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Original Research Article

THE NIGERIAN ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION (NERC) AND ELECTRICITY METERING IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract: This study delved into the connection between the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) and electricity metering in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It was sparked by ongoing issues in the electricity sector, such as insufficient metering, estimated billing practices, billing disputes, a lack of consumer awareness, and worries about how well regulatory enforcement is working. The research utilized a survey design, focusing on a population of 1,057,858 active electricity consumers in Akwa Ibom State. To gather insights, a sample size of 400 respondents was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula. Six Local Government Areas Uyo, Itu, Eket, Oron, Ikot Ekpene, and Abak were intentionally chosen to ensure geographical representation. Data collection involved a structured questionnaire, which was analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, linear regression, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation, with statistical decisions made at a 0.05 significance level. Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, 356 were completed and returned, yielding an impressive 89% response rate. The results revealed a fairly high level of public awareness regarding NERC, with 78.4% of respondents indicating they were aware of the Commission. However, knowledge about electricity consumer rights and familiarity with NERC's customer protection regulations was notably low. Additionally, the findings indicated that respondents viewed NERC's financial regulation as a positive factor for billing transparency, scoring a mean of 3.75. In contrast, perceptions about the reduction of estimated billing and protection against it fell below the 3.00 decision benchmark. The study concludes that while NERC has put regulatory mechanisms in place to enhance electricity metering, billing transparency, and consumer protection, there are still significant gaps in effective implementation, consumer awareness, and safeguarding against estimated billing. The study recommends stronger monitoring and enforcement of metering regulations, increased consumer education, improved complaint-resolution mechanisms, and accelerated deployment of functional electricity meters in Akwa Ibom State.

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Keywords: Electricity Metering, Regulatory Oversight, Estimated Billing, Consumer Protection, Akwa Ibom State

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Background to the study

The electricity sector in Nigeria has long been plagued by inefficiencies, a lack of sufficient generation capacity, fragile transmission systems, and high rates of technical and commercial losses, all of which have left consumers feeling frustrated. Before any reforms took place, the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) was in charge of electricity supply, which later evolved into the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN). Despite the government's monopoly over the sector, the quality of service was dismal, leading to frequent power outages, questionable billing practices, and poor customer service (Sambo, 2008; Adenikinju, 2005). These ongoing issues highlighted the urgent need for a complete overhaul of the system and the creation of an independent regulatory framework aimed at boosting efficiency, accountability, and consumer protection. The reform journey picked up speed with the introduction of the Electric Power Sector Reform (EPSR) Act in 2005, which established the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) as an independent body. NERC's role includes licensing market players, setting and reviewing tariffs, establishing performance standards, ensuring compliance, and safeguarding the interests of electricity consumers (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2005).

The formation of the Commission signified a shift from direct government control to a regulated electricity market that encourages competition, invites private sector involvement, and enhances service delivery, ultimately contributing to national development (Atairet et al., 2021). As noted by Eberhard et al. (2016), independent regulation is crucial for fostering transparency, building investor confidence, and protecting consumers in liberalized electricity markets, especially in developing countries. The privatization of electricity distribution and generation companies in 2013 further underscored the necessity for robust regulatory oversight. After PHCN was unbundled, private Distribution Companies (DisCos) emerged, including the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, assumed responsibility for electricity distribution in states such as Akwa Ibom. While privatisation aimed to improve operational efficiency and attract investment, it also generated new concerns regarding tariff adjustments, estimated billing, service quality, and dispute resolution (Aliyu et al., 2013). In response, NERC introduced regulatory instruments such as the Multi-year Tariff Order (MYTO), the Customer Service Standards of Performance for Distribution Companies, the Meter Asset Provider (MAP) Regulation 2018, and the Order on Capping of Estimated Bills (NERC, 2015; NERC, 2018). These measures were designed to strengthen consumer protection and enhance accountability in electricity service delivery, of which the government always consider it in the budget but the problem has been implementation (Mark & Atairet, 2021).

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Consumer protection in the electricity sector is all about ensuring that people's rights are respected when it comes to fair billing, access to accurate metering, clear tariff structures, fair treatment, and effective ways to resolve complaints. As noted by Brown and Stern (2014), regulatory bodies in utility sectors are essential for striking a balance between what investors want and what consumers need, especially in situations where the market isn't perfect. In Nigeria, the NERC has set up Consumer Complaint Units (CCUs) within distribution companies and NERC Forum Offices in various states to create accessible channels for resolving disputes (NERC, 2020). These initiatives are designed to give consumers a way to seek justice against unfair practices and service failures (Alao, 2022).

