

An Appraisal of Leadership Challenges and Nigeria's Development: Perspectives from Citizens of Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper appraised the leadership challenges and Nigeria's overall development. The paper is premised against the background of the humongous development challenges in Nigeria, in the midst of burgeoning human and material resources. Further providing background for this paper is the current Nigeria's position in the global poverty index, the increasing number of out of school children, the deteriorating rate of employment, the declining Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and other indexes of development. Aimed at finding out the correlation between leadership and development, as well as ascertaining the prevailing attitude of Nigerian leaders towards development, this paper used the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Contingency as its theoretical underpinnings. The paper adopted a survey research design, using Anambra State as the area of study. From a population of 8,252, 998 citizens in Anambra State, a simple size 400 residents were drawn for the paper using the Taro Yameni's formula. The paper adopted a multi- stage sampling technique and used questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The paper concludes that to truly clean up the bad leadership and corruption, Nigeria needs sound ethical leadership that is rooted in respect, service, justice, honesty and community. It was recommended that leaders should have good moral conduct and ethical responsibility to enable them attend to the demands, concerns, needs, and problems of the citizens in the country.

Keywords: Appraisal; Leadership; Challenges; Development.

Introduction

In his 1986 book, *'The Trouble with Nigeria'*, the renowned literary icon, Professor Chinua Achebe, identified failed leadership as the major trouble with Nigeria. About four decades now since Achebe made this revelation, every keen observer will acquiesce that leadership is the bane of Nigeria's development. Without doubts, therefore, the relevant and major challenge confronting Nigeria and, indeed, other developing countries of the world is leadership. Getting the right leadership to propel good governance has been a recurring challenge in Nigeria and developing countries in general. Successive leaders of Nigeria seem to have failed to provide quality leadership capable of addressing numerous challenges confronting the country. Governments are unable to set in place transparent and accountable institutions capable of securing economic progress, governing effectively, and protecting their citizens. This lack of capacity is amplified by recourse to authoritarianism and repression, dramatic economic decline precipitated by indiscriminate corruption, and the adoption of exclusive (ethnic) policies to assure self-succession tendencies.

Furthermore, inefficiency in governance has deteriorated the Nigerian economy, resulting in political instability and lack of proper accountability. Nigeria, as a country has severely impeded the ability of successive governments to implement

economic policies for the common good of the people, thus creating a lack of basic amenities for the people in the country Ejimabo (2023). According Ejimabo (2023), the solution for addressing Nigeria's problems and consolidating democratic governance in the federal republic lies in having a government or leadership that works on the principles of good governance and is, most importantly, accountable to the Nigerian people. Good governance in Nigeria is essential to its stability, growth and development. Adejimi (2005) cited in Ejimabo (2023) indicated that in Nigeria, most of the policy makers as well as those involved in decision making are engaged in bribery, egoism, power, and trade liberalization. Fagbadebo (2024) corroborated the foregoing and stated that the Nigerian State is a victim of high-level corruption, bad governance, political instability, and a cyclical legitimacy crisis. The country's authoritarian leadership faced a legitimacy crisis, political intrigues, in an ethnically differentiated polity, where ethnic competition for resources drove much of the pervasive corruption, and profligacy.

The leadership challenge in Nigeria is at variance with the history of a great nation, which is linked to purposeful leadership. Such leaders have played significant roles in the socio-economic development and political emancipation of their nations. In Nigeria, leadership has failed to harness the resources and the ingenuity

of the people for national development. The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership (Achebe, 1986). The nature of political leadership became a problem as most of them lost or lacked control of effective leadership. This led to the scramble for state resources to suit their personal desires, secessionist movements, insecurity, and other violent crimes.

