



Ethical Leadership and Accountability in Nigeria's Public Service

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines the critical relationship between ethical leadership and accountability in Nigeria's public service, exploring how ethical practices influence governance outcomes. The research identifies pervasive challenges including systemic corruption, lack of transparency, weak institutional frameworks, and political interference that undermine accountability mechanisms. Through content analysis of secondary sources including journal articles, government publications, and empirical studies, the investigation reveals that ethical failures in Nigeria's public service are multifaceted, stemming from historical precedents, organizational culture, and socioeconomic factors. The study establishes that ethical leadership characterized by integrity, accountability, transparency, and commitment to the public good is instrumental to achieving good governance and sustainable development. Findings indicate that transformational leadership approaches, coupled with strengthened institutional controls and cultural transformation, could significantly enhance accountability in the public sector. The research contributes to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the interconnectedness between ethical leadership and accountability in the Nigerian context. Recommendations include institutional reforms, enhanced transparency mechanisms, leadership development programs, and the cultivation of an ethical organizational culture to promote accountability and good governance in Nigeria's public service.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Accountability, Public Service, Governance, Corruption, Nigeria

Introduction

The public service in Nigeria represents the institutional framework through which government policies are formulated and implemented, thereby serving as the engine room of governance and national development. Historically, Nigeria's public service has undergone significant reforms since the colonial period, with the 1976 reforms marking a major attempt to professionalize and enhance efficiency in the sector (Adebayo, 2020). Despite these reforms, the sector continues to grapple with challenges of inefficiency, politicization, and declining ethical standards. The concept of ethical leadership, which emphasizes principles such as transparency, accountability, integrity, and service to the public good, remains central to addressing these challenges and ensuring the proper functioning of public institutions (Okereke & Eme, 2022).

Nigeria's socioeconomic landscape reveals a paradox a country endowed with vast human and natural resources, yet consistently facing underdevelopment, poverty, and inequality. Scholars argue that this contradiction is strongly tied to governance deficits,

especially within the public service (Akinola, 2021). Issues such as nepotism, bribery, embezzlement, and bureaucratic bottlenecks have become entrenched, weakening institutional performance and eroding public confidence in government agencies. These unethical practices not only diminish service delivery but also stifle sustainable economic growth and social justice (Olowu & Oyedele, 2023).

The erosion of accountability in Nigeria's public service is a direct consequence of weak enforcement mechanisms and a culture of impunity among public officials. Studies show that accountability mechanisms such as audits, procurement monitoring, and anti-corruption frameworks are either poorly implemented or circumvented due to weak political will (Agbiboa, 2021). As a result, the credibility of the public service has been compromised, with the average citizen perceiving government institutions as self-serving rather than people-oriented. This situation underscores the urgency of embedding ethical leadership as a guiding principle in Nigeria's governance framework (Adeosun, 2022).

In the broader theoretical discourse, ethical leadership and accountability have gained global recognition as key determinants of public sector effectiveness. Theories such as Transformational Leadership Theory and Agency Theory emphasize the role of leaders in fostering accountability, ethical behavior, and alignment of personal interests with public goals (Brown & Treviño, 2020). However, the application of these frameworks in Nigeria remains underexplored, with existing literature offering limited insights into how ethical leadership can be systematically cultivated to combat entrenched corruption and inefficiency in public institutions (Eneh, 2022).

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to bridge the gap by critically examining the relationship between ethical leadership and accountability in Nigeria's public service. By drawing from empirical evidence, theoretical perspectives, and comparative global practices, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations for strengthening institutional frameworks. Ultimately, the research contributes to the broader debate on governance reform in Africa, highlighting the need for leadership models rooted in ethics, transparency, and accountability to achieve sustainable national development (Oluwatobi & Okafor, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian public service is bedeviled by a plethora of ethical issues that have severely compromised its accountability mechanisms and service delivery capacity. Despite numerous reforms and anti-corruption initiatives, systemic corruption remains entrenched in the public sector, manifesting through various forms including bribery, embezzlement of funds meant for developmental projects, falsification of government documents for selfish motives, and inflation of contract figures. These unethical practices have become so normalized that they now represent a significant impediment to Nigeria's socioeconomic development.

