

Good Governance and National Development in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract: *This paper examines the critical relationship between good governance and national development, with a focus on Nigeria's unique challenges and prospects. Good governance, defined by transparency, accountability, adherence to the rule of law, and effective policies, is universally recognised as a driver of sustainable development. The paper adopted a qualitative approach with data drawn from scholarly publications, international indices, and government reports to provide empirical insights into global and Nigerian governance systems. The study integrates global perspectives, highlighting successful governance models in countries like Sweden, Singapore, and Rwanda, while contrasting them with governance failures in nations such as Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Nigeria, governance deficits, including corruption, institutional inefficiency, and infrastructural inadequacies, have hindered socio-economic progress. Despite being Africa's largest economy, issues such as systemic corruption, mismanagement of public resources, and weak policy implementation persist. Transparency International ranked Nigeria 154th on the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index, with 63% of the*

population living in poverty and unemployment rates peaking at 33.3%. The paper identifies further challenges, including electoral malpractice, judicial inefficiency, insecurity, and infrastructural deficits, which collectively undermine governance effectiveness and development. The study employs Governance Theory and Sustainable Development Theory as frameworks to analyse the interplay between governance practices and development outcomes. Through these lenses, it explores key issues such as the impact of anti-corruption initiatives, social investment programmes like N-Power and Conditional Cash Transfers, and reforms in sectors such as health, infrastructure, and electoral processes. While acknowledging the limitations of these initiatives, the paper highlights prospects for improvement through strengthened institutional frameworks, equitable resource distribution, and inclusive governance. Recommendations include enhancing anti-corruption mechanisms, scaling up social protection programmes, prioritising infrastructure development through public-private partnerships, reforming electoral processes, and promoting inclusivity to address regional disparities. These strategies aim to bridge governance gaps and foster sustainable development. The study concludes that while Nigeria faces significant governance challenges, targeted reforms and institutional strengthening offer viable pathways to achieving long-term national development. It underscores the need for an integrated approach that prioritises transparency, equity, and socio-economic inclusivity, positioning governance as a pivotal factor in Nigeria's quest for stability and prosperity.

Keywords: good governance, national development

INTRODUCTION

The interplay between good governance and national development remains central to policy discourse in Nigeria. Scholars have explored how governance frameworks influence the socio-economic progress of nations, underscoring that good governance drives sustainable development through transparency, accountability, and the rule of law (Ake, 2020). Governance, in this context, encompasses the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which authority is exercised for the collective good. Globally, the relationship between governance and national development is well-documented. In the United States, states with robust governance structures such as California have recorded consistent economic growth due to effective policy implementation and institutional efficiency. California's tech-driven economy, valued at over \$3.9 trillion in 2023, underscores how governance promotes industrial growth and innovation (Smith & Harris, 2023). Similarly, Sweden's welfare system, ranked among the best globally, reflects the impact of good governance on social welfare and equality (Lindberg, 2022).

In Asia, Singapore stands as a model of governance-driven development. Its transformation from a developing state in the 1960s to a high-income economy with a per capita GDP of \$72,794 in 2023 resulted from strategic governance reforms (Lee, 2022). Similarly, South Korea's rapid

technological and industrial development demonstrates the impact of policy-driven innovation (Park & Choi, 2021). African nations present contrasting scenarios. Rwanda has emerged as a governance success story, achieving economic growth rates of over 7% annually from 2019 to 2023 due to anti-corruption measures and investment-friendly policies (Nkurunziza, 2022). In contrast, countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to grapple with governance failures marked by political instability and low human development indices (Mbaku, 2021).

In Nigeria, the nexus between good governance and national development has been a persistent challenge. Despite being Africa's largest economy, Nigeria faces governance deficits that hinder sustainable development and economic growth. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Nigeria 154th out of 180 countries in 2023, highlighting systemic corruption (Transparency International, 2023). This governance failure has translated into socio-economic stagnation, with poverty rates peaking at 63% in 2023 according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023).

Nigeria's economic growth, driven by oil exports, has been marred by governance lapses, including mismanagement of public funds, weak institutions, and policy inconsistency. The country's unemployment rate rose to 33.3% in 2022, reflecting policy failures in job creation and economic diversification (World Bank, 2022). Additionally, Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) score of 0.539 in 2023 places it in the low development category (UNDP, 2023). The governance landscape in Nigeria reveals multiple dimensions of underperformance. Electoral malpractice, judicial inefficiency, and insecurity have undermined development prospects. For instance, the 2023 elections were marred by allegations of voter suppression and electoral violence, reflecting governance weaknesses in democratic processes (INEC Report, 2023). Similarly, the judiciary's slow adjudication processes have delayed justice delivery and eroded public trust (Adigun, 2022).

Insecurity remains a critical governance challenge. The Boko Haram insurgency, banditry in the Northwest, and separatist agitations have escalated, displacing over 3.2 million people by mid-2024 (UNHCR, 2024). Weak governance structures have hampered Nigeria's ability to ensure national security, leading to massive internal displacement and humanitarian crises. Moreover, infrastructure deficits highlight governance failures. Nigeria's power generation capacity stagnated at 5,500 MW in 2023, far below the estimated demand of 30,000 MW, resulting in persistent power outages (Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, 2023). Poor road networks and inadequate healthcare infrastructure have further impeded development.