Onodugo (2016) asserts that corruption and lack of vision among past and present leaders of Nigeria culminate to hamper any meaningful effort in the quest for good governance in the country. It is often said that no country can develop beyond the level of its leadership. Nigeria needs committed leaders who will govern with integrity and doggedly influence its human and natural resources toward the actualization of sustainable national development. This paper focused on leadership challenges and Nigeria's development.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria gained independence on 1st October, 1960; went ahead to become a republic in 1963 and has gone through almost every leadership plague common to African countries and even countries in other continents. This period of time passed has seen the country suffer multiple military coups, a civil war, tribal/ethnic violence, militancy, insurgency and as a result grave consequences with respect to the standard of living, economic growth,

stability, and a general decay in the standard of governance and governance structure. All of these can be portrayed as a consequence of a breakdown in leadership at different levels of societal structure. At different moments in Nigeria's history, we have needed a different kind or trait of leadership and have been found sorely lacking. Visionary leadership is extremely essential in the determination of the future trajectory of any effort or goal. It is the rudder that directs the spinning wheel of national development and the interaction between the leadership and followership of a nation. Fast forward to our current democracy, and it is evident that we are still struggling with the consequences of this apparent lack of visionary leadership. Such struggles include tribal politics, militancy, insurgency, and a general lack of buy-in into the 'Nation' Nigeria. Regime after regime over the past 20 years have started and abandoned agendas, shown a lack of continuity, promoted mediocrity and ineptitude in governance, and by doing so, have lost the faith of a majority of its citizens. It is against this background that this paper is set to appraise leadership challenges and Nigeria's development. The problem necessitating this paper is that the prevailing attitudes of Nigerian leaders viz-a-viz Nigeria's development is not yet known.

Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this paper is to appraise leadership challenges and Nigeria's development. The specific objectives of this paper are as stated below:

1. To identified the prevailing attitudes and characteristics of Nigerian leadership.
2. To identify the indices of good governance.
3. To find out the relationship between leadership, governance and development.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Two theories, Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) and the Contingency Theory of Leadership formed the theoretical background for this paper.

The Situational Leadership Theory was created Dr. Paul Hersev and Dr. Ken Blanchard (Francisco and Nugui, 2020). Developed while working on the text book, *Management of Organizational Behavior*, the theory was first introduced in 1969 as "*Life Cycle Theory of Leadership*" (Francisco & Nugui, 2020). *Mustofa and Muafi (2021) corroborated the forgoing views and further state that during the mid-1970s, Life Cycle Theory of Leadership was renamed "Situational Leadership Theory."* According to *Mustofa and Muafi (2021)*, the Situational Leadership Model a flexible framework that

enables leaders to tailor their approach to the needs of their team or individual members. Continuing, *Mustofa and Muafi (2021) explain that the model provides a repeatable process for matching leadership behaviors to the performance needs of those being influenced. Unlike other leadership models, Situational Leadership® recognizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, allowing leaders to adapt their behaviors to suit the unique needs of each situation.*

Ridlwani, Purwandari and Syah (2021) aver that the Situational Leadership methodology is based on the relationship between leaders and followers and provides a framework to analyze each situation based on the Performance Readiness Level that a follower exhibits in performing a specific task, function or objective. Then, based on the leader's diagnosis, the necessary amounts of relationship behavior and task behavior are applied and communicated to the follower in order to support their needs and advance development (Ridlwani, Purwandari & Syah 2021). From his research, Dr. Paul Hersey found that there is no one best leadership style, as it is dependent upon the individual's level of ability and willingness to complete the specific task. From the 1960s to present, the Situational Leadership theory has remained an effective tool for leaders to match their behaviors with the performance needs of the individual or group that they are attempting to influence.

The fundamental principle of the Situational Leadership Model is that there is no single "best" style of leadership. Effective leadership is task-relevant, and the most successful leaders are those who adapt their leadership style to the Performance Readiness level (ability and willingness) of the individual or group they are attempting to lead or influence. Effective leadership varies, not only with the person or group that is being influenced, but it also depends on the task, job, or function that needs to be accomplished.

