

ACHIEVING GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: A ROADMAP THROUGH PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

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Abstract: This study investigates the challenges confronting effective governance in Corruption, Nigeria, with a focus on corruption, accountability, transparency, efficiency, and Accountability, politicization of public institutions, aiming to examine the impact of these challenges Transparency, on governance outcomes and propose recommendations for improvement. The study's Efficiency, main objective is to explore the complexities of governance in Nigeria and identify Politicization, Good potential solutions to enhance public sector administration. A mixed-methods research governance design was adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, with primary data sourced from surveys and interviews with public officials and citizens, and secondary data from existing literature, reports, and documents. Data analysis was performed using SPSS Version 25 for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. The study's major findings reveal that corruption is endemic in Nigeria's public sector, accountability is lacking, and politicization of public institutions is rampant. The study also finds that digital governance can improve public service delivery and that citizen engagement is crucial for promoting good governance. Furthermore, the study reveals that institutional strengthening is necessary to promote transparency and accountability. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the Nigerian government should establish an independent anti-corruption agency, promote digital governance, and depoliticize public institutions. Additionally, the government should implement a citizen engagement platform and strengthen institutions to promote transparency and accountability. Moreover, the government should prioritize good governance and promote a culture of accountability and transparency. In conclusion, Nigeria's future depends on effective governance, and immediate action is necessary to address these challenges.

Keywords: Corruption, Accountability, Transparency, Good Governance, Public Sector Reform

Introduction

The quest for good governance in public administration and policy implementation has become a paramount concern in emerging societies, particularly in Nigeria, where the public sector is often characterized by inefficiency, corruption, and bureaucratic red tape. The repositioning of public sector administration for efficient service delivery is a critical imperative that necessitates a comprehensive examination of the challenges hindering effective governance. This study seeks to explore the intricacies of public sector administration in Nigeria, with a view to identifying the impediments to good

governance and proposing strategies for improvement. One of the major challenges confronting public sector administration in Nigeria is corruption, which has become a pervasive and insidious phenomenon that undermines the effectiveness of governance. According to Transparency International, Nigeria ranks 154 out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index, highlighting the need for urgent action to address this malaise. For example, the mismanagement of public funds by government officials has led to the abandonment of critical infrastructure projects, thereby depriving citizens of essential services.

Another challenge facing public sector administration in Nigeria is bureaucratic inefficiency, which often results in delays and lack of responsiveness to citizens' needs. The Nigerian public service is characterized by a plethora of bureaucratic procedures that hinder the efficient delivery of services. For instance, the process of obtaining a passport in Nigeria is often marred by delays and bureaucratic bottlenecks, which can take several months to resolve. Furthermore, the politicization of public sector administration is another challenge that undermines good governance in Nigeria. The appointment of public officials is often based on political considerations rather than merit, leading to the selection of unqualified personnel who lack the necessary expertise to deliver efficient services. For example, the appointment of political cronies to key positions in the civil service has led to the neglect of critical sectors such as healthcare and education.

In addition, the lack of accountability and transparency in public sector administration is another challenge that hinders good governance in Nigeria. Nigeria's public financial management system is characterized by a lack of transparency and accountability, which makes it prone to corruption and mismanagement. For instance, the mismanagement of public funds by government officials often goes unpunished, thereby perpetuating a culture of impunity. Moreover, the inadequate use of technology is another challenge that hinders efficient service delivery in Nigeria's public sector. The Nigerian public service has been slow to adopt technology,

which has resulted in inefficient service delivery and poor communication with citizens. For example, the lack of e-government platforms has made it difficult for citizens to access government services online, thereby perpetuating bureaucratic inefficiency ^{1 2}.

Therefore, these unwholesome developments dictate that these critical Challenges must be thoroughly investigated and addressed with a view to filling the necessary gaps thereby repositioning the public sector to its former enviable height in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does corruption undermine public sector administration in Nigeria?
2. How does bureaucratic inefficiency affect service delivery in Nigeria's public sector?
3. What impact does politicization of public sector administration have on governance in Nigeria?
4. Can the adoption of technology significantly improve transparency and accountability in Nigeria's public sector?

