



LEADERSHIP AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: A SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE

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Abstract

Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, while balancing social well-being, economic growth, and environmental protection. Based on the extant literature, the role of leadership and good governance in achieving sustainability cannot be overemphasised. It is argued that without effective leadership and good governance, the goal of sustainable growth may be elusive. As evident in the existing studies, the goals of sustainability have not been adequately achieved in Nigeria. Carbon footprints, unsustainable water usage and energy consumption are increasing in the face of environmental regulatory frameworks and polices. These problems have been associated with leadership and governance failure. Therefore, this study aims to examine the roles of leadership and good governance in driving and achieving sustainability goals. The study considered how socio-economic developments and environmental protection can be achieved via effective leadership and good governance. The study is anchored on two frameworks; “Transformational Leadership Theory and Principal-Agent Theory”. Secondary data was used to achieve the aim of this study. The study concluded that to achieve sustainability goals, it is imperative for the leadership framework to have elements of ethicality, connectedness, collaboration, creativity and courage. Nigeria is currently at an inflection point where the old methods of patronage based governance are failing to meet modern economic and social demands. Sustainability is not just about the environment in Nigeria; it is about the survival of the state itself.

Keywords: *Good governance, leadership, sustainability, sustainable development.*

Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa, and sixth in the world. Population growth in the country is largely geometric as its population increased from 32million in 1950 to 232 million in 2023 (Oban International, 2023). Based on the projection, its population is likely to be more than 400 million in 2050 (Okafor, 2022). Also, Nigeria is one of the largest economies in Africa, and this could be associated with a large volume of economic activities due to its large population. Unsurprising, the rapid population and economic growth have major implications for sustainability. Sustainability has been variously defined as achieving balance between the environment, equity and economy. Based on the definition of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

From the above definition, it is observed that there are three major dimensions of sustainability: environmental (Planet), social (People) and economic (Profit) sustainability (Thiele, 2024). Thus, sustainability is measured by the extent to which the three dimensions are achieved without affecting each other. However, these three dimensions have been problematic in Nigeria as the country struggles to achieve the three components (Ruggerio, 2021). For instance, environmental sustainability is still far from being achieved as its natural resources are already under strain, with rising carbon emissions and increasing deforestation. To feed its population, Nigeria builds its economy around fossil fuels (oil and gas). About 93 per cent of its export revenue comes from fossil fuels, and this also causes significant environmental disruptions. Due to large-scale production, the country produced 129 metric tons of CO₂ in 2023, which is the 4th highest emission in Africa (Population, 2024).

The bulk of the emissions are reportedly coming from the production of oil and gas, especially the practice of 'gas venting' where unwanted gases emerge during oil production largely methane – are largely released into the environment. Like carbon dioxide, methane is a greenhouse gas, but it is 28 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Also, gas flaring is a common practice of burning off surface gases. As reported by CSL Stockbrokers 2023, about 6.6 billion cubic metres of gas were flared in Nigeria in 2021, which made the country the 7th largest gas flarer in the world. Also, many private companies operating in Nigeria are not complying with the environmental regulations as they release waste indiscriminately. The study of Lala et al. (2022) revealed that increased rates of industrial and construction activities, transportation systems and unregulated emissions from power plants are responsible for the problem of environmental sustainability in Nigeria.

Also, social sustainability is another major concern in Nigeria. This is about ensuring that communities and societies thrive and continue to exist in a healthy, fair and equal way. Social sustainability could be said to have been achieved when people's quality of life is improved and strong relationships are fostered. The country faces challenges relating to poverty, inequality, education, healthcare, and gender equality (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). These challenges have been associated with a lack of social inclusivity (World Bank, 2022). Based on the World Bank Group report (2023), the poverty rate was estimated to be 38.9 per cent. The report also revealed that Nigeria is the second-largest poor population, after India, with about 87 million Nigerians living below the poverty line. Similarly, Premium Times (2022) reported that 133 million Nigerians are living in poverty, equivalent to 63 per cent of the country's population. Oxfam International (2024), the combined wealth of Nigeria's five richest men - \$29.9 billion – could end extreme poverty at a national level. About 18.3 million children are out of school, which limits their opportunities in life.