Francisco and Nugui (2020) reveal that the theory identifies four main leadership approaches:

- **Telling:** Directive and authoritative approach. The leader makes decisions and tells employees what to do.
- **Selling:** The leader is still the decision maker, but he communicates and works to persuade the employees rather than simply directing them.
- **Participating:** The leader works with the team members to make decisions together. He supports and encourages them and is more democratic.
- **Delegating:** The leader assigns decision-making responsibility to team members but oversees their work.

In addition to these four approaches to leadership, there are also four levels of follower maturity:

- **Level M1:** Followers have low competence and low commitment.
- **Level M2:** Followers have low competence, but high commitment.
- **Level M3:** Followers have high competence, but low commitment and confidence.
- **Level M4:** Followers have high competence and high commitment and confidence.

In Hersey and Blanchard's approach, the key to successful leadership is matching the proper leadership style to the corresponding maturity level of the employees. As a general rule, each of the four leadership styles is appropriate for the corresponding employee maturity level:

- Telling style works best for leading employees at the M1 level (low competence, low commitment).
- Selling style works best for leading employees at the M2 level (low competence, high commitment).
- Participating style works best for leading employees at the M3 level (high competence, low commitment/confidence).
- Delegating style works best for leading employees at the M4

level (high competence, high commitment/confidence).

The Situational Leadership theory is suitable for this paper because of the dynamic nature of the Nigerian citizen, whose yearnings and aspirations need to be met by the Nigerian leaders. The four leadership approaches and the maturity levels identifies by the SLT need to be well understood by Nigerian leaders and judiciously applied

Contingency Theory

Closely related to the situational approach is what has become known as **contingency theory**. The contingency theory of leadership was proposed by the Austrian psychologist **Fred Edward Fiedler** in his landmark 1964 article, "A Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness" (Donaldson, 2023). According to Donaldson (2023), Contingency Theory of Management has an intriguing history that revolves around the idea of adapting leadership and decision-making to specific situations. Donaldson (2023) informs that the theory emerged as a response to the recognition that one-size-fits-all approaches in management don't always work, adding that its roots can be traced back to the mid-20th century when researchers observed that different organizations faced diverse challenges and required tailored solutions. Fred Fiedler, in the 1960s, introduced his contingency model,

emphasizing the impact of situations on a leader's effectiveness. Fiedler proposed that a leader's style should match the context to achieve success.

The contingency theory emphasizes the importance of both the **leader's personality** and the **situation** in which that leader operates. Fiedler and his associates studied leaders in a variety of contexts but mostly in military context and their model is based on their research findings.

They outline two styles of leadership:

- **Task-motivated**
- **Relationship-motivated.**

Task refers to task accomplishment, and relationship-motivation refers to interpersonal relationships.

Fiedler's Contingency Theory states that, for a leader to be effective, their leadership style must fit the situation. Using this model, you'll identify your own leadership style, assess the situation that requires leadership, and determine whether you're the right leader. In this piece, we further break down the theory, teach you how to apply it to become a better leader, and provide examples of the theory in action. Fiedler argues that it's difficult to change how you lead, so understanding your leadership style is essential for serving your team. To help you better comprehend your style of leadership and make the best

decisions for your company, we break down Fiedler's model.

For this reason, Fiedler believed the right leader must be chosen for each job based on their skill set and the requirements of the situation. In order to best match leaders with situations, each leader must first understand their natural leadership style. Then, they need to evaluate whether their leadership style is right for the situation. To put it simply, Fiedler determined that a leaders' ability to succeed rests on two factors:

- Natural leadership style
- Situational favorableness

Contingency Theory brought a shift in management thinking, embracing the uniqueness of each situation. This approach became crucial for leaders seeking to navigate complex and ever-changing business landscapes, recognizing that adaptability and flexibility are vital traits for effective management.