In Akwa Ibom State, electricity is a vital component for driving socio-economic growth, benefiting households, small and medium-sized businesses, schools, and healthcare facilities as it enhances manpower development in a developing economy like Nigeria. (Eyo et al., 2024). Yet, issues like inconsistent supply, voltage fluctuations, billing disputes, and limited metering coverage continue to be a problem. For consumers, it’s not just about the power outages; it’s also about feeling that their rights are often overlooked. They face challenges like estimated billing that doesn’t reflect their actual usage, lack of access to functional metering, disconnections without adequate notice, and slow responses to their complaints.

Statement of problem

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) was set up under the Electric Power Sector Reform Act of 2005 with the goal of enhancing regulatory oversight in Nigeria’s electricity sector and ensuring that consumers are well protected. NERC is tasked with implementing regulatory tools and monitoring compliance to ensure fair billing practices, promote access to metering, and establish effective complaint resolution systems, all aimed at improving public service delivery. However, despite these frameworks, electricity consumers in Akwa Ibom State are still facing ongoing challenges that raise doubts about how well regulatory oversight is functioning at the local level.

One significant issue is the ongoing use of estimated billing and the perception of unfair charges by electricity distribution companies, especially the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company (PHED), which serves Akwa Ibom State. Even though NERC has rolled out billing regulations and capping orders to protect customers without meters, complaints about high and unclear billing continue to be widespread. This situation hints at a disconnect between what the regulations say and how they are enforced in practice. Another closely related issue is the lack of adequate metering. Although NERC introduced the Meter Asset Provider (MAP) regulation to speed up the deployment of meters and cut down on estimated billing, many consumers in Akwa Ibom State still find themselves without properly functioning prepaid meters. This ongoing metering shortfall not only undermines transparency and accountability but also fuels disputes between consumers and service providers, raising serious questions about how effective NERC’s oversight is in ensuring compliance with metering regulations.

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Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to assess the relationship between the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) and Electricity Metering in Akwa Ibom State

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the research questions what is the relationship between the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) and Electricity Metering in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The null hypotheses (Ho) formulated for empirical testing was: there is no significant relationship between the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) and Electricity Metering in Akwa Ibom State

Conceptual Explorations

Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC)

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) was set up under the Electric Power Sector Reform Act of 2005 with the goal of enhancing regulatory oversight in Nigeria's electricity sector and ensuring that consumers are well protected. NERC is tasked with implementing regulatory tools and monitoring compliance to ensure fair billing practices, promote access to metering, and establish effective complaint resolution systems, all aimed at improving public service delivery. However, despite these frameworks, electricity consumers in Akwa Ibom State are still facing ongoing challenges that raise doubts about how well regulatory oversight is functioning at the local level.

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Electricity Regulation in Nigeria

Electricity regulation involves the frameworks and legal structures set up by the government or an independent regulatory body to oversee the actions of those involved in generating, transmitting, and distributing electricity. The goal of this regulation is to make sure that electricity companies adhere to specific technical, financial, and service-quality

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standards, while also ensuring that consumers receive fair and transparent services. In Nigeria, the electricity sector has long struggled with issues like insufficient generation capacity, fragile transmission systems, technical and commercial losses, estimated billing practices, and an unreliable power supply. These challenges have led to frustration among consumers and highlighted the need for significant institutional reforms. The shift from NEPA to PHCN, along with the unbundling and privatization of the electricity sector, marked crucial milestones in this reform journey. The 2013 privatization of generation and distribution companies underscored the necessity for effective regulation as there is need for the government to pay higher attention to the implementation of policy formulation, considering the Nigerian legislature and administration of constituency projects. Again, distribution companies took on the responsibility of delivering electricity across various regions, while NERC stepped in to ensure that these companies operated within the established regulatory framework. In Akwa Ibom State, the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company (PHED) is the key player in electricity distribution. Thus, understanding the regulatory relationship between NERC and PHED is vital for grasping issues related to electricity billing, metering, and consumer protection in the state.

