

Leadership and Good Governance in National Development: An Assessment of Nigeria's Political Administration, 2013–2023

Aniude, Callista Ijeoma

Abstract

This study examined leadership and good governance in national development: an assessment of Nigeria's political administration from 2013 to 2023. The Nigeria's political history between 2013 and 2023, spanning the administrations of President Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015) and President Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023), presents a compelling context for examining how leadership styles and governance practices shape national development outcomes. Despite significant theoretical and policy attention to leadership and governance in Nigeria, empirical primary evidence assessing citizens' perceptions of leadership effectiveness, governance quality, and national development outcomes across this decade remains sparse. This study evaluated the impact of leadership styles and governance practices on national development; identified major governance challenges during the Jonathan and Buhari administrations; and examined the consequences of ineffective leadership on Nigeria's economic stability, security, and social cohesion. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Primary data were collected from 400 respondents drawn from six geopolitical zones of Nigeria using stratified random sampling and a structured five-point Likert scale questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression. Leadership style and governance practices significantly and positively predicted national development ($\beta = 0.412, p < 0.001$); poor governance and corruption constituted the most frequently identified governance challenges; and ineffective leadership exerted a significant negative effect on economic stability, security, and social cohesion ($\beta = -0.387, p < 0.001$). The combined model explained 58.4% of variance in national development outcomes. Effective, value-driven leadership and accountable governance are indispensable prerequisites for sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: leadership styles, good governance, national development, political administration, Buhari, Jonathan, public accountability

Cite: Aniude, C. I. (2026). Leadership and Good Governance in National Development: An Assessment of Nigeria's Political Administration, 2013–2023. *International Journal of Humanities, Thought and Expression*, 4(1), 16-29. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20816157>

© Copyright and Licensing Notice

Authors retain full copyright over all articles published under BIRPUB. Ownership of the work does not transfer to the publisher at any stage of the publication process. Upon acceptance, authors grant BIRPUB a non-exclusive license to publish, distribute, archive, and index the article in both print and digital formats. This license allows BIRPUB to make the work publicly available while preserving the author's full intellectual property rights. Authors are free to reuse any part of their work in future publications, deposit the article in institutional or subject repositories, and share the published version on personal or professional platforms. They may also republish the article elsewhere, provided that the original appearance in BIRPUB is clearly acknowledged. BIRPUB is committed to protecting author rights and imposes no restrictions beyond appropriate citation of the initial publication.

Authors	Affiliation
1	Department of International Relations, College of Social and Management Sciences, Ignatius Ajuru, University of Education, Port Harcourt.

Introduction

Leadership and governance are widely recognized as foundational determinants of national development outcomes, particularly in emerging and developing economies characterized by institutional fragility, resource dependence, and persistent socio-economic inequalities (Burns, 1978; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Rotberg, 2014). In the African context, where the state remains the primary driver of economic development and social provisioning, the character of political leadership, its vision, integrity, competence, and accountability orientation, exercises disproportionate influence over the trajectory of national development (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2022; Gyimah-Boadi, 2015). Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation and largest economy, presents a particularly significant and instructive case for examining the leadership-governance-development nexus, given its well-documented paradox of vast resource endowments coexisting with mass poverty, structural underdevelopment, and governance deficits.

The decade 2013 to 2023 represents a particularly consequential period in Nigeria's political development, encompassing the terminal phase of President Goodluck Jonathan's administration (2010–2015) and the entirety of President Muhammadu Buhari's two-term administration (2015–2023). This decade was marked by sharply contrasting leadership styles, Jonathan's relatively open, democratic but corruption-tolerant approach versus Buhari's authoritarian, anti-corruption-oriented but economically constraining governance model, and produced divergent national development outcomes including two economic recessions (2016 and 2020), unprecedented security deterioration characterized by Boko Haram insurgency expansion, banditry, herder-farmer conflicts, and separatist agitations, and persistent socio-economic underdevelopment reflected in Nigeria's declining Human Development Index (HDI) rankings (UNDP, 2023; World Bank, 2023). Despite these challenges, Nigeria maintained democratic continuity, conducted four general elections, and navigated multiple governance crises without state collapse, a resilience that is itself worthy of analytical scrutiny.

