International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

Responsible Leadership, Social Trust, and Governance in Nigeria: A Systematic Review

[1] Madumelu HC Madubueze, [2] Anthony Ejue Egberi, [3] Obioma Davison Mbanefo

[1, 3] Department of Public Administration, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria
[2] Department of Public Administration, Federal University Wukari, Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: **Madumelu HC Madubueze**

Abstract

The paper focuses on responsible leadership, social trust and governance in Nigeria. Responsibility in leadership is among the reasons organizations, institutions and even nations succeed. Problematically, Nigeria is in search of responsible leadership; a leadership ready to make decisions and stand by those decisions no matter whose ox is gored. Sentiments and bias in serious decisions making, have never taken any society or organizations higher. The study therefore examined the nexus between leadership, social trust vis-à-vis good governance. To investigate this, the paper adopted qualitative documentary research design relying on the PRISMA model of analysis. The McGregors Theory X & Y in leadership were adopted to analyze the contending variables. Findings showed that; - social trust contributes to successful implementation of economic policies and the rule of law; - responsible leadership and social trust facilitates human resource development not only through high investment in education; - responsible leadership and social trust has become increasingly important for sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

1. Introduction

At the heart of societal cohesion lies responsible leadership, bedrock that nurtures and sustains social trust across diverse communities and nations. Leaders who embody integrity, transparency, and accountability in their decision-making processes instill a sense of confidence and reliability among their constituents. Through a steadfast commitment to the greater good and adherence to ethical principles, these leaders cultivate an atmosphere of trust and collaboration, wherein individuals find assurance that their interests are safeguarded. As underscored by Boin, 'tHart, Stern, and Sundelius (2016) [7], responsible leadership encompasses not only visionary competence but also an unwavering dedication to ethical conduct and answerability, which are essential elements in the construction and perpetuation of social trust. Indeed, responsible leadership assumes a pivotal role in fortifying the social fabric of societies, nurturing solidarity, and advancing the collective welfare.

Chioke (2023) [11] emphasizes that fostering responsible leadership is pivotal for steering socio-political and economic progress, underpinned by governance characterized by transparency, accountability, and ethical practices. However, Nigeria grapples with systemic challenges stemming from governance deficiencies, corruption, and a lack of accountability, impeding its advancement. This underscores the nexus between development and integrity. In alignment with this perspective, Akhtar, Garavan, Javed, Huo, Junaid, & Hussain (2023) [1] note a notable gap in empirical research exploring the impact of responsible leadership on critical outcomes like innovation and national progress.

Heidarabadi, Sarukhani, & Valadbigi (2011) underscore the paramount importance of social trust in contemporary life, highlighting its multifaceted nature and diverse implications. They assert that social trust not only reflects aspects of societal interactions but also unveils facets of individual experiences. Moreover, some scholars regard social trust as a fundamental determinant of human societies' and groups' endurance. The efficacy and potency of social trust vary across different societies, prompting extensive discussions and analyses. Drawing on Coleman's perspective, social trust emerges as a cornerstone of social capital (Coleman, 1990; Rahmani and Heydarabadi, 2006, as cited in Heidarabadi, Sarukhani, & Valadbigi, 2011), further accentuating its significance in fostering cohesive communities and fostering resilience.

To them, social trust emerges as both a catalyst for progress and a prerequisite for the development of social contracts. They argue that social trust fosters synergistic interactions, enabling it to address existing challenges and facilitate the establishment of social agreements. Adding depth to this discourse, Cook (2008) [12] raised pivotal inquiries that have spurred novel research avenues. He questioned whether trust truly underpins good governance, or if robust laws hold greater importance. Additionally, Cook explored the factors influencing trust and distrust in governmental institutions, as well as the attributes that render leaders trustworthy. Furthermore, he delved into the potential vulnerability of citizens to corruption in trusting environments, prompting considerations for necessary safeguards.

In Nigeria, the absence of responsible leadership has perpetuated a cycle of socio-political and economic challenges, significantly undermining social trust within the nation. The country's governance landscape has been marred by corruption, nepotism, and a lack of accountability among its political elite. This dearth of responsible leadership has led to widespread disillusionment among the populace, eroding trust in governmental institutions and exacerbating social divisions. As noted by Okolie & Igbini (2020) the failure of Nigerian leaders to uphold ethical standards and prioritize the welfare of the citizenry has fueled a pervasive sense of distrust and cynicism among the populace.