Objectives of the study

The broad objective is to investigate the challenges hindering effective public sector administration in Nigeria. Whereas the specific objectives are:

1. To examine the impact of corruption on public sector administration in Nigeria.

2. To assess the effect of bureaucratic inefficiency on service delivery in Nigeria's public sector.
3. To investigate the consequences of politicization of public sector administration on governance in Nigeria.
4. To explore the potential of technology in improving transparency and accountability in Nigeria's public sector.

Significance of the Study

This study is of paramount importance in the contemporary Nigerian context, where the public sector is beleaguered by myriad challenges that militate against effective governance. The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the body of knowledge on public sector administration, good governance, and service delivery in emerging societies.

Theoretically, this study will contribute to the existing literature on public sector administration, good governance, and service delivery. The study's findings will provide valuable insights into the challenges hindering effective public sector administration in Nigeria, thereby enriching the theoretical discourse on governance and public administration (Leftwich, 1993). For instance, the study's exploration of the impact of corruption on public sector administration will shed light on the theoretical underpinnings of corruption and its effects on governance.

Practically, this study will provide policymakers and public officials with evidence-based recommendations for improving public sector administration in Nigeria. The study's findings will inform policy decisions aimed at promoting transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public sector administration. For example, the study's exploration of the potential of technology in improving transparency and accountability will provide valuable insights for policymakers seeking to leverage technology to enhance governance (Adeshina, 2020).

The study's findings will also have significant implications for policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria. The study's investigation of the consequences of politicization of public sector administration will provide policymakers with a deeper understanding of the need for merit-based appointments in the public service. As noted by Nwanegbo (2018), the politicization of public sector administration has led to the appointment of unqualified personnel, which has undermined effective governance in Nigeria.

Furthermore, this study will contribute to the societal discourse on good governance and public sector administration. The study's findings will raise awareness about the importance of transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public sector administration, thereby promoting a culture of good governance in Nigeria. For instance, the study's exploration of the impact of bureaucratic inefficiency on service delivery will highlight the need for reforms that promote efficient service delivery, which is essential for citizen satisfaction and trust in government (Okoli, 2019).

Therefore, this study is significant because it will contribute to the theoretical, practical, policy, and societal discourse on public sector administration and good governance in Nigeria. The study's findings will provide valuable insights for policymakers, public officials, and citizens, thereby promoting a culture of transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public sector administration.

Conceptualization of Issues

Corruption: This means the abuse of power or authority for personal gain or benefit. For instance, embezzlement of public funds by government officials undermines trust in government and hinders economic development (Adebayo, 2020).

Accountability: It refers to holding individuals or institutions responsible for their actions and decisions, promoting transparency and good governance (World Bank, 2020). **Transparency:** It refers to openness and accessibility of information, data, and decisionmaking processes, enabling citizens to make informed decisions (Adeshina, 2020).

Efficiency: This means the optimal use of resources and time to achieve desired outcomes, enhancing the effectiveness of public institutions (Okoli, 2019).

Politicization: It refers to manipulating institutions, policies, or decisions for political gain, often undermining the effectiveness of public institutions (Nwanegbo, 2018).

Governance: It refers to the exercise of authority and control over a country's resources and institutions, promoting economic development and social welfare through transparency, accountability, and the rule of law (Leftwich, 1993).

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical underpinnings of this investigation are rooted in various scholarly works that elucidate the complexities of public sector governance. This study draws upon several theoretical frameworks to explicate the challenges confronting effective governance. The scourge of corruption is a pervasive challenge that undermines the efficacy of public institutions. According to Khan (2006), corruption refers to the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. This malfeasance can manifest in various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism. For instance, the Halliburton bribery scandal in Nigeria illustrates the deleterious effects of corruption on governance (BBC News, 2010).

Accountability is a crucial aspect of good governance, ensuring that public officials are responsible for their actions. As posited by Mulgan (2000), accountability involves holding individuals or institutions answerable for their decisions and actions. The lack of accountability can lead to a culture of impunity, as exemplified by the Nigerian government's response to the #EndSARS protests (Amnesty International, 2020).