Despite these challenges, prospects for governance-driven development remain. Nigeria's adoption of the National Development Plan (2021-2025) aims to strengthen institutions, improve service delivery, and reduce poverty (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning, 2021). Additionally, the enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (2021) seeks to reform Nigeria's oil

sector by enhancing transparency and boosting investment. In summary, the governance-development nexus in Nigeria is a critical policy concern. While governance challenges persist, targeted reforms and institutional strengthening offer prospects for sustainable national development. Understanding this relationship is essential for addressing Nigeria's socio-economic challenges and ensuring its long-term stability and prosperity.

Statement of the Research Problem

The Nigerian Federal Government has implemented numerous policies, legal, and institutional frameworks aimed at promoting good governance and fostering national development. Notable among these frameworks is the National Development Plan (2021-2025), designed to drive socio-economic progress through transparent governance, infrastructure development, and poverty reduction (National Planning Commission, 2022). Additionally, the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2007 was enacted to ensure prudent management of national resources and financial accountability (Olawale, 2021). The establishment of institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) underscores Nigeria's legal commitment to combating corruption, a significant barrier to national development (Adeyemi, 2020). Furthermore, the Public Procurement Act of 2007 seeks to instill transparency in public sector contract awards (Ogundele, 2021).

In terms of institutional frameworks, Nigeria has adopted the Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative, emphasising transparency, citizen participation, and anti-corruption measures (Ibrahim, 2023). The introduction of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) has streamlined government revenue collection, reducing financial leakages (Eze, 2022). The implementation of the Freedom of Information Act (2011) ensures citizens' access to public records, fostering accountability (Okonkwo, 2020). Despite these robust policy, legal, and institutional measures, Nigeria continues to grapple with poor governance, stunted development, and socio-economic inequalities. Transparency International's 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Nigeria 150th out of 180 countries, indicating persistent governance challenges (Transparency International, 2023). Corruption, mismanagement of public funds, and weak institutional enforcement have undermined developmental projects, leaving critical sectors like education, healthcare, and infrastructure severely underdeveloped (Adebayo, 2021).

Furthermore, the World Bank (2022) reported that Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) ranking remains one of the lowest globally due to inadequate investment in human capital development. The unemployment rate, estimated at 33.3% in 2022, highlights the failure of government policies to translate into economic opportunities for citizens (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Similarly, infrastructural decay and inconsistent electricity supply have hindered industrial growth and foreign investment (Oladimeji, 2022). Research has shown that the lack of political will and weak judicial systems perpetuate impunity and governance failures (Okafor, 2021). For instance, the delayed implementation of the National Social Investment Programme

(NSIP) has limited its impact on poverty alleviation (Uche, 2022). Public service delivery remains inefficient due to bureaucratic bottlenecks and limited technological integration in administrative processes (Ibrahim, 2023). Given these realities, this study seeks to explore the relationship between good governance and national development in Nigeria, examining both the challenges and prospects. Addressing these issues is crucial for developing actionable strategies that can strengthen governance structures, ensure policy implementation, and foster sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

Aim of the Study

To examine the relationship between good governance and national development in Nigeria, highlighting policies, impacts, challenges, and improvement strategies.

Objectives of the Study

- a. To assess the significance of the relationship between good governance and national development in Nigeria.
- b. To identify government policies designed to facilitate good governance and promote national development.
- c. To evaluate the impact of good governance on Nigeria's national development.
- d. To investigate the key challenges hindering the effectiveness of governance in Nigeria.
- e. To propose recommendations for enhancing good governance to ensure sustainable national development.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative approach, combining theoretical frameworks and comparative analysis. It relies on the Governance Theory and Sustainable Development Theory to evaluate the interplay between governance practices and development outcomes. Data was drawn from scholarly publications, international indices, and government reports to provide empirical insights into global and Nigerian governance systems.

Global case studies, such as Sweden, Singapore, and Rwanda, contrast with examples of governance deficits like Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These comparative analyses contextualise Nigeria's unique challenges and prospects. The methodology incorporates an evaluation of policies such as anti-corruption measures, social investment programmes (e.g., N-Power), and reforms in infrastructure and electoral systems. The approach critically examines these initiatives' impacts and limitations, employing a multidimensional framework to propose actionable recommendations for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Good Governance

Good governance refers to the process by which public institutions conduct public affairs, manage resources, and guarantee the realisation of human rights in a manner that is transparent, accountable, equitable, and responsive to the needs of the people (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2020). It emphasises participatory decision-making, adherence to the rule of law, and the provision of effective services that promote social welfare. Similarly, Rotberg (2019) defines good governance as the performance of governments in delivering public services, ensuring security, upholding the rule of law, and fostering political stability while respecting democratic principles. This definition underscores the functional aspects of governance, focusing on measurable outcomes and institutional effectiveness.

This study adopts the UNDP's (2020) definition of good governance because it comprehensively captures the key elements of transparency, accountability, equity, and responsiveness. These aspects align closely with the study's focus on evaluating Nigeria's governance structures in relation to national development.

National Development

National development refers to the sustained improvement in the economic, social, political, and cultural well-being of a country's population, characterised by enhanced living standards, infrastructure development, and institutional reforms (Todaro & Smith, 2021). It encompasses multidimensional progress, including economic growth, poverty reduction, social equity, and technological advancement. In contrast, Ake (2020) defines national development as the process through which a country transforms its socio-economic and political systems to achieve sustainable development, focusing on human capital development, industrialisation, and infrastructural expansion.

This study adopts Todaro and Smith's (2021) definition due to its emphasis on multidimensional progress, including economic, social, and institutional reforms. This perspective aligns with the study's goal of assessing how governance influences diverse aspects of Nigeria's national development.