The repercussions of this leadership deficit extend beyond governance issues, permeating various facets of Nigerian society. The lack of accountable leadership has hampered infrastructural development, impeded economic growth, and perpetuated social inequalities. According to Amaeshi, Adegbite, & Rajwani, (2014) [3], the prevalence of corruption and mismanagement in Nigeria has eroded public confidence in government institutions, hindering the country's ability to attract foreign investment and foster sustainable development. Moreover, the failure of leaders to address pressing social issues such as poverty, unemployment, and insecurity has further eroded trust in the government's ability to effectively address the needs of its citizens.

In the absence of responsible leadership, Nigeria grapples with deep-rooted governance challenges that undermine social cohesion and perpetuate a culture of impunity. The lack of transparency and accountability in governance processes has fostered a climate of impunity, where corrupt practices go unchecked and perpetrators evade accountability. This culture of impunity not only undermines the rule of law but also exacerbates social tensions and erodes trust in the integrity of governmental institutions. As observed by Dunmade, Aderibigbe, Asa, & Obadare (2023) [15], the failure of Nigerian leaders to uphold ethical standards and promote transparency has contributed to a breakdown of social trust, exacerbating divisions along ethnic, religious, and regional lines.

This paper thus, embarked on a systematic exploration of responsible leadership, social trust, and governance by synthesizing the insights of leading scholars in the field. Our analysis delineates the essence of responsible leadership at the individual level, juxtaposing it with the intricate dynamics of Nigeria's socio-political landscape. Through an examination of existing literature, we aim to elucidate potential avenues for further research, offering provisional frameworks to deepen comprehension and guide future inquiries.

2. Theoretical Framework

While the landscape of leadership theories is indeed vast, it is commonly categorized into two main streams: The traditional theories and the more contemporary, situational perspectives. However, our contention in this paper is that there exists no universally optimal approach to leadership.

Leadership is inherently adaptable, shaped by various factors such as situational context, contingencies, and individual preferences. It is not uncommon for leaders to employ a hybrid of methodologies, tailoring their approach to suit the demands of specific circumstances. This rejects the notion of a fixed, permanent trait of leadership—a cornerstone principle of the situational or contingency approach.

Over the years, social scientists have pursued simplistic theories of leadership, aiming for concepts that are easy to grasp, teach, learn, and apply. Initially, the prevailing belief was that "leaders are born, not made," emphasizing innate qualities as the key to effective leadership. Subsequently, the paradigm shifted to "leaders are made, not born," suggesting that anyone could acquire leadership skills when placed in the right environment. However, contemporary understanding acknowledges the complexity of leadership styles, recognizing that multiple factors influence a leader's decision-making process. Research indicates that a leader's chosen style is a product of three interrelated variables: The leader's characteristics, the attributes of subordinates, and the situational context. Hence, leadership style emerges as a dynamic function of these elements, defying rigid categorizations and emphasizing the need for adaptability and contextual awareness (Boone & Kurtze, 1984) [9].

Douglas McGregor, in his seminal work "The Human Side of Enterprise," delineates two distinct leadership assumptions: Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X posit a set of implicit assumptions about human nature and behavior:

i. The average human being harbors an inherent aversion to work and will evade it whenever possible. ii. Given this inclination to shun work, coercion, control, direction, or the threat of punishment becomes necessary to elicit sufficient effort toward organizational goals. iii. The average human being prefers to be directed, shirks responsibility, and prioritizes security above all.

In contrast, McGregor's Theory Y is rooted in evolving understandings of human behavior, characterized by the following assumptions:

i. Engagement in work, both physically and mentally, is as natural as leisure or rest. ii. External control and punitive measures are not the sole methods to foster effort toward organizational aims. Individuals possess the capacity for self-regulation when committed to objectives. iii. Commitment to goals hinges on the rewards associated with their attainment, particularly those fulfilling needs for self-esteem and personal growth. iv. Given conducive conditions, individuals not only accept but actively seek out responsibility. v. The ability to innovate and solve organizational challenges creatively is not limited to a select few but is widely distributed across the population. vi. In the modern industrial context, the intellectual potential of the average individual remains largely untapped.

McGregor's dichotomy offers profound insights into differing perspectives on human motivation and behavior within organizational contexts, shaping leadership approaches and management practices.posits that the essence of leadership lies in guiding employees to uncover

goals aligned with organizational objectives, a principle we find resonant with responsible leadership and its associated cultivation of social trust. Thus, Theory Y, which embodies this approach, is better suited to modern employees than the autocratic style associated with Theory X.

Regarding the relevance of McGregor's ideas to our study, we align with the contingency or situational model of leadership. This model asserts that the most effective leadership style in a given situation can be forecasted by assessing three interconnected factors: The quality of leader-member relations, the level of job structure, and the degree of power vested in the supervisor by superiors. However, Theory X and Y's propositions give pause in our analysis because we contend that the Nigerian populace doesn't demand a high level of accountability from its leaders.

