POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN NIGERIA: ASSESSING GOVERNANCE REFORM UNDER THE APC ADMINISTRATION, 2015–2025

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Keywords

Political Leadership; Institutional Capacity; Governance Reform; Policy Implementation; Institutionalization; APC; Nigeria

Abstract

Research Problem: *This study explores the gap between the political leadership commitment to governance reforms and the governance performance in Nigeria, with emphasis on the mechanisms through which this occurs within the APC regime of 2015 to 2025.*
Method/Theory: *The methodology adopted in this study is qualitative documentary research, using thematic analysis of government policies, institutional reports, reports from international organizations and academic literature. The study uses Transformational Leadership theory and Good Governance theory.*
Results: *From this study, it has been found that there is a very high level of political commitment towards institutional and policy reforms during the Buhari and Tinubu regimes. But the outcomes of the reforms differ depending on the capabilities of the implementing institutions, such as administrative, technical, financial, and coordinating capabilities.*
Conclusion: *Political leadership is a necessary condition for the reforms but it is not the sufficient condition of governance performance. Institutional capability is a must for sustainable governance performance.*
Key Contributions to Knowledge: *The study provides an analytical perspective whereby institutional capacity is seen as the intervening mechanism between political leadership and the effects of governance.*
Recommendation: In designing reforms, institutional capacity should be

considered, with emphasis on coordination and monitoring among agencies, institutional sustainability, and assessment of reforms in terms of institution-building.

Introduction

The success of any governance reform lies in the ability of the institutions in the public sector to implement political decisions to improve the state. In this regard, political elites can set their priorities, direct the attention of administration, reform institutions and allocate the resources of the state to governance projects. Nevertheless, adopting a reform does not ensure its proper implementation and the resulting improvements in governance. Therefore, the conditions of implementation of the political decision become relevant together with the political commitment. This question becomes crucial for developing democratic regimes, like Nigeria, where governments have introduced numerous institutional and administrative reforms despite problems with policy implementation, administrative effectiveness, accountability and public sector performance. Indeed, research on the topic of public sector leadership suggests that the link between the two phenomena depends on institutional and organizational factors (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022).

However, the Nigerian literature offers valuable lessons regarding these aspects; nevertheless, it is still segmented along the lines of leadership, governance, institutional reforms, and specific policy sectors. Research in relation to political leadership has concentrated on the performance and style of governance by Nigerian political leaders. For instance, the study conducted by Egobueze & Odili (2025) on the Nigerian presidential leadership from 2015 to 2025 analyzes the role of presidential leaders in the national development of the country. Although their research gives a wide review of the performance of the leaders, it is not limited to the institutional mechanisms that facilitate the implementation of decisions and governance.

Likewise, Adenuga et al. (2025) assess corruption and governance within the Buhari administration, paying special attention to the Buhari administration's efforts against corruption and good governance principles. While this study offers an essential evaluation of governance within the first APC administration, it is specific to corruption and the Buhari era rather than the broader process of how the political leadership influenced the process of governance reform in the APC's decade of governing at the federal level. In another study assessing the Buhari administration, Okechukwu, Aderinto and Lawal (2024) consider the anti-corruption crusade through public prosecutions and analyze the relevant institutional and political influences on it.

Furthermore, elaborations in the literature of public administration and policy implementation reveal that the effects of governance cannot be explained through the lens of political decisions alone. For example, Adegbite et al. (2022) reveal that the role of bureaucrats in the implementation of policy in Nigeria is significant and also highlight political pressure, insufficient budgetary allocation, politicisation of appointments and decreasing professionalism as potential barriers for effective implementation of policies. Moreover, Domorenok, Graziano and Polverari (2021) define institutional capacity as the capacity of government to formulate, coordinate and implement policies with the help of organizational and procedural abilities. Such an understanding of institutional capacity

is important in the sense that it directs the discussion from presence of institutions or policies to the capacities that allow the institutions to carry out the required activities. However, it needs to be noted that both streams of literature have followed separate routes for their analysis as one stream investigates political leadership while the other discusses implementation.

The separation poses a critical analytical challenge for studying governance reform during the APC regime. The period between 2015 and 2025 presents the chance to analyze the linkages between political leadership and institutional effectiveness within successive regimes of the same political party. The Buhari administration initiated or improved reforms in such domains as public financial management, personnel administration, digital governance, and anti-corruption. In turn, the Tinubu administration implemented significant reforms in fuel subsidy regime, foreign exchange management, fiscal policy, and revenue generation. Reform initiatives show persistent efforts from the executive arm to change governance institutions, but the process was uneven among the different policy domains. Political commitment thus cannot alone explain the embedding of certain reforms and implementation challenges in other cases. This calls for analyzing how political decisions were implemented and their effects on governance institutions.

Although scholars like Adenuga et al. (2025), Egobueze and Odili (2025), and Okechukwu et al. (2024) have addressed the topic of governance, leadership, and performance of policies in Nigeria, very few works have sought to systematically investigate the institutional processes that make political leadership lead to governance performance throughout the ten years of APC administration in Nigeria. Studies that have been done usually focus on selected sectors or problems of governance or specific administrations in Nigeria. This way, they offer inadequate insight into the role of institutional capacity in mediating the link between executive support and governance performance within successive APC administrations. Studies on bureaucratic institutions and the implementation of policies show the significance of administrative factors, while those on political leadership show the significance of executive support, yet the linkage between the two has not been adequately investigated in relation to Nigeria. This gap is specifically in understanding how the same level of political commitment to reforms could lead to different outcomes of implementation and institutional development.

The research problem that is being investigated in this case is therefore the gap between political leadership commitment to governance reform and the actual governance results brought about by those reforms in Nigeria. While political leadership might offer the mandate and guidance needed to implement institutional change, the degree to which political processes generate sustainable governance gains depends on the ability of the implementing institutions to align resources, technical know-how, implementation monitoring and administrative procedures. Without taking into account the institutional process, any evaluations of governance reform can be mistaken for policy implementation as equivalent to institutional success. The APC era is an important empirical context through which to investigate this problem since it offers both continuity and change from 2015 to 2025.

Given the above context, the study analyses the connection between political leadership, institutional capacity and governance reform during the period of the APC government in Nigeria from 2015 to 2025. The specific objectives of the study are: (1) To analyse the link between political leadership and governance reform during the period of the

APC government from 2015 to 2025; (2) To analyze the connection between institutional capacity and mediation of the link between political leadership and governance outcomes; and (3) To analyse the implementation and institutionalization of governance reforms under the Buhari and Tinubu governments.

This study makes a contribution to the literature through its focus on the explanation of governance reform not based on a leader-based account, but an institution-based account of how political decisions result in governance reform. This research focuses on institutional capacity not as another determinant of good governance, but as a means by which political leadership results in governance reform. The study also broadens the scope of governance reform within APC through consideration of the 2015-2025 era and beyond the Buhari and Tinubu administrations. This study therefore asserts that political leadership plays a crucial role in driving governance reform, but in a way that is constrained by the capacity of the institutions in charge of implementing governance reform.

