

# Transformational Leadership as a Catalyst for Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Transformational leadership has increasingly been recognized as a crucial mechanism for promoting effective governance and sustainable development, particularly in developing democracies such as Nigeria. This paper examined the significance of transformational leadership in strengthening good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria. The study specifically addressed the persistent challenges of institutional inefficiency, policy inconsistency, and weak adherence to ethical principles of equity, transparency, and accountability among successive political administrations. Although existing literature acknowledges the relevance of transformational leadership, insufficient attention has been given to its integrative capacity in addressing governance deficits and developmental challenges in Nigeria. The study adopted transformational leadership theory as its analytical framework in order to identify an appropriate leadership approach capable of fostering good governance and sustainable national development. Data for the study were collected from secondary sources, including scholarly publications, official reports, and relevant documented materials. Findings revealed that successive political leadership in Nigeria has been characterized by policy inconsistencies and inadequate developmental commitment, largely resulting from the absence of motivational inspiration and visionary leadership capable of stimulating collective national transformation. The study further found that transformational leadership possesses the capacity to promote inclusiveness, enhance institutional effectiveness, encourage productivity, and strengthen mechanisms for sustainable development. The paper concluded that redefining political leadership through transformational leadership principles is essential for achieving radical transformation, good governance, and sustainable national progress in Nigeria. Consequently, the study recommends the adoption of transformational leadership approaches that emphasize inclusivity, accountability, individual consideration, and enduring solutions to developmental challenges across the country.

## 1. Introduction: Transformational Leadership and Good Governance in Nigeria

The establishment of government is fundamentally aimed at creating laws, formulating policies, and protecting citizens from internal disorder and external aggression. These responsibilities are entrusted to political leaders who are expected to organize society effectively and manage public resources in ways that promote development and improve citizens' welfare. The attainment of these objectives largely depends on the adoption of effective leadership styles that prioritize good governance, accountability, transparency, and public interest. In advanced democratic societies, political leaders encourage citizen participation by allowing the populace to contribute to policy discussions, evaluate governmental programmes, and identify shortcomings in policy implementation.

Since independence, political leadership in Nigeria has been characterized by corruption, institutional weakness, and ineffective public service delivery, all of which have undermined democratic values and hindered socio-economic development (Akinola, 2018). This situation has largely been attributed to the predominance of transactional leadership approaches that fail to inspire collective vision and national commitment, thereby widening the disconnect between government and citizens' aspirations (Adebayo, 2014). Frequent policy inconsistencies and administrative discontinuities have negatively affected governance outcomes, causing many citizens to perceive annual budget speeches and policy declarations as mere political rhetoric with little practical impact on their daily lives.

The return to democratic governance in 1999 was expected to usher in sustainable development and institutional reforms; however, significant challenges persist. Political actors have continued to engage in intense competition for political power and personal enrichment, often at the expense of public welfare and national development. Consequently, citizens are frequently excluded from meaningful participation in decision-making processes and are mainly regarded as instruments for electoral mobilization rather than as critical stakeholders in governance and development.

Public expectations of political leadership increasingly centre on the need for transformational leadership capable of providing strategic direction, accommodating individual differences, and motivating citizens toward collective national goals. Such leadership is essential for promoting effective governance and achieving sustainable development. Despite Nigeria's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the country continues to experience widespread poverty, inequality, unemployment, and infrastructural deficiencies, largely due to the absence of visionary leadership capable of integrating developmental objectives with governance structures (Nwachukwu & Chladkova, 2017).

Against this background, critical questions emerge: Does transformational leadership stimulate good governance? How can transformational leaders motivate citizens toward the pursuit of common goals within a heterogeneous society such as Nigeria? Can effective governance be achieved through transformational leadership practices? In response to these concerns, this paper examines transformational leadership as a strategic leadership approach that inspires followers to pursue shared national objectives. The paper argues that transformational leadership promotes innovation, encourages positive social change, and enhances citizen engagement in governance processes. Through this leadership approach, citizens are motivated to fulfil their civic responsibilities and actively engage policymakers in the formulation and implementation of people-oriented policies capable of improving quality of life and fostering sustainable national development.