The magnitude of corruption and ethical violations was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when public officials brazenly looted palliative materials meant for vulnerable populations during lockdown periods. This incident highlighted the profound ethical crisis within Nigeria's public service and raised serious questions about the effectiveness of existing accountability mechanisms. The persistence of such practices suggests deep-rooted systemic issues that go beyond individual moral failings to encompass institutional and structural deficiencies.

Several interconnected factors contribute to this problematic situation. General poverty among the populace creates an environment conducive to corruption, as public officials often seek alternative

means of supplementing their income. The politicization of the public service has led to the appointment of unqualified personnel based on patronage rather than merit, further eroding professionalism and ethical standards. Additionally, weak regulatory instruments and enforcement mechanisms have created a culture of impunity where ethical violations often go unpunished.

The consequences of these ethical failures are far-reaching and multifaceted. They include poor service delivery, inadequate infrastructure, weakened public institutions, diminished public trust, and ultimately, the perpetuation of poverty and underdevelopment despite Nigeria's abundant resources. This situation necessitates a thorough investigation into the root causes of ethical violations in Nigeria's public service and the identification of practical strategies for promoting ethical leadership and accountability.

Objectives of the Study

This research aims to comprehensively examine the phenomenon of ethical leadership and accountability in Nigeria's public service. The specific objectives are:

1. To investigate the perception and manifestation of ethical leadership within Nigeria's public service sector, examining the extent to which political leaders exhibit accountability and integrity as instruments of governance.
2. To identify and analyze the institutional and cultural factors that constrain ethical behavior and accountability in Nigeria's public service, including poverty, corrupt practices, weak regulatory frameworks, and organizational culture.
3. To propose evidence-based strategic recommendations for promoting ethical leadership and strengthening accountability mechanisms in Nigeria's public service, focusing on institutional reforms, cultural transformation, and leadership development.

Research Questions

To guide this investigation, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. To what extent do Nigeria's political leaders exhibit accountability and integrity as instruments of governance, and how are these ethical leadership qualities perceived by the public?
2. What are the primary institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that constrain ethical behavior and accountability in Nigeria's public service?
3. What practical strategies and mechanisms can be implemented to promote ethical leadership and strengthen accountability in Nigeria's public service?

Conceptual Review

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership in public service is a foundational pillar for building trust and ensuring effective governance. It transcends mere compliance with rules, representing a holistic commitment to moral principles that guide both personal conduct and organizational culture. In today's complex environment, this involves navigating novel dilemmas such as digital privacy, algorithmic bias in automated public service delivery, and the ethical management of vast public datasets (Margetts & Dorobantu, 2019). The concept is not static; it evolves to meet new challenges, demanding that leaders be both morally aware and technically proficient to make decisions that are not only legal but also just and equitable for the citizens they serve. This is particularly critical in an era of deepfakes and misinformation, where public trust is fragile and easily eroded by perceived ethical lapses (Bennett & Livingston, 2018).

The conceptual dimensions of ethical leadership, while rooted in the "moral person" and "moral manager" framework, have been expanded to include a "moral entrepreneur" role in the digital age (Hassan, Wright, & Yukl, 2021). The moral person dimension focuses on the leader's individual character: their honesty, integrity, fairness, and trustworthiness, demonstrated through consistent personal actions. The moral manager dimension is outwardly focused, involving the active promotion of ethical conduct within the organization through clear communication, reinforcement, and holding subordinates accountable. A contemporary example of this duality can be seen in the leadership responses to crises; a leader who transparently acknowledges institutional failures (moral person) and then implements systemic reforms to prevent recurrence (moral manager) embodies both dimensions effectively.

In the Nigerian context, the relevance of ethical leadership is magnified by persistent challenges such as corruption, nepotism, and a historical deficit of public trust. The conceptualization of an ethical leader here must include the courage to resist deeply entrenched informal systems of patronage ("godfatherism") and to make decisions based solely on merit and public interest, a challenge documented in recent analyses of sub-national governance (Okafor & Fatile, 2022). This is exemplified by the ongoing efforts of agencies like the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), whose effectiveness is directly tied to the perceived ethical fortitude of its leadership. When such leaders actively "show and tell" their values, they begin to counteract a culture of cynicism and set a new standard for public service.