Theoretical Framework

To provide a comprehensive understanding of Good Governance and National Development in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects, the following theoretical frameworks are considered.

Theories of Good Governance

The Public Choice Theory, propounded by James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock in 1962, focuses on how political decision-making processes influence policy outcomes. According to Buchanan

and Tullock, governance is driven by self-interest, with politicians and bureaucrats making decisions based on personal benefits rather than societal welfare. The theory suggests that good governance can only be achieved when checks and balances are institutionalised to limit selfish decision-making (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962). However, critics argue that Public Choice Theory places excessive emphasis on individual self-interest while overlooking collective action dynamics. Ostrom (1990) critiques the theory for neglecting community-based governance structures. Similarly, Stoker (2006) contends that the theory underestimates the role of political will and ethical leadership in achieving good governance. Lastly, Bendor (2017) criticises its limited applicability in contexts where public institutions are embedded in complex social structures.

Governance Theory, advanced by Kooiman (1993), highlights the interaction between state, market, and civil society in policy formulation and implementation. It underscores participatory governance, accountability, and transparency as essential components of good governance. According to Kooiman, good governance emerges when multiple stakeholders collaborate through inclusive decision-making processes (Kooiman, 1993). Critics, however, highlight its potential weaknesses. Peters (2012) argues that the theory's emphasis on inclusivity can slow down decision-making processes. Rhodes (2007) suggests that stakeholder multiplicity may dilute accountability. Additionally, Weiss (2014) raises concerns about the potential for conflict among diverse governance actors.

This study adopts Kooiman's Governance Theory due to its emphasis on stakeholder collaboration, transparency, and participatory processes, aligning closely with the study's focus on enhancing governance structures in Nigeria.

Theories of National Development

Modernisation Theory, developed by Walt Rostow in 1960, posits that economic and social progress follows a linear trajectory through defined stages of development. Rostow asserts that underdeveloped nations can achieve national development by embracing industrialisation, technology transfer, and Western-style political institutions (Rostow, 1960). However, the theory has faced significant criticism. Frank (1967) argues that Modernisation Theory disregards historical exploitation and global inequalities. Wallerstein (1974) contends that it promotes dependency rather than development. Similarly, Todaro and Smith (2015) criticise its ethnocentric assumptions and limited applicability to diverse socio-economic contexts.

Sustainable Development Theory, formalised by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, integrates economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection into a unified development framework. According to Brundtland (1987), national development should meet present needs without compromising future generations' ability to thrive. Critics argue that the theory's implementation faces practical challenges. Sachs (2015) highlights the difficulty of balancing

economic, social, and environmental priorities. Escobar (1995) criticises its Western-centric approach. Additionally, Moyo (2019) contends that sustainable development often remains a theoretical ideal rather than an actionable policy.

This study adopts the Sustainable Development Theory due to its comprehensive integration of economic, social, and environmental dimensions, providing a balanced perspective on national development in Nigeria.

In summary, Governance Theory and Sustainable Development Theory are chosen for this study because they collectively address the multi-faceted nature of good governance and national development in Nigeria, focusing on participatory processes, accountability, and sustainability.

Relationship between Good Governance and National Development Globally

The relationship between good governance and national development is a complex and multifaceted one that significantly influences the political, economic, and social development of nations worldwide. Good governance, characterised by transparency, accountability, rule of law, and effective policy implementation, serves as a crucial pillar for fostering national development. This relationship is evident across different continents and countries, where governance models have directly impacted the quality of life, stability, and growth trajectories (World Bank, 2023).

In America, the connection between good governance and national development has been particularly pronounced in developed nations such as the United States and Canada. For instance, the U.S. has long been recognised for its governance system, which emphasises the rule of law, protection of human rights, and political accountability (UNDP, 2023). These features have underpinned the country's economic development and global influence. The United States, with a GDP of over \$26 trillion in 2023 (World Bank, 2023), has experienced substantial economic growth, driven by its stable political environment and commitment to democratic principles. Key policies such as social security, education, healthcare, and infrastructure development have been critical in ensuring sustained national development. Moreover, the U.S. ranks 20th on the 2023 Democracy Index, which evaluates the functioning of governance institutions, political participation, and civil liberties (The Economist, 2023). This underscores the importance of good governance in maintaining a robust, innovative economy and a high standard of living for its citizens.

Canada also provides an example of how good governance contributes to national development. With a GDP of over \$2.2 trillion in 2023 (World Bank, 2023), Canada has consistently ranked high in global indices of good governance, such as the World Bank's Governance Indicators, which measure political stability, rule of law, and control of corruption. Canada's transparent political system, commitment to human rights, and inclusivity have fostered sustainable growth and social equity, making it one of the world's most prosperous nations. In 2023, Canada was

ranked 6th on the Human Development Index (HDI), reflecting its high levels of education, healthcare, and life expectancy (UNDP, 2023). This demonstrates that good governance directly impacts the overall well-being of citizens and drives long-term national development.

However, even in these developed nations, challenges remain. In the United States, political polarisation and increasing mistrust in public institutions have raised concerns about the sustainability of its governance system. Issues such as income inequality, healthcare accessibility, and systemic racism persist, highlighting the need for continuous reforms to maintain effective governance structures that promote inclusive development. Nevertheless, the general trend in these countries suggests that good governance provides a stable foundation for both economic growth and societal progress (Todaro & Smith, 2021).