Electricity Metering

Electricity metering is all about tracking how much electricity a customer uses through an electricity meter. This measurement is crucial because it helps determine the actual amount of electricity consumed, which in turn affects how much the consumer has to pay. Having effective metering in place is vital as it fosters transparency between electricity users and distribution companies. When consumers have working meters, their electricity bills can reflect their actual usage instead of relying on estimates. On the flip side, if meters aren’t functioning properly, it can lead to disputes over the accuracy and fairness of those bills.

In Nigeria, metering has taken on a significant role in the reform of the electricity sector. The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) has rolled out initiatives like the Meter Asset Provider (MAP) Regulation 2018 to boost the installation of electricity meters and lessen the reliance on estimated billing.

Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) and Transparent Electricity Billing

Transparent electricity billing requires that consumers understand how their electricity charges are calculated and that billing practices conform to applicable regulatory requirements. Regulatory oversight is important because tariffs, billing procedures and estimated consumption can affect the financial obligations of electricity consumers.

The study examines whether NERC's financial regulation, monitoring activities and tariff regulation contribute to transparent billing. The field results show that although 41.3% of respondents agreed that NERC's financial regulation promotes billing transparency, the mean scores for other indicators were below the study's acceptance criterion of 3.0. The reported means were 3.75, 2.89, 2.77 and 2.83, respectively.

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These findings indicate that regulatory provisions may exist without necessarily producing the same level of effectiveness in actual consumer experiences. The distinction is important for understanding the relationship between regulatory institutions and electricity metering in Akwa Ibom State.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted two theoretical frameworks, which were regulatory theory and public interest theory of Regulation.

Regulatory Theory provides a useful framework for explaining the relationship between government regulatory institutions, service providers and consumers. The theory assumes that regulation is necessary where market structures may not adequately protect the interests of consumers or guarantee efficient service delivery. In the electricity sector, consumers generally have limited ability to determine how electricity is generated, distributed, billed and regulated. Distribution companies, on the other hand, possess greater technical and institutional information about electricity supply and billing. Regulatory institutions are therefore expected to establish standards that reduce information asymmetry and protect consumers. Applied to this study, Regulatory Theory explains the role of NERC in establishing electricity-market rules, regulating tariffs, monitoring distribution companies, promoting metering and providing consumer-protection mechanisms. NERC's regulatory activities are expected to influence the quality and transparency of electricity metering and billing in Akwa Ibom State. The theory is particularly relevant because the study seeks to determine whether the regulatory role of NERC is associated with electricity metering outcomes. The study's independent variable is regulatory oversight, while metering and related consumer-protection outcomes constitute important aspects of the dependent variable. The methodology explicitly operationalises regulatory oversight through billing, access to prepaid meters and complaint-handling mechanisms.

The Public Interest Theory of Regulation holds that regulation is introduced to correct market failures and protect the broader interests of society. Regulation is particularly relevant in essential public services where consumers may be vulnerable to unfair practices or poor service delivery. Electricity is an essential service because households, businesses, educational institutions and public facilities depend on it. Consequently, ineffective regulation can have effects beyond individual consumers. Poor electricity supply, inaccurate billing and inadequate metering can impose additional costs on households and businesses. NERC can therefore be understood within the public-interest perspective as an institution established to ensure that electricity-sector participants comply with standards that protect consumers and promote efficient service delivery. The study's focus on fair billing, functional meters, consumer rights and complaint resolution reflects the central concern of the Public Interest Theory.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design, which is suitable for collecting data on perceptions, experiences, and satisfaction levels of electricity consumers regarding

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regulatory oversight and consumer protection. The population of this study was 1,057,858 active electricity consumers in Akwa Ibom State (Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, 2025). This population comprises electricity consumers in Akwa Ibom State, Officials of NERC, Members of the NERC Forum Office in Uyo, personnel of electricity distribution companies operating in the study area and other electricity consumers who interact with electricity distribution companies under NERC's regulatory oversight (PHEDC). Given the large population of electricity customers in Akwa Ibom State, the Taro Yamane formula was used to calculate an appropriate sample size of 400 for the study. The formula is as follows:

Where: n = sample size

N = population size (1,057,858)

e = margin of error (0.05 for 95% confidence level)

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Sample size

N = Population of the study

e = error level

Therefore, $n = \frac{1,057,858}{1+1,057,858\ (0.05)^2}$

$$n = \frac{1,057,858}{1+1,057,858\ (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{1,057,858}{1+2,644.645}$$

$$n = \frac{1,057,858}{2,645.645}$$

n = **399.84 or 400**

Hence, the sample size for this study as derived using the Taro Yamane technique, is 400, which depicts the number of respondents which questionnaire was administered. The study used a purposive sampling technique to select respondents from 6 local government areas (LGAs) in Akwa Ibom State, each with varying population. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed in Likert scale format (Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Uncertain = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1). The data collected from the questionnaires were analysed using simple percentages, frequency and mode. A linear regression model was used to test hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient model was used to test hypotheses 4 and 5.