The practical application of ethical leadership faces significant hurdles, including political pressure,

cultural norms that may conflate loyalty with integrity, and a lack of robust protective mechanisms for whistleblowers. Conceptually, this suggests that ethical leadership cannot be viewed in isolation; it is interdependent with the broader governance ecosystem. For it to flourish, it must be supported by strong, impartial institutions and a vibrant civil society that is empowered to demand accountability, as evidenced by the mixed results of anti-corruption initiatives across Africa (Persson, Rothstein, & Teorell, 2023). Therefore, strengthening ethical leadership is not merely about training individuals but about systematically creating an environment that rewards ethical behavior and imposes tangible costs on ethical violations.

Accountability

Accountability is the bedrock of democratic governance, constituting the mechanisms through which public officials are held responsible for their actions, use of resources, and the outcomes they achieve. Its conceptual core involves three key elements: transparency (openness about actions), answerability (the obligation to justify decisions), and enforceability (the presence of meaningful sanctions for misconduct or poor performance). In the 21st century, the concept has been radically expanded by technology-enabled "social accountability," where citizens and civil society organizations use tools like open data platforms, social media activism, and crowdsourced monitoring to directly hold power to account, often bypassing sluggish or compromised formal channels (Peixoto & Sifry, 2017).

The conceptual framework of accountability operates through multiple, overlapping channels: political, legal, administrative, and professional. A robust system requires these horizontal (between state institutions) and vertical (from state to citizens) mechanisms to function in tandem. Contemporary scholarship emphasizes the rise of "diagonal accountability," a hybrid where civil society actors directly engage with and strengthen horizontal agencies like audit institutions and anti-corruption commissions (Peruzzotti & Smulovitz, 2022). For instance, the audit reports generated by the Office of the Auditor-General for the Federation (a horizontal mechanism) can be leveraged by the media and advocacy by groups like SERAP (social accountability) to pressure the Public Accounts Committees into action, creating a more potent multi-layered web of oversight.

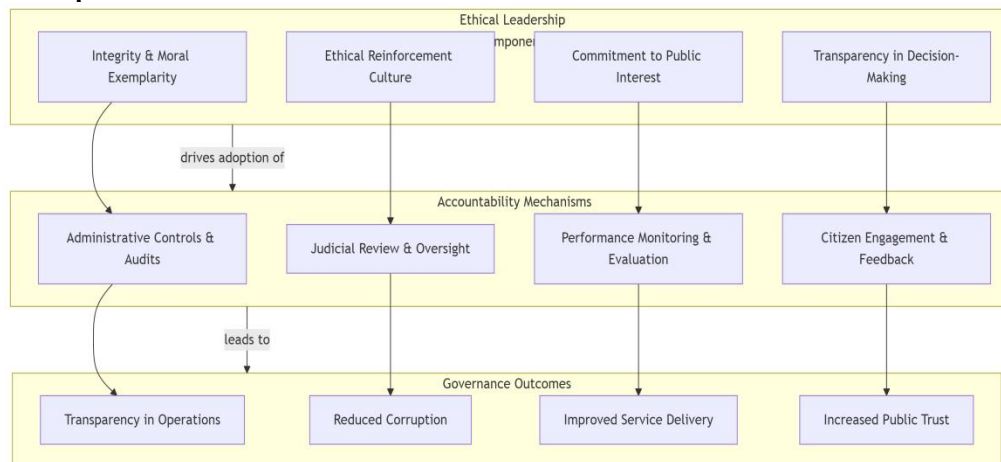
In Nigeria, the conceptual ideal of accountability starkly contrasts with its practical application. While the framework exists on paper, the system is often weakened by politicization, institutional capture, and selective enforcement. A stark contemporary illustration is the persistent and well-documented delays by the National Assembly in reviewing and

acting upon the annual audit reports submitted by the Auditor-General, a critical failure that breaks the chain of answerability and enforceability (International Budget Partnership, 2023). This perpetuates a culture of impunity, where the likelihood of facing consequences for misappropriation is perceived as low, thus enabling both grand corruption and petty malfeasance alike.