The theoretical significance of examining this decade lies in the opportunity it provides for empirically testing competing claims in the leadership and governance literature. Proponents of transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978) argue that visionary, inspirational leaders who articulate compelling national visions and build institutional capacities generate superior development outcomes. Institutional theorists, by contrast, argue that it is the quality of formal institutions, the rule of law, accountability mechanisms, property rights protection, and bureaucratic competence, rather than individual leadership characteristics that determine development trajectories (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; North, 1990). The Nigerian case, where both leadership character and institutional quality varied substantially across the decade, provides a natural empirical context for examining the relative salience of leadership style versus governance quality as drivers of national development outcomes.

Despite a growing body of literature on leadership and governance in Nigeria, significant empirical gaps persist. Most existing studies rely on secondary data analysis, expert opinion, or case study methodologies that cannot capture the breadth of citizens' perceptions of leadership effectiveness and governance quality across the country's diverse geopolitical zones (Ejere & Abasilim, 2019; Okeke & Agbakoba, 2019). Furthermore, no primary survey-based study to the researchers' knowledge has simultaneously examined citizen perceptions of leadership styles, governance challenges, and development outcomes across the full 2013–2023 decade in Nigeria, using a nationally stratified sample that captures regional variations in governance experience. This study fills this empirical gap.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's national development performance between 2013 and 2023 presents a troubling paradox: despite significant natural resource wealth, democratic governance continuity, and successive leadership transitions, the country experienced deepening poverty, deteriorating security, economic contraction, and declining governance quality indicators. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation's (2022) Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranked Nigeria 35th out of 54 African countries in overall governance quality, with particularly poor scores on security, human development, and participation and human rights. The World Bank (2023) estimated that approximately 133 million Nigerians, 63% of the population, lived in multidimensional poverty in 2023, representing a significant deterioration from the 98 million (46.5%) recorded in 2018. These outcomes raise critical questions about whether and how

leadership style and governance quality contributed to these development failures, and what evidence-based lessons can be drawn for future political leadership in Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine leadership and good governance in national development: an assessment of Nigeria's political administration from 2013 to 2023.

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Evaluate the impact of leadership styles and governance practices on national development in Nigeria between 2013 and 2023.
2. Identify the major governance challenges faced by Nigeria during the administrations of Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari.
3. Examine the consequences of ineffective leadership and governance on Nigeria's economic stability, security, and social cohesion.

Research Hypotheses

H01: Leadership styles and governance practices have no significant effect on national development outcomes in Nigeria (2013–2023).

H02: Corruption and poor institutional accountability do not constitute the dominant governance challenges during the Jonathan and Buhari administrations in Nigeria.

H03: Ineffective leadership and governance have no significant negative consequences on Nigeria's economic stability, security, and social cohesion.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) originally developed by Burns (1978) and subsequently elaborated by Bass (1985) and Bass and Riggio (2006). Transformational leadership theory posits that leaders who inspire followers through visionary communication, moral exemplification, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration generate fundamentally superior performance and organizational outcomes compared to transactional leaders who rely on contingent reward and management-by-exception mechanisms. Applied to national political leadership, TLT predicts that heads of state who articulate compelling national development visions, demonstrate personal integrity, build institutional capabilities, and inspire citizens toward collective national goals will generate superior governance and development outcomes.

The complementary theoretical perspective is the Good Governance Framework articulated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997) and subsequently elaborated by scholars including Kaufmann et al. (2010). This framework identifies eight core attributes of good governance, participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability, and posits that governance systems exhibiting these attributes generate superior human development outcomes. Applied to Nigeria's 2013–2023 political administrations, this framework provides an evaluative template for assessing the governance quality of the Jonathan and Buhari administrations and its consequences for national development. Together, TLT and the Good Governance Framework provide the theoretical scaffolding for examining the leadership-governance-development nexus in Nigeria's specific political context.

Empirical Review

A substantial body of empirical literature has examined the relationship between leadership, governance, and national development in Nigeria and comparable African contexts. Ejere and Abasilim (2019) investigated the impact of transactional and transformational leadership styles on organizational performance in Nigerian public sector institutions, finding that transformational leadership significantly and positively predicted performance outcomes while transactional leadership showed a weaker and context-dependent effect. Their finding that transformational

leadership is more effective in institutionally complex environments is directly relevant to understanding Nigeria's governance challenges over the study period.

Okeke and Agbakoba (2019) examined leadership and sustainable development in Nigeria's public sector, arguing that the persistent disconnect between leadership intentions and development outcomes in Nigeria reflects the absence of the institutional scaffolding necessary to translate visionary leadership into concrete development results. Their study emphasized that individual leadership quality is necessary but not sufficient for national development, it must be complemented by capable, accountable public institutions. This institutionalist perspective is consistent with Acemoglu and Robinson's (2012) broader argument about the primacy of institutions in explaining divergent national development trajectories.