## 2. Literature Review

Effective leadership is fundamental to making appropriate decisions that respond to the yearnings and developmental aspirations of citizens. It provides the intellectual and moral direction required to translate societal needs into actionable policies that enhance collective wellbeing. Leadership development, therefore, involves the systematic preparation of individuals for responsibilities and complex situations that extend beyond their immediate experiences. This process is achieved through structured social interaction, knowledge acquisition, mentorship, and practical engagement within institutional and community contexts. Within this framework, transformational leadership is particularly significant because it inspires followers by articulating a compelling vision and motivating them to pursue collective goals that transcend narrow personal interests such as salary, status, or power. Rather than focusing on individual gain, it fosters a sense of shared purpose and commitment to societal progress. In this regard, Nwoke (2020) emphasizes that the strength of any nation is largely determined by the quality of its leadership. Similarly, Adewale et al. (2020) argue that leadership style plays a decisive role in the successful implementation of development programmes. Consequently, societies must prioritize the cultivation of leaders who can transform available resources into instruments of national strength and development, rather than allowing such resources to become sources of vulnerability that deepen human deprivation and social inequality.

Closely related to leadership is the concept of governance, which refers to the processes through which governments design, formulate, and implement decisions aimed at promoting societal wellbeing. It encompasses the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority in regulating human behaviour and managing public affairs within the state. Governance, therefore, is not merely about authority but about responsibility and

responsiveness to public needs. The quality of governance is often evaluated through public perception of government actions and inactions, as noted by Unegbu (2020). Good governance is generally characterized by transparency in decision-making, accountability of public officials, adherence to the rule of law, efficient and effective public service delivery, and inclusive participation in democratic processes. When these principles are upheld, governance contributes significantly to socio-economic development, strengthens civil and political institutions, and enhances the overall standard of living of citizens by expanding access to opportunities and public services.

Development, on the other hand, signifies a multidimensional process of transformation, progress, and positive socio-economic change within a society. It reflects improvements in both material conditions and institutional capacity, as well as advancements in human wellbeing. Contemporary development indicators include education, healthcare delivery, infrastructure provision, technological innovation, political stability, and sustained economic growth (Nnabue, 2017). However, Ubi (2018) argues that development should not be reduced to statistical measures of economic performance alone, but must also encompass qualitative improvements in human wellbeing, including access to healthcare, education, and improved living standards. This broader understanding underscores the human-centered nature of development.

Despite the core responsibility of modern states to provide essential political goods and public services, Nigeria continues to experience persistent leadership challenges that undermine good governance and sustainable development. The absence of visionary and transformative leadership has significantly constrained economic progress and national transformation, as observed by Osuji et al. (2021). Williams (2020) further notes that contemporary development must be economically viable, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable in order to address complex societal challenges effectively. In this context, transformational leadership and good governance remain indispensable for generating innovative ideas, formulating effective policies, and implementing sustainable development strategies. Ultimately, achieving meaningful national progress requires leadership that is people-centered, development-oriented, and committed to strengthening institutions that uphold accountability, equity, and long-term societal wellbeing.

## 2.1 Theoretical Framework

The emergence of transformational leadership as a prominent paradigm in leadership studies is widely attributed to MacGregor Burns' seminal work, *Leadership*. Burns (1978) conceptualizes leadership as a dynamic relational process in which leaders and followers engage in mutual influence that elevates both parties to higher levels of motivation, morality, and collective purpose. Rather than viewing leadership as a transactional exchange, Burns emphasizes its transformative capacity to inspire individuals to transcend self-interest and act in ways that advance shared ideals. Building on this foundation, transformational leadership theory posits that effective leaders motivate followers to exceed their immediate personal goals for the sake of the collective good (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Such leaders actively seek innovative approaches to organizational improvement, articulate a compelling and shared vision, and align individuals toward the achievement of common objectives (Koh et al., 2019). Through this process, transformational leadership fosters a strong sense of collective ownership, encouraging followers to enhance both performance and personal development in pursuit of shared aspirations.