Literature Review

There is general consensus in the governance reform literature that political leadership and institutional capacity are both important for the functioning of public institutions, although both have frequently been treated as distinct dimensions of governance reform. The political leadership literature concentrates mostly on the process by which leaders set policy agendas, generate administrative attention and implement organisational change, while institutional capacity literature deals with the organisational, technical, financial and procedural factors needed for the implementation of policies. This difference is relevant for governance reform since the political willingness may be critical in determining whether reforms take place, while the institutional capacity may affect whether the reform is successfully implemented, co-ordinated and sustained.

In their meta-analysis on public leadership, Backhaus and Vogel (2022) illustrate the existence of a generally positive correlation between public leadership and organisational performance. This study is significant for two reasons; one, it confirms the ability of leadership to impact organisational performance and two, the fact that this correlation changes depending on context. This second point is especially important to the study of governance reforms since it undermines an argument where leadership is considered an independent variable of institutional performance. But then again, the research conducted by Backhaus and Vogel focuses on the impact of public leadership and organisational performance in the larger body of knowledge without considering the institutional mechanisms that political leadership uses to bring about governance performance in an emerging democracy like Nigeria.

Institutional capacity literature offers another valuable approach to this discussion. According to Domorenok, Graziano, and Polverari (2021), it is essential to consider the organizational and procedural capabilities used by institutions to create, coordinate, and implement policies. It becomes obvious from their research that the policy implementation does not rely only on the presence of particular institutions but on the capacity of those institutions and the procedure of coordination of responsibilities for policy implementation. It helps to offer a valuable alternative to leadership approaches as it takes into account the factors that affect the ability to translate policy decisions into action. However, the approach of these authors does not pay much attention to the issue of political leadership and governance in Nigeria. Thus, this literature offers excellent explanations of leadership and

institutional capacity but pays little attention to the interaction of these concepts.

The literature on Nigeria further underscores the need to take these factors into consideration. Research on governance under the Buhari government suggests that commitment to reform by the political actors did not mean a consistent outcome from the perspective of governance. The paper by Adenuga, Lawal and Sanusi (2025), for instance, considers the issues of corruption and governance in Buhari's government and highlights the problems which persist despite the strong commitment to fighting corruption displayed by the Buhari government. This research paper is helpful in illustrating the difference between political commitment and governance results, but the main issue discussed in the paper is corruption in the context of Buhari's government rather than the more general institutional arrangements linking political leadership and governance outcomes over the period of APC government. In a similar vein, the paper by Okechukwu, Aderinto and Lawal (2024) discusses public prosecution as one of the components of Buhari's anti-corruption campaign.

Egobueze and Odili (2025) have added to the debate by analyzing Nigerian leadership during 2015–2025. This work is highly pertinent to the current study, since it addresses leadership during the period when APC was in power at the federal level, and thus adds to the analysis of leadership that focuses only on the Buhari presidency. Nevertheless, the analysis of leadership in the presidency cannot account for how political decision-making takes place through institutional means, nor why political commitment yields different results in various policy areas. The current study has thus taken up this literature by focusing on institutional factors behind leadership.

Further research on Nigerian public administration provides another reason why institutional capacity should be included in the discussion. According to Adegbite et al. (2022), bureaucracy continues to play an important role in the implementation of policies in Nigeria's Fourth Republic and political influence, inadequate budgetary provision, politicization of appointment, and lack of professionalism among other things constitute constraints to implementation. Similarly, Lawal & Akinyemi (2024) also consider low capacity, skills and expertise, political considerations and organizational culture as constraints to governance reform in Ondo State. Amin et al. (2024) also view institutional capacity, resources, skilled personnel, and leadership as some of the key conditions influencing public administration reform and good governance in Nigeria. Overall, this body of literature provides evidence that institutional conditions may act as constraints for implementation even when political or administrative will is present. Yet, most of this body of literature focuses on certain institutions, state governments, policy domains or administrative reforms and not on the inclusion of institutional capacity in a theory of federal political leadership.

This point is critical in the sense that the APC era offers a chance for evaluating both the continuity and the variations in governance reforms. Reform efforts undertaken by the Buhari regime include those related to public financial management, personnel management, e-governance, and anti-corruption efforts such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA), Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS), Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) and Open Treasury reforms. On the other hand, the Tinubu administration implemented important reforms in sectors such as fuel subsidy policy, foreign exchange management, fiscal consolidation and revenue generation. In spite of the variations in goals and policy approaches employed in these reforms, there was one thing in common: they

all involved the use of public institutions to operationalize executive decisions. Analyzing these reforms within the two regimes thus presents a chance to determine whether variations in implementation can be solely attributed to political leadership or not.

The literature further shows that reform adoption must be separated from institutional effectiveness. Adoption of the policy, a new institutional setup or digital technology by the government does not necessarily bring the required enhancement in governance. Domorenok et al. (2021) focus on the procedural and organisational aspects of capacity, while Adegbite et al. (2022) show that bureaucratic conditions remain crucial for policy implementation. All these views confirm that the presence of the reform does not automatically mean institutional effectiveness. But the link between this distinction and political leadership throughout the APC period has been ignored by current researches to some extent. The issue is not about whether the two administrations had political commitment towards reforms or not, but whether or not the institutions responsible for implementation had the required capacity to bring the change through that commitment.

A further limitation of the existing literature relates to the institutionalisation and continuity. The research based on the focus on certain administrations or certain policy initiatives can help us understand the specifics of certain reforms, yet this research can miss the moment of the change of political leadership and what follows this change. The change of leadership from Buhari to Tinubu allows us to analyse whether reforms made by one administration can be institutionalised and sustained by another administration from the same political party. This is because those reforms which rely heavily on the attention of the political leader can be more susceptible to changes in priorities than those embedded in administrative practices.

As a result, the literature highlights three associated analytical problems. First, while leadership scholarship stresses the need for political direction and executive commitment, it pays relatively little attention to the institutional means by which leadership is implemented. Second, institutional capacity scholarship explains organizational and administrative circumstances but does not adequately link them to political leadership and governance outcomes in the Nigerian federation. Third, scholarly works that have examined governance during the APC era have generally been focused on specific sectors of governance, governance challenges, or specific governments, preventing a proper understanding of institutional change and variation during the ten-year APC era.

Despite the considerable body of literature on political leadership and governance in Nigeria, empirical work has rarely explored the institutional channels through which political leadership impacts on governance in the APC government period in a systematic manner. Studies on governance in Nigeria have mainly focused on particular areas of policy or on particular administrations, without offering an overall account of the APC ten-year period. While Backhaus and Vogel (2022) explore leadership and organisational consequences in the public sector, and Domorenok, Graziano and Polverari (2021) assess institutional capacity and policy integration, neither of these studies explores institution capacity as a mediator between political leadership and governance consequences in Nigeria. On the other hand, studies from Nigeria have contributed considerably to the understanding of corruption, public administration, political leadership, and policy implementation in Nigeria.