Conceptual Clarification

Leadership Conceptualized: The word 'Leadership' has been defined in so many Ways by different scholars and as a result, it has become almost an impossibility to come up with a single definition that is acceptable to scholars of various divides. Leadership has been defined as a necessary phenomenon in political field. It is the capacity in a person or in a group of persons to inspire confidence and

thereby regard for himself or themselves to guide and govern the followers (Okaneme, 2017). Leadership is the process through which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behavior Ogunmilade, Nwoko & Akhigbe (2017). Political leadership is the decision on social policy and resources allocation, as exerted by pattern representatives (Okadigbo, 1987; Abbott, 1947; Cranston, 1964). These definitions suggest that the leadership process is hinged on the capacity to allocate scarce resources, which determines the locus of power. Leadership is the ability to influence the behaviour of others in a group or organization, set goals, for the group, formulate paths to the goal and create some social norms in the group (Uveges, 2003). Leadership involves the exercise of social power. Thus, by exerting a profound effect on personal behaviour, individual and organization productivity, adjustment to working situations, and morale in organizations, leadership should not be viewed separately from social power (Nwagboso & Duke 2022). Omolayo (2016) describes leadership as an essential oil that keeps the wheel of government working without any difficulty. According to him, leadership makes the difference between success and failure in a country. The qualities of good leadership according to Orji and Ekpo (2020) include transparency, accountability, honesty, diplomacy,

etc. A leader is someone who leads a group of people in the direction of the accomplishment of set goals.

Development Defined: The term Development is used to describe improvements in the lives of people, society, place, situation, or environment. It can, also, be referred to as the process in which someone or something grows or changes and become more advances. Furthermore, development can be viewed as a process in which something passes by degrees to a different stage (especially a more advanced or mature stage). For instance, the development of one's ideas or skills (for writers), expanding, refining and enlarging of knowledge, which may take some years, can be classified as development. There is, however, no one universally accepted definition of the word, "development." The word 'development' is widely used to refer to a specified state of advancement or growth. It could also be used to describe a new and advanced idea or product; or an event that constitutes a new stage under changing circumstances. Generally, the term development describes good, or positive change. But how do you tell which change is good?

In this regard, researchers explain three ways that the term 'development' is used: First, development, as a vision, is used to describe how desirable a society or a region is, possibly with regard to what it can become. Secondly, development,

as a historic process, refers to social change that occurs over extended periods of time due to inevitable processes. For instance, it is widely believed that both communism and capitalism are an inevitable outcome of progress. Thirdly, development as action, refers to deliberate action to change things for the better, as with providing aid to alleviate hunger. Development is process of improving the quality of all human lives with three equally important aspects. These are Raising peoples' living levels, i.e. incomes and consumption, levels of food, medical services, education through relevant growth processes, Creating conditions conducive to the growth of peoples' self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions which promote human dignity and respect and Increasing peoples' freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables. Development is therefore the realization of increased self-esteem and self-reliance. People should be capacitated to have power to influence and control their own future. i.e this concept does not only mean capacity building for socio-economic achievement, but also political empowerment so that people have power to influence their future (Wetmore & Theron 1997).

Governance Defined: According to Kolade (2022), Governance involves participation by both the governor and the governed (i.e. the leader and the

follower). Salman (2019) asserts that Governance entails the procedure through which governments are selected, monitored, held accountable, and replaced; it is government's ability to judiciously manage resources well and formulate, implement as well as enforce good policies and regulations; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interaction between them. Dickson (2021) said that good governance in relation to a popular democracy ought to be hinged on two basic things; the first is a constitution fit to the distinct needs and circumstances of Nigeria as ethno-religious, multi-dimensional, and political economic structure. Secondly, a leadership fit not only to the pressing needs of Nigeria but the exact needs of its citizens. He reiterated that generally, good governance does not call for ordinary type of leadership but it requires tolerance, breadth of outlook, intellectual comprehension, hard work, selfless devotion, statesmanship, a burning sense of mission, etc. to make a success of leading Nigeria as a nation.