Earlier scholarly discussions did not sufficiently emphasize the integrative capacity of transformational leadership in addressing governance deficiencies and developmental challenges, particularly within complex socio-political environments (Ejimabo, 2015). However, contemporary discourse recognizes its heightened relevance in pluralistic and diverse societies where citizens require visionary leadership that empowers, challenges, and mobilizes them toward meaningful progress. In the political arena, transformational leaders have historically introduced innovative and far-reaching policy reforms, demonstrated exemplary leadership behaviours, and empowered citizens to actively participate in developmental processes. Their commitment to long-term goals and national transformation has often generated collective enthusiasm and coordinated action, resulting in significant developmental progress. Notable examples of such leadership include Mahatma Gandhi in India, Mahathir Mohamad in Malaysia, Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore, and Nelson Mandela in South Africa, all of whom initiated profound socio-political transformations and achieved landmark national development outcomes through visionary leadership and sustained commitment to reform.

For transformational leadership to remain effective, it must be anchored in ethical values and aligned with long-term societal goals that reflect the complexities of modern organizations and states (Northouse, 2019). Since followers naturally look to leaders for direction, transformational leaders bear a moral responsibility to provide guidance, address the concerns of subordinates, and create enabling environments for growth and empowerment. They elevate followers by enhancing awareness of broader organizational and societal goals, encouraging them to transcend narrow self-interest, promoting teamwork, and facilitating opportunities for personal and professional development (Bastardo, 2021; Bastardo & Day, 2022). Through these processes, leaders generate ideas, mobilize teams, build confidence, and provide continuous support that enables followers to exceed

expectations and achieve superior performance (Arenas et al., 2018). This leadership approach ultimately nurtures environments where innovation, creativity, and shared commitment thrive.

Moreover, the demonstration of strong moral and ethical standards is central to the effectiveness of transformational leaders, as it fosters trust, credibility, and confidence among followers. By emphasizing collective responsibility and teamwork, such leaders cultivate enthusiasm that motivates individuals to surpass expected performance levels and work toward shared objectives (Puni et al., 2018). The reinforcement of team spirit and shared purpose encourages citizens and organizational members alike to contribute meaningfully to collective goals. Siangchokyoo et al. (2020) further affirm that transformational leadership remains a critical area of scholarly inquiry due to its sustained positive influence on individuals, institutions, and organizational systems. These leaders are fundamentally oriented toward initiating necessary changes that ensure adaptability, survival, and long-term development within their spheres of influence. By identifying areas requiring improvement, designing innovative strategies, and inspiring commitment among followers, transformational leaders drive meaningful and sustainable progress.

In supportive environments shaped by transformational leadership, individuals feel valued, recognize the significance of their contributions, and are empowered to realize their full potential. This empowerment enhances skill development, fosters creativity and innovation, and ultimately leads to improved productivity and organizational effectiveness.

## 2.2 Transformational Leadership and Good Governance

Transformational leadership is fundamentally anchored in emotions, values, ethics, and high-performance standards. It emphasizes a deep understanding of human motivation, the ability to respond to followers' needs, and the commitment to treating individuals with dignity and respect. As a distinctive form of leadership influence, it inspires individuals to perform beyond ordinary expectations by fostering intrinsic motivation and a strong sense of purpose. A transformational leader is therefore purpose-driven, result-oriented, and strategically focused on capacity building, institutional strengthening, and the implementation of sound policies and development-oriented programmes. Such leaders prioritize long-term societal gains over short-term personal or political advantages.

However, in the Nigerian context, the absence of effective transformational leadership continues to significantly undermine meaningful and sustained development across various sectors of national life. Dada (2022) observes that a large proportion of individuals who have occupied leadership positions in Nigeria have failed to provide exemplary leadership capable of driving genuine national transformation. As a result, transformational leadership within the public sector has remained largely underdeveloped and inconsistently practiced. This leadership gap has contributed to a political environment where patriotism, integrity, and selflessness are difficult to institutionalize. Instead, governance is often deeply entangled with corruption, thereby worsening the living conditions of the majority of citizens and eroding public trust in state institutions.