While participatory governance is ideal, we assert that effective leadership must be complemented by a populace willing to adhere to governmental institutions and norms. This aligns with the principles of Theory X and Y, which emphasize the importance of mutual trust and cooperation between leaders and followers.

2.1 Methodology
The study utilized qualitative design. Data were sourced through secondary sources using the PRISMA review strategy using "ABS-KEY-TITLE" as the command key. At the end of the undertaking, a total of Two Thousand Two Hundred and Twenty Two (2,222) were found records. The screenings were on the same figure and a total of One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty-Three reviews were excluded. Full text articles reviewed for eligibility were Three Hundred and Seventy Nine (379) and a total of Three Hundred and Forty (340) were excluded with reasons. The total records reviewed were Thirty Nine (39). See the flowchart below;
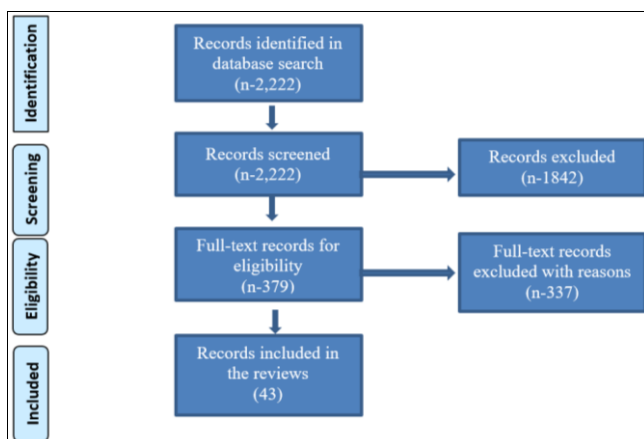

Fig 1.1: Flowchart of PRISMA model used for the study

3. Conceptual Explanations
3.1 Responsible leadership; In contemporary discourse, responsible leadership encapsulates a multifaceted role, as succinctly articulated by Thomas Nicole (2021), who portrays a responsible leader as embodying traits of a servant, steward, architect, change agent, coach, and storyteller. This definition encapsulates the essence of ongoing intellectual deliberations surrounding responsible leadership. Waldman and Galvin (2008) further underscore the centrality of responsibility within effective leadership, contending that traditional leadership descriptors often overlook this vital element. They argue that terms such as

transformational, charismatic, authentic, participative, servant, shared, or even spiritual and ethical leadership fail to explicitly incorporate the imperative of responsibility. According to Waldman and Galvin (2008), a leader's effectiveness is inherently tied to their sense of responsibility, and any omission of this aspect undermines the essence of true leadership.

Their perspective sheds light on the inadvertent neglect of fundamental leadership principles, contributing to the erosion of public trust in governance. Indeed, the absence of responsibility in leadership paradigms may exacerbate societal skepticism towards public governance structures.

Nicola and Maak (2011) astutely observed that responsible leadership remains a significantly understudied phenomenon, emphasizing its orientation towards the concerns of others and prompting critical inquiries into the targets and scope of leaders' responsibilities. Echoing this sentiment, Maak and Pless (2006), as cited by Ossy-Agbata and Madubueze (2019), conceptualized responsible leadership as a relational and ethical construct, manifesting within the social dynamics of interactions with stakeholders who influence or are impacted by leadership decisions. They advocate for a paradigm shift from traditional leader-subordinate dynamics towards more inclusive leader-stakeholder relationships, acknowledging the broader implications of responsible leadership beyond conventional hierarchies.

Their insights illuminate the transformative potential of responsible leadership, which extends beyond individual roles to encompass a stakeholder-driven approach in governance. By embracing the ethos of responsibility, leaders become integral stakeholders in the public governance sphere, navigating their actions and decisions in alignment with broader societal interests. Thus, responsible leadership entails not only fulfilling obligations to subordinates but also actively engaging with diverse stakeholders to foster ethical and sustainable governance practices.

3.2 Social Trust; Social trust encompasses the faith, mutual exchange, and perceived dependability that permeate interpersonal relationships within a society, extending to institutions, organizations, and cultural norms. It epitomizes the conviction that fellow members of society will engage in reliable and cooperative behavior, thereby fostering unity, collaboration, and concerted efforts towards shared goals.