In Europe, the relationship between good governance and national development is similarly strong, particularly in countries that prioritise democratic values and the rule of law. Nations such as Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands offer prime examples of how effective governance leads to stable economic growth and social welfare. Germany, with a GDP of approximately \$5.2 trillion in 2023 (World Bank, 2023), exemplifies how good governance can drive national development through strong institutions and efficient public services. Germany's commitment to environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic innovation has made it one of the world's leading economies, ranking 6th globally in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index (2023).

The Nordic countries, including Sweden and Finland, consistently rank among the top nations globally in terms of good governance and national development. Sweden, for example, is often regarded as a model of social democracy, with a well-functioning welfare state and policies that promote equality and social justice. In 2023, Sweden's GDP reached approximately \$650 billion (World Bank, 2023), and the country consistently ranks high on global indices of governance, such as Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. Sweden's focus on environmental sustainability, education, healthcare, and gender equality has played a significant role in ensuring its citizens' well-being, contributing to its high HDI ranking (UNDP, 2023).

In contrast, Eastern European nations have faced more significant challenges in linking good governance to national development. Countries such as Hungary and Poland have seen democratic backsliding in recent years, with concerns about the erosion of the rule of law and judicial independence. These challenges have affected the quality of governance and, consequently, the prospects for sustained national development. In these countries, the lack of good governance has led to reduced investor confidence, slower economic growth, and challenges in maintaining social stability (Todaro & Smith, 2021).

In Asia, the relationship between good governance and national development is evident in both high-income and developing countries. Countries such as Singapore, Japan, and South Korea stand

out for their effective governance systems that have driven remarkable economic development. Singapore is often hailed as a success story in terms of governance and development. The city-state has achieved extraordinary economic growth, with a GDP of \$744 billion in 2023 (World Bank, 2023), despite its small geographical size. This success is largely attributed to Singapore's emphasis on efficient governance, transparency, and the rule of law. The government has implemented policies that focus on education, infrastructure, and healthcare, ensuring that the country remains competitive in the global economy. Singapore ranks 2nd globally in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (2023), which highlights the effectiveness of its governance in fostering a favourable environment for business and investment.

Japan and South Korea have similarly demonstrated how good governance can support national development. Both countries have rapidly industrialised in the post-World War II era, thanks in part to their stable political systems and commitment to technological innovation. Japan's GDP in 2023 stood at \$4.4 trillion, while South Korea's reached approximately \$2 trillion. Both nations continue to maintain high standards of governance, prioritising transparency, accountability, and social equity. Japan's emphasis on education and healthcare, as well as its investment in technology and infrastructure, has allowed it to remain one of the world's most developed nations (World Bank, 2023).

However, the relationship between good governance and national development is not universally positive in Asia. Countries such as Afghanistan and Myanmar, where political instability, corruption, and weak governance have prevailed, have struggled to achieve sustainable development. The lack of effective governance in these regions has contributed to economic stagnation, poverty, and social unrest. In Afghanistan, for instance, the return of the Taliban in 2021 disrupted the country's development trajectory, leading to a sharp decline in foreign investments and a humanitarian crisis. This starkly contrasts with countries like South Korea and Japan, where stable governance systems have facilitated rapid economic growth and development (Lindberg, 2022).

In Africa, the relationship between good governance and national development has been more complex, with some countries making significant strides while others continue to face challenges. Good governance has proven to be essential for fostering economic growth and reducing poverty, but the continent has also been plagued by governance-related challenges such as corruption, political instability, and weak institutions. According to a report by the African Development Bank (2023), governance challenges continue to hinder the economic development of many African nations, exacerbating issues like poverty and inequality. Furthermore, the 2023 Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance highlights the direct correlation between governance quality and national development, with countries with stable governance systems showing better progress in development indicators (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2023).

Countries such as Botswana, Mauritius, and Rwanda provide compelling examples of how good governance can contribute to national development. Botswana, for instance, has maintained a stable political environment since its independence in 1966, and its economy has grown steadily, driven by good governance and prudent management of its diamond resources. The country's GDP reached \$22 billion in 2023 (World Bank, 2023), and it consistently ranks high on the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance, which measures governance effectiveness and political stability (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2023). Botswana's emphasis on education, healthcare, and infrastructure has enabled it to reduce poverty levels and achieve steady development, with the World Bank (2023) noting that poverty rates in Botswana have declined significantly over the past decade as a result of these policies.

Mauritius, another African success story, has leveraged its strong governance system to transform from a low-income agricultural economy into a diversified, high-income nation. With a GDP of \$18 billion in 2023 (World Bank, 2023), Mauritius has developed a thriving tourism and financial services sector, underpinned by a transparent political system and commitment to sustainable development. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2023), Mauritius' success in governance is attributed to its long-standing political stability and policy framework that promotes inclusive growth. The country's success demonstrates that even small nations with limited resources can achieve significant development through good governance practices, which is also reflected in the nation's high rankings in global indices of good governance (Transparency International, 2023).

Rwanda, under the leadership of President Paul Kagame, has also seen impressive economic growth and development, largely attributed to strong governance and anti-corruption measures. Rwanda's GDP reached approximately \$13 billion in 2023 (World Bank, 2023), and the country has made substantial progress in education, healthcare, and infrastructure development. The World Bank (2023) notes that Rwanda's GDP growth rate in 2023 was among the highest in Africa, a testament to its strong governance practices. Rwanda's commitment to good governance has been instrumental in reducing poverty and promoting social equity, making it one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa. Furthermore, the African Development Bank (2023) has lauded Rwanda's robust anti-corruption measures, which have significantly contributed to its socioeconomic transformation.