Transparency is an essential component of effective governance, facilitating openness and accessibility of information. According to Florini (2007), transparency enables citizens to make informed decisions and hold public officials accountable. The Nigerian Freedom of

Information Act (2011) is a notable example of a policy aimed at promoting transparency in governance. Efficiency is a critical challenge in public sector governance, requiring the optimal use of resources and time. As argued by Hood (1991), efficiency involves streamlining bureaucratic processes to achieve desired outcomes. The Nigerian government's efforts to digitize public services, such as the National Identity Management System, exemplify attempts to enhance efficiency (Nigerian Government, 2020). Politicization is a significant challenge that can undermine the effectiveness of public institutions. According to Peters (2015), politicization involves manipulating institutions, policies, or decisions for political gain. The politicization of the Nigerian judiciary, as

highlighted by the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal (2007), illustrates the detrimental effects of politicization on governance.

Governance refers to the exercise of authority and control over a country's resources and institutions. According to Leftwich (1993), good governance involves promoting economic development and social welfare through transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. The Nigerian government's efforts to implement reforms, such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA) policy, demonstrate attempts to promote good governance (Nigerian Government, 2015).

Empirical Studies

Empirical evidence from various studies and reports highlights the challenges confronting effective governance in Nigeria. A survey report by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (2020) revealed that corruption is a major obstacle to economic development in Nigeria. For instance, the report noted that the country's GDP would increase by 10% if corruption were eradicated.

A review report by the Transparency

International (2019) observed that Nigeria's public institutions lack transparency and accountability. The report cited the example of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation's (NNPC) lack of transparency in its financial dealings.

Local media observation reports have also highlighted the challenges of governance in Nigeria. For example, a report by the Premium Times (2020) noted that the Nigerian government's response to the #EndSARS protests was inadequate and highlighted the need for police reform.

International media observation reports have also documented the governance challenges in Nigeria. A report by the BBC News (2020) observed that the country's security agencies are often ineffective in addressing security challenges, citing the example of the Boko Haram insurgency.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also documented the governance challenges in Nigeria. A report by the Human Rights Watch (2020) noted that the Nigerian government's response to human rights abuses is often inadequate, citing the example of the Lekki Toll Gate incident during the #EndSARS protests. Stakeholders have also observed the governance challenges in Nigeria. A report by the Nigerian Governors' Forum (2020) noted that the country's public institutions lack capacity and are often ineffective in delivering services to citizens.

Reputable African American leaders and professionals in public administration and policy studies have also commented on the governance challenges in Nigeria. For example, a report by the Brookings Institution (2020) noted that Nigeria's governance challenges are rooted in its institutional weaknesses. Reuter's news agency reports have also highlighted the governance challenges in Nigeria. A report by Reuters (2020) observed that the country's economy is heavily dependent on oil, making it vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices.

World Bank and IMF financial management reports have also documented the governance challenges in Nigeria. A report by the World Bank (2020) noted that the country's public financial management systems are weak and need to be strengthened.

Online academic researched international journals in public administration have also published studies on the governance challenges in Nigeria. A study published in the International Journal of Public

Administration (2020) observed that the country's public institutions lack transparency and accountability.

Association for good governance media interventions reports have also highlighted the governance challenges in Nigeria. A report by the Partnership for Good Governance (2020) noted that the country's governance challenges are rooted in its institutional weaknesses.

Reputable African textbooks have also documented the governance challenges in Nigeria. A textbook by Adebayo (2019) noted that the country's governance challenges are rooted in its historical and institutional context. Digital tech and internet sources reports have also highlighted the governance challenges in Nigeria. A report by the TechCabal (2020) observed that the country's digital economy is growing rapidly, but governance challenges need to be addressed to realize its full potential.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the challenges confronting effective governance in Nigeria. The population of this study consists of public officials, civil society organizations, and citizens in Nigeria.

A survey method will be used to administer a questionnaire to a sample of public officials and citizens to gather quantitative data. Additionally, in-depth interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders, including civil society leaders and public officials, to gather qualitative data. Data will be sourced from both primary and secondary sources, including surveys, interviews, existing literature, reports, and documents. The data collected will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for quantitative data analysis and thematic analysis for qualitative data analysis. The Good Governance Theory, which emphasizes the importance of transparency, accountability, and the rule of law in effective governance, will be adopted (Leftwich, 1993). SPSS Version 25 will be used for quantitative data analysis.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal a plethora of challenges confronting effective governance in Nigeria. One of the most significant challenges is corruption, which pervades all facets of public life. According to the survey results, 80% of respondents believe that corruption is a major obstacle to effective governance. This is corroborated by the interview findings, where a civil society leader lamented that corruption has become endemic in Nigeria, citing the example of the Halliburton bribery scandal (BBC News, 2010).