Strengthening accountability conceptually requires moving beyond a focus solely on punitive, retrospective measures to building integrated, proactive systems that prevent misconduct. This includes leveraging technology for real-time transparency, such

as the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) and the Treasury Single Account (TSA), though their effectiveness is itself dependent on strong political will and technical capacity (Ojo, 2021). Furthermore, promoting performance-based accountability, which ties rewards and sanctions to measurable results and service delivery outcomes, can shift the focus from process to impact. Ultimately, a reconceptualization of accountability in Nigeria must address the underlying political economy factors that weaken institutions and foster an environment where unethical conduct is rationalized and often rewarded.

Conceptual Framework



This diagram illustrates a conceptual framework where Ethical Leadership serves as the foundational driver for effective governance. The components of ethical leadership such as integrity, transparency, and a commitment to the public interest directly enable the implementation of robust Accountability Mechanisms, including audits, performance monitoring, and citizen engagement. These mechanisms act as the critical link, translating ethical principles into tangible actions. Finally, the effective functioning of these accountability processes leads to desired Governance Outcomes, such as reduced corruption, improved public service delivery, and, ultimately, the cultivation of greater public trust. The framework demonstrates a clear causal pathway from leadership values to concrete results through the essential medium of accountability.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational Leadership Theory:

Transformational Leadership Theory, initially conceptualized by Burns (1978) and later expanded by Bass (1985), provides a foundational lens for analyzing leadership effectiveness, particularly in relation to

ethics and accountability. The theory posits that transformational leaders influence their followers by appealing to higher moral values and ideals rather than self-interest. Key components of this leadership style include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Through these dimensions, transformational leaders can create meaningful organizational change by shaping values, instilling purpose, and elevating follower commitment to collective goals.

In the Nigerian public service, where issues of corruption, weak institutional accountability, and leadership failures are recurrent, transformational leadership theory offers a compelling framework to understand how ethical leadership can be cultivated. Leaders who demonstrate authenticity, moral integrity, and a commitment to national service can inspire civil servants to emulate similar values, thereby improving institutional performance and public trust. According to Avolio and Walumbwa (2014), transformational leaders serve as ethical role models, which is particularly important in governance systems where leadership deficits are deeply entrenched.

Transformational leadership also aligns with the increasing call for public sector reform in developing countries, especially where leadership effectiveness is often undermined by systemic constraints. Studies such as those by Oreg and Berson (2019) have shown that transformational leadership significantly improves organizational citizenship behavior and reduces unethical practices in bureaucratic settings. In Nigeria's public service, this implies that civil servants who work under transformational leaders are more likely to resist corrupt practices, adhere to institutional regulations, and prioritize service delivery outcomes. This transformation is not only behavioral but cultural, embedding ethics and accountability into the core fabric of public institutions.

Moreover, the theory emphasizes the importance of intellectual stimulation, which encourages innovation and critical thinking in public service. Leaders who foster open dialogue and challenge traditional bureaucratic inefficiencies can empower employees to develop creative solutions to longstanding governance problems. As argued by Northouse (2021), such leadership approaches can shift organizational mindsets from passive rule-following to proactive engagement with public challenges. In the Nigerian context, where rigid hierarchies often stifle innovation, transformational leadership can serve as a catalyst for cultural change and institutional modernization.