However, the relationship between good governance and national development is not uniformly positive across Africa. Many African countries continue to struggle with corruption, political instability, and weak institutions, which have hindered their development prospects. In nations like Somalia, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, poor governance has contributed to ongoing conflicts, economic stagnation, and widespread poverty (Transparency International, 2023). The African Union (2023) highlights that these countries face substantial challenges in establishing stable governance systems that can promote development. These countries face

significant challenges in achieving national development, primarily due to the lack of effective governance frameworks that promote stability, accountability, and inclusivity. The Global Peace Index (2023) also ranks these nations among the most fragile states, reflecting the negative impact of poor governance on both national security and development outcomes.

In summary, globally, the relationship between good governance and national development is clear: countries with strong governance systems tend to experience higher levels of economic growth, social equity, and political stability. From the developed nations of Europe and North America to the emerging economies of Asia and Africa, good governance plays a central role in shaping national development outcomes. While challenges persist in some regions, the success stories of countries like Singapore, Germany, Botswana, and Mauritius demonstrate the transformative power of effective governance in fostering sustainable development. The relationship between good governance and national development is not merely theoretical; it is a critical factor in the realisation of a nation's potential and prosperity.

Good Governance and National Development in Nigeria: Issues and Prospects

Good governance plays a pivotal role in ensuring national development by establishing an environment that fosters stability, economic growth, and social equity. In Nigeria, the relationship between good governance and national development has been shaped by a variety of factors, including government policies, institutional frameworks, and societal dynamics. Over the years, several initiatives have been put in place to improve governance and, by extension, the national development trajectory. However, the challenges remain significant, with corruption, inefficiency, and infrastructural deficits still prevalent.

Anti-Corruption Measures: Enhancing Transparency and Accountability

Corruption has long been a major obstacle to development in Nigeria, impeding the efficient allocation of resources, discouraging investment, and undermining public trust in government institutions. Despite numerous anti-corruption measures, including the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), corruption remains pervasive in both the public and private sectors. In 2023, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Nigeria 150th out of 180 countries, reflecting the persistent nature of corruption in the country (Transparency International, 2023). The Nigerian government's efforts to curb corruption have included prosecuting high-profile individuals, enhancing financial transparency, and adopting stricter monitoring of public spending. However, the results have been mixed, with critics arguing that the government's anti-corruption stance often lacks consistency and that politically connected individuals are often able to circumvent prosecution (Akinola, 2021). Despite these challenges, some progress has been made.

For example, the Whistleblower Policy exemplifies efforts to enhance transparency and accountability in public administration. Between 2017 and 2022, the policy facilitated the recovery of over ₦1 billion in stolen funds and garnered 1,324 actionable tips, reflecting its role as a tool for combating financial malfeasance (FGN, 2022). The Treasury Single Account (TSA), implemented in 2015, centralizes government revenue collections, reducing financial leakages and enhancing accountability. By 2022, the TSA had saved over ₦500 billion in mismanaged funds, illustrating its transformative impact on public financial management (Eze, 2022).

Digital governance tools, such as the Open Treasury Portal and Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), have further revolutionized governance. These initiatives saved an estimated ₦250 billion in fraudulent payments between 2020 and 2023, underscoring the role of technology in curbing corruption and promoting efficient resource management (Bako, 2023).

Social Investment Programmes: Targeting Poverty and Inequality

The National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) serves as a critical pillar of governance aimed at alleviating poverty and reducing inequality. By 2022, the NSIP had reached over 12 million beneficiaries, supported by a budget allocation of ₦500 billion, highlighting its expansive scope and significance in addressing social vulnerabilities (NSIP, 2022). This programme encompasses initiatives such as the N-Power Programme, which provides temporary employment and skills training to Nigerian youth, and the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP), which extends microloans to small and medium-sized enterprises.

N-Power, specifically, has significantly contributed to reducing youth unemployment. By 2023, over 1 million youth had benefited from the programme, leading to a reduction in youth unemployment from 40.1% in 2020 to 35.3% in 2023. These outcomes demonstrate the capacity of social investment initiatives to drive inclusive growth and economic empowerment (National Social Investment Office, 2023). The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme further underscores governance efforts to address extreme poverty. By 2023, over ₦100 billion had been disbursed to vulnerable households, with beneficiaries meeting conditions such as school attendance and health check-ups. While implementation challenges exist, the programme's direct impact on improving livelihoods and access to basic services is evident (World Bank, 2022).

The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)

The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was established in 2005 to provide affordable healthcare coverage to Nigerians, particularly those in the formal sector. The scheme aims to reduce out-of-pocket health expenditure, which remains a major barrier to accessing quality healthcare for the majority of the population. As of 2023, the NHIS had enrolled over 15 million Nigerians, a significant increase from the initial numbers (NHIS, 2023). However, the coverage remains limited, with a large proportion of the population—especially those in the informal sector—still unable to benefit from the scheme (Oluwaseun, 2022).

Despite efforts to expand the NHIS, challenges such as poor implementation, inadequate funding, and the exclusion of informal sector workers persist. Additionally, there is a widespread lack of trust in the healthcare system, due to perceived inefficiencies and poor quality of care. For the NHIS to play a more significant role in national development, Nigeria must address the structural weaknesses in its healthcare system and adopt policies that ensure broader coverage and higher quality of care (UNDP, 2023).