Welch, Rivera, Conway, Yonkoski, Lupton, & Giancola (2001) [41] emphasized the challenge of precisely defining social trust due to its multifaceted nature, which often obscures its fundamental aspects amidst various levels and dimensions. They conducted a comprehensive examination of these dimensions from both economic and sociological perspectives. Their exploration of economic viewpoints is exemplified in several notable studies. For instance, Hardin (2001) portrays trust as a symbolic commodity, while Misztal (1996) [27] contends that trust constitutes a public good essential for the functionality of a market economy. These perspectives underscore a central theme in the economic viewpoint: The assertion that social capital acts as a lubricant facilitating diverse economic transactions (Krishna, 2000) [21].

Social trust is acknowledged as a catalyst for economic advancement, stemming from the conducive atmosphere of collaboration among individuals that trust nurtures (Misztal, 1996 [27]; Arrow, 2000). Societies characterized by trust in

their leadership are believed to exhibit heightened levels of interaction and cooperation, thereby fostering increased economic transactions (Putnam, 2000; Krishna, 2000 [21]). From a sociological standpoint, social trust is perceived as a prerequisite for nurturing robust social relationships. This perspective regards social capital, including trust, as a valuable resource utilized to revitalize struggling communities or to bolster the growth of already thriving ones (cited in Wilson, 1997 [42]; Hearn, 1997).
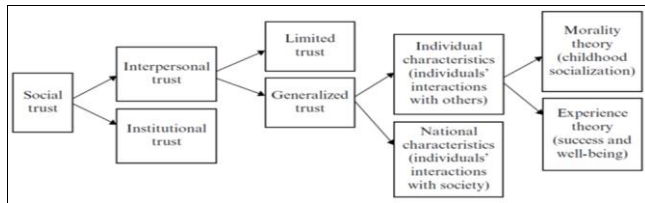
Sources: Kwon (2021); Social trust: Its concepts, determinants, roles, and raising ways

Fig 1.2: Social Trust, Types & Determinants

From the contending issues, we argued that, social trust emanates from the conscious efforts and beliefs that the society [the masses] entrusts their common good [provision of basic facilities] in the hands of their leaders with the hope that, they manage and administer those basic good, for enhancement of their economic well-being.

4. Impacts of responsible leadership on social trust
Welch, Rivera, Conway, Yonkoski, and Giancola (2001) [41] aptly acknowledged the challenge of categorizing theorists into rigid disciplinary boundaries during multidisciplinary literature surveys, recognizing the inherent cross-pollination of ideas across diverse fields. They underscored the pervasive nature of social trust, which transcends disciplinary confines and permeates various domains within social sciences and humanities. Indeed, regardless of the nominal disciplinary affiliations of studies, research consistently demonstrates the beneficial effects of social trust on individuals, communities, workplaces, institutions, and nations (Welch, Rivera, Conway, Yonkoski, & Giancola, 2001) [41].

In this study, we endeavor to unravel some of the inherent complexities elucidated by previous scholars in the field. Putnam (2001) notably highlighted the multifaceted benefits of trust, asserting its role in enhancing individual well-being and societal cohesion. Trust, according to Putnam (2000), fosters robust interpersonal connections, providing individuals with access to various resources such as employment opportunities, financial support, social networks, and emotional sustenance. Furthermore, trust is posited to contribute to both physical and mental health outcomes, as well as to engender pro-democratic attitudes among citizens.

Scholars from diverse academic fields widely recognize the crucial role of trust in shaping human interactions across a spectrum of domains, spanning from international diplomacy to everyday interpersonal relations. Trust, deeply rooted within social networks, instills vital "social virtues" like reciprocity and honesty, influencing behavior and fostering cohesion within communities. Our analysis of trust's repercussions extends beyond social relationships to encompass its impact on crucial connections such as governance, commerce, caregiving, and interactions among

strangers, showcasing its pervasive influence on human dynamics across diverse contexts (Rotter, 1980 [35]; Hearn, 1997; Fukuyama, 1995 [16]).

According to Kayode, Osman & Turgay (2022) [22] ethical [responsible] leadership fosters employees' trust in organization and service recovery performance, while it mitigates their absenteeism. It serves as a cornerstone in shaping the fabric of social trust within both local communities and larger organizational structures, leaving a lasting imprint on interpersonal dynamics, corporate ethos, and societal harmony. Leaders who embody principles of transparency, integrity, and accountability not only earn the confidence of their followers but also foster an environment ripe for trust and collaboration. For instance, pioneering research by Brown, Treviño, & Harrison (2005) [6] showcases how ethical leadership, characterized by unwavering honesty, impartiality, and ethical decision-making, significantly enhances employees' perceptions of organizational trustworthiness. When leaders consistently prioritize the collective welfare over personal gain and uphold ethical standards, they elevate trust levels within their teams, paving the way for open dialogue and constructive feedback channels (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002) [14].