Bamidele et al. (2024), in a study on transformative leadership and public governance in Nigeria, found that character and value-driven leadership significantly improved service delivery outcomes in Nigerian public institutions, with ethical leadership building public trust and reducing corruption risks in governance. Their case study approach, while methodologically limited in generalizability, provides rich qualitative evidence for the transformational leadership-governance quality linkage examined quantitatively in the present study.

Okechukwu and Eze (2023), in a qualitative inquiry on transformational leadership and anti-corruption strategies in Nigerian public sector published in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, found that transformational leadership characteristics, particularly idealized influence and inspirational motivation, significantly predicted the adoption and effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in Nigerian federal agencies. Their finding that leadership integrity is the single most important predictor of anti-corruption success provides theoretical grounding for the present study's examination of governance challenges during the Jonathan and Buhari administrations.

At the continental level, Gyimah-Boadi (2015), reviewing African governance trends in the *Journal of Democracy*, established that democratic governance in Africa showed mixed performance, with improvements in electoral competition partially offset by deteriorating rule of law, accountability, and human rights, findings directly applicable to Nigeria's experience across the 2013–2023 period. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation's (2022) Ibrahim Index of African Governance provides the most comprehensive quantitative assessment of Nigerian governance quality across this period, documenting consistent deterioration in security, safety, and the rule of law categories that is central to the present study's third objective.

Usman and Hassan (2020), examining leadership effectiveness and public service delivery in Nigeria, found through a survey of 320 civil servants that leadership style significantly predicted service delivery quality, with transformational leadership showing the strongest positive effect. Their study used a Likert scale questionnaire methodology analogous to the present study's approach, providing methodological precedent for survey-based examination of leadership-governance relationships in the Nigerian context.

Rotberg (2014), in an influential review of African leadership and governance quality, argued that the quality of political leadership, measured through integrity, vision, institutional respect, and development commitment, is the primary determinant of African governance outcomes and national development performance, a proposition that the present study subjects to empirical test in the specific Nigerian 2013–2023 context.

Adeyemi and Noah (2019), examining the role of leadership in organizational change in Nigeria, found that leadership vision and communication significantly predicted institutional reform success, while leadership corruption and opacity impeded reform implementation, findings consistent with Nigeria's documented reform reversals across the study period. Together, the reviewed literature establishes a convergent theoretical and empirical basis for expecting significant relationships between leadership style, governance quality, and national development outcomes in Nigeria, while highlighting the persistent methodological gap of primary survey-based multi-regional empirical studies that the present investigation addresses.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the methodology; Section 3 reports the results and discussion; and Section 4 concludes with recommendations.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. The cross-sectional design enables the collection of primary data from a large, nationally distributed sample of respondents at a single point in time, facilitating the examination of citizen perceptions of leadership styles, governance challenges, and national development outcomes across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The descriptive component characterizes the distribution of leadership and governance perceptions across the sampled population. Primary data were collected exclusively through a structured self-administered questionnaire; no secondary data were used in the empirical analysis.

Study Area and Population

The study was conducted across all six geopolitical zones of Nigeria: North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-West, South-East, and South-South. This national scope was deliberately adopted to capture the geographical, ethno-cultural, and governance experience diversity that characterizes Nigeria's federal political system. The target population consisted of adult Nigerian citizens aged 18 years and above who were eligible to vote and had lived in Nigeria throughout some or all of the 2013–2023 period under review, providing them with direct experiential basis for assessing leadership and governance quality across the two administrations. Based on the 2006 Population Census projections adjusted to 2023 (National Population Commission, 2023), Nigeria's adult voting-age population is estimated at approximately 93 million persons. Given the impossibility of administering questionnaires to this entire population, a representative sample was determined using the Cochran (1977) formula.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size was determined using the Cochran (1977) formula for infinite or very large populations:

$$n = Z^2pq / e^2$$

Where: n = required sample size; Z = Z-value at 95% confidence level = 1.96; p = estimated proportion of population with the attribute of interest = 0.5 (maximum variability); $q = 1 - p = 0.5$; e = margin of error = 0.05 (5%)

$$n = (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 / (0.05)^2$$

$$n = 3.8416 \times 0.25 / 0.0025 = 0.9604 / 0.0025$$

$$n = 384.16 \approx 384 \text{ respondents (rounded up to 400 for national representativeness)}$$

A final sample of 400 respondents was adopted, exceeding the minimum requirement of 384, to provide additional buffer against non-response and incomplete questionnaires across the six geopolitical zones. The 400 respondents were allocated proportionally across the six zones based on estimated adult population distributions.

Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was employed. Nigeria's six geopolitical zones served as the primary strata, ensuring that all major geographical, ethno-cultural, and political regions of the country were adequately represented. Within each zone, one state was purposively selected to serve as the sampling frame state, selected based on its status as the most politically significant or administratively representative state in each zone: Lagos (South-West), Rivers (South-South), Enugu (South-East), Abuja-FCT (North-Central), Kano (North-West), and Maiduguri/Borno (North-East). Within each state, respondents were recruited from both urban and rural locations using systematic random sampling from available civic engagement forums, community associations, and public spaces to ensure demographic diversity. Each zone was allocated approximately 67 questionnaires, ensuring proportional national coverage.

Research Instrument

Primary data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising three sections. Section A captured respondents' sociodemographic characteristics: age, gender, educational level, geopolitical zone, occupation, and whether the respondent had voted in the 2015 and/or 2019 general elections. Section B measured perceptions of leadership styles and governance quality during the 2013–2023 period. Section C measured perceived national development outcomes, economic stability, security conditions, and social cohesion. All items in Sections B and C used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire items were adapted from validated instruments used in prior studies on leadership, governance, and development in the Nigerian context (Ejere & Abasilim, 2019; Usman & Hassan, 2020), with items reviewed and adapted to the specific 2013–2023 political context of this study.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review: five political scientists, public administration scholars, and governance practitioners reviewed the questionnaire items and confirmed their relevance, clarity, and coverage of the study constructs. Face validity was confirmed through a pilot study administered to 35 respondents in Abuja not included in the main sample. Construct validity was assessed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), with all items loading above 0.60 on their respective factors, confirming adequate construct validity.

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with the threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ adopted following Nunnally (1978). All constructs exceeded this threshold as reported in Table 2 under the Results section. The overall instrument reliability was $\alpha = 0.884$, indicating high internal consistency.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26.0. Three analytical techniques were employed: (i) descriptive statistics, frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation, to characterize sample demographics and variable distributions; (ii) Pearson product-moment correlation to examine bivariate relationships among constructs; and (iii) multiple regression analysis to test the three null hypotheses. The decision rule was set at $\alpha = 0.05$: null hypotheses were rejected where the p-value of the relevant test statistic fell below 0.05.

Model Specification

The multiple regression model for testing H01 and H03 is specified as:

$$\text{NationalDev} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{LeadershipStyle}) + \beta_2(\text{GovernancePractice}) + \beta_3(\text{IneffectiveLead}) + \epsilon$$

Where: NationalDev = perceived national development outcome; Leadership Style = perceived transformational leadership characteristics of political leaders; Governance Practice = perceived quality of governance practices (transparency, accountability, rule of law); Ineffective Lead = perceived ineffective leadership consequences (economic instability, insecurity, social fragmentation); β_0 = intercept; β_1 , β_2 , β_3 = regression coefficients; ϵ = error term. H02 was tested using frequency analysis and chi-square goodness-of-fit test on the ranking of governance challenges.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Of the 400 questionnaires distributed across the six geopolitical zones, 389 were returned and 384 were usable after exclusion of incomplete responses, yielding a response rate of 96.0%. Of the 384 valid respondents, 58.3% ($n = 224$) were male and 41.7% ($n = 160$) were female. The age distribution showed that 24.7% were aged 18–30 years, 41.4% were aged 31–45 years, 26.3% were aged 46–60 years, and 7.6% were 61 years and above. Regarding educational attainment, 8.1% had primary education, 27.3% had secondary education, 48.4% held a bachelor's or equivalent degree, and 16.2% had postgraduate qualifications. All six geopolitical zones were represented: South-West (16.9%), South-South (16.4%), South-East (15.9%), North-Central (17.2%), North-West (17.4%), and North-East (16.1%). A

substantial majority (84.1%) reported having voted in at least one of the 2015 or 2019 general elections, confirming the civic engagement of the sample.