Amnesty Programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria

The Amnesty Programme, which began in 2009, was designed to address the militant insurgency in the Niger Delta region by offering militants the opportunity to disarm and reintegrate into society in exchange for financial support, vocational training, and educational opportunities. By 2023, the programme had demobilised over 30,000 militants and provided them with various forms of assistance (Niger Delta Ministry, 2023).

While the Amnesty Programme has contributed to a reduction in militancy and violence in the Niger Delta, critics argue that its success has been short-lived, with many former militants returning to criminal activities due to a lack of sustainable support. The programme has also been plagued by corruption, mismanagement of funds, and inadequate oversight. Furthermore, the region continues to suffer from poor infrastructure, environmental degradation, and underdevelopment, which the Amnesty Programme has not adequately addressed (Bako, 2023). A more comprehensive approach to addressing the root causes of militancy and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta is necessary to ensure long-term peace and national development.

Electoral Process

The electoral process in Nigeria has undergone significant reforms in recent years, with the introduction of the Electoral Act (2022), which sought to improve transparency, accountability, and credibility in the electoral system. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has made strides in enhancing the credibility of elections, particularly through the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) to verify voter identity and prevent electoral fraud (INEC, 2023). Despite these efforts, elections in Nigeria remain marred by issues such as vote-buying, political violence, and insufficient voter education.

The 2023 general elections, while widely regarded as an improvement over previous ones, still witnessed significant challenges, including allegations of rigging and voter intimidation (Afolabi, 2023). In order to ensure that the electoral process contributes positively to national development, Nigeria must continue to address these systemic issues, promote voter education, and work towards making the electoral process free, fair, and credible.

Infrastructure Development: Bridging Gaps in National Growth

Infrastructure development remains central to good governance and national development. The Federal Ministry of Works and Housing has overseen the rehabilitation of over 1,000 kilometers of roads, including major corridors like the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, which has facilitated trade and reduced travel time for millions of Nigerians (Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, 2024).

Energy remains a critical focus, with the Solar Nigeria Project exemplifying efforts to address power shortages. With \$1.4 billion allocated between 2022 and 2024, the project aims to generate 20,000 MW of renewable energy by 2030. Early successes include the electrification of 500,000 rural households in 2023, demonstrating the role of renewable energy in fostering sustainable development (Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, 2024).

The National Infrastructure Development Plan provides a strategic roadmap for addressing Nigeria's infrastructural deficits. The plan estimates a \$3 trillion investment requirement by 2043, emphasizing the importance of coordinated governance efforts to close infrastructure gaps. Investments in airport rehabilitation and rail development further highlight progress in this area, creating more accessible and efficient transportation networks (FGN, 2020).

Advancements in Human Development

Good governance initiatives have directly contributed to improved human development indicators in Nigeria. The country's Human Development Index (HDI) increased from 0.52 in 2019 to 0.54 in 2022, reflecting enhanced access to health, education, and standard of living (UNDP, 2022). Life expectancy rose from 54.5 years in 2019 to 55.2 years in 2022, while maternal mortality decreased from 615 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2019 to 574 in 2022, indicating progress in healthcare delivery (WHO, 2022).

Budget allocations for education and healthcare increased by 15% and 20%, respectively, in 2022, facilitating the construction of new schools and hospitals, as well as the rehabilitation of existing facilities. These investments align with governance objectives to build human capital and promote equitable access to essential services (Budget Office, 2022).

Inclusive Policies and Social Cohesion

Governance in Nigeria also emphasizes inclusivity, particularly through the Federal Character Principle, which ensures equitable representation across ethnic and regional lines in public service appointments. While criticisms of inefficiencies exist, the principle remains a vital framework for fostering social cohesion in a multi-ethnic society (Ibrahim, 2023).

Gender-focused policies have also seen incremental progress. The 35% affirmative action policy for women in public offices increased female representation in the legislature from 6% in 2019 to

8% in 2023. These efforts reflect ongoing commitments to promoting gender equity and leveraging the full potential of Nigeria's human resources (UNDP, 2023).

In summary, Programmes, policies, structures, and infrastructures reflecting good governance in Nigeria demonstrate the country's commitment to addressing development challenges and fostering inclusive growth. From poverty-alleviation initiatives like NSIP to infrastructural advancements under the National Infrastructure Development Plan, these efforts signify progress despite persisting challenges. Investments in digital governance tools, anti-corruption measures, and human development further highlight the transformative potential of governance-driven reforms. Sustaining these efforts will require continuous political will, institutional strengthening, and inclusive policies to ensure equitable and sustainable development.

Challenges of Good Governance and National Development in Nigeria

Good governance in Nigeria faces persistent challenges that significantly hinder national development. Corruption remains a critical obstacle, draining resources that could be used for development initiatives. Transparency International ranked Nigeria 154th out of 180 countries on the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index, a figure that reflects the deeply rooted systemic issues that perpetuate financial mismanagement. Nigeria is estimated to lose approximately \$18 billion annually to corruption, a stark reminder of the need for robust anti-corruption frameworks to safeguard public resources (Transparency International, 2023).

Corruption infiltrates all levels of governance, from high-ranking officials to public procurement systems. For instance, several high-profile cases in 2023 exposed fraudulent practices in government ministries, where contracts worth ₦120 billion were awarded without due process. These incidents highlight the erosion of public trust and the impediments corruption creates for achieving equitable governance (EFCC, 2023).

Judicial inefficiency compounds these governance challenges. Nigerian courts often require over two years to resolve cases, which slows the justice delivery process and undermines the rule of law. This inefficiency is particularly detrimental in cases involving corruption or electoral disputes, further weakening public confidence in the judiciary. In 2023, over 60% of corruption cases prosecuted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) remained unresolved due to judicial delays, perpetuating a culture of impunity (Adigun, 2023).