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Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents, analyses and interprets the data collected from electricity consumers in Akwa Ibom State. The analysis provides the empirical evidence required to determine the effectiveness of NERC's regulatory oversight in areas such as transparent billing, metering, complaint resolution, consumer awareness and enforcement. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered, with 356 successfully retrieved.

The data collected from the administration of the questionnaire are presented in this session. This was followed by the interpretation of the results obtained from the statistical analysis of the data.

4.1. Data Presentation

4.1.1. Questionnaire Administration

Table 4.1: Questionnaire Administration

Respondents	**No. of copies Administered**	**%**	**No. of copies Returned**	**%**
Uyo	67	16.75	63	15.75
Itu	67	16.75	57	14.25
Eket	67	16.75	56	14.00
Oron	66	16.50	57	14.25
Ikot Ekpene	67	16.75	62	15.55
Abak	66	16.50	61	15.25
Total	**400**	**100**	**356**	**89.00**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Multi-stage and proportionate sampling techniques was adopted in order to avoid bias in proper administration of the questionnaire. The questionnaire administration details as explained in Table 4.1 revealed that, a total of four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire was administered to electricity customers in Akwa Ibom State to examine how the role of NERC affects consumer protection. However, from 400 administered copies, 356 copies were filled and retrieved by the researcher, implying that forty,four (44) copies of the questionnaire lost in the process. Hence, 356 respondents became the valid sample size of the study, since it is unethical and highly prohibited for researchers to manipulate data for a particular study in order to avoid uncertainty, porous and unreliable results. Thus, 89.0% (356) copies of the questionnaire administered were recovered from the respondents.

4.1.2 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1

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Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	231	64.9
	Female	125	35.1
	Total	**356**	**100**
Age group	18 – 30 years	31	8.7
	31 – 40 years	88	24.7
	41 – 50 years	143	40.2
	51 years and above	94	26.4
	Total	**356**	**100**
Educational qual.			
	FSLC	43	12.1
	SSCE	80	22.5
	OND/NCE	104	29.2
	HND/B.Sc.	96	27.0
	M.Sc./PhD	33	9.2
	Total	**356**	**100**
Occupation	Student	52	14.6
	Civil servant	137	38.5
	Entrepreneur	120	33.7
	PHED Employee	35	9.8
	NERC Staff	12	3.4
	Total	**356**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Gender: The results in Table 4.1 revealed that, 64.9% (231) of the respondents were male and 35.1% (125) of the respondents were female. This indicates that male respondents constituted the majority of the 356 respondents involved in the study. The relatively higher participation of males may suggest that male electricity consumers were more represented in the sampled residential and commercial consumer population in Akwa Ibom State. In relation to the study on the role of the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) in consumer protection in Akwa Ibom State, the gender distribution

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provides useful demographic information about the respondents whose experiences and perceptions were assessed. Since the study focuses on issues such as transparent billing, access to functional electricity meters, complaint and dispute resolution, awareness of consumer rights, and infrastructure maintenance in mitigating power outages, the responses obtained reflect the perceptions of both male and female electricity consumers.

Age: Most (38.3%) of the respondents were within 41 – 50 years of age. This was followed by 26.4% and 24.7% of the respondents who were above 50years of age and between 31 – 40years of age respectively. The least were 8.7% of the respondents were 18 – 30 years of age. The result suggests that the study was predominantly represented by middle,aged and older electricity consumers. This age composition is relevant to the study on the role of NERC in consumer protection in Akwa Ibom State, as respondents within these age groups are likely to have considerable experience with electricity consumption, billing, metering, power outages, and interactions with electricity distribution companies. The relatively high proportion of respondents aged 41 years and above (64.7%) suggests that a substantial number of respondents may have experienced electricity,related challenges over an extended period. Consequently, they may be in a better position to assess the effectiveness of NERC's interventions concerning transparent billing, access to functional electricity meters, complaint and dispute resolution, consumer,rights awareness, and enforcement of infrastructure maintenance standards to mitigate power outages.