Challenges of Leadership in Nigeria

Lack of Rule of Law: The rule of law is a principle or system where a society or nation is governed by a set of legislation instead of by an individual making the whole decision. Rule of law makes it impossible for one person to have the unrestrained exercise of power over a society or nation. It applies and puts a limit or

check to the behavior of everyone including government officials. The level of poverty and illiteracy in Nigeria is also a limitation to the rule of law. A lot of people live in ignorance of their constitutional rights which makes it easy for people to infringe their rights. Nigerian leaders do not show respect to the rule of law, especially, judicial decisions. This hinders the judiciary from discharging its duties effectively. The judiciary is so unpredictability because the political elites still undermine the independence of the judiciary through patronage appointments, and judicial administration is marked by weak enforcement capacity.

Absence of Accountability and Transparency:

Lack of openness and accountability remain a frightening legacy of the Nigerian leadership since 1960 to date. A country where corruption is entrenched can never have a transparent and accountable system. Transparency and accountability are absent in Nigerian leadership. An accountable government is one that is responsive to the demands of the citizens. Accountability is best enforced through the instrument an independent judiciary and the rule of law. Citizen can seek redress in the courts for acts of omission or commission by a government and its officials. However, Nigeria has not done well in this regard; it has been corruption at all levels. And this corruption is not unconnected with profuse index of

weak accountability and lack of transparency. Nigerian leaders abuse public office for private gain.

Corruption Challenges: Although corruption is a global problem, Nigeria appears to suffer greatly from this menace. Corruption is a huge problem Nigeria has been fighting with since independence. It started with government officials and has gradually eaten deep into every other area of the economy. It's very rare to see a government official who isn't corrupt nowadays. Currently, Nigeria ranks very high in the league of corrupt nations, and as stated by ex-British Prime Minister David Cameron, Nigeria is a "fantastically corrupt" country with corrupt leaders. This problem has been there since independence and has gotten worse. The countless reforms and lack of honesty by our leaders have left Nigeria poor as poor can be. Politicians are expunged and later readmitted into their parties, then, what hope for good governance when the leadership is deeply entrenched in corrupt practices. Corruption is one of the greatest threats to good governance today (Iyoha, *et al*, 2015). It is a social problem which hampers development and robs people of the chances for any significant economic as well as social advancement (Okeyim, Ejue, & Ekanem, 2023). Corruption slows down economic growth and investment.

Economic growth and development in Nigeria for over

twenty years has been soiled with misappropriation and embezzlement of funds even with the return of democracy, turning the country's economy into an underdeveloped nation with least position in international ratings (Abullahi 2019). **Lack of Ideology:** The lack of ideology is the tragedy of our politics since 1999. An ideology is a collection of ideas or beliefs shared by a group of people. It may be a connected set of ideas, or a style of thought, or a world-view. There are two main types of ideologies: political ideologies, and epistemological ideologies. Political ideologies are sets of ethical ideas about how a country should be run. Epistemological ideologies are sets of ideas about the philosophy, the Universe, and how people should make decisions. In Nigeria, the political elites constitute a non-productive class who rely on the control of state structures to access economic rewards. The over-politicization of the Nigerian state is also understood in the context of the unmediated struggle for power, influence and patronage. The nature of political contest ensured the emergence of a local governing class without ideological commitment. Rather than pursue political contests within ideological frameworks, politics became a contested terrain for shallow, self-centered political gains.

Characteristics of Good Governance

Chikendu (2017) posits that the primacy of leadership in the

governance project rests on the ability of the leadership to see beyond the perceptual vista of the people, appreciate their needs and inspire and motivate them to cherish and desire these needs as goals that should be achieved. Indeed, ensuring good governance for achieving peace, security and sustainable development rests with the leadership. Governance should have a number of characteristics to be considered as good governance. Reviewing the relevant literature it has been found out that various international organizations have set different types of characteristics for good governance. This paper discusses the main characteristics of good governance as below:

Transparency: Transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them. Good governance requires transparency in public procedures, process, investment decision, contracts and appointment. It is not sufficient that information simply be available, it must also be reliable and presented in useful and understandable ways to facilitate accountability (Rahman, 2016)

Consensus orientation: is a group decision-making process in which group members develop, and agree to support a decision in the best interest

of the whole group or common goal. It is used to describe both the decision and the process of reaching a decision. Consensus decision-making is thus concerned with the process of deliberating and finalizing a decision, and the social, economic, legal, environmental and political effects of applying this process. Good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interests of the group and, Where possible, on policies and procedures.