Over time, political leadership in Nigeria has increasingly been characterized by self-serving behaviour and symbolic performance rather than substantive governance. Political office is often reduced to a platform for personal aggrandizement, where the pursuit of recognition, material wealth, and social status takes precedence over public service. Consequently, governance has assumed the form of political theatrics, where leaders prioritize image-making and political survival over meaningful development outcomes. Instances of unguided public statements, erratic leadership behaviour, and resistance to accountability have become increasingly common. Leaders frequently present themselves as champions of the people while simultaneously presiding over systems that foster nepotism, corruption, and entrenched kleptocratic practices.

A telling illustration of this reality is the remark attributed to Babangida Aliyu, former governor of Niger State, who once stated that "if you want to be honest, don't join party politics in Nigeria." Such sentiments underscore the pervasive perception of politics as an arena incompatible with integrity. This troubling situation has significantly weakened the emergence of transformational leadership capable of inspiring young, patriotic citizens to engage in public service and nation-building. Rather than embracing reform-oriented leadership, many members of the political elite appear to interpret political office as a form of entitlement. This has reinforced a culture of impunity, weakened governance structures, and produced inconsistent policy directions that continue to constrain national progress. The widespread disregard for transparency and accountability has further complicated efforts to achieve good governance and sustainable development.

In many cases, policymaking in Nigeria does not reflect the genuine aspirations or priorities of the citizenry. Instead, it often results in uneven resource allocation and development imbalances. Rather than engaging citizens in meaningful participation, political elites frequently rely on externally generated policy prescriptions, particularly from international financial institutions, to guide domestic policy choices. This dependence has often led to misplaced priorities, economic inefficiencies, and worsening poverty, thereby widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Governance, ideally understood as the effective management of public resources and institutions, is frequently reduced to electoral competition, where the primary objective is winning the next

election rather than delivering tangible development outcomes. Public office holders are often celebrated for performing basic infrastructural duties that should ordinarily be routine responsibilities of governance.

Nigeria's declining capacity for independent policymaking further exacerbates these challenges. The growing influence of global institutions on domestic policy choices limits the autonomy of both government and citizens in shaping economic, social, and cultural directions. As Nwoke (2020) notes, the structure of Western liberal democracy, embedded within a global capitalist system, often weakens state authority and policy independence. In some instances, political leaders govern remotely or disengage from direct accountability, leaving citizens vulnerable to opportunistic actors who exhibit anti-democratic tendencies. Over time, governance has been characterized by misappropriation of public resources, weak leadership succession planning, capital flight, and misrepresentation of public interest.

Political power is frequently perceived as a means of wealth accumulation rather than public service. Weak accountability mechanisms allow leaders to divert public funds for personal enrichment, thereby undermining sustainable development. Governance structures are often distorted to favour family members, political associates, and loyalists, who occupy privileged positions with disproportionately high remuneration compared to ordinary civil servants. Consequently, questions persist regarding the capacity of such leadership practices to foster sustainable development, particularly in a context where universities continue to produce graduates facing unemployment, insecurity, and economic hardship. This situation encourages a survival-oriented mindset in which individuals prioritize personal survival over collective progress. Ultimately, transformational leadership struggles to thrive in environments where political power is primarily driven by personal ambition rather than public interest and national development goals.

## 2.3 Transformational Leadership, Good Governance and Sustainable Development

The primary objective of democracy is the realization of good governance, which is expected to translate into accountability, responsiveness, and improved welfare for citizens. Achieving sustained good governance requires a continuous supply of competent and visionary leaders capable of shaping a nation's political direction, as well as its economic and social development trajectories (Oleabhiele & Obasogie, 2021). In this sense, leadership becomes the operational mechanism through which democratic ideals are translated into tangible developmental outcomes. However, in the Nigerian context, the democratic space is often characterized by strong individualistic tendencies, where political competition is driven more by personal ambition and elite interests than by collective national development goals.