In this research, the gap will be bridged using an analytical framework that considers political leadership and institutional capacity

together for an understanding of governance reforms during the APC regime between 2015 and 2025. Here, political leadership is seen as the agent that sets the agenda for the reform and ensures its commitment, whereas institutional capacity is analyzed as the tool that helps in translating the political agenda into reality. In addition to this, the role of administrative coordination and institutionalization is considered here since not only the implementation of policies is essential for sustainability but also their institutionalization after their political impetus ends. In this way, the analysis goes beyond the leader-centric approach of assessing the governance reforms and considers the institutional dynamics in shaping the process of translating the political agenda into governance reform.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

A qualitative documentary research design is chosen to conduct this study on the interplay between political leadership, institutional capacity and governance reform under APC government in Nigeria from 2015 to 2025. Qualitative research design was viewed as the most suitable choice since the aim of the study is not only to identify the reforms introduced but also to investigate the processes of political decisions transformation into administration and governance changes through institutional means. Thus, the study explores the meaning, processes of implementation and conditions of major governance reforms instead of establishing statistical relations between variables. The study covers the activities of the federal government led by President Muhammadu Buhari from 2015 to 2023 and the activities of the federal government led by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu from 2023 to 2025. Two governments operating during the same period under the same ruling party but facing different economic, political and institutional conditions while implementing different priorities of reforms will serve as a reasonable base for analyzing continuity and change in the process of reform.

Materials and Selection of Documents

The research utilizes secondary sources only. The documents were chosen based on their relevancy to the research problem and their capability to offer evidence for political leadership, institutional reforms, implementation capacity, and governance outcomes during the research period. The main criteria for document selection include: (i) their relevancy to Nigeria, especially the federal government; (ii) publication or inclusion of content in the 2015-2025 research period; (iii) direct relevance to the concepts of political leadership, institutional capacity, governance reform, policy implementation or institutionalization; and (iv) enough substantive content for interpretation of the process and outcomes of the reforms.

The documentary data included policy documents, legislative acts and official policy statements; institutional and administrative reports; budget and financial documents; reports of international organisations; and pertinent academic literature. Government and institutional documents helped to determine reform priorities, executive decisions and arrangements for the implementation of the reforms and official evaluations of institutional performance. The reports of organisations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), OECD and UN bodies were used to conduct an external evaluation of governance, economic and institutional performance. The peer-reviewed academic literature served as the basis for constructing the theoretical and empirical background of the research and interpreting the Nigerian case in the wider context of literature on political leadership and institutional development.

Documentary sources were found in government and institutional publications, official online repositories, reports of international organisations, academic literature and relevant research articles of particular importance were documents about major reforms of public financial management, personnel management, digital governance, anti-corruption, fiscal, revenue and macroeconomic policies.

Data Sources

The major categories of documentary sources and their analytical contributions are presented in Table 1.

Source Type	Examples Used in the Study	Contribution to Analysis
Government documents and policy materials	Federal government policy documents, Federal Executive Council decisions, budget-related documents and official policy statements	Identified executive reform priorities, political commitment, policy direction and formal implementation decisions
Institutional and administrative reports	Reports and publications from relevant Nigerian public institutions and administrative bodies	Provided evidence on institutional arrangements, implementation processes, administrative capacity and coordination
International organisation reports	World Bank, IMF, OECD and UN-related reports	Provided external assessments of economic reforms, institutional performance, governance conditions and implementation challenges
Academic literature	Studies by Backhaus and Vogel (2022), Domorenok et al. (2021), Adegbite et al. (2022), Adenuga et al. (2025), Okechukwu et al. (2024), among others	Provided theoretical concepts, empirical evidence and critical perspectives for interpreting political leadership, institutional capacity and governance reform
Policy and monitoring reports	UNICEF and other relevant institutional monitoring materials	Provided evidence concerning monitoring, evaluation, institutional capacity and implementation processes

Source: Authors' compilation from documents reviewed for the study.

The table presents the principal categories of materials used rather than claiming a fixed numerical sample where the original documentary collection was not formally enumerated. This distinction is important because the study is based on documentary analysis and the analytical value of the materials depended on their relevance to the research questions rather than on a predetermined statistical sample.

Data Analysis

The documents were analyzed thematically and the thematic analysis took a structured approach in which relevant documentary sources were first identified and categorized based on the research objectives. Relevant statements, descriptions, and documentary evidence related to executive commitment, institutional reform, institutional capacity, technical capacity, resource constraints, bureaucratic resistance, interagency coordination, implementation continuity and governance outcomes were considered.

In the first stage of coding of the documents, attention was paid to the research framework and not only to the administrative and political categories. Evidence on the

direction and priorities of reforms was coded as executive commitment. Human resource issues, technical skills, financing, organizational system, and information system were coded as institutional capacity. Cooperation, information exchange, overlapping responsibilities, and interministerial relations were coded as administrative coordination. Whether the reforms were sustained, modified or embedded in the administration after their political launch was coded as implementation continuity and institutionalization. Finally, the evidence on government effectiveness, accountability, transparency, administrative performance and broader socioeconomic impacts was coded as governance outcomes.

The theme classifications were related directly to the analytical thesis of the study that political leadership affects governance outcomes via institutional capacity, coordination, and implementation. Thus, the analysis proceeded from the following relationship: Political leadership – executive commitment – institutional reform – institutional capacity and coordination – implementation – institutionalization – governance outcomes.

This relationship served as an analytical framework but was not intended to suggest a mechanistic causal relationship. Evidence was analyzed in comparison between the Buhari and Tinubu regimes and across reform sectors to identify similarities, differences, and patterns of implementation. Special emphasis was placed on the cases when high executive commitment was associated with higher and lower levels of institutional capacity. It allowed the study to reveal reasons for the lack of consistent institutional outcomes despite similar conditions of the same ruling party.

The evidence was then analysed by applying the theoretical constructs of Transformational Leadership Theory and Good Governance Theory. Transformational Leadership Theory was applied to evaluate the reform agenda setting, commitment, and institutional transformation conducted by political executives. The Good Governance Theory was employed to measure the governance consequences of reform by assessing its effectiveness, accountability, transparency, performance of institutions and the administration of public resources. Institutional capacity was seen as the connecting point for both theoretical constructs in order to understand how political directions were translated into administrative actions.

The process of analysis also included comparison and triangulation of data from various types of sources. Evidence taken from official documents was compared with that provided by academic researches and reports by international organisations when possible. This way, the reliance on one particular source type could be minimized, especially because official documents tend to portray achievements of the government, whereas other sources could use different criteria of assessment.