The aim of social sustainability is to improve access to education for everyone (Agwam, 2024). Also, health inequality is widening in Nigeria as the poor spend about 9 times more on health costs than wealthy people due to income inequality and inadequate funding of the healthcare system (Dejusticia, 2024). The third one is economic sustainability, which focuses on revenue. Based on the existing reports, Nigeria is performing in terms of economic sustainability. International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2024) projected that Nigeria would be the fourth largest economy in Africa in 2024 after South Africa, Egypt and Algeria. As reported by Trading Economics (2024), revenues in Nigeria increased to NGN1693.02 billion in the third quarter of 2023 from NGN1510.09 billion in the second quarter of 2023. Also, the National Bureau of Statistics (2023) reported that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 2.31 per cent (year-on-year) in real terms in the first quarter of 2023. IMF projected that the country's GDP would be \$253 billion in 2024. The major source of government revenue is the oil sector. Ademola (2024) reported that government revenue obtained from the oil sector increased from 11 per cent in 2023 to 30 per cent in the first half of 2024. Jaiyeola (2023) reported that oil revenue increased by 83 per cent, which is about NGN8.5 trillion. Also,



the report revealed that oil production increased to about 1.7 million barrels per day. Between 2023 and 2024, the production increased from 1.1 mbpd to 1.7 mbpd (Jaiyeola, 2023). However, based on the existing reports and findings, an increase in the country's revenue and GDP is being achieved at environmental costs. The intensity of oil exploration and exploitation in Nigeria has caused serious environmental implications. Due to oil exploration and exploitation, oil spills and gas flaring have caused major destruction to the environment. For instance, oil spills have polluted the soil, water and air, and they have had devastating consequences on the people living in the region.

Also, over 2.5 billion cubic feet of natural gas are flared every day in the Niger Delta region. Evidently, the destruction of the ecosystem has deleterious implications on social sustainability, as it has led to a cycle of poverty because depletion of resources means people cannot make a living, and environmental problems such as flooding and soil erosion destroy homes and crops. Also, increased revenue has not translated to improvements in access to education and healthcare services. Consequently, there have been increasing calls for action to transform unsustainable practices and systems (World Health Organization, 2022). While successive Nigerian governments have formulated and implemented several policies and frameworks to achieve economic development without compromising environmental protection and social development, such as the Environmental Impact Assessment Act (1992) and the Harmful Waste (Special Criminal Provisions) Act 1988, among others, the initiatives have not been effective.

Also, the establishments of agencies such as the National Environmental Law Enforcement Agency (NESREA) and the National Oil Spill Direction and Response Agency (NOSDRA), among others, have not lived up to expectations as large-scale environmental disruptions are still ongoing, especially in the exploration, exploitation and production of mineral resources such as crude oil. The perceived failure to achieve environmental and social sustainability could be linked to leadership failure and a lack of good governance. Existing studies have shown that environmental and social sustainability can only be achieved through effective leadership. Despite the role of leadership and good governance in achieving sustainability, the role of leadership qualities and capabilities in achieving sustainability has not been given the needed attention by scholars and policymakers (University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainable Leadership, 2023). It is against this background that this study examines how good governance and leadership could bring about sustainability in Nigeria.

This study is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the key concepts, where sustainability, leadership and good governance are discussed. The second section deals with the theoretical framework, where leadership and good governance frameworks were applied to the study. The third section discusses the methodology of the study. The fourth section discusses the intercourse among leadership, good governance and sustainability. The fourth section concludes and recommends what should be done to achieve sustainability goals in Nigeria.