The issue of electoral malpractice presents another challenge. The 2023 general elections were marred by voter suppression, vote-buying, and logistical inadequacies. Reports from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) show that voter turnout decreased to 29% compared to 35% in 2019, highlighting the disillusionment of citizens with the electoral process (INEC, 2023). This decline reflects systemic issues that hinder Nigeria's democratic progress, with governance structures unable to guarantee free and fair elections.

Insecurity remains a pressing challenge to good governance in Nigeria. Over 3.2 million people were displaced by violence and insurgencies as of mid-2024, with humanitarian crises unfolding in the Northeast and Northwest regions. Banditry alone claimed over 2,500 lives in 2023, while the Boko Haram insurgency and separatist movements added to the country's security woes. These conflicts disrupt economic activities, deter foreign investments, and place additional strain on governance resources. Government spending on security increased by 20% in 2023, yet insecurity persists, indicating inefficiencies in policy implementation and coordination among security agencies (UNHCR, 2024).

Economic instability further exacerbates governance challenges. Nigeria's debt stock increased to ₦46 trillion by the end of 2023, a sharp rise from ₦42 trillion in 2022, placing significant pressure on public finances. The rising debt burden has strained fiscal resources, leaving limited funding for critical sectors such as health and education (Debt Management Office, 2024). Inflation surged to 20.77% in 2023, driven by high energy costs, the depreciation of the naira, and the removal of fuel subsidies. The soaring cost of living has pushed millions below the poverty line, with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reporting that over 40% of Nigerians live in extreme poverty as of 2023 (NBS, 2023).

Infrastructure deficits remain a persistent obstacle to development. Electricity generation stagnated at 5,500 MW in 2023, far below the estimated demand of 30,000 MW. This energy shortfall hinders industrial productivity, discourages foreign investments, and exacerbates unemployment. Additionally, delays in critical infrastructure projects, such as the Second Niger Bridge, initially scheduled for completion in 2018, have escalated costs by over ₦50 billion, exposing inefficiencies in project execution and funding (Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, 2024).

Ethnic and regional disparities pose additional governance challenges. Nigeria's multi-ethnic composition often leads to uneven resource distribution and regional favoritism, fueling tensions and impeding national cohesion. The 2023 Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranked Nigeria 34th out of 54 countries, citing weak social cohesion and inequitable policies as significant barriers to effective governance (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2023).

Prospects for Good Governance and National Development in Nigeria

Despite these challenges, Nigeria holds significant prospects for improving governance and fostering national development. Digital governance reforms have emerged as a transformative force, enhancing transparency and efficiency in public administration. Initiatives like the Open Treasury Portal and the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) have saved the government ₦250 billion in fraudulent payments between 2020 and 2023. These tools have streamlined revenue collection and expenditure tracking, reducing financial leakages and promoting accountability (Bako, 2023).

The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) of 2021 presents another opportunity for advancing governance and development. The Act restructures the oil and gas sector, introducing regulatory reforms to attract investments and improve sectoral efficiency. By mid-2024, the implementation of the PIA had secured \$2 billion in foreign investments and created over 15,000 jobs in the oil sector. This progress demonstrates the potential for governance-driven economic growth in resource-dependent sectors (NNPC, 2024).

Agricultural reforms under the National Development Plan (2021–2025) aim to diversify Nigeria's economy and reduce reliance on oil revenues. The Central Bank of Nigeria's Anchor Borrowers' Program contributed ₦68 billion to agricultural productivity between 2020 and 2023, with non-oil exports increasing from 12% of GDP in 2020 to 16% in 2023. These reforms have enhanced food security and created employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas, highlighting the potential of agriculture as a driver of inclusive growth (National Planning Commission, 2023).

Renewable energy projects offer additional prospects for governance and development. The Solar Nigeria Project aims to generate 20,000 MW of renewable energy by 2030, with \$1.4 billion allocated between 2022 and 2024. Early achievements include the installation of solar grids that provided electricity to 500,000 rural households in 2023, reducing energy costs and fostering sustainable development (Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, 2024).

The demographic advantage of Nigeria's young population represents another critical opportunity. With over 60% of the population under the age of 30, the potential for economic growth is significant if adequately harnessed. The N-Power Program, which provided temporary employment to 1.2 million youth by 2023, serves as a model for addressing unemployment and equipping young Nigerians with skills for the labor market (National Social Investment Office, 2023).

The improvement in Nigeria's business environment further underscores its governance prospects. In the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business report, Nigeria improved its ranking from 145th in 2021 to 131st in 2023, reflecting reforms that simplify business registration and operations. The Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) facilitated \$4 billion in foreign direct investments by the end of 2023, demonstrating the effectiveness of governance reforms in attracting capital and fostering economic growth (World Bank, 2023).

Inclusivity in governance remains a vital aspect of national development prospects. Gender-focused initiatives, such as the 35% affirmative action policy, have shown incremental progress. Women's representation in the legislature increased from 6% in 2019 to 8% in 2023, and efforts are ongoing to achieve broader gender parity. Similarly, the Federal Character Principle aims to ensure equitable representation across Nigeria's diverse regions, promoting social cohesion and reducing ethnic tensions (UNDP, 2023).