Trustworthiness and Limitations

One way to understand how the reform was implemented and its impact on governance is by analyzing documentary sources, which provide insight into policy choices, institutional structures, and evaluations of governance over time; at the same time, there are certain limitations of the methodology. First, the accessibility of documentary material varies between institutions and policy fields; in other words, the level of documentation for one aspect of the process may be higher compared to another. Second, documents provided by the government may contain information about governmental policies and accomplishments that would emphasize intentions and reported successes. Third, academic and international organization

reports may use different criteria for analysis, assumptions, and interpretations of the same reforms.

Another limitation is connected with the retrospective nature of the analysis. The results of governance may be produced over a number of years, which means that reforms implemented in the time under review cannot always be evaluated based only on the implementation phase. To address these limitations, the study compares evidence across government documents, institutional reports, international organisation assessments and academic literature rather than relying on a single source category. Contradictory or differing assessments were considered as part of the analysis rather than automatically privileging official accounts. The study therefore interprets documentary evidence comparatively and in relation to the analytical framework, while recognising that documentary analysis cannot fully capture informal administrative practices or perspectives that are not documented.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, Transformational Leadership Theory and Good Governance Theory are used as complementary theoretical frameworks to understand the link between political leadership, institutional capacity and governance reforms in Nigeria. The two theories serve distinct yet interrelated roles in analysis. While Transformational Leadership Theory is the framework for analyzing the way in which political leaders set reform agenda, mobilize commitment and bring about institutional changes, Good Governance Theory is used as a framework that can be used to judge whether these reforms help in achieving good governance through effectiveness, accountability and transparency. However, none of the two theories adequately addresses how the political process is transformed into administrative reality. In order to fill this gap, the two theories have been combined with the notion of institutional capacity.

Transformational Leadership Theory

The Transformational Leadership Theory can be traced back to the work of James MacGregor Burns, who made the distinction between transforming and transactional leadership in his book Leadership, published in 1978. Burns identified transformational leadership as a process through which leaders and followers elevate each other to a higher level of moral and motivation. Further development of the theory belongs to Bernard Bass, who gave a more precise definition to the concept of transformational leadership and its application to organisations. According to the definition of Bass, transformational leaders have the ability to inspire followers, to set a vision and to stimulate them intellectually and individually.

The key assumption of the theory of transformational leadership lies in the possibility of achieving significant changes by setting up a powerful direction, gaining commitment and encouraging actors to go beyond their ordinary interests for the sake of organisational interests. In other words, transformational leaders do not merely manage existing structures but also can question these structures, encourage change and establish new priorities. Applying the theory to the field of political leadership, one can see that it gives an opportunity to study the way presidents apply their executive power to place reforms on the agenda

The relevance of the theory to the governance of public organizations can be found in Backhaus and Vogel (2022) who provide a meta-analysis of 151 articles and 486 effect sizes on public sector leadership and find a positive association between the latter and good organizational outcomes. In addition, the authors identify that the strength

of leadership-outcome associations depends on context, administrative traditions, leadership approach, and methodological specifics. This qualification is especially relevant for the current research. It shows that leadership should not be viewed as an independent process within its administrative context.

Transformational Leadership Theory therefore serves as an instrument in understanding the role of presidential leadership within the APC administration through focusing on the issues that require reforms and attracting the necessary institutional attention to those problems. While under Buhari political attention was drawn to the issues like public financial management, personnel administration, digital governance, and anti-corruption, the attention of the executive power under Tinubu was paid to the problems like fuel subsidy reform, foreign exchange management, fiscal consolidation, and revenue generation.

Nonetheless, one of the limitations of the Transformational Leadership Theory in regard to governance reform is that its focus on the ability of the leaders to create vision, inspire and effect organizational change may result in undue crediting of the individuals themselves with too much explanatory power. In fact, political executives do not effect reforms themselves. Their decisions have to go through a number of processes, such as ministries, departments, bureaus, administrative procedures, financial processes, technical processes, and the relationship between agencies. Consequently, there may be cases of great commitment to the reform by a leader, but poor implementation of the same due to the lack of sufficient institutional capacity.

This constraint is especially applicable in the case of Nigeria. In terms of the leader-centered approach, one could argue why there was a need to embark on the reform exercise but would not be able to explain why, despite being conducted by the same ruling party with similar executive commitment, different degrees of success were achieved in the process of implementation and institutionalization. In the current study, transformational leadership is thus seen not as a sufficient variable in the explanation of governance outcomes. Political leadership is rather viewed as an important catalyst setting the direction and creating executive commitment, while institutional capacity sets the limits to its realization.

Good Governance Theory

The second theory that informs this study is that of Good Governance Theory. In contrast to Transformational Leadership Theory, which is all about leadership practices and change, Good Governance Theory is concerned with the quality and implications of governance. As such, the core issue of this theory does not lie in how governments implement reforms, but rather, in how public institutions function efficiently, transparently, accountable and according to institutional and administrative principles necessary for sustainability. Contemporary governance theories view good governance as a multi-dimensional concept. As one can see from OECD's Government at a Glance 2023, for instance, public governance can be viewed in terms of public finance and budgeting, public employment and management, digital government and trust and democratic resilience. This framework highlights the significance of efficient public institutions and public sector capability in addressing governance issues. Such dimensions are important for this study since they enable the assessment of governance reform beyond policy implementation.

The usefulness of Good Governance Theory in this study will be seen in how it allows the setting up of evaluation criteria that may be used to measure the impact of the institutional reforms. A reform like TSP, IPPIS/GIFMIS for instance cannot just be

deemed successful on the grounds of having been adopted formally. Rather, what matters here is whether or not there were any gains in terms of improvement of public financial management, administrative effectiveness, accountability, transparency, coordination or institution performance. In the same vein, the economic reforms that have been undertaken by the Tinubu administration have to be viewed in this context. In that regard, the Good Governance Theory thus supplies the outcome-oriented dimension of this study. It helps distinguish between reform adoption and good governance and sets the ground for investigating whether the changes made had any impact on the operations of government. In this case study, the main dimensions of governance include effectiveness, accountability, transparency, institution performance and the ability of public institutions to manage public affairs.

However, one limitation inherent in Good Governance Theory is the normative nature of the theory due to its focus on desirable governance principles. Ideas like effectiveness, accountability and transparency set a standard with which governance can be measured, but they fail to provide a causal link between political decisions and the institutional measures needed to bring about such results. A country may have institutions that qualify as good governance measures even when the actual process of implementation is low due to poor administrative capacity, bureaucratic challenges, lack of technical capacity or poor coordination. The study seeks to overcome this limitation by focusing on the empirical aspects of the implementation of reforms based on the normative aspects of good governance. Instead of taking the presence of reforms for granted as being a measure of good governance, the research delves into the process of implementation of the reforms and sustenance thereof. The use of Good Governance Theory, in this case, will not be as a cause of reforms but as a means of evaluating governance.