This pattern of leadership practice has contributed to systemic governance challenges. A columnist vividly captures this reality by highlighting widespread corruption and mismanagement across different political administrations. For instance, it is reported that during the administration of Olusegun Obasanjo, approximately N300 billion allocated for road construction between 1999 and 2003 reportedly disappeared without any corresponding infrastructure delivery. In addition, allegations were made that children of political elites were involved in the embezzlement of about N1.6 trillion through fraudulent documentation schemes, without delivering basic commodities such as petroleum products. Furthermore, between 1999 and 2007, approximately 18 governors from major political parties were prosecuted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for financial misconduct. The same account also suggests that national assets valued at over \$100 billion were privatized and sold for about \$1.5 billion to politically connected individuals under questionable circumstances (Oluwajuyitan, 2025). These narratives, whether viewed as allegations or reflections of public perception, underscore deep concerns about governance integrity in Nigeria.

In addition to these systemic issues, political leadership in Nigeria has often been criticized for moral deficiency and weak commitment to accountability. This environment has made the emergence of transformational leadership difficult, as transactional leadership practices—characterized by self-interest, patronage, and short-term political gains—dominate governance structures. In a related critique, former President Olusegun Obasanjo reportedly condemned the Buhari administration's decision to grant state pardons to convicted former governors Joshua Dariye and Jolly Nyame, who had been sentenced to prison terms for embezzling public funds. Despite their convictions for diverting N1.126 billion and N1.64 billion respectively, they were granted pardons on grounds of age and ill health, claims that were widely disputed in public discourse (Obasanjo, 2024). Such decisions, according to critics, undermined the morale of anti-corruption institutions such as the EFCC and weakened public confidence in the justice system.

These governance inconsistencies reflect a broader structural weakness in Nigeria's democratic framework. The system appears to lack sufficient capacity to support sustainable development due to limited political will to implement deep institutional reforms. Instead of embracing a transformational shift in governance philosophy, Nigeria has largely remained within a transactional leadership model that prioritizes political survival over national development. This has contributed to policy inconsistency, weakened institutions, and socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, industrial decline, and rising insecurity.

True democratic dividends—such as political accountability, ethical leadership, and inclusive governance—can only be realized through visionary and responsible leadership. Effective governance requires not only the formulation of sound policies but also their transparent implementation and consistent monitoring to ensure accountability between the state, its institutions, and citizens. When governance systems are efficient in resource management and policy execution, they create opportunities for innovation, economic expansion, and social progress. Conversely, weak governance structures limit development potential and deepen socio-economic inequalities.

Good governance is therefore central to ensuring that elected leaders exercise authority responsibly and prioritize the welfare of citizens. However, the persistent challenges of insincere leadership, misplaced policy priorities, and deteriorating public infrastructure continue to hinder Nigeria's development trajectory. These problems are compounded by inefficiency and incompetence within key public sector institutions, further weakening service delivery and public trust.

In contrast, transformational leadership offers a pathway toward addressing these challenges. Transformational leaders empower citizens by raising awareness, promoting civic responsibility, and encouraging individuals to prioritize collective interests over personal gains. Such leaders are typically guided by strong moral values, confidence, competence, and a clear developmental vision. They serve as role models who inspire trust, foster motivation, and build a sense of shared responsibility among followers.

Moreover, transformational leadership is inherently visionary, goal-oriented, and results-driven. It enhances productivity by aligning individual efforts with national objectives through effective communication, guidance, and motivation. This leadership style strengthens commitment among both leaders and followers while reinforcing democratic values such as accountability, rule of law, political inclusivity, and civic participation. Ultimately, sustainable governance in Nigeria requires a deliberate strategy for identifying, nurturing, and continuously developing individuals with transformational leadership potential, thereby ensuring the emergence of leaders capable of driving meaningful and lasting national change. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual relationship between transformational leadership, good governance, and sustainable development.



**Fig. 1** *Conceptual model of transformational leadership, good governance and sustainable development*

Figure 1 presents a conceptual model illustrating the relationship between transformational leadership and sustainable development, with good governance functioning as the mediating mechanism through which leadership values, behaviours, and institutional practices are translated into long-term developmental outcomes. The model suggests that transformational leadership does not directly produce sustainable development in isolation; rather, its effectiveness is channelled through governance systems that ensure accountability, efficiency, and inclusiveness in policy implementation.