Rule of law: Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights. One of the main characteristics of good governance should be its capability to formulate effective and implementable laws and policies. Good governance should have the ability to implement the established rules, regulations, laws and policies of the land. Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force

Accountability and Transparency: Decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organizations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organisations

and whether the decision is internal or external to an organisation. The extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media (Mogilevsky, 2020). Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. Transparency in good governance entails that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms of media. Transparency in government decision-making and public policy implementation reduces uncertainty and may help inhibit corruption among public officials.

Strategic vision: Leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded. The leader should have the qualities of a visionary: he must lead others to see a future that could be different notably from the present and to adhere to this vision by inspiring them through his words and his actions. Indeed, visionary leaders develop values and create and interpret the objectives of the institution, they are models, and

they produce meanings, open doors and shape the culture of the organization. They are persistent and consistent and have such a powerful vision that they know what they want from each interaction. Their visions do not blind others, but give them strength (Egan, 1985, in Korbi, 2015).

Securing Property: Securing the properties of the people is one of the most important characteristic of good governance. Players of Good Governance at every level at the national, international, and corporate level should be able to secure people's properties. **Control of Corruption:** Corruption remains a priority concerns to the Nigerian Government and People. Corruption affects all aspects of public life, continues to undermine the social, economic and political development of the country and is a major obstacle to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Good Governance should be in a position to control corruption (Mogilevsky, 2020)

Participation: All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively (Rahman, 2016).

Empirical Review

In a paper with the title, *Leadership Challenges and Nigeria Development.- The Issues and Imperatives*. Anekwe (2020) examined leadership challenges and Nigeria development: issues and imperatives, and pointedly revealed that the most critical challenge confronting Nigeria is leadership. Anekwe (2020) argued that the present and past leaders of Nigeria seem to have failed to provide quality leadership capable of addressing numerous challenges confronting the country, adding that these leadership challenges are evidenced in political, social and economic instability and the prevalence of ethnic, communal and religious crises, which have bedeviled Nigerian socio economic development. The reverberation effects of the failure of leadership, corruption and bad governance are visible and being felt across all sectors and segment of the Nigerian society. Leadership and good governance are crucial to realizing any giant stride taken in pursuit of development anywhere in the world, Nigeria is not an exception. The Contingency Theory of Leadership propounded by Fred Fiedler was adapted. The study assesses the challenges of leadership in Nigeria and the characteristics of good governance. It was concluded that, to tackle the challenges of leadership that bedeviled the country, Nigeria needs sound ethical leadership that is rooted in respect, service, justice, honesty and community. Leaders who place fairness at the center of decision

making, including the challenging task of being fair to individuals as well as to the common interest of the community they serve. It therefore recommended that leaders should have good moral conduct and ethical responsibility to enable them to attend to the demands, concerns, needs, and problems of the citizens in the country.

Yerima (2021), in his paper titled, "*Challenges of Leadership and Good Governance*," aimed at examining the challenges of leadership and good governance in Nigeria in the light of historical and contemporary period and advanced some propositions that will go a long way in ensuring political, social and economic development. The paper utilizes a simple methodology of literature review, and established that, the challenges of leadership and good governance in north eastern Nigeria include among others; corruption, poverty and unemployment, inadequate infrastructures, disrespect of the rules of law, lack of transparency and accountability in governance, ineffective implementation of public policies and laws, Ethnic and religious intolerance, inadequate security, mismanagement of public funds, budget constraints etc which pose serious threat to national development. The paper ends with conclusion and made recommendations that will enhance effective leadership and good governance. The research would be the library base documents.