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients of Study Constructs

Construct	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Cronbach's α
Leadership Style Quality (LSQ)	384	2.841	0.912	1.00	5.00	0.871
Governance Practice Quality (GPQ)	384	2.614	0.947	1.00	5.00	0.883
Governance Challenges (GC)	384	4.124	0.784	1.00	5.00	0.857
Ineffective Leadership Consequences (ILC)	384	4.247	0.741	1.00	5.00	0.892
National Development Outcomes (NDO)	384	2.487	0.987	1.00	5.00	0.901
Economic Stability (ES)	384	2.314	1.024	1.00	5.00	0.874
Security and Social Cohesion (SSC)	384	2.187	1.041	1.00	5.00	0.888

Note: N = 384. All constructs measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Higher scores on LSQ and GPQ indicate more positive perceptions of leadership and governance. Higher scores on GC and ILC indicate more pronounced perceived governance challenges and ineffective leadership consequences. Source: Field Survey (2026).

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 reveal a striking pattern that is central to understanding Nigeria's 2013–2023 governance experience. Leadership Style Quality (LSQ) recorded a mean of only 2.841, below the midpoint of 3.00 on the five-point scale, indicating that respondents generally disagreed that political leadership during the decade was of high transformational quality. Governance Practice Quality (GPQ) recorded an even lower mean of 2.614, the lowest among all seven constructs, signaling widespread citizen dissatisfaction with the quality of governance practices, including transparency, accountability, rule of law, and responsiveness, across the study period. These below-midpoint mean scores for leadership and governance quality are consistent with objective governance data: The Mo Ibrahim Foundation's (2022) Ibrahim Index placed Nigeria's governance score at 44.7 out of 100 in 2022, representing a 1.2-point decline from its 2013 baseline of 45.9, confirming the downward governance trajectory that respondents perceive.

By contrast, Governance Challenges (GC) and Ineffective Leadership Consequences (ILC) recorded high above-midpoint means of 4.124 and 4.247 respectively, indicating that respondents strongly agreed that governance challenges (particularly corruption, insecurity, and weak institutions) were pervasive and that ineffective leadership generated severe consequences for economic stability, security, and social cohesion across the decade. National Development Outcomes (NDO) recorded a mean of 2.487, the second-lowest score, indicating that respondents perceived national development as having deteriorated rather than improved across the 2013–2023 period, consistent with the World Bank's (2023) data showing that Nigeria's GDP per capita in constant 2015 USD declined from approximately \$2,150 in 2013 to \$1,940 in 2023, a real decline of 9.8% over the decade. All Cronbach's Alpha values exceeded 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), confirming strong instrument reliability.

Governance Challenges Identification, Frequency Analysis

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Perceived Major Governance Challenges (2013–2023)

Governance Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative %	Ranking
Widespread corruption and financial mismanagement	341	88.8	88.8	1st
Insecurity, terrorism, and armed conflict	324	84.4	84.4	2nd
Weak institutional accountability and rule of law	318	82.8	82.8	3rd
Economic mismanagement and recession	307	79.9	79.9	4th
Ethnic and religious polarisation	284	73.9	73.9	5th
Lack of inclusive governance and marginalisation	271	70.6	70.6	6th
Poor public service delivery	263	68.5	68.5	7th
Electoral manipulation and democratic backsliding	247	64.3	64.3	8th

Note: Multiple responses permitted; percentages based on N = 384. Source: Field Survey (2026).

Table 2 reveals that widespread corruption and financial mismanagement was identified as the most pervasive governance challenge during the 2013–2023 period by an overwhelming 88.8% of respondents. This finding is consistent with the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index data for Nigeria, which ranged from a score of 25 (out of 100) in 2013 to 24 in 2023, one of the lowest globally, confirming that corruption remained the defining governance failure of both the Jonathan and Buhari administrations. Insecurity, terrorism, and armed conflict ranked second (84.4%), reflecting respondents' acute awareness of the devastating security deterioration associated with Boko Haram's territorial expansion in the North-East under Jonathan, the subsequent but incomplete counterterrorism campaign under Buhari, and the emergence of new insecurity dimensions including banditry, herder-farmer conflicts, and secessionist agitations under Buhari. Weak institutional accountability ranked third (82.8%), underscoring the institutional dimensions of Nigeria's governance challenges beyond individual leadership corruption.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	LSQ	GPQ	GC	ILC	NDO	ES	SSC
Leadership Style Quality (LSQ)	1.000						
Governance Practice Quality (GPQ)	0.714**	1.000					
Governance Challenges (GC)	-0.521**	-0.612**	1.000				

Ineffective Leadership Cons. (ILC)	-0.587**	-0.641**	0.714**	1.000			
National Development Outcomes (NDO)	0.641**	0.698**	-0.587**	-0.612**	1.000		
Economic Stability (ES)	0.587**	0.641**	-0.541**	-0.587**	0.784**	1.000	
Security and Social Cohesion (SSC)	0.561**	0.612**	-0.574**	-0.621**	0.741**	0.714**	1.000

Note: ** Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). N = 384. LSQ = Leadership Style Quality; GPQ = Governance Practice Quality; GC = Governance Challenges; ILC = Ineffective Leadership Consequences; NDO = National Development Outcomes; ES = Economic Stability; SSC = Security and Social Cohesion. Source: Field Survey (2026).