Within this framework, transformational leadership serves as the primary driving force, good governance operates as the enabling mechanism, and sustainable development represents the ultimate goal of the entire process. Transformational leadership initiates change by shaping vision, influencing institutional behaviour, and promoting value-based leadership practices. Good governance then provides the structural and procedural environment necessary for translating leadership intentions into effective public policies. In turn, sustainable development emerges as the cumulative outcome of these interactions, reflected in long-term socio-economic progress, institutional stability, and improved quality of life. The model therefore establishes a continuous cycle of improvement that reinforces adaptive leadership, responsive governance, and sustained development outcomes. It further implies that building a resilient, inclusive, and future-oriented society depends significantly on the presence of transformational leadership at all levels of governance.

Transformational leaders are characterized by a combination of visionary thinking, strong interpersonal skills, openness to change, and a willingness to take calculated risks. They are proactive in addressing challenges, strategic in planning, and innovative in solving complex societal problems. In addition, they demonstrate analytical reasoning, critical evaluation of information, and a strong sense of responsibility in decision-making processes. Their leadership approach is motivational and participatory, encouraging collaboration and inclusive engagement in governance processes. Rather than relying solely on positional authority, transformational leaders influence followers through inspiration, shared purpose, and value-driven guidance that consistently drives performance beyond expected standards.

Furthermore, transformational leadership emphasizes empowerment by addressing the specific needs of followers and aligning individual, group, and organizational objectives. This alignment fosters leadership development within teams and institutions while strengthening trust and cooperation. Such visionary and ethical leadership practice enhances the effectiveness of governance systems, particularly in addressing contemporary socio-political and economic challenges that require innovative and sustainable solutions.

Although not exhaustive, evidence exists of public officials who have implemented result-oriented policies with significant developmental impact. Their governance approaches demonstrate how effective leadership can contribute meaningfully to sustainable development outcomes across the nation. The table below therefore presents selected cases of effective policy implementation by public officers whose leadership practices have positively influenced sustainable development in Nigeria.

Table 1 presents selected Nigerian public officials whose policy initiatives reflected transformational leadership practices and contributed positively to sustainable development.

**Table 1 Selected Public Officers Who Implemented Transformational Policies in Nigeria**

| S/N | Public Officer          | Ministry/Agency         | Policy Implemented                                  |
|-----|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Prof. Moji Adeyeye      | NAFDAC                  | War against fake drugs and substandard foods        |
| 2   | Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili | Public Procurement      | Due process in contract awards                      |
| 3   | Prof. Okonjo-Iweala     | Ministry of Finance     | Transparency in public finance                      |
| 4   | Barr. Ola Olukoyede     | EFCC                    | Fight against corruption                            |
| 5   | Prof. Charles Soludo    | Central Bank of Nigeria | Bank consolidation reforms                          |
| 6   | Mr. Raji Fashola        | Lagos State Government  | Public service reforms                              |
| 7   | Dr. Akinwumi Adesina    | Ministry of Agriculture | Agricultural transformation policies                |
| 8   | Prof. Attahiru Jega     | INEC                    | Credible electoral administration                   |
| 9   | Prof. Ishaq Oloyede     | JAMB                    | Institutional accountability and procedural reforms |
| 10  | Prof. Babagana Zulum    | Borno State Government  | Promotion of public welfare                         |
| 11  | Prof. Peter Okebukola   | NUC                     | Ethical reforms in tertiary institutions            |
| 12  | Brig. Gen. Buba Marwa   | NDLEA                   | Campaign against drug trafficking                   |

Source: Compiled from national dailies.

## 2.4 Towards Effective Policy-Making Process

Nigeria's persistent underdevelopment has been widely linked to deep-seated challenges in leadership and governance structures (Onyeulo & Okeke, 2023). Central to this concern is the limited political will demonstrated by successive administrations, coupled with a declining sense of patriotism in the discharge of public responsibilities. These deficiencies have consistently undermined efforts toward good governance and sustainable development. In particular, the inability of the political elite to effectively mobilize and utilize the country's abundant human and material resources for socio-economic advancement raises critical questions about the quality and orientation of Nigeria's leadership architecture. In contemporary governance discourse, a key benchmark of state performance is its capacity to create enabling conditions that ensure the fulfilment of citizens' basic needs, including security, education, healthcare, and economic well-being.