It is a catalyst for nurturing social capital within communities by fostering harmonious interactions and fostering mutual cooperation among diverse stakeholders. By championing stakeholder interests and embracing inclusive decision-making processes, responsible leaders lay the groundwork for trust that transcends organizational boundaries. Scholarly insights from Choi and Wang (2009) [10] underscore the pivotal role of transformational leadership in fostering social trust within communities, as leaders who empower and inspire their followers cultivate a shared sense of purpose and collective identity. Through collaborative endeavors and community engagement initiatives, responsible leaders bridge societal rifts, bolster social cohesion, and instill a sense of belonging among community members (Uslu & Oklay, 2015) [38].

Moreover, the ripple effects of responsible leadership extend far beyond immediate organizational or community contexts, shaping broader societal dynamics and governance frameworks. Leaders who exemplify ethical conduct and champion the common good contribute to the legitimacy and efficacy of public institutions, thus bolstering public trust in government and societal structures (Tyler, 2001) [37]. Scholarly research by Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) [39] underscores the pivotal role of ethical leadership in fostering trust within public sector organizations, as leaders who embody fairness, transparency, and accountability enhance citizen perceptions of institutional integrity and reliability. By fostering a culture of responsible governance and ethical leadership, societies can mitigate skepticism and cynicism, stimulate civic participation, and uphold the bedrock principles of democracy (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012) [13].

4.1 Examining the Absence of Responsible Leadership and Social Trust on Governance in Nigeria
The absence of responsible leadership and dwindling social trust in Nigeria has cast a long shadow over the nation's governance landscape, manifesting in multifaceted challenges. In a country rife with corruption, nepotism, and political instability, the dearth of accountable leadership exacerbates socio-economic disparities and undermines

public confidence in government institutions. According to a report by Transparency International, Nigeria consistently ranks low on the Corruption Perceptions Index, reflecting pervasive corruption that erodes trust in leadership and stifles development initiatives (Transparency International, 2023). Without leaders committed to upholding ethical standards and serving the interests of the populace, governance becomes a mere facade, perpetuating a cycle of distrust and disillusionment among citizens.

Moreover, the erosion of social trust in Nigeria amplifies governance woes, fueling disunity and exacerbating ethnic, religious, and regional tensions. When citizens lack faith in their leaders and institutions, they resort to informal networks and communal ties for support, further entrenching divisions along ethnic and religious lines. This fragmentation impedes collective action and hampers efforts to address pressing issues such as poverty, insecurity, and infrastructure decay. A study by the African Development Bank highlights how low social trust undermines the effectiveness of public policies and impedes socio-economic progress, hindering Nigeria's journey towards sustainable development (African Development Bank, 2022). Thus, the erosion of social trust not only weakens the social fabric but also undermines the legitimacy of governance structures, perpetuating a vicious cycle of instability and underdevelopment.

We believe that the absence of responsible leadership, social trust has adverse effects on good governance which result in the following;

Anarchy: In its essence, anarchy embodies a state of disorder and lawlessness, echoing the grim portrayal famously articulated by Hobbes as a life that is "nasty, brutish, and short." Sadly, this depiction strikes a chord with the current reality facing Nigerian society. Ojo & Ojo (2012) [31], in their examination of effective leadership, shed light on the squandering of abundant human, material, and financial resources that should have propelled visible socio-economic growth and development. However, Nigeria finds itself entrenched in stagnation, despite the ample revenue generated from its petroleum industry and foreign exchange earnings, both of which have been mismanaged to an alarming extent.

This troubling state marks a descent from a nation once hailed for its auspicious development prospects in Sub-Saharan Africa to one on the verge of faltering into a failed state category. A plethora of political, economic, and socio-cultural factors contribute to this regression, notably fiscal indiscipline, pervasive corruption permeating all sectors, a glaring disregard for the rule of law and due process, and a pervasive culture of impunity fostered by the militarization of politics. Furthermore, a vast portion of the population grapples with dire poverty, stemming from persistent mismanagement of the economy at the micro level. As a result, Nigeria finds itself ensnared in a cyclic pattern of crises, perpetuated by inadequate and ineffective political leadership.

The consequences of this leadership void are dire, with citizens bearing the brunt of the fallout. Hindered by obstructionism from self-serving or incompetent leaders, Nigeria struggles to navigate its manifold challenges. Instances such as the 2020 #EndSARS protests and the subsequent pillaging of COVID-19 relief supplies serve as stark illustrations of this obstructionism. These events underscore the disillusionment and frustration of the Nigerian populace, who continually encounter roadblocks in their pursuit of a brighter future, imposed by those entrusted with leadership responsibilities.