Literature review and Conceptual Discussions

In this section, key concepts relevant to this study are conceptualised. These are as follows:

Concept of Sustainability: Sustainability involves integrating environmental health, economic vitality, and social equity to create thriving, healthy, diverse and resilient communities that benefit both current and future generations (Hajian & Kashani, 2021). Practices can be said to be sustainable provided that they support economic, human and environmental health. Based on the idea of sustainability, resources are assumed to be finite, and consequently, should be used consciously and sustainably so that they can be used for the long term in the interests of both current and future generations (Phillips, 2023). It is also defined as a practice of preventing the depletion of natural/physical resources to ensure that they remain available and useful for the long term. Based on the existing studies, sustainability can be broken down



into three components: economic, social and environmental (Hajian & Kashani, 2021; Borowy, 2021). In this study, sustainability in Nigeria is defined as environmental protection, social and economic development.

This is further explained under the Triple Bottom Line framework. Based on the Triple Bottom Line framework, sustainability has three major dimensions: Environmental protection, social development and economic development (Brinkmann & Brinkmann, 2020; Bolton & Landells, 2020). Environmental protection deals with the reduction of carbon footprints, water usage, wasteful processes and non-decomposable packaging, among others (Muñoz, 2020). Social development deals with addressing poverty, unequal access to education and healthcare services and ensuring community development through the implementation of sustainable infrastructural projects (Brinkmann, Brinkmann, 2020). Economic development implies making enough revenue to invest in and develop critical sectors and infrastructure. Sustainability is measured by assessing the performance of the above three areas (Bolton & Landells, 2020).

The relevance of sustainability is that the current path is leading towards a fiscal and social cliff; sustainable leadership is the only brake available.

Concept of Leadership: Leadership has been defined differently. Drucker (2020) defined a leader as someone who has followers. This definition is too simple because roles and positions could be delegated to anyone. In a situation where a role/position is delegated, it may be hard to distinguish who is actually a leader and follower. Bennis (2008) defined leadership as the capacity to translate vision into reality. Translating visions into reality is one of the functions/responsibilities of a leader. Bill Gates defined leadership as the act of empowering others (Clarke, 2008). This definition is incomplete as it does not explain the reasons for empowerment. In other words, the definition does not explain the goals and visions of leadership; it is just limited to the empowerment of others. Maxwell (2002) defined leadership as influence. However, the definition ignores the source of influence. The above definitions of leadership have both strengths and shortcomings.

To aggregate the above definitions, leadership could be seen as a process of social influence, which maximises the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal (Kilag et al., 2023; Ang et al., 2023). In the context of this study, leadership is seen as the process of social influence to maximise the efforts of others towards achieving sustainability goals (Samimi et al., 2022). In other words, the goal of leadership is to achieve environmental protection, social and economic development.

In political science and management, leadership is not merely holding a position of authority (like a President or Governor); it is a process of social influence. The concept of leadership is relevant because Nigeria sustainability crisis is not a technical problem, it is an adaptive problem.

Concept of Good Governance: Like leadership, good governance has been defined differently. Before conceptualising good governance, it is important to define governance (Brown & Marsden, 2023). Governance has been variously defined as how vested authority leverages its power to drive institutional objectives by designing, implementing, and innovating policies, rules, systems and processes. Additionally, it fosters stakeholder engagement and involvement to ensure effective governance and progress. (Beshi & Kaur, 2020). It implies how a country is managed, such as economic, policy and legal aspects. In this context, it implies how a country designs and implements policies and rules to achieve sustainability goals. Thus, good governance denotes that the exercise of the vested authority is accountable, transparent, predictable, participative and dynamic (Kjaer, 2023; Rosenau, 2021). As noted

by the World Bank, good governance is defined as a way in which power is used to regulate the economic and social resources of a country for development. Good governance enables a country to achieve its goals ethically, while ensuring compliance with regulatory expectations and adhering to best practices (Erkkilä, 2020; Farazmand, 2023). In this study, good governance is necessary to ensure the achievement of sustainability goals (environmental protection and socio-economic development).