Educational Qualification: Table 4.1 further revealed that, 29.2% of the respondents, maintained diploma (OND and NCE) as their highest academic qualification. Followed by 27.0% and 22.5% of the respondents who are certified HND/B.Sc. degree and senior secondary school certificate respectively. Also, 12.1% and 9.2% of the respondents maintained primary school certificate and M.Sc./PhD as highest qualification respectively. The result indicates that a considerable proportion of the respondents had attained postsecondary education, suggesting that most participants possessed a reasonable level of educational exposure to understand and respond to issues relating to electricity regulation and consumer protection. This is important to the study because the assessment of NERC's role in consumer protection in Akwa Ibom State requires respondents to understand issues such as electricity billing procedures, metering regulations, complaint and dispute resolution mechanisms, consumer rights, and infrastructure maintenance standards.

Occupation: From the results in Table 4.1, majority of the respondents (38.5% and 33.7%) were civil servants and entrepreneurs. This was followed by 14.6% of the respondents were students. More so, 9.8% and 3.4% of the respondents were PHED Employee and NERC Staff respectively. The result indicates that the study was largely represented by civil servants and entrepreneurs, who together accounted for 72.2% of the respondents. This is relevant to the study on the role of NERC in consumer protection in Akwa Ibom State, as these groups are active users of electricity for residential, commercial, and occupational activities. Their experiences can therefore provide useful information on issues relating to electricity billing, metering, service reliability, complaints, and power outages. The relatively high representation of entrepreneurs (33.7%) is particularly important because electricity supply directly affects business operations, production costs,

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profitability, and continuity. Their responses may therefore provide valuable evidence regarding the effectiveness of NERC's regulations on transparent billing, access to meters, complaint resolution, and the enforcement of infrastructure maintenance standards to mitigate power outages.

4.2 Data Analysis

4.2.1 The level of public awareness on the role of NERC in electricity consumer protection

Table 4.3: The level of public awareness on the role of NERC in electricity consumer protection

Statement	Yes	No	Total
i. Are you aware of the National Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) in Akwa Ibom State	279 78.4%	67 18.8 %	356 100
ii. Are you aware of your rights as electricity consumer	155 43.5%	201 56.5 %	356 100
iii. Are you familiar with NERC's regulations on customers protection	112 31.5%	244 68.5 %	356 100
iv. Has NERC created awareness on consumers right and protection in your area	88 24.7%	268 75.8 %	356 100

Source: Field Survey, 2026 mean value > 3.0 accepted otherwise rejected

The level of public awareness on the role of NERC in electricity consumer protection among customers of PHED in Akwa Ibom State was examined in Table 4.3. From the result, 78.4% of the respondents agreed that, they are aware of the National Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) in Akwa Ibom State. However, 75.8% of the respondents who disagreed that NERC created awareness on consumers right and protection in your area. Also, 68.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they are familiar with NERC's regulations on customers protection. In the premise, 56.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they aware of their rights as electricity consumer. The result indicates a mixed and generally inadequate level of public awareness of the role of the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) in electricity consumer protection among customers of Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company (PHED) in Akwa Ibom State.

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This indicates that NERC has achieved a relatively high level of institutional visibility among electricity consumers. However, awareness of the existence of the regulatory body does not necessarily translate into adequate knowledge of its functions, regulations, and consumer protection responsibilities. This is evident from the finding that most of the respondents disagreed that NERC had created sufficient awareness of consumer rights and protection in their area. This suggests that although consumers may know that NERC exists, many are not adequately exposed to information explaining their rights, available protections, and the procedures for seeking redress when their rights are violated. This represents a significant awareness gap and suggests that NERC's regulatory guidelines may not have been effectively communicated to a substantial proportion of electricity consumers in Akwa Ibom State. Lack of familiarity with relevant regulations can make consumers less capable of identifying unfair billing, metering problems, poor service delivery, and other practices that may undermine their rights.