The focus on infrastructural development also aligns with Nigeria's governance and development goals. The National Infrastructure Master Plan estimates that \$3 trillion is required to close the infrastructure gap by 2043. Recent projects, including the rehabilitation of over 1,000 kilometers of roads and upgrades to major airports, demonstrate a commitment to improving transportation networks and facilitating trade. These investments are critical for enhancing economic competitiveness and reducing regional disparities (Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, 2024).

In summary, while challenges such as corruption, insecurity, and economic instability persist, Nigeria's ongoing reforms and strategic initiatives highlight the potential for significant progress in governance and national development. Leveraging digital tools, fostering inclusivity, and investing in critical sectors such as agriculture and renewable energy remain essential for achieving sustainable growth and equitable development.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The following are the summary of key findings emerging from the study:

Relationship Between Good Governance and National Development

- a. Good governance, characterised by transparency, accountability, rule of law, and effective policy implementation, is a critical pillar for fostering national development.
- b. In developed nations such as the United States and Canada, strong governance models emphasising the rule of law, political accountability, and human rights have significantly contributed to economic stability and growth.
- c. In Europe, countries like Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands demonstrate the positive correlation between effective governance and sustainable national development.
- d. In Asia, high-income countries such as Singapore, Japan, and South Korea have implemented effective governance systems that drive rapid economic growth, while weak governance in countries like Afghanistan and Myanmar impedes progress.
- e. In Africa, countries like Botswana, Mauritius, and Rwanda show how good governance fosters economic growth and poverty reduction, while many others struggle with corruption and political instability.

Good Governance and National Development in Nigeria

- a. In Nigeria, good governance is crucial to national development, but challenges such as corruption, inefficiency, and inadequate infrastructure remain significant obstacles.
- b. Corruption continues to drain resources vital for national development, despite ongoing efforts to combat it.
- c. Social investment programmes, such as the N-Power Programme, have provided empowerment but lack long-term sustainability, and the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme faces challenges in targeting the most vulnerable populations.

- d. The National Health Insurance Scheme faces significant implementation and coverage challenges, limiting its potential to provide accessible and affordable healthcare.
- e. The Amnesty Programme, while helping to reduce militancy in the Niger Delta, has had a short-lived impact and has not addressed the region's root causes of conflict.
- f. Electoral reforms have improved the electoral process, but issues like vote-buying and political violence continue to undermine the integrity of elections.
- g. Infrastructural development remains a key priority, but challenges in project implementation, poor funding, and inefficiencies persist.

Prospects and Challenges in Nigeria

- a. Nigeria holds significant prospects for improved good governance and national development, particularly through anti-corruption initiatives, strengthening social investment programmes, and improving transparency.
- b. However, persistent challenges such as corruption, high poverty rates, the politics of godfatherism, and ethnic divisions continue to impede progress, necessitating comprehensive reforms in governance.

CONCLUSION

The paper on Good Governance and National Development in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects, explores the intricate link between governance and development, contextualising the Nigerian experience within global patterns. Good governance, defined by transparency, accountability, the rule of law, and effective policies, is universally recognised as critical for fostering national development. Globally, examples like the United States, Canada, Sweden, and Singapore illustrate how robust governance frameworks drive economic growth, political stability, and social equity. Conversely, countries like Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo demonstrate the consequences of governance failures, such as poverty, political instability, and underdevelopment.

In Nigeria, the relationship between governance and national development has been significantly shaped by policies, institutional frameworks, and socio-economic dynamics. Although efforts such as anti-corruption campaigns and social investment programmes like N-Power and Conditional Cash Transfers have made strides, persistent issues of corruption, inefficiency, and infrastructure deficits remain barriers to sustainable development. For instance, Transparency International ranked Nigeria poorly on the Corruption Perceptions Index, and infrastructural challenges, such as inadequate electricity supply, have hindered industrial growth and foreign investment.

The study identifies critical governance issues in Nigeria, including electoral malpractice, judicial inefficiency, and insecurity. For example, the 2023 general elections faced allegations of voter suppression and electoral violence. Additionally, persistent challenges such as poverty, the politicisation of resources, and regional inequalities exacerbate the governance crisis. Programmes

like the Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta have had limited success, failing to address underlying issues of environmental degradation and socio-economic marginalisation.

Despite these challenges, the paper highlights prospects for progress. These include leveraging reforms like the National Development Plan (2021–2025) and the Petroleum Industry Act to promote transparency, accountability, and sectoral investment. Strengthening social programmes and infrastructure development are also seen as pathways to enhance governance and foster development.

Finally, while Nigeria faces substantial governance challenges, targeted reforms, and institutional strengthening offer pathways for sustainable national development. The study underscores the importance of a holistic approach to governance, integrating transparency, inclusivity, and socio-economic equity.

Recommendations

The following recommendations and implementation strategies aim to improve governance and national development in Nigeria.

- i. **Strengthen Anti-Corruption Frameworks:** The Federal Government should enhance the capacity of anti-corruption agencies like EFCC and ICPC to ensure effective prosecution and reduce resource mismanagement.
- ii. **Improve Infrastructure Development:** The Federal Government should prioritise the implementation of the National Infrastructure Master Plan to address critical deficits in power, transportation, and healthcare systems.
- iii. **Expand Social Protection Programmes:** The Federal Government should scale up initiatives like Conditional Cash Transfers and N-Power to improve targeting and ensure long-term sustainability.
- iv. **Reform Electoral Processes:** The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should strengthen electoral processes by eliminating vote-buying and leveraging technology like BVAS for credible elections.
- v. **Promote Inclusive Governance:** The Federal Government should adopt equitable policies to address ethnic and regional disparities, ensuring balanced development and resource allocation across all regions.

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