Within this context, transformational leadership has emerged as a critical framework for addressing governance deficits. It is characterized by the capacity to inspire, motivate, and elevate individuals and groups toward exceptional performance and self-development. Transformational leaders are distinguished by their moral credibility, integrity, and ability to serve as role models who earn trust, respect, and admiration. Core attributes associated with this leadership style include self-awareness, optimism, humility, empathy, professionalism, and ethical responsibility. According to Yusuf (2021), transformational leadership provides a

practical corrective to conventional leadership models by fostering collaboration between leaders and followers in identifying necessary reforms and implementing collective solutions. In a similar vein, governance in modern societies increasingly reflects a convergence of public and private sector leadership practices, aimed at ensuring that societal needs are efficiently and equitably addressed (Ufua et al., 2021).

Transformational leaders exert influence through four key dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Through these mechanisms, they act as moral guides who promote innovation, encourage critical thinking, and facilitate problem-solving in complex environments. In policy formulation processes, such leaders demonstrate inclusiveness by evaluating multiple alternatives, engaging diverse stakeholders, and embracing constructive criticism. Their decision-making approach is participatory and transparent, thereby strengthening public trust and enhancing policy legitimacy. When citizens perceive that their voices are acknowledged and valued, they are more likely to support government policies, demonstrate civic loyalty, and actively contribute to national development initiatives.

A well-structured governance system that prioritizes accountability, participatory decision-making, and intergenerational responsibility provides a solid foundation for sustainable development. However, in Nigeria, public office has often been misconstrued as a platform for personal enrichment rather than public service. Transformational leadership offers a viable alternative by promoting value reorientation, ethical governance, and leadership development, particularly among younger generations. It also creates opportunities for experiential learning in policy processes, thereby strengthening leadership capacity and institutional resilience.

Nigeria is endowed with numerous intellectuals whose contributions have advanced innovation both nationally and globally. The challenge lies in creating an enabling environment that nurtures emerging leaders with the requisite knowledge, ethical orientation, and administrative competence to implement impactful and enduring development initiatives. Ultimately, the absence of effective leadership has far-reaching consequences for governance quality and social cohesion, underscoring the urgent need for a leadership framework anchored in excellence, accountability, and long-term national progress.

### 3. Conclusion

Leadership is increasingly understood as a dynamic and interactive activity rather than a fixed position occupied by a single individual. In this evolving perspective, transformational leadership has become highly significant in advancing good governance and promoting sustainable development. Unlike traditional governance systems where authority was concentrated in a single leader or a narrow elite, contemporary leadership is more inclusive, relational, and collective in nature. It requires the active participation of both leaders and citizens in shaping, negotiating, and implementing public policies aimed at achieving the common good.

Transformational leaders play a central role in this process by using their influence to inspire citizens, strengthen civic consciousness, and build administrative capacity for addressing complex national challenges. Through sustained engagement, motivation, and value-driven leadership, they promote political awareness and institutionalize participatory governance as a core element of development. This continuous interaction between leaders and citizens is essential for producing governance outcomes that are not only effective in the present but also sustainable in the long term. It also ensures the creation of a stable foundation for younger generations to develop their capacities, meet their aspirations, and contribute meaningfully to national progress at their own pace.

In line with these insights, the study recommends the institutionalisation of structured leadership development programmes within public and political institutions to enhance leadership capacity. It further advocates prioritizing competence over political affiliation in recruitment and appointments, strengthening participatory governance mechanisms, and improving accountability and transparency frameworks through effective institutional checks and performance monitoring systems. Additionally, youth leadership development initiatives should be promoted through mentorship, civic education, and empowerment programmes to ensure continuity and generational renewal of leadership capacity.

It is suggested that future studies should focus on longitudinal analyses of leadership styles and comparative studies between Nigeria and other African countries.

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### Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

## Author Contribution

The author takes sole responsibility for study conception and design, and manuscript preparation.

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