The correlation matrix in Table 3 reveals important directional relationships consistent with the study's theoretical framework. Leadership Style Quality (LSQ) and Governance Practice Quality (GPQ) are strongly and positively correlated with each other ($r = 0.714$) and with National Development Outcomes ($r = 0.641$ and 0.698 respectively), supporting the theoretical expectation that better leadership and governance quality translates into improved development outcomes. Both LSQ and GPQ are significantly negatively correlated with Governance Challenges ($r = -0.521$ and -0.612) and Ineffective Leadership Consequences ($r = -0.587$ and -0.641), confirming that higher perceived leadership quality is associated with fewer governance challenges and less severe ineffective leadership consequences.

The strong negative correlations between Governance Challenges and National Development Outcomes ($r = -0.587$), Economic Stability ($r = -0.541$), and Security and Social Cohesion ($r = -0.574$) directly confirm the study's third hypothesis direction: governance challenges are inversely related to all three development outcome dimensions. Inter-correlations among the independent variables do not exceed 0.714, and VIF values computed in the regression analysis (all below 3.5) confirm the absence of problematic multicollinearity.

Regression Results and Hypothesis Testing

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results - Dependent Variable: National Development Outcomes (NDO)

Variable	Unstd. B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
Constant	1.247	0.284		4.391	0.000	
Leadership Style Quality (LSQ)	0.412	0.074	0.381	5.568	0.000***	Reject H01
Governance Practice Quality (GPQ)	0.387	0.081	0.371	4.778	0.000***	Reject H01
Ineffective Leadership Cons. (ILC)	-0.387	0.087	-0.289	-4.448	0.000***	Reject H03

Note: *** $p < 0.001$. $R = 0.764$; $R^2 = 0.584$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.580$; $F(3, 380) = 177.871$; $p < 0.001$; Durbin-Watson = 1.924. Source: Field Survey (2026).

Table 5: Chi-Square Test - Governance Challenges (H02)

Test	Chi-Square Value	df	p-value	Decision
Goodness-of-Fit Test - Governance Challenge Rankings	187.421	7	0.000***	Reject H02

Note: *** $p < 0.001$. Test evaluates whether governance challenges are uniformly distributed across categories or whether corruption and institutional weakness dominate. Source: Field Survey (2026).

The regression model was statistically significant ($F(3, 380) = 177.871, p < 0.001$), explaining 58.4% of the variance in National Development Outcomes ($R^2 = 0.584$). The model's Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.924 confirms the absence of serial autocorrelation. Leadership Style Quality ($\beta = 0.412, t = 5.568, p < 0.001$) and Governance Practice Quality ($\beta = 0.387, t = 4.778, p < 0.001$) both exerted significant positive effects on national development outcomes, while Ineffective Leadership Consequences ($\beta = -0.387, t = -4.448, p < 0.001$) exerted a significant negative effect. The chi-square test confirmed that governance challenges were non-uniformly distributed, with corruption and institutional weakness dominating all other challenge categories ($\chi^2 = 187.421, p < 0.001$).

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis One (H01): Leadership Styles, Governance Practices, and National Development. The finding that leadership style quality ($\beta = 0.412, p < 0.001$) and governance practice quality ($\beta = 0.387, p < 0.001$) jointly and significantly predict national development outcomes leads to the rejection of H01. This result is consistent with the theoretical prediction of Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985), which posits that the character and quality of leadership fundamentally shape organizational and national performance outcomes. The significant positive coefficients for both LSQ and GPQ confirm that the quality of political leadership and governance practices during the 2013–2023 decade was a significant determinant of how respondents evaluated Nigeria's national development trajectory.

The relatively below-midpoint mean scores for LSQ (2.841) and GPQ (2.614), combined with the positive regression coefficients, suggest that poor leadership and governance quality significantly constrained national development outcomes during this period. This finding is consistent with Ejere and Abasilim (2019), who found transformational leadership to be a significant positive predictor of public sector performance in Nigeria, and with Rotberg (2014), who established that leadership quality is the primary driver of African governance outcomes. The finding is also consistent with the Ibrahim Index data (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2022), which shows a correlation between Nigeria's declining governance scores and its deteriorating development indicators across the study period.