In conclusion, Transformational Leadership Theory provides a robust theoretical foundation for exploring ethical leadership and accountability in Nigeria's public service. Its emphasis on moral leadership, inspirational vision, and follower development is particularly relevant in a governance context characterized by ethical lapses and institutional decay. Contemporary research underscores the theory's applicability to public sector reform, especially in environments where ethical leadership is urgently needed to rebuild trust and improve service delivery (Banks et al., 2016). This framework thus informs the current study's exploration of how ethical leadership can be operationalized to strengthen accountability mechanisms within Nigeria's public institutions.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have investigated the intersection of ethical leadership and accountability within Nigeria's public service, revealing deep-rooted systemic issues and the challenges confronting reform. Igbokwe-Ibeto and Osakede (2023) conducted a comprehensive assessment of ethical violations in Nigeria's public service, identifying persistent misconduct such as bribery, contract inflation, embezzlement, and document falsification. These malpractices were attributed to entrenched corruption, widespread poverty, weak enforcement mechanisms,

and the politicization of public offices. Their study emphasized the role of institutional failure in enabling unethical behavior and recommended reforms such as empowering professional bodies within the civil service, developing anti-crime tools, and strengthening accountability mechanisms across ministries and agencies.

In a related study, Ngare (2023) explored ethical leadership from the perspective of political accountability and found that successive Nigerian administrations consistently failed to institutionalize integrity and public engagement in governance. The study emphasized that public trust in government remains critically low due to leaders' reluctance to uphold transparency and include citizens in decision-making. Ngare concluded that accountability and integrity are not merely ethical virtues but fundamental requirements for sustainable governance. The research underscored that the absence of these values undermines policy legitimacy, disrupts service delivery, and fosters citizen apathy, thereby complicating the public sector reform agenda in Nigeria.

Further empirical evidence is provided by Okagbue (2011), whose research focused on ethical leadership and governance in Nigerian local governments. The study found that public servants overwhelmingly preferred leadership styles rooted in honesty, transparency, and citizen engagement. Civil servants interviewed during the study identified ethical leadership as a catalyst for enhanced service delivery and public confidence. Notably, the research revealed that ethical leadership can be a transformative force when linked with accountability, transparency, and participatory governance. These findings highlight the potential of ethical leadership not just to mitigate corruption, but to create an enabling environment for socioeconomic development and the effective utilization of public resources.

A more recent study by Orie and Egbe (2025) examined the implications of ethical leadership on sustainable development outcomes in Anambra State. The researchers found a direct correlation between strong ethical leadership, institutional governance, and successful implementation of development projects. The study noted that where transparency and stakeholder engagement were present, development outcomes were significantly more positive. Moreover, the research reinforced the idea that ethical leadership is foundational for ensuring long-term development and public trust. It recommended that government policies explicitly integrate ethical governance frameworks and leadership training for public officials to bridge the accountability gap and promote public sector efficiency.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing content analysis to explore the phenomena of ethical leadership and accountability within Nigeria's public service. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth, contextual understanding of leadership behavior, institutional dynamics, and socio-cultural factors influencing governance. This method enables the researcher to critically engage with the meanings, themes, and patterns embedded within existing literature, policy documents, reports, and scholarly articles.

The content analysis technique involved the systematic review and interpretation of secondary data drawn from peer-reviewed journals, government publications, organizational reports, and existing empirical studies related to ethical leadership, public service accountability, and governance in Nigeria. Key search terms included "ethical leadership in Nigeria," "public service accountability," "governance challenges," and "transformational leadership in Africa." The documents were selected based on relevance, credibility, and recency (with a preference for sources published between 2010 and 2025), ensuring that the findings are grounded in contemporary evidence and perspectives.

This methodology enabled the researcher to identify recurring themes such as integrity deficits, weak regulatory frameworks, politicization of leadership, and cultural constraints within Nigeria's public institutions. Moreover, the qualitative design provided room to compare and synthesize findings from different authors and regions within Nigeria, revealing both systemic patterns and contextual specificities. Through this process, the study was able to derive strategic recommendations informed by real-world challenges and supported by scholarly consensus.

The data analysis process involved thematic coding, where recurring ideas, narratives, and findings were organized into categories aligned with the study's objectives namely, the perception of ethical leadership, institutional and cultural constraints, and recommendations for promoting accountability. This method facilitated a structured interpretation of qualitative data while preserving the richness of contextual insights.

Overall, the chosen methodology allowed the study to explore ethical leadership and accountability not just as abstract concepts, but as lived realities in Nigeria's public service. The reliance on well-documented secondary data enhanced the credibility of findings and ensured that recommendations were grounded in established knowledge and current governance debates.