Gberevbie, Shegun and Adeola (2017) in a paper with the title, "Accountability for Sustainable Development and the Challenges of Leadership in Nigeria, 1999-2015," explored the relationship between accountability for the sustainable development and the challenges of leadership in Nigeria. The paper is premised against the background that development of any society is meant to enhance the living standard of citizens. However, where there are challenges of accountability, development is more likely to be a mirage. The paper argued that past studies in Nigeria on the challenges of leadership and sustainable development identified corruption and lack of required skills on the part of public officials to perform in terms of proper policy formulation and implementation among others.

With the analysis of data obtained from secondary sources, this present study identified lack of accountability for sustainable development to include the challenges leadership, unethical behavior, poor maintenance culture, poor management of resources, corruption on the part of public officials, and inadequate funds to execute projects in Nigeria. This article therefore recommends, among others, the need for government to adopt a more practical approach to the promotion of accountability, a determined fight against corruption and unethical behavior, proper management of resources, and devotion of more funds

to the execution of capital projects that could positively affect the lives of the people for improved standard of living. The gap in the foregoing empirical review is that they are qualitative in nature, hence this present study.

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for this study. Survey was considered suitable because the context of the study involves studying the people, their attitudes, beliefs, experiences, concerning a given phenomenon. The area of study is Anambra State, one of the five states in the south east geopolitical zone. The state is bounded by Delta State to the West, Imo and Rivers States to the South, Enugu State to the East and Kogi State to the North. The State's capital is Awka, while the state's largest city is Onitsha, which is regarded as one of the largest Metropolitan area in Africa. Nnewi is the second largest commercial and Industrial city in Anambra State, and also a known auto-mobile hub within Nigeria and Africa. The choice of the area is because the authors hail from the state and have lived in the state for the past 20 years. Therefore, the authors are familiar with the developments in the area.

The population of interest for this study is 8,252, 998 residents in Anambra State, according the 2024 projected population (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024) A sample size of 400 residents was drawn for the study using the Taro Yameni's formula. Furthermore, the researchers used a

multi-stage sampling strategy to select the samples for the study. The research instrument used for the study was the questionnaire, which was delivered to the respondents through some university students in three clusters/zones (one from each of the three senatorial zones). Onitsha North represented Anambra North; Awka South represented Anambra Central, and Nnewi North represented Anambra South. The questionnaire was distributed to civil servants, students, artisans, traders and farmers. Results obtained from the study were presented in simple frequency distribution tables and analyzed subsequently. Out of the 400 copies of the questionnaire distributed, a total of 360 copies were retrieved from the respondents. Below are the results.

Biographic Data of the Respondents

The questionnaire for this study had two sections: Section A dealt with the biographic data of the respondents while Section B dealt with the thematic data. The tables below explain the biographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1.1: Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	174	48%
Female	186	52%
TOTAL	360	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In the table above, 186 respondents (52%) were female, while 174 respondents (48%) were male. The data revealed an almost even

distribution of the respondents, according to their gender characteristics. However, the slight higher number of females is an indication that the women are easier persuaded to respond to issues that involves leadership.

Table 1.2: Age

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 30	78	22%
31 – 40	86	24%
41 – 50	102	28%
51 – above	94	26%
TOTAL	360	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

The data in table 1.2 above revealed that the respondents between 41 years and 50 years had the highest frequency (28%). The respondents under 30 years had 22% while respondents within 18 years and 40 years had 24% frequency. The implication of this frequency distribution was that majority of the respondents were of right age to make informed decision/input in reproductive health related matters, such as family planning choices.

Table 1.3: Educational Qualification

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
High School or Below	79	22.3%
Some College/ Technical	49	13.5%
Bachelor's Degree	115	31.8%
Masters Degree	106	29.5%
Ph.D Degree	7	1.9%
TOTAL	360	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

The implication of the frequency of educational qualification of the respondents is that a significant proportion of the respondents were well-informed.

Table 1.4: Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Students	88	24%
Civil Servants	84	23%
Traders	58	16%
Artisans	76	21%
Farmers	54	15%
TOTAL	360	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

The data in the table above indicate almost an even distribution in the percentage frequency of respondents who were civil servants (24%) and students (23%). However, farmers had the lowest frequency (15%) among the respondents.