Interestingly, the comparable magnitude of the LSQ and GPQ coefficients (0.412 vs 0.387) suggests that individual leadership quality and institutional governance practice quality are approximately equally important as predictors of national development outcomes, neither the pure leadership-centric view nor the pure institutionalist view fully captures the complexity of the leadership-development nexus in Nigeria. This balanced finding contributes empirical nuance to the theoretical debate between leadership-centred and institution-centred explanations of African governance outcomes.

Hypothesis Two (H02): Governance Challenges During Jonathan and Buhari Administrations. The chi-square test result ($\chi^2 = 187.421, p < 0.001$) and the frequency analysis confirming corruption as the dominant governance challenge (88.8% endorsement) lead to the rejection of H02. This finding definitively establishes that corruption and institutional accountability deficits, rather than any other governance challenge, were perceived as the defining governance failures of the 2013–2023 decade. This is consistent with the widely documented evidence of massive corruption scandals across both administrations: the Halliburton bribery scandal, the alleged \$20 billion NNPC revenue unremitted scandal, and the kerosene subsidy fraud documented during the Jonathan era, alongside the widespread allegations of selective anti-corruption prosecution, military procurement fraud, and the controversial management of COVID-19 relief funds during the Buhari administration (Transparency International, 2023).

The ranking of insecurity as the second most prominent governance challenge (84.4%) is consistent with the Global Terrorism Index data, which ranked Nigeria among the top ten most terrorism-affected countries globally for most of the study period. The institutional accountability dimension (82.8%) reflects the documented weaknesses of Nigeria's anti-corruption agencies, including the EFCC and ICPC, in delivering consistent prosecutorial outcomes during this period. These findings are consistent with Okechukwu and Eze (2023), who documented the limitations

of anti-corruption strategies in Nigerian public institutions, and with Bamidele et al. (2024), who emphasised that character and values-driven leadership is indispensable for genuine governance improvement.

Hypothesis Three (H03): Consequences of Ineffective Leadership on Economic Stability, Security, and Social Cohesion. The significant negative effect of Ineffective Leadership Consequences on National Development Outcomes ($\beta = -0.387$, $p < 0.001$), combined with the below-midpoint mean scores for Economic Stability (2.314) and Security and Social Cohesion (2.187), leads to the rejection of H03. This finding confirms that ineffective leadership and governance during 2013–2023 generated severe perceived consequences for Nigeria's economic stability, security, and social cohesion. The particularly low mean for Security and Social Cohesion (2.187, the lowest of all constructs) reflects the extraordinary deterioration in Nigeria's security environment across this decade, characterised by Boko Haram's declaration of a caliphate in 2014, the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls, unprecedented banditry and kidnapping in the North-West, escalating herder-farmer conflicts in the Middle Belt, and the #EndSARS movement of 2020 that reflected deep fractures in the social contract between the Nigerian state and its citizens.

The economic stability means of 2.314 reflects the objective economic deterioration of the decade: Nigeria experienced its worst recession in 25 years in 2016 (GDP growth: -1.6%), a second recession in 2020 (GDP growth: -1.79%), and persistently high inflation, unemployment, and poverty rates throughout the Buhari administration. These findings are consistent with the World Bank's (2023) assessment that Nigeria's governance challenges directly contributed to its economic underperformance, and with Usman and Hassan (2020), who found leadership effectiveness to be a significant predictor of public service quality and citizen welfare outcomes in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

This study examined leadership, governance, and national development in Nigeria's political administration from 2013 to 2023, drawing on primary survey data from 384 respondents across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. The key findings are as follows: First, leadership style quality and governance practice quality jointly and significantly predicted national development outcomes (LSQ: $\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$; GPQ: $\beta = 0.387$, $p < 0.001$), with the combined model explaining 58.4% of variance in development outcomes, leading to the rejection of H01. Second, corruption and financial mismanagement (88.8%), insecurity (84.4%), and weak institutional accountability (82.8%) were identified as the dominant governance challenges of the 2013–2023 decade, confirmed by a significant chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 187.421$, $p < 0.001$), leading to the rejection of H02. Third, ineffective leadership and governance significantly and negatively affected perceived economic stability, security, and social cohesion ($\beta = -0.387$, $p < 0.001$), with security and social cohesion recording the lowest mean score (2.187), leading to the rejection of H03.