Integrating the Theories with Institutional Capacity

The major theoretical contribution of this research is the combination of the two theories mentioned above with the concept of institutional capacity. Transformational Leadership Theory offers the explanation of the political roots of any reform whereas Good Governance Theory offers the criteria to evaluate its results. It is only through the combination of the two theories with institutional capacity that we are able to find out the missing link between them. The connection can be described in the following way: Political leadership – Executive commitment – Institutional reform – Institutional capacity and coordination – Implementation – Institutionalisation – Governance outcomes

At the very beginning of this chain, political leadership plays the role of the source of guidance and political attention. The extent to which particular reforms will have enough support and executive attention will be determined by executive commitment. Institutional reforms are the implementation of priorities in terms of rules and systems or administrative procedures. But these formal changes do not guarantee the success of governance.

Institutional capacity acts as a mediator within the analytical model. When there is greater capacity within institutions to implement and coordinate action, political decisions will have a greater chance of being turned into effective administration. In cases where the capacity is lower, the political will may lead to policies being adopted formally while no change takes place institutionally. Experiences of implementation could, in turn, affect political priorities; thus, there is no strict linearity here. Political leaders may form institutions, yet institutional dynamics might hinder political leaders in realizing their aims.

Such an integrated perspective is distinct from a traditional approach based on Transformational Leadership Theory, whose focus would still remain on the leader's ability to form vision and implement organizational change. At the same time, this is different from a good governance approach, where governance would be evaluated only in terms of meeting normative criteria. The study is trying to combine these two points of view by posing a specific question: what institutional dynamics make political leadership result in governance outcomes?

The framework is very useful for the APC period because it permits comparison across reforms and across the Buhari and Tinubu administrations. It allows the study to distinguish between reforms characterised by strong political commitment and adequate institutional capacity, reforms where political commitment was not matched by sufficient institutional capacity, and reforms whose sustainability depended heavily on continuing political attention. This distinction provides an explanation for variation in implementation and institutionalisation that cannot be derived from political commitment alone.

Theoretical Critique and Application to the Study

This combined theoretical framework takes into account the shortcomings of each of the theories when applied separately. The Transformational Leadership Theory could be criticised for the agency attributed to political leaders in this theory because it assumes that the transformation of the institutions is due to their vision and the mobilisation. In this research, the agency problem is addressed in the sense that the leader would trigger the reforms but institutions would define the extent to which reforms are achievable and sustainable.

In turn, the Good Governance Theory, while providing important benchmarks for assessing the governance performance, would tend towards normativity if the processes of achieving the desired governance outcome are not considered in its application. These processes will be addressed in the current research in the form of institutional reforms, the conditions of their implementation being the focus of interest here.

Therefore, the two theories are not viewed as conflicting explanations but rather as complementary ones. They are used at different stages of the analysis process, where Transformational Leadership Theory helps to explain the triggers of political reforms and the institutional capacity helps to explain the translation of political decisions into administrative action. This division of analytical roles allows the study to move beyond the assumption that executive commitment automatically produces effective governance.

Theoretical Contribution

The research advances theory through the use of Transformational Leadership Theory and Good Governance Theory alongside the notion of institutional capacity, thus producing a theoretical framework that allows for an understanding of the conditional effect of political leadership on governance results. This framework considers institutional capacity as a mediator that converts political commitment into implementation, with institutionalization determining whether the reform can be sustainable against changes in political priorities and environmental conditions.

Such a theoretical contribution is particularly important within the case of Nigeria since it brings together two areas of academic inquiry that are usually studied independently of each other, namely leadership and its political dimensions on one hand, and institutions and their administrative capacities on the other. By testing this framework on the example of APC

administration for the period from 2015 to 2025, the study gives the answer to the question of why there could be significant commitment of political leadership to reform, but no implementation and poor results.

Results and Presentation of Data

The findings are discussed in light of the three research objectives, which include analysis of the relationship between political leadership and governance reforms under the APC administration, the role of institutional capacity in mediating this relationship, and analysis of reforms' implementation and institutionalization in the Buhari and Tinubu administrations. The discussion revolves around five dimensions that are interlinked. These include executive commitment to governance reforms, institutional capacity, administrative coordination, reforms' implementation and institutionalization, and governance outcomes.

Executive Commitment to Governance Reforms

The finding shows that the role of political leadership in terms of setting directions and implementing changes in institutions during the period from 2015 to 2025 under the APC administration was important. Both the Buhari and Tinubu administrations were engaged in reforms aimed at changing the mode of functioning of the institutions, improving their fiscal management, and addressing emerging economic situations. Yet the role of political leadership is not in the number of implemented reforms but in prioritizing them and keeping commitments to implementation.

Some of the major reforms introduced during the Buhari period include the implementation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA), the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS), the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) and the introduction of the Open Treasury Portal. The establishment and implementation of the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council also indicate the effort of the administration to use executive coordination to deal with the problem of regulatory and administrative fragmentation. The above reforms illustrate the catalytic role of political leadership in institutional reforms through addressing particular governance challenges and directing public institutions toward particular reform goals.

Similarly, the Tinubu administration used the mechanism of executive action in implementing its major reforms. Although the reform priorities of the Tinubu administration were different from those of the Buhari administration, its early reform priorities were based largely on the need to remove fuel subsidies, carry out foreign exchange reform and consolidate the fiscal position of the country, generate revenues and restructure the economy. Therefore, the important point about the two administrations is that the similarity between them lies in the use of executive action to implement significant changes in the country's public policies and institutions.

This finding corresponds with Backhaus and Vogel's (2022) observation that public-sector leadership is associated with organisational outcomes, although the strength of this relationship varies according to institutional and contextual conditions. In the Nigerian case, executive commitment was important because it initiated reforms and gave them political priority. However, the evidence also shows that executive activism alone did not guarantee effective implementation. Political decisions had to be translated through institutions with different levels of administrative, technical, financial and coordinating capacity.

Institutional Capacity and Implementation

The second key finding relates to the importance of institutional capacity in determining how extensively political decisions were turned into administrative action. Although the executive's commitment was important in setting the objectives of reforms and in giving them political impetus, implementation depended upon the administrative, technical, financial, organizational and coordination capacities of those institutions which were responsible for their implementation. For instance, reforms related to public financial management such as TSA, GIFMIS and IPPIS were important because their implementation and success was not dependent only upon the executive's decision to implement them. Information systems, administrative processes, manpower, monitoring mechanisms and coordination among various public institutions were required for the reforms to be successful and sustained.

In the same vein, Domorenok, Graziano and Polverari (2021) have highlighted the importance of capabilities within an organization to set, coordinate and implement policies. In the context of Nigeria, the findings support the distinction made by these authors between reforms and institutional capacity. The mandate for reform can be set by the executive, but this mandate gains administrative relevance only if the institutions have the capacity to implement them. Cooperation was essential since a number of governance reforms demanded cooperation between various ministries, departments, and agencies. In cases where there was fragmentation in roles and ineffective sharing of information, implementation was more challenging. Thus, the analysis shows that some of the implementation challenges faced were not due to lack of political commitment alone. It was also an issue of institutional fragmentation and lack of coordination between various institutions of administration.