Corruption: Gould's delineation of corruption as "an immoral and unethical phenomenon encompassing deviations from societal moral norms, resulting in diminished respect and confidence in duly constituted authority" (Gould, 1991) [18] underscores the erosion of values and the erosion of trust in social, eco-political institutions, and those vested with authority. This definition closely resonates with Dobel's portrayal of corruption as "the moral inability to make selfless moral commitments to actions, symbols, and institutions that promote the substantive common good" (Dobel, 1978).

As eloquently articulated by Agbude & Etete (2013) [2], the prosperity of any nation, the rejuvenation of the populace's faith in governance, and the complete eradication of corrupt practices from our society hinge upon the shoulders of responsible leaders. It is imperative to recognize, as emphasized by Freeman & Stewart (2006), that ethical leadership extends beyond the leaders themselves, it includes their constituents, followers and key stakeholders. According to Freeman & Stewart, leaders are intrinsic members of their respective organizations and stakeholder communities, and thus, their objectives, vision, and values should serve the collective benefit of the organization and its stakeholders. Responsible leaders embody the purpose, vision, and values of both the organization and its constituents, grounded in ethical principles (Freeman & Stewart, 2006, as cited in Agbude & Etete, 2013) [2]. Therefore, we wholeheartedly concur with their perspective that endemic corruption thrives in the absence of responsible leadership and social trust.

Poor economic development: The existing body of literature extensively illustrates a robust correlation between responsible leadership, social trust, and economic advancement, bolstered by empirical evidence from various studies (Fukuyama, 1995; Knack and Keefer, 1997; Whiteley, 2000; Zak and Knack, 2001; Knack and Zak, 2003; Tabellini, 2010; Bjornskov, 2012) [16, 23, 40, 43, 25, 36, 8]. The interplay between responsible leadership and social trust profoundly influences economic development through multifaceted mechanisms. Primarily, responsible leadership and social trust foster economic activities by enhancing coordination and cooperation among economic stakeholders while simultaneously mitigating the incentives for opportunistic behavior. Given that economic endeavors typically involve multiple agents within a community or organization, the efficiency of such activities hinges upon effective coordination, cooperation, and collaboration - a feat only attainable in an environment characterized by responsible leadership and social trust.

Incohesion: The concept of social cohesion, as highlighted by OECD (2011), holds significant relevance in the pursuit of sustainable and equitable social development, a principle particularly emphasized in the context of Korea (OECD, 2013). OECD (2011; 2014 [32]) delineates a cohesive society into three fundamental components: Social inclusion, social capital, and social mobility. Social inclusion pertains to the integration of individuals and social groups into society through avenues like employment, networks, and access to social welfare programs. Moreover, social inclusion necessitates governmental policies and frameworks that ensure equitable access to benefits from social welfare

programs such as healthcare, education, and housing. Fostered by social trust, social inclusion engenders stronger participatory attitudes and behaviors among trusting individuals (Knack and Keefer, 1997) [23].

Beyond these outlined facets, the focal point of this inquiry lies in institutional trust. Defined by Newton (2006), Kelleher and Wolak (2007), and Warren (1999), institutional trust epitomizes the confidence citizens place in institutions to operate efficiently, effectively, fairly, and ethically in alignment with their designated roles as stipulated by law or social norms. Newton (2013) further elucidates that institutional trust diverges from interpersonal trust, as the former is typically acquired indirectly and from a distance, often through media channels and social discourse. Citizens' assessment of institutional trust stems from their evaluation of institutional performance vis-à-vis their expectations, thereby shaping their perception of institutional trustworthiness. Institutional trust hinges on two interconnected dimensions: Competence, encompassing the efficiency and effectiveness of institutions in fulfilling their assigned functions, and values, which encompass the ethical underpinnings of institutional operations, including integrity and fairness (OECD, 2017).

5. Conclusion
Nigeria faces significant challenges stemming from the absence of responsible leadership and dwindling social trust. To address these issues, the country must prioritize comprehensive institutional reforms that emphasize transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. Key measures include strengthening anti-corruption mechanisms, improving civic education, and fostering dialogue among diverse stakeholders. Moreover, investment in leadership development programs and grassroots initiatives is crucial to cultivating a new cadre of leaders dedicated to serving the common good and bridging societal divides. By tackling the root causes of governance deficiencies and fostering a culture of integrity and social cohesion, Nigeria can pave the way for sustainable development and inclusive prosperity.