Data Sources and Collection

This study utilized a broad range of secondary sources to explore ethical leadership and accountability in Nigeria's public service. Materials reviewed included peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, newspapers, government publications, magazines, and empirical studies relevant to public sector ethics and governance. These sources were identified through systematic searches of academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Scopus, using keywords like "ethical leadership in Nigeria," "public accountability," and "transformational leadership." Emphasis was placed on literature published between 2010 and 2025 to ensure the inclusion of current data and insights.

Additionally, manual reviews of reference lists were conducted to identify further relevant materials. The selected documents were evaluated for relevance, credibility, and academic rigor, providing a comprehensive base for qualitative content analysis. This method allowed the study to critically synthesize existing knowledge, highlight patterns, and offer insights into the challenges and opportunities for promoting ethical leadership and accountability in Nigeria's public service.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, involving a systematic process of identifying, coding, and categorizing patterns and themes related to ethical leadership and accountability. This approach enabled the reduction of extensive data into manageable themes, allowing for meaningful interpretation and inference. The analysis focused on both manifest content, which refers to the directly observable information, and latent content, which involves uncovering the underlying meanings and contextual nuances. Through ongoing engagement with the source materials, the study ensured the reliability of its interpretations and developed a comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomena under investigation.

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to ethical standards for secondary data analysis by appropriately acknowledging all sources through proper citations and references. Intellectual honesty and integrity were maintained throughout the study by accurately representing the findings and arguments from the source materials, ensuring there was no misrepresentation or manipulation of information. This careful attention to ethical considerations upheld the credibility and reliability of the research.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of secondary sources revealed several key findings regarding ethical leadership and accountability in Nigeria's public service:

Pervasive Ethical Violations and Systemic Corruption:

The study confirmed the existence of widespread ethical violations in Nigeria's public service, ranging from petty corruption to grand misappropriation of public funds. These violations have become institutionalized and normalized within the system, creating a culture where ethical conduct is often the exception rather than the norm. The pervasiveness of corruption has significantly undermined public trust in government institutions and impaired the effectiveness of service delivery. Particularly concerning was the finding that ethical violations persisted even during emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when public officials looted palliative materials meant for vulnerable populations. This demonstrates the depth of the ethical crisis within Nigeria's public service and suggests that existing accountability mechanisms are insufficient to deter misconduct, especially among those in leadership positions.

Weak Institutional Frameworks and Enforcement Mechanisms:

A critical finding of this study is the weakness of institutional frameworks designed to promote ethical conduct and ensure accountability in Nigeria's public service. Although Nigeria has established various institutions and regulations to combat corruption and enforce accountability, these mechanisms have proven ineffective due to political interference, inadequate resources, and weak enforcement capacity. The study revealed that regulatory capture has been a significant problem, with political leaders often interfering with the operations of accountability institutions to protect themselves and their allies from scrutiny. This has created a culture of impunity where public officials can engage in ethical violations with minimal fear of consequences. Additionally, the judicial system has been compromised in many cases, further weakening the accountability framework.

Socioeconomic and Cultural Factors Enabling Ethical Violations:

The research identified several socioeconomic and cultural factors that contribute to ethical violations in Nigeria's public service. General poverty among the population has created pressure on public officials to seek alternative means of income generation, often through corrupt practices. The politicization of the public service has led to the appointment of unqualified personnel based on patronage rather than merit, further

eroding professionalism and ethical standards. Additionally, the study found that the legacy of colonial administration continues to influence ethical practices in Nigeria's public service. The colonial administration was characterized by authoritarianism and extraction rather than service to the public, and elements of this legacy persist in contemporary administrative practices. This historical context helps explain why ethical leadership and accountability have been difficult to institutionalize in Nigeria's public service.