Bureaucratic conditions were also another important aspect for implementation of governance reforms. Existing studies about implementation of reforms in Nigeria's Fourth Republic show that political influences, budget constraints, politicization of appointments and decrease in professionalism are some of the aspects which can limit the process of implementation of policies. Similarly, the evidence from this study also shows that there is a possibility of occurrence of institutional resistance to reforms in cases where reforms change the existing institutional arrangements.

Table 1. Comparative Reform Orientation under the Buhari and Tinubu Administrations

Administration	Major reform areas identified	Principal institutional requirement	Observed implementation issue
Buhari	Public financial management, personnel management, digital governance, and anti-corruption	Administrative systems, information infrastructure, technical capacity, coordination, and monitoring	Implementation varied by institutional capacity, bureaucratic conditions, and coordination
Tinubu	Fuel subsidy reform, foreign exchange reform, fiscal consolidation, revenue generation, and economic restructuring	Coordination, fiscal institutions, technical capacity, monitoring, and adaptive capacity	Reform effects were shaped by institutional and socioeconomic constraints

Source: Authors' synthesis of documentary evidence reviewed.

The table demonstrates that the two administrations pursued different reform priorities but faced a common implementation question: whether the institutions responsible for implementation possessed sufficient capacity to translate executive decisions into sustained administrative outcomes.

Administrative Coordination and Digital Governance

Further, the results show that institutional capacity cannot be equated with the existence of finance or human resources. The capacity of institutions to coordinate roles, share information and modify administration processes was equally significant. Some of the reforms reviewed in this research were dependent on multiple institutions working within the same implementation process. Thus, poor coordination might have resulted in fragmented implementation despite executive backing for the policy in question.

One good example in this regard is digital governance. The implementation of TSA, GIFMIS and IPPIS improved some of the information and administrative infrastructure of the government. Nevertheless, digitisation could not address all of the weaknesses of institutions. Technologies could help manage information, finances and administration more effectively; however, technologies alone cannot solve incentive problems, professional capabilities issues, politics, accountability issues and inter-agency coordination problems.

The research suggests that digital transformation should be viewed as a part of the institutional capacity development process and not as a replacement of the latter. This process could be described in the following way: Political leadership – executive commitment and policy orientation – institutional reform – institutional capacity and coordination – implementation – governance outcomes.

This is not a mechanical or linear process.Institutional limitations can constrain the implementation of political decisions, while implementation experiences can subsequently influence political priorities and institutional reforms.

Implementation Continuity and Institutionalisation

The third objective addresses the issue of implementation and institutionalization of reforms during the APC period. According to the evidence, the transfer of power from Buhari to Tinubu creates the ground for

evaluating the success of reforms' institutionalization through the independence from the personal attention of a leader. Some reforms implemented and reinforced during the tenure of Buhari influenced the institutional environment under Tinubu. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a certain level of institutionalization, though the continuation of administrative systems does not mean continuity of policy orientation. Indeed, Tinubu turned his political attention to macroeconomic restructuring and worked within some administrative and institutional arrangements established and reinforced under the previous administration.

It should be noted that institutional continuity and policy continuity are two different phenomena. A reform might survive a change in political leadership due to its institutionalization in legislation, administrative procedures, information systems and organizational routine. At the same time, reforms depending heavily on the continued personal political attention might lose its momentum. Institutionalisation is also associated with adaptation because economic recession, the pandemic situation caused by coronavirus infection, insecurity, inflation and shifts in macroeconomic variables posed new challenges to public institutions during the period of research. The level of the coordination of processes within the institution, availability of information and flexibility of the organisation determined its capacity for adaptation to changing conditions. It means that institutional effectiveness implies both ability to implement reforms and capacity for adapting institutional practices in response to external challenges.

Governance Outcomes

The third dimension of analysis focuses on governance outcomes. According to the results of research, the APC administration provided numerous institutional interventions; however, their impact was varied depending on the area of policy and context of implementation. It contributes to the differentiation between the adoption of reforms and institutional effectiveness.

Introduction of policy, administrative approach or digital tools proves commitment to reforms and their implementation; however, it does not imply improvement of governance performance. The effects of reforms were conditioned by implementation capacity, administrative coordination, bureaucratic factors, monitoring and sustainability. The evidence therefore does not support either a uniformly positive or uniformly negative assessment of the governance reform process during the APC period. Instead, it indicates variation. Where executive commitment was accompanied by stronger institutional capacity and coordination, reforms were more capable of producing durable administrative improvements. Where institutional capacity and coordination were weaker, implementation remained uneven despite political commitment.

Table 2. Analytical Relationship between Political Leadership, Institutional Capacity and Governance Outcomes

Analytical dimension	Evidence examined	Relationship to governance reform
Executive commitment	Reform priorities, executive decisions and political attention	Initiated and prioritised institutional and policy reforms
Institutional capacity	Human, technical, financial, organisational and information resources	Determined the ability of institutions to implement reforms
Administrative coordination	Inter-agency cooperation, information sharing and institutional responsibilities	Influenced the coherence and effectiveness of implementation
Implementation continuity and institutionalisation	Continuation, adaptation and embedding of reforms in administrative systems	Influenced whether reforms survived changes in political priorities
Governance outcomes	Effectiveness, accountability, transparency, administrative performance and wider effects	Provided the basis for assessing whether reforms produced meaningful institutional change

Source: Authors' synthesis based on the study's analytical framework and documentary evidence.

Collectively, the findings provide evidence in support of the study's major thesis that political leadership functions as a catalyst for governance reform but does not independently influence governance performance. The role of institutions in conditioning how political decisions are implemented and institutionalisation in the sustainability of reforms over and above political attention periods cannot be overstated. Additionally, the findings show the reason why the same ruling political party may have different outcomes when it comes to governance reforms in various policy domains. The critical difference is not whether there is political commitment or not but the institutional environment within which specific reforms are implemented.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrates that political leadership played an important role in launching and guiding the process of governance reform during the APC administration between 2015 and 2025, although the influence of such leadership was shaped by the institutional context in which the reforms were conducted. In all three of the study's objectives, there is a common trend that can be identified. Political leadership defined what to do and provided direction in terms of mobilising the attention of the executive branch of government; institutional capacity facilitated the transformation of these political decisions into administrative practice; while institutionalisation had an effect on whether the reforms would be sustained after the initial attention of political leaders had been withdrawn.

Political Leadership Matters but Its Effects Are Institutionally Conditioned

The first objective focused on the association between political leadership and governance reform in the APC administration. From the findings, it is clear that both the Buhari and Tinubu administrations utilised the executive power to bring about important reforms, although different in nature. While the Buhari administration prioritised reforms such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA), Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS), Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), Open Treasury Portal and Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council, the Tinubu administration focused on reforms related to the fuel subsidy, foreign

exchange, fiscal consolidation, revenue generation and economic restructuring.

