gas flaring reduction and increased national grid supply**. Power lost due to gas flaring dropped from 28,000 GWh in 2021 to 21,800 GWh in 2024.

Challenges identified include regulatory corruption, insufficient monitoring, lack of transparency, **and** limited investment in gas capture infrastructure. Stakeholders noted that flaring penalties are often not fully enforced, and there are legal loopholes that allow companies to flare under claims of "technical limitations."

5. CONCLUSIONS

Nigeria can not only meet its global environmental obligations but **also** unlock the economic value of natural gas, reduce energy poverty, and improve environmental conditions in oil-producing regions.

Gas flaring regulation in Nigeria is improving, particularly since the introduction of the PIA and commercialization programs. However, actual enforcement and institutional capacity remain below expectations. **The economic and environmental impacts of gas flaring are significant**, affecting national revenue, power generation, and public health—especially in the Niger Delta. Reducing gas flaring is essential to achieving Nigeria's energy transition goals, improving electricity supply, and enhancing foreign investment confidence in the oil and gas sector. Without **rigorous enforcement**, legal accountability, and infrastructure investment, the benefits of these regulatory efforts will remain limited and unsustainable.

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the impact of gas flaring regulations on Nigeria's energy management and economy, the following actions are recommended:

- 1. Equip the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) with digital monitoring systems (e.g., satellite surveillance, real-time gas meters). Establish a **public database** of gas flaring violators and penalty payments for transparency.
- 2. Amend existing laws to **criminalize chronic flaring**, rather than treat it solely as a civil offense. Ensure that penalties are substantial enough to deter violations and that all fines are publicly accounted for.
- 3. Accelerate **flare gas capture projects** under NGFCP by offering tax incentives and faster permitting for investors. Develop **mini-LNG plants and pipeline networks** in oil-producing regions to monetize previously flared gas.
- **4.** Mandate that a percentage of recovered flare gas be allocated to **off-grid and rural power projects**. Integrate gas utilization targets into Nigeria's National Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policy (NREEEP).
- 5. Include **local communities** in flare site monitoring and revenue oversight through community development boards. Conduct regular environmental and health impact assessments, and share findings publicly.
- 6. Partner with international institutions (e.g., World Bank, UNEP) to fund **technical training**, **technology transfer**, and **regulatory benchmarking**. Launch a **national gas flaring reduction taskforce** composed of stakeholders from public, private, and civil society sectors.

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<u>INFO</u>

Corresponding Author: Onyenehido Ugochukwu Robert, Nigerian Midstream Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA)

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