In Nigeria, we often have "Big Government" but "Poor Governance." The relevance of this concept is that until the process of governing becomes transparent, accountable, and inclusive, no amount of borrowing or oil wealth will make the country sustainable.

Theoretical Framework

To effectively analyze this topic, it is best to anchor the work on two complementary theories: one that addresses the human element (Leadership) and one that addresses the structural element (Governance). Here are the two most relevant theories for this specific topic:

1. **Transformational Leadership Theory:** It was propounded James MacGregor Burns (originally) in the year, 1978 and was expanded by Bernard M. Bass in 1985 (who formalized the psychological mechanisms).

Basic Assumptions and Principles

This theory distinguishes between "Transactional Leadership" (exchange-based) and "Transformational Leadership" (change-based).

Assumption: Followers follow a leader not just for rewards, but because they trust and admire the leader's vision. The 4 Principles (The 4 I's): i. Idealized Influence: The leader acts as a role model with high ethical standards (Charisma). ii. Inspirational Motivation: The leader provides a compelling vision of the future that inspires followers to achieve more than they thought possible. iii. Intellectual Stimulation: The leader encourages innovation, creativity, and challenging the status quo. iv. Individualized Consideration: The leader acts as a mentor, paying attention to the specific needs of followers.

Justification of Relevance to the Work:

- Addressing the "Status Quo": Nigeria's current leadership style is largely Transactional (Patronage/Vote-buying: "I give you rice, you give me a vote"). This theory is relevant because it argues that to achieve sustainability, Nigeria must shift to Transformational leadership—leadership that focuses on long-term vision (e.g., diversification of the economy) rather than short-term exchange.
- Solving the Trust Deficit: The principle of 'Idealized Influence' is crucial for Nigeria. The "Sustainability Challenge" is partly due to a lack of trust in government. Transformational theory provides the framework for rebuilding that trust through ethical conduct.
- Innovation for Sustainability: The principle of Intellectual Stimulation is needed to solve modern challenges like the post-oil economy and climate change. Nigeria needs leaders who encourage new ideas, not leaders who rely on old methods.

2. **The Principal-Agent Theory (Agency Theory)**

The theory was propounded by Michael Jensen and William Meckling. Year: 1976 (Originated in Economics, but widely adapted to Political Science and Public Administration).

Basic Assumptions and Principles

This theory explains the relationship between the owners of resources and the people hired to manage them. The Players:

- The Principal: The Citizens/Electorate (owners of the country).
- The Agent: The Politicians/Public Officials (hired to manage the country).

Assumption 1 (Goal Conflict): The Agent (Politician) often has different interests than the Principal (Citizen). The Politician wants to maximize personal wealth/power; the Citizen wants good roads and hospitals.

Assumption 2 (Information Asymmetry): The Agent knows more about what is happening inside the government than the Principal does. The Problem: Without checks and balances, the Agent will act in their own self-interest (corruption), leading to "Agency Loss."

Justification of Relevance to the Work

Explaining "Growth without Development": This theory perfectly explains why Nigeria generates revenue (Oil) but the citizens remain poor. The "Agents" (Leaders) are diverting resources for personal gain because the "Principals" (Citizens) lack the mechanisms to monitor them effectively.

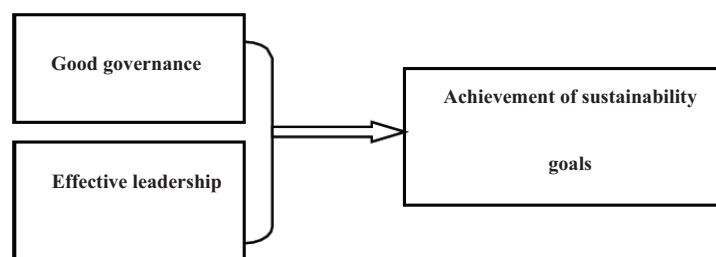
The Case for Good Governance: The theory posits that the only way to align the Agent's actions with the Principal's needs is through accountability mechanisms (Transparency, Rule of Law, Elections). This provides the theoretical justification for why Good Governance institutions are necessary for sustainability. Sustainability via Monitoring: The theory argues that for a system to be sustainable, "Agency Costs" (corruption/waste) must be minimized. This directly supports the argument that Nigeria needs stronger institutions (EFCC, Independent Judiciary) to monitor the "Agents."