This demonstrates the major idea of Transformational Leadership Theory that political leaders may influence organisational change through vision creation, priority setting and mobilisation of institutions on the reforms they want to bring about. Both Burns' (1978) initial concept of transformational leadership and the later formulation of transformational leadership by Bass indicate the ability of leadership to effect change in terms of direction and collective action in the organisation. In the case of the present study, however, it should be noted that the executive commitment was necessary, but not sufficient for the success of the reforms.

The results are supported by the analysis conducted by Backhaus and Vogel (2022), which shows that the link between public sector leadership and organisational performance is contextually and institutionally contingent. In the Nigerian case, the point is reinforced in terms of showing how political leadership effectiveness depends to a significant degree on the administrative capabilities of institutions to transform government intentions into action. Political leaders set the course for reforms, but the implementation of such changes depends on institutions that have varying degrees of administrative, technical, financial and coordinating capabilities.

Thus, the research results do not refute the relevance of transformational leadership, but set more definite institutional limits to its applicability. Political leaders do not implement reforms personally; they work via bureaucracies, administration systems, state institutions and institutional processes. Consequently, even when political leaders demonstrate a high level of commitment to reforms, they do not guarantee an equally high level of governance performance improvement. That explains why some significant reforms were introduced in Nigeria within the APC era, but not implemented properly and effectively.

Institutional Capacity Is the Missing Link Between Reform and Outcomes

The second objective sought to explore how institutional capacity could serve as the mediation tool between political leadership and governance outcome. The results of the analysis offer very convincing evidence regarding the necessity to view institutional capacity as the mediating mechanism for the relationship in question. In this context, reforms such as TSA, GIFMIS and IPPIS were not limited to executive decisions. Their implementation presupposed information infrastructure, procedure, technology, monitoring, funding and coordination of relevant institutions. This result is similar to Domorenok et al. (2021), who focus on the need for organisational and procedural capacities of governments to develop and implement policies. The current research extends this theoretical perspective by using it in the analysis of the relationship between political leadership and governance reform in Nigeria.

The findings, in addition, offer a meaningful link between leadership and Good Governance Theory. Good governance revolves around the quality and effectiveness of public institutions, their capability to manage resources, deliver services, remain accountable and adjust to changes. Similarly, the OECD (2023) approach emphasizes the significance of the capacity of institutional and public sectors in efficient governance. In this context, it means that governance reforms must not be measured solely based on whether the government introduces some reform or develops an administrative system. They must also be measured by the ability of public institutions to implement, monitor and sustain reforms.

The findings, in turn, provide another area of applicability of the Good Governance Theory as they make the link between governance outcomes and the institutional conditions under which political decisions are taken. The theory presents a valuable framework for assessing governance quality, yet the example of Nigeria shows that the capacity of institutions is essential for explaining how formal reforms result in various outcomes in different policy fields. It also proves the assumption about the importance of administrative coordination in terms of institutional capacity as well.

These findings are in line with those of Adegbite et al. (2022), which show political influence, inadequate budgetary allocations, politicisation of appointments, and professional weaknesses as elements that influence the implementation of policies in Nigeria. Indeed, the results from this study indicate that, in some instances, implementation challenges do not imply that there is no political will. They may arise due to institutional weaknesses.

Adoption Does Not Equate to Effectiveness

The third objective evaluated the implementation and institutionalisation of reforms during the presidencies of Buhari and Tinubu. The findings indicate that, although reforms may be adopted, this does not imply that institutional effectiveness has been achieved. It implies political and administrative interventions. However, its effects depend on its performance within the prevailing institutional arrangements.

The above differentiation becomes relevant for understanding the APC era. The implementation of reforms such as TSA, IPPIS and GIFMIS could be seen as meaningful institutional actions, however, they could not be understood in terms of their mere enactment. The success of such reforms was contingent upon the way they were implemented, monitored and adapted institutionally. The same can be said about the large-scale economic reforms made under Tinubu. Through executive action, the policies were introduced; however, their impact could be determined in light of the specific institutional and socioeconomic context of their implementation.

The research conclusion supports the Good Governance Theory that suggests evaluating governance in terms of institutional outcomes and not policy declarations only. Furthermore, it gives grounds for an adjustment to the strictly leadership-based approach to reform. Transformational Leadership Theory gives the rationale for why political leaders take steps to make changes; however, it lacks the explanation for the period that follows. The role of institutional capacity in the transition between leadership process and governance outcome is crucial.

The result also aligns with that of Lawal & Akinyemi (2024) and Amin et al. (2024). Their studies highlight the institutional and governance context influencing reform success in Nigeria. Instead of considering reform as a one-time occurrence, this research shows that a process-oriented approach can be considered whereby reform starts as a political initiative and then becomes an institutional process, and where possible, is institutionalised.

From Political Initiatives to Institutional Resilience

The last theme focuses on the sustainability of reforms and their transition from political initiatives to institutional resilience. The results reveal that the success of reform is dependent upon its institutionalisation within the processes and procedures, laws, information systems, organizational practices, and institutions. This is especially evident when comparing the transition from the Buhari regime to the Tinubu regime.

The evidence suggests that some institutional arrangements established or strengthened during the Buhari period continued into the Tinubu administration, although political priorities changed. This demonstrates the distinction between political continuity and institutional continuity. A reform does not have to remain politically identical to survive a change in administration. Where it becomes sufficiently embedded in administrative systems, it can continue while being modified or adapted to new political and economic priorities.

This finding advances the integration of the two theories utilized in this research. Transformational Leadership Theory addresses the part of political leadership in driving change, whereas Good Governance Theory serves as an anchor for assessing the quality of these institutional arrangements. The concept of institutionalisation links the two theories through providing an explanation on how political actions can translate into sustainable administrative practices. This relationship can thus be stated as follows: Political leadership – executive commitment –- institutional reform – institutional capacity and coordination – implementation – institutionalisation – governance outcomes.

It should be emphasized that this relationship does not represent a strict causal process. Institutions' capacity to implement changes can influence political actions, and experiences of implementation processes can impact political decisions and institutional practices. However, this relationship still gives a good analytical explanation for the identified pattern. This finding is very important in the context of changing economic and political environments within which the examined institutions operate. In the case of recession, the COVID-19 pandemic, insecurity, inflation and other macroeconomic factors, public institutions faced new challenges during the studied period. Thus, institutional resilience requires not only the maintenance of the same procedure but also its adaptation to new conditions without compromising essential administrative processes.