Thematic Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section, the data relating to the central theme of the study are presented in simple frequency distribution tables and analyzed afterwards.

Table 2: Nigeria is grappling with leadership challenges in contemporary communication world

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	213	59%
Agreed	147	41%
Strongly Disagreed	0	0%
Disagreed	0	0%
Total	360	100%

Source: field survey 2025

The implication of the data in the table 2 above is that visionary and responsive leaders are lacking in Nigeria.

Table 3: Leadership challenges affect development in Nigeria

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	132	37%
Agreed	162	45%
Strongly Disagreed	32	8%
Disagreed	24	7%
Total	360	100%

Source: field survey 2025

In table 3 above, the data imply that a significant proportion of the respondents were in acquiescence that leadership challenges have correlations with development.

Table 4: Transparent and Accountable leadership is lacking in Nigeria

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	186	52%
Agreed	148	41%
Strongly Disagreed	0	0%
Disagreed	26	7%
Total	360	100%

Source: field survey 2025

The implication of the data on the table 4 above is that a significant proportion of the respondents were aware that transparent and accountable leaders are lacking in Nigeria.

Table 5 Transparent and accountable leadership has the potential to nurture and streamline good governance

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	168	48%
Agreed	186	52%
Strongly Disagreed	0	0%
Disagreed	0	0%
Total	360	100%

Source: field survey 2025

The data in table 5 above imply that the respondents perceive transparent and accountable leadership as effective mechanism for efficiency of governance.

Discussion of Findings

Results from this study revealed that respondents were unanimous in their affirmation that there are a plethora of leadership challenges in Nigeria. The respondents identified some of the challenges to include corruption, lack

of transparency and accountability, lack of vision and lack of capacity to respond to the yearnings and aspirations of the masses. Again, the results revealed that respondents in Anambra State perceive efficient and effective leadership as being capable of streamlining and nurturing the operations of participatory democracy and therefore a veritable instrument for good governance. These views were in tandem with the Corporate Social Responsibility theory and the Contingency leadership theory. This finding aligns with the study by Yerima, (2021), in a paper titled, "Challenges of Leadership and Good Governance." Yerima (2021) utilizes a simple methodology of literature review, and established that, the challenges of leadership and good governance in north eastern Nigeria include among others; corruption, poverty and unemployment, inadequate infrastructures, disrespect of the rules of law, lack of transparency and accountability in governance, ineffective implementation of public policies and laws, Ethnic and religious intolerance, inadequate security, mismanagement of public funds, budget constraints etc which pose serious threat to national development. Findings also align with the study by Gbervbie, Shegun, and Adeola (2017) in a paper with the title, "Accountability for Sustainable Development and the Challenges of Leadership in Nigeria, 1999-2015."

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

To truly clean up the bad leadership and corruption, Nigeria needs sound ethical leadership that is rooted in respect, service, justice, honesty and community. Leaders who place fairness at the center of decision making, including the challenging task of being fair to individuals as well as to the common interest of the community they serve. The country needs people who are educated, and sincere and honest both in administration and leadership styles. In the Nigerian leadership situation, self-less and charismatic leaders are needed to amend the wrong. The most fundamental measure required in confronting the challenge, and averting the Nigerian state from failure and collapse is strategic and progressive leadership. The importance of strategic leadership is that it identifies and harmonizes national capabilities to achieve the national interest.

The following recommendations classified as long-term are proffered to meet this challenge. Undertake concerted development, broadly understood as progress toward stable, accountable society. Restructure the polity to ensure equity, justice and fairness. Leader should be creative. Indeed, creativity plays an important role in the quality of decisions: the ability to propose innovative solutions is essential to decision-making process such as the development of new opportunities and problems diagnosis.

Leaders should help arouse their followers' uniqueness and potential innovation perspective for more effective problem solving without direct intervention from their leader. Leaders should have good moral conduct and ethical responsibility to enable them to attend to the demands, concerns, needs, and problems of the citizens in the country.

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