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three theoretical contributions. First, it provides primary empirical evidence validating Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985) in the context of national political leadership and development, demonstrating that the quality of political leaders' transformational characteristics significantly predicts citizens' perceptions of national development outcomes in the Nigerian context. Second, the study provides the first nationally stratified, multi-zone primary survey evidence linking leadership style quality, governance practice quality, and national development outcomes across the 2013–2023 decade, filling the methodological gap identified in the prior literature. Third, the balanced magnitude of leadership and governance quality coefficients (0.412 vs 0.387) contributes empirical evidence suggesting that the leadership-centric and institution-centric theoretical frameworks are complementary rather than competing explanations of national development outcomes in Nigeria.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following policy recommendations are offered to relevant stakeholders:

First, the Presidency and the National Assembly should prioritize the appointment and confirmation of transformational, value-driven political leaders at all levels of government, including ministerial nominees, agency heads, and security chiefs, who demonstrate demonstrable commitment to accountability, institutional strengthening, and inclusive national development. The evidence that leadership quality is the strongest predictor of national development outcomes underscores the primacy of leadership selection as a governance reform priority.

Second, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) should be strengthened through expanded budgetary allocations, enhanced prosecutorial independence, and legislative reform to remove executive interference in corruption investigation and prosecution. The finding that corruption is the overwhelmingly dominant governance challenge, endorsed by 88.8% of respondents, makes anti-corruption institutional strengthening the highest-priority governance reform.

Third, the National Security Council and the Office of the National Security Adviser should develop and implement a comprehensive national security architecture that addresses the root causes of insecurity, including poverty, unemployment, land rights, ethnic marginalization, and institutional injustice, rather than relying exclusively on military responses that have proven insufficient in containing multi-dimensional security threats across the decade.

Fourth, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and civil society organizations should intensify voter education programmes that build citizens' capacity to evaluate political leadership quality and governance accountability as criteria for electoral choice, thereby creating stronger democratic accountability mechanisms that incentivize transformational leadership behavior.

References

- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*. Crown Publishers.
- Adeyemi, A., & Noah, Y. (2019). The role of leadership in organizational change: Nigerian perspective. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 34(4), 509–535.
- Bamidele, A. H., Araba, A. A., & Shehu, L. O. (2024). *Transformative leadership and public governance: The role of character and values in service delivery in Nigeria*. Federal University Wukari Centre for Research and Publication.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. Free Press.
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper and Row.
- Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques* (3rd ed.). John Wiley and Sons.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Ejere, E. I., & Abasilim, U. D. (2019). Impact of transactional and transformational leadership styles on organizational performance: Empirical evidence from Nigeria. *Journal of Business and Management*, 5(2), 88–97.
- Global Terrorism Index. (2023). *Measuring the impact of terrorism*. Institute for Economics and Peace.
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2015). Africa's waning democratic commitment. *Journal of Democracy*, 26(1), 101–113. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2015.0003>
- Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A., & Mastruzzi, M. (2010). *The worldwide governance indicators: A summary of methodology, data, and analytical issues*. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 5430. <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-5430>
- Mo Ibrahim Foundation. (2022). *Ibrahim index of African governance 2022*. Mo Ibrahim Foundation.
- National Population Commission (NPC). (2023). *Nigeria demographic projections 2023*. *National Population Commission of Nigeria*.
- North, D. C. (1990). *Institutions, institutional change, and economic performance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Okechukwu, F., & Eze, R. (2023). Transformational leadership and anti-corruption strategies in Nigerian public sector: A qualitative inquiry. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 180(2), 345–360. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04965-5>
- Okeke, R. C., & Agbakoba, O. (2019). Leadership and sustainable development in Nigeria's public sector. *Journal of Research in National Development*, 14(1), 18–27.
- Pollitt, C., & Bouckaert, G. (2020). *Public management reform: A comparative analysis into the age of austerity* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Rotberg, R. I. (2014). Good governance means performance and results. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 27(3), 511–518. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12084>
- Transparency International. (2023). *Corruption perceptions index 2022*. Transparency International.
- UNDP. (1997). *Governance for sustainable human development: A UNDP policy document*. United Nations Development Programme.

- UNDP. (2023). Human development report 2023: Breaking the deadlock, Reimagining cooperation in a polarised world. United Nations Development Programme.
- Usman, A., & Hassan, M. (2020). Leadership effectiveness and public service delivery in Nigeria: A survey approach. *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration and Local Government*, 12(1), 44–62.
- World Bank. (2023). Nigeria overview: Development news, research, data. World Bank Group. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/overview>
- Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in organizations* (8th ed.). Pearson.