Synthesis of the Findings

Summarily, the findings from the three research objectives have provided a coherent understanding of governance reform within the APC government from 2015 to 2025. First, the findings show that political leadership played a role in determining the agenda and ensuring that political actions would occur. Second, the findings showed that the institutional capacity and coordination acted as mediating variables in the transformation of the political agenda to implementation. Third, the findings revealed that the institutionalization of reforms acted as a factor that determined sustainability. The general pattern can therefore be summarised in the following way: political leadership determines the direction, institutional capacity acts as a mediator for implementation and institutionalisation determines the sustainability of reforms. This finding is a synthesis of the two theories used in the current analysis: Transformational Leadership Theory and Good Governance Theory. In fact, while Transformational Leadership Theory offers an explanation for the political initiation of change, the Good Governance Theory provides a theoretical basis on which governance performance can be measured.

Therefore, the study makes an important contribution to existing literature on the topic of how governance reform can be understood without being simply based on the concept of leadership. However, this does not mean that political leadership is not important at all, but only that leadership occurs within institutions. Likewise, institutional capacity cannot be considered separately from political direction because major changes need the authority of executives and attention to the matter. Thus,

both political leadership and institutional capacity are interrelated and linked to each other, with political leadership providing political direction and institutions defining the level of its possible implementation. Finally, the results obtained confirm the main thesis of this study, according to which political leadership is an important element of the catalyst for governance improvement, but not an independent factor. Executive willingness and engagement can start a lot of reforms, but the efficiency of their implementation relies on institutional capacity, coordination, and adaptability, and sustainability of the reforms on their institutionalization. This way, the study explains why governance reforms implemented under the same party show different levels of institutional success.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Conclusion

This study sought to establish the impact of political leadership on the effectiveness of institutional arrangements in Nigeria within the APC era between 2015 and 2025, especially in relation to the ability of the institutions to facilitate policy and decision-making into actual governance actions. In pursuit of its aims, the study was informed by three objectives: to explore the association between political leadership and governance reform; to determine the role of institutional capacity in moderating this association; and to investigate the process of implementing reforms in both Buhari and Tinubu presidencies. The results of the analysis indicate that political leadership played a pivotal role in setting out the agenda for reform and driving the processes of change in public institutions through the involvement of the executive branch. Both presidencies showed notable executive engagement in the process of governance reform, but with different emphasis reflecting their distinct political and economic environments.

However, what the study also reveals is that political commitment alone is not enough to guarantee the success of the governance process. The successful implementation of the reform process was determined by the administrative, technical, financial, organisational and coordination capabilities of the implementing institutions. Institutional capacity is thus one mediating factor between political leadership and governance results. The implication of this finding is that it extends the use of the good governance theory in that successful governance involves not only the implementation of reforms but also institutional capability. The research also discovered that the adoption of a reform does not automatically mean institutional success. Simply the existence of policy, administrative system or digital platform cannot be taken as a sign of improvement in governance performance. It is how deep the reforms are embedded in administrative processes, information systems and organisational structures that matters.

Overall, it can be stated that political leadership acts as a catalyst to reforms in governance and not as a stand-alone determinant of governance performance. In terms of the relationship established within the research, political leadership serves as guidance, institutional capacity acts as mediator to implementation, and institutionalization is the factor that influences sustainability. Transformational Leadership Theory accounts for the aspect of executive leadership in bringing about change. Good Governance Theory, on the other hand, gives an institutional and result-oriented framework for understanding governance performance. The two theories combined with institutional capacity help us better understand why reforms from the same political era yield varying implementation and governance results.

Policy Implications

There are several practical implications that can be drawn from these findings when designing, implementing and evaluating governance reforms in Nigeria.

Institutional capability should be considered in the design of the reform. There needs to be an identification of the necessary institutional capabilities that will be needed for the implementation of the governance reforms at the very beginning. The government needs to consider whether the institutions that will be tasked with carrying out the reforms have the requisite personnel, technical know-how, information capabilities, funding and coordination measures before embarking on the policy change. Where the capabilities are inadequate, the capability-building measures should be included in the reform process and not left until later.

Promote coordination and monitoring of reform implementation. The Federal Government should clarify institutional roles in relation to multi-ministry, multi-departmental and multi-agency reforms. Systems of shared information, targets for implementation and performance reviews should be established to overcome fragmentation and promote accountability. For example, the implementing MDAs of major reforms at the federal level should be expected to prepare monthly performance and implementation reports on budget implementation using a common reporting system, whereby the coordinating institution reviews the progress, identifies bottlenecks and takes action.

Institutionally sustainable reform designs. Important governance reforms should be designed in a way that allows the reforms to withstand shifts in political leadership. In cases where possible, such reforms should be legally and administratively anchored with well-documented procedure and ownership beyond the office of the political executive who introduced the reform measures.

Evaluate reforms in terms of institution building. The government needs to evaluate reforms not only in terms of the implementation of initiatives, programmes, or digital applications, but also in terms of how these have impacted the effectiveness, accountability, coordination and service delivery of the government. This means that the monitoring framework for reform should also contain measures of institution building capacity and performance along with indicators of the implementation of policies.

Improve monitoring and evaluation systems. Monitoring and evaluation should be included in the implementation process of major reforms in governance, rather than at the end of the implementation process of a program. Institutions concerned should set out the targets for implementation, reporting times and review process right at the beginning of the reform process. Through this process, the government will be able to determine whether the problem is due to resource limitations, lack of coordination, technical limitations, etc.

Limitations of the Study

Most of the documentary sources used in this study include government documents, institution documents, international organisation documents and academic literature. While these sources offered considerable data on governance reforms, government documents might represent the point of view of institutions and politics rather than the real challenges in implementation. International and academic documents may use different standards to measure the performance of governance.

This study did not make use of interviews with people such as policymakers, civil servants, implementing officials and other parties who played an important role in the

reforms. As a result, this study cannot account for all the unspoken processes, institutional experience and unrecorded implementation challenges. Moreover, since this study only focuses on the governance at the federal level under the APC government, it cannot offer an evaluation on how similar reforms were implemented at the state or local government levels. The above-mentioned limitations have been taken into consideration as much as possible using evidence comparison and triangulation from various types of documentary sources.

Future Research

The results of future research might be improved by introducing primary empirical data in the form of interviews and questionnaires with policymakers, civil servants, implementing bodies, and other stakeholders. The results of such research would reveal more details about the institutional process of the transformation of political decisions into administrative activities.

Another interesting field for further comparative research is the identification of the presence of the revealed relationship in other African countries with comparable institutional problems. The comparison of Nigeria with other African political systems will make it possible to understand which aspects of institutional capacity are context-dependent and which have general characteristics of governance reform.

Future research should focus on the institutional mechanisms mediating the influence of political leaders on the result of governance. Special emphasis should be put on monitoring and evaluation systems, performance management, inter-institutional coordination, digital infrastructure of the public sector, bureaucratic professionalism, and institutional accountability. This would allow us to understand what institutional mechanisms make political commitments sustainable and effective governance reforms.

In conclusion, it would be more appropriate in the future for research to shift from simply looking at how governments implement reforms to analyzing the institutional setting necessary for effective implementation of the reform efforts.

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