"Sustainability Challenge in Nigeria is a result of failing on both theoretical fronts: i. Leadership Failure (Transformational Theory): We lack leaders with the vision to transform the economy. ii. Governance Failure (Principal-Agent Theory): We lack the monitoring systems to stop leaders from acting in their own self-interest.

Using these two theories gives your work both a psychological/behavioral angle (Leadership) and a structural/institutional angle (Governance).

Without effective leadership and good governance, it is largely impossible to achieve effective administration, achieve sustainability goals and deliver essential services (Mahmood & Baskaran, 2021). Good governance and effective leadership are fundamental. Persistent socio-economic and environmental challenges have necessitated the need for effective leadership (Zahoor et al., 2022). As mentioned earlier, leadership is a process of influencing others to achieve a common objective, guiding the organisation towards a more cohesive and coherent direction (Sawmar & Mohammed, 2021). This indicates that it is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. The effectiveness of leadership is measured in terms of good governance (Naomi & Akbar, 2020).

Figure 1
Conceptual framework



Source: Developed by the researchers.

To achieve sustainability goals in Nigeria, 6 major elements of good governance need to be prioritised during the formulation and implementation of sustainability goals (Ghorbanian, 2021). These are as

follows (Pomeranz and Stedman, 2020):

- I. Participation: When formulating and implementing sustainability policies, active participation of citizens should be encouraged, especially those who would be affected by the policy. For instance, people and communities should be involved in the formulation of economic, social and environmental policies, rules and regulations.
- ii. Rule of Law: There is a need for a fair legal framework to establish the rule of law in society. Nobody should be above the law. One important aspect of the rule of law is that it ensures impartiality, which helps to protect human rights, especially those people who are most marginal in society. When the rule of law is effectively entrenched, the violators of environmental destruction would face the wrath of the law. Both the government and private sectors contributing to environmental damage would be made to face the law. Entrenchment of the rule of law is fundamental for achieving environmental protection and social development without compromising economic development.
- iii. Transparency: Governance needs to be transparent for the fair delivery of services to the citizens. Through this, citizens would be aware of existing economic, social and environmental policies. They would know what and why they are important, and why they must adhere to them. Most Nigerians are unaware of most of the government policies, and consequently, they are denied the advantages of those policies. When they are aware of them, they would take advantage of them.
- iv. Responsiveness: The essence of governance is responsibility. The government is expected to take responsibility for the socio-economic and environmental challenges of the country. In other words, the government is expected to be responsive to socioeconomic and environmental challenges affecting citizens and communities. For instance, the government is expected to respond favourably and actively to the issues of poverty, unemployment, widening income inequality, pollution, and flooding, among others.
- v. Consensus-oriented: This implies that government policies should reflect the interests and needs of the people and community. In other words, the government should always adopt a bottom-up approach rather top-down approach when formulating and implementing socio-economic policies. Socio-economic development and environmental protection goals can only be achieved when the government carry along the beneficiaries.
- vi. Accountability: This means that the government should take responsibility for their decisions and actions. The government needs to be more accountable for the socioeconomic and environmental conditions of the country. They should formulate and implement effective policies to address the socio-economic situations of the country.

Figure 2: Good governance framework



Source: Adopted from Pomeranz and Stedman (2020).