4.2.2 Role of NERC's contributions to transparent billing of customers

Table 4.4: Role of NERC's contributions to transparent billing of customers

Statements	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total
1. Financial regulation among NERC promote transparency in the billing of electricity customers.	101 (28.4)	147 (41.3)	53 (14.9)	31 (8.7)	24 (6.7)	356 100
2. NERC monitoring has reduced estimated billing in my area	85 (23.9)	61 (17.1)	38 (10.7)	77 (21.6)	95 (26.7)	356 100
3. NERC has protected consumers from estimated billing.	70 (19.7)	74 (20.8)	22 (6.2)	86 (24.2)	104 (29.2)	356 100
4. NERC promotes transparent billing through tariff regulation	61 (17.1)	91 (25.6)	18 (5.1)	101 (28.4)	85 (23.9)	356 100

Source: Field Survey, 2026 mean value > 3.0 accepted otherwise rejected

The role of NERC's contributions to transparent billing of customers of PHED in Akwa Ibom State was examined in Table 4.4. From the result, 41.3% of the respondents agreed that, financial regulation among NERC promote transparency in the billing of electricity customers. Invariably, 29.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed that NERC has protected consumers from estimated billing. In addition, 26.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed that NERC monitoring has reduced estimated billing in their area. More so, 28.4% of the respondents disagreed that co NERC promotes transparent billing through tariff regulation. The precision through the mean value decision rule that, a mean value > 3.0 was accepted while a mean < 3.0 was rejected. As shown in the result (3.75, 2.89, 2.77

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and 2.83), just one descriptive question (items) had a mean value above 3.0, in effect, the researcher concluded that there is no significant contribution by NERCs towards transparent billing of customers of PHED in Akwa Ibom State. Therefore, the finding indicates that NERC's contribution to transparent billing of PHED customers in Akwa Ibom State is inadequate. Although consumers recognize NERC's financial regulatory role, this recognition does not extend to effective protection from estimated billing, effective monitoring, and transparent tariff implementation. The finding further suggests the need for stronger enforcement of metering and billing regulations, more effective monitoring of PHED billing practices, and improved consumer education on tariffs and billing procedures.

Summary of Findings

The study explored how the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) interacts with electricity metering in Akwa Ibom State. It focused on a population of 1,057,858 active electricity users, drawing a sample of 400 respondents. Out of these, 356 questionnaires were successfully collected, resulting in an impressive 89.0% response rate; the key findings are as follows:

1. Only 24.7% of respondents felt that NERC had raised awareness about consumer rights and protections in their areas, while a significant 75.8% disagreed.
2. NERC's role in financial regulation scored a mean of 3.75, highlighting its positive impact on billing transparency.
3. However, the mean scores for NERC's monitoring (2.89), consumer protection from estimated billing (2.77), and tariff regulation (2.83) fell short of the study's acceptance benchmark of 3.0.
4. The research also pointed out that limited access to functional prepaid meters is a significant challenge for electricity consumers in Akwa Ibom State.

Conclusion

The study wraps up by highlighting that the creation of NERC has laid down a crucial framework for overseeing Nigeria's electricity sector and safeguarding consumers. However, insights from the field survey reveal a disconnect between the existence of these regulations and the real-world experiences of consumers. While many respondents knew about NERC, a significantly smaller number understood their rights as electricity consumers or were aware of NERC's regulations designed to protect them. This points to a situation where just having an institution in place hasn't necessarily led to a deep understanding among consumers.

Additionally, the findings show that although respondents acknowledged NERC's role in ensuring financial transparency in billing, they were less enthusiastic about the effectiveness of measures aimed at reducing estimated billing and improving tariff transparency. Therefore, the study concludes that for effective electricity metering, it’s not enough to just have regulatory policies in place; there also needs to be ongoing

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implementation, monitoring, consumer education, and enforcement. By enhancing access to functional meters, we can boost billing transparency and minimize conflicts between consumers and distribution companies.

Recommendations

1. Based on the findings, the study recommends that: The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) and relevant electricity distribution stakeholders need to ramp up their efforts to ensure that consumers in Akwa Ibom State have access to functional prepaid or other approved electricity meters. Expanding metering coverage will create a more reliable foundation for accurately assessing electricity consumption.
2. That NERC should also step up its monitoring of electricity distribution companies to ensure they comply with the relevant estimated-billing regulations. If any violations are found, appropriate regulatory actions should be taken following established procedures.
3. Additionally, NERC and electricity distribution companies should make it a priority to provide consumers with clear and accessible information regarding applicable tariffs, meter readings, electricity usage, and billing calculations. This transparency can help boost consumer confidence and minimize disputes.

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