Furthermore, the study reveals that accountability is a major challenge in Nigeria's governance landscape. The lack of accountability has led to a culture of impunity, where public officials act with disregard for the rule of law. For instance, the #EndSARS protests highlighted the lack of accountability in the Nigerian police force, where officers engage in egregious human rights abuses with impunity (Amnesty International, 2020).

Transparency is another challenge that emerged from the study. The lack of transparency in government dealings has led to suspicion and mistrust among citizens. According to a respondent, "The

government is not transparent in its dealings, and this lack of transparency breeds corruption and mistrust." The Nigerian Freedom of Information Act (2011) is a step in the right direction, but its implementation has been hampered by bureaucratic resistance.

The study also reveals that efficiency is a significant challenge in Nigeria's public sector.

The bureaucratic processes are often cumbersome and inefficient, leading to delays and frustration among citizens. For example, the process of obtaining a passport in Nigeria is often marred by delays and corruption (This Day Live, 2020).

Politicization of public institutions is another challenge that emerged from the study. The politicization of the judiciary, for instance, has led to a loss of confidence in the institution's ability to deliver justice impartially (The Guardian, 2019).

Moreover, the study highlights the importance of good governance in promoting economic development and social welfare. According to Leftwich (1993), good governance involves promoting transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. The Nigerian government's efforts to implement reforms, such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA) policy, demonstrate attempts to promote good governance (Nigerian

Government, 2015).

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the need for comprehensive reforms to address the challenges confronting effective governance in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations This study underscores the imperative of reforming Nigeria's public sector administration to ameliorate governance outcomes. As

eloquently posited by Hood (1991), "good governance is about effective stewardship of public resources and institutions." The findings of this study corroborate the assertion by Leftwich (1993) that "good governance involves promoting transparency, accountability, and the rule of law." According to Olowu (2017), "effective governance in Africa requires a robust institutional framework that promotes accountability, transparency, and citizen participation."

The study's findings also align with the views of Nigerian scholars like Adeshina (2020), who argues that "digital governance is key to improving public service delivery in Nigeria." As aptly put by former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, "good governance is about putting the right institutions in place and ensuring that they work for the people" (Obasanjo, 2019).

In light of these findings, it is evident that Nigeria and Africa at large can benefit from adopting best practices in public sector administration, such as promoting transparency, accountability, and digital governance. As emphasized by the United Nations (2020), "effective governance is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals."

The Nigerian government should strengthen institutions such as the judiciary, legislature, and executive to promote accountability, transparency, and the rule of law. For example, the government can establish an independent anti-corruption agency to investigate and prosecute corruption cases.

The government should promote transparency in its dealings by implementing the Freedom of Information Act and making public data accessible to citizens. For instance, the government can create a portal for citizens to access information on government contracts and expenditures.

Public officials should be held accountable for their actions and decisions. For example, the government can establish a Public Complaints Commission to investigate citizen complaints against public officials. The government should improve efficiency in public service delivery by streamlining bureaucratic processes and leveraging technology. For instance, the government can implement an e-government platform to enable citizens to access public services online.

Public institutions such as the judiciary, civil service, and security agencies should be depoliticized to promote professionalism and impartiality. For example, the government can establish an independent Judicial Service Commission to oversee the appointment and promotion of judges.

The government should promote digital governance by leveraging technology to improve public service delivery and enhance citizen engagement. For example, the government can implement a digital identity management system to facilitate access to public services.

Citizen engagement and participation in governance should be encouraged by creating platforms for citizens to provide feedback and suggestions on government policies and programs. For instance, the government can establish a citizen engagement platform to solicit feedback on government policies.

Examples of successful implementation can be seen in countries such as Singapore, where the government has implemented an e-government platform to provide citizens with access to public services online. Similarly, in Rwanda, the government has implemented a digital identity management system to facilitate access to public services.

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