The study argues that ethical and moral leadership could enhance the achievement of good governance required for achieving sustainability goals (Solinger et al., 2020; Hartarto et al., 2021). Thus, this study is anchored on ethical leadership, which portrays a good leader as a moral person – a fair and honest person who behaves morally both in personal and professional life – who influences moral conduct and ethical behaviour (Khan et al., 2020). The morality of a leader is determined by his/her sincerity and genuineness, and competence (Wanta & Augustine, 2021). An ethical leader can get the most out of others and have awareness of what others can achieve. Also, a leader should be able to motivate others and help others develop a capability. Ethical leadership is vital for achieving good governance because it establishes and nurtures good relationships (Gu et al., 2024).

Ethical behaviour and moral integrity are the bedrock of building trusted and lasting relationships between leaders and followers. An ethical leader has a few roles and responsibilities he/she need to meet for a country to run effectively (Argyropoulou & Spyridakis, 2022). These primary responsibilities are setting a good example, holding all people to the same standards, and ensuring their expectations are clear (Taryono et al., 2021). Ethical leadership is the practice of being honest and virtuous in whatever position one holds (Kim & Vandenberghe, 2020). It is argued that ethical leadership is required for achieving sustainability goals (Denters et al., 2023; Bekele & Ago, 2020).

Methodology

Secondary data were used in this study. Relevant information was gathered from suitable sources. Secondary data refers to existing data that was originally collected for a different purpose, which is being leveraged for this study. This study relied on secondary data due to its quicker and more convenient collection process as opposed to primary data (Newman et al., 2021). Additionally, secondary data offers a more economical option compared to primary research. Moreover, utilising secondary data allows for a substantial volume of data to be available for analysis, supporting the attainment of research goals (Taherdoost, 2021). Specifically, secondary data allowed the researchers to have a clearer and broader understanding and analysis of the current sustainability, governance and leadership issues in Nigeria. Data sources included databases, newspapers, books, conferences, and published articles. This is crucial to ensure sufficient and pertinent data are available to meet the study's objectives. The data were analysed using content analysis.

Discussion

Good Governance, Leadership and Sustainability

Issues in Nigeria Sustainability has three fundamental pillars: environmental protection, social development and economic development. Environmental protection entails reducing carbon footprints, water usage and non-biodegradable packaging. Social development implies treating people and communities fairly and ethically. Economic development involves achieving sustainable economic growth through efficient utilisation of resources. In the midst of regulatory and societal pressures to meet sustainability standards, effective and appropriate leadership styles and good governance are imperative. In most countries, the emphasis is largely on achieving economic development with limited emphasis on environmental protection and social development. The Triple Bottom Line denotes that every country/organisation should prioritise economic development, environmental health and social well-being.

The current administration, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has formulated several economic policies to achieve economic development in Nigeria. One of these policies is targeting higher GDP growth and a significant reduction in unemployment (Olaseinde, 2023). To achieve this goal, economic activities would be intensified. When economic activities increase, there would be an increase in government revenue for public services. Another policy is reviewing complaints about multiple taxation and antiinvestment



inhibitions, which have led to a reduction in the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by 80 per cent. It is expected that if these policies are implemented, they would attract domestic and foreign investors, which would lead to an increase in government revenue (Olaseinde, 2023):

- Repatriation of profits and dividends through an improved FX market framework: This policy has the potential to attract foreign investors, increasing capital inflows, strengthening the economy, and enhancing foreign reserves. These are necessary for achieving economic growth and development (Olaseinde, 2023).

- Mandating the Central Bank to implement a unified exchange rate: This policy would lead to more stable and predictable exchange rates, which would benefit individuals and businesses involved in international trade and those that depend on imported goods (Olaseinde, 2023).

- Making electricity more accessible and affordable for businesses and homes, and this is vital for business growth, as it leads to cost reduction.

- Instituting budgetary reform to stimulate the economy without engendering inflation, which is necessary for achieving balanced economic growth. The major one is the removal of fuel subsidy to free up government finances (Olaseinde, 2023).

However, while these policies are formulated and implemented to