6. Findings and recommendations
This research has conclusively demonstrated the pivotal role of social trust in fostering the effective implementation of economic policies and upholding the rule of law. Through thorough intellectual inquiry, it becomes evident that a society characterized by high levels of trust tends to cultivate a pool of honest bureaucrats, politicians, and leaders. When trust in government and its officials are robust, it naturally extends to trust in the policies they enact - a hallmark of responsible leadership. Consequently, individuals engage in economic activities such as investment and consumption aligned with governmental directives, thereby bolstering the success of said policies. Our study strongly asserts, as extensively elucidated, that heightened social trust correlates with economic growth by facilitating the more efficient execution of the rule of law. We therefore advocate for governmental initiatives aimed at elevating moral consciousness through widespread awareness campaigns and educational endeavors targeting leaders. It is imperative to recognize that there are no shortcuts to economic prosperity within a framework characterized by mistrust, distrust, and irresponsibility.

Secondly, the findings of our study underscore the significant role that responsible leadership plays in fostering

human resource development, extending beyond mere investment in education to encompass recruitment practices grounded in meritocracy. Such a commitment to merit-based recruitment not only ensures the efficient allocation of talent but also serves as a catalyst for economic prosperity, ultimately fostering social trust within society. We recommend a comprehensive institutional reform aimed at prioritizing meritocracy over the prevalent practice of "Federal character." Such reform is essential for steering Nigeria away from the pitfalls of nepotism and favoritism, towards a system that rewards talent, competence, and hard work. By fostering an environment where individuals are selected and promoted based on their qualifications and capabilities, rather than extraneous factors, Nigeria can pave the way for sustainable growth and development, instilling confidence and trust in its institutions and leadership.

Thirdly, extant literature also shows that responsible leadership and social trust have become increasingly important for economic development. Thus, we recommend that Nigeria should as a matter of expediency, look inward in her value orientation and begin to promulgate relevant laws targeted at strengthening her bilateral ties while sanitizing the leadership system and characters of individuals that are being recruited into public offices.

7. References
1. Akhtar MW, Garavan T, Javed M, Huo C, Junaid M, Hussain K. Responsible leadership, organizational ethical culture, strategic posture, and green innovation. The Service Industries Journal. 2023; 43(7-8):454-474. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2023.2172165
2. Agbude GA, Etete PI. Ethical Leadership, Corruption and Irresponsible Governance: Rethinking the African Dilemma Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences. 2013; 4(6). Doi: 10.5901/mjss.2013.v4n6p481
3. Amaeshi K, Adegbite E, Rajwani T. Corporate social responsibility in challenging and non-enabling institutional contexts: Do institutional voids matter? Journal of Business Ethics. 2014; 134(1):135-153. Doi: 10.1007/s10551-014-2420-4
4. Arrow KJ. The Limits of Organization. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.
5. Aviral KT, Mihai M. Economic Growth and FDI in Asia: A Panel-Data Approach. Economic Analysis and Policy, Elsevier. 2011; 41(2):173-187.
6. Brown ME, Treviño LK, Harrison DA. Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes. 2005; 97(2):117-134. Doi: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002
7. Boin A,'t Hart P, Eric Stern E, Sundelius B. The politics of crisis management: Public leadership under pressure. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 182.
8. Bjørnskov C. How Does Social Trust Affect Economic Growth? Southern Economic Journal. 2012; 78(4):1346-1368. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41638856
9. Boone LE, Kurtz DL. Principles of Management. Second Edition, New York: Random House, 1984.
10. Choi J, Wang H. Stakeholder relations and the persistence of corporate financial performance. Strategic Management Journal. 2009; 30(8):895-907. Doi: 10.1002/smj.759
11. Chioke SC. Responsible leadership and accountability

challenge in Nigeria's public administration and sustainable development: A glocalised perspective. Innovative Issues and Approaches in Social Sciences. 2023; 16. Doi: 10.5281/zenodo.7605676

12. Cook KS. (Eds) Trust in Society. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008.

13. Den Hartog DN, Belschak FD. Work engagement and machiavellianism in the ethical leadership process. Journal of Business Ethics. 2012; 107(1):35-47. Doi: 10.1007/s10551-012-1296-4

14. Dirks KT, Ferrin DL. Trust in leadership: Meta-analytic findings and implications for research and practice. Journal of Applied Psychology. 2002; 87(4):611-628. Doi: 10.1037//0021-9010.87.4.611

15. Dunmade EO, Aderibigbe AS, Asa KJ, Obadare GO. assessing the impact of leadership's style on the performance of NASCON allied industries Plc., Lagos, Nigeria. Journal of Applied Economics and Business Studies. 2023; 7(4):45-62. Doi: https://doi.org/10.34260/jaebs.743

16. Fukuyama F. Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

17. Fukuyama F. Social capital, civil society and development. Third World Quarterly. 2010; 22(1):7-22. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/713701144

18. Gould D. Administrative corruption: Incidence, causes and remedial strategies. In Ali Farazmand (Eds.) Handbook of Comparative and Development Public Administration. pp. 761-774. New York: Marcel Dekker Inc, 1991.