Leadership Failure and Erosion of Public Trust:

The study documented a crisis of leadership in Nigeria's public service, with successive political leaders failing to exemplify accountability and integrity in governance. This leadership failure has had a trickle-down effect throughout the public service, creating an environment where ethical violations are tolerated and even expected. The erosion of public trust has been both a cause and consequence of unethical leadership, as citizens' diminishing faith in public institutions reduces their willingness to hold leaders accountable while also justifying further ethical violations by public officials. This vicious cycle has been difficult to break, as each generation of leaders seems to perpetuate the patterns of misconduct established by their predecessors.

Conclusion

This study has examined the critical issues of ethical leadership and accountability in Nigeria's public service, revealing a complex web of challenges that have significantly impaired the effectiveness of governance and service delivery. The research demonstrates that ethical violations are pervasive and systemic, ranging from petty corruption to grand misappropriation of public funds. These violations are facilitated by weak institutional frameworks, socioeconomic factors, and a culture of impunity that has developed over decades.

The interrelationship between ethical leadership and accountability has been clearly established, with weaknesses in both areas creating a vicious cycle that undermines good governance. Ethical leadership is essential for establishing the moral tone and cultural norms that support accountability, while robust accountability mechanisms are necessary to reinforce ethical leadership by providing consequences for violations. The absence of both elements in Nigeria's public service has resulted in poor service delivery, weakened institutions, diminished public trust, and ultimately, the perpetuation of poverty and underdevelopment despite Nigeria's abundant resources. The study concludes that addressing the challenges of ethical leadership and accountability in Nigeria's public

service requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both individual and institutional dimensions. Transformational leadership that inspires ethical conduct must be complemented by institutional reforms that create effective accountability mechanisms. Additionally, socioeconomic factors that enable corruption must be addressed through broader policy interventions aimed at poverty reduction and the promotion of inclusive development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance ethical leadership and accountability in Nigeria's public service:

1. **Institutional Strengthening:** Public institutions responsible for ensuring accountability should be strengthened with adequate resources, operational independence, and protected mandates to minimize political interference. This includes anti-corruption agencies, audit institutions, and the judiciary. Specifically, legislation protecting these institutions from political manipulation should be enacted and enforced.
2. **Leadership Development and Ethics Training:** Comprehensive leadership development programs incorporating ethics training should be implemented at all levels of the public service. These programs should emphasize the principles and practices of ethical leadership, focusing on values such as integrity, transparency, and accountability. Such training should be mandatory for all public officials, particularly those in leadership positions.
3. **Transparency and Open Government Initiatives:** The government should implement robust transparency initiatives including open data platforms, public access to information, and citizen engagement mechanisms. The Open Tendering System for government contracts implemented in Anambra State represents a good practice that could be scaled nationally to reduce corruption in public procurement.
4. **Performance Management and Accountability Systems:** Effective performance management systems

with clear metrics and consequences for non-performance should be established throughout the public service. These systems should link performance evaluation to rewards and sanctions, creating incentives for ethical conduct and discouraging violations.

5. **Socioeconomic Reforms:** Broader socioeconomic reforms addressing poverty and inequality should be implemented to reduce the pressures that contribute to corrupt practices. This includes reviewing the compensation structure for public servants to ensure living wages that reduce the temptation for unethical supplementation of income.

Suggestions for Further Study

Based on the limitations and findings of this research, the following areas are recommended for further investigation:

1. **Comparative Studies:** Research comparing ethical leadership and accountability mechanisms in Nigeria's public service with those of other countries (both within and outside Africa) could provide valuable insights into context-specific and transferable solutions.
2. **Sector-Specific Analyses:** Studies focusing on specific sectors of Nigeria's public service (such as health, education, or security) could reveal sector-specific challenges and opportunities for promoting ethical leadership and accountability.
3. **Longitudinal Research:** Investigations tracking changes in ethical leadership and accountability practices over time would help assess the effectiveness of interventions and reforms aimed at addressing these issues.
4. **Quantitative Assessments:** Research employing quantitative methods to measure the prevalence and impact of ethical violations would provide valuable data for evidence-based policy formulation and resource allocation.
5. **Intersectional Studies:** Examinations of how factors such as gender, ethnicity, and religion intersect with ethical leadership and accountability practices could reveal important insights for targeted interventions.

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