19. Heidarabadi A, Sarukhani B, Valadbigi A. A Study of the Types of Social Trust and the Elements Influencing It: The Case of the Iranian Northern Town of Sari. Asian Social Science. 2012; 8(1). Doi: 10.5539/ass.v8n1p183

20. Hardin R. Trust and Government. in Trust and Trustworthiness, 151-72. Russell Sage Foundation, 2002. Retrieved from: https://books.google.com.ng/books?id=juqFAwAAQB AJ

21. Krishna A. "Creating and Harnessing Social Capital" in P. Dasgupta & I. Serageldin (Eds.). Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective (pp. 71-93). Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2000.

22. Kayode KE, Osman MK, Turgay A. Ethical leadership, trust in organization and their impacts on critical hotel employee outcomes, International Journal of Hospitality Management. 2022; 102. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2022.103153.

23. Knack S, Keefer P. Does social capital have an economic payoff? A Cross-country investigation. Quarterly Journal of Economics. 1997; 112:1251-88. Retrieved from: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2951271

24. Kwon OY. Social trust: Its concepts, determinants, roles, and raising ways in Social Trust and Economic Development: The Case of South Korea. Germany: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019. Retrieved from: https://www.elgaronline.com/view/9781784719593/978 1784719593.xm; https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784719609.

25. Knack S, Zak PJ. Building trust: Public policy. Interpersonal, 2003. Retrieved from: https://www.minessence.net/PDFs/Articles/CAPCOTru st.pdf

26. Kotzian P. Conditional Trust: The Role of Individual and System-Level Features for Trust and Confidence in Institutions, 2010. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1585759 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1585759

27. Misztal BA. Trust in Modern Societies, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

28. McGregor D. The Human Side of Enterprise. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960.

29. Pless N, Maak T. (Eds.). Responsible Leadership (2nd ed.). Routledge, 2021. Doi: https://doi.org/10.4324/b22741

30. Pless NM, Maak T. Responsible Leadership: Pathways to the Future. In: Pless, N.M., Maak, T. (eds) Responsible Leadership. Springer, Dordrecht, 2011. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-3995-6_2

31. Ojo LI, Ojo BB. Effective leadership: Tool for achieving political stability and national development in Nigeria. Journal of Education and. 2012; 3(2). Retrieved from: https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/234633287.pdf

32. OECD. Society at a Glance, Paris: OECD, 2014.

33. Putnam Robert. Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.

34. Putnam RD. Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

35. Rotter JB. Interpersonal Trust, Trustworthiness, and Gullibility. American Pscyhologist. 1980; 35:1-7.

36. Tabellini G. Culture and institutions: Economic development in the regions of Europe. Journal of European Economic Association. 2010; 8(4):677-716. Doi: 10.1111/j.1542-4774.2010.tb00537.x

37. Tyler TR. Public trust and confidence in legal authorities: What do majority and minority group members want from the law and legal institutions? Behavioral Sciences & the Law. 2001; 19(2):215-235. Doi: 10.1002/bsl.438

38. Uslu F, Oklay E. The effect of leadership leadership on organizational trust trust. Leadership and Organizational Outcomes, 2015, 81-95. Doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-14908-0_5

39. Van Knippenberg D, Sitkin SB. A critical assessment of charismatic-transformational leadership research: Back to the drawing board? The Academy of Management Annals. 2013; 7(1):1-60. Doi: 10.1080/19416520.2013.759433

40. Whiteley PF. Economic growth and social capital. Political Studies. 2000; 48(3):443-466. Doi: 10.1111/1467-9248.00269

41. Welch MR, Rivera REN, Conway BP, Yonkoski J, Giancola R. Determinants and consequences of social trust. A revised version of a paper originally developed in SOC. 476/576, offered in the Department of Sociology, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, 2001.

42. Wilson PA. Building Social Capital: A Learning Agenda for the Twenty-first Century. Urban Studies. 1997; 34(5-6):745-760. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098975808

43. Zak PJ, Knack S. Trust and growth. Economic Journal. 2001; 111(470):295-321. Retrieved from: https://www.socialcapitalgateway.org/content/paper/zak

-p-j-knack-s-2001-trust-and-growth-economic-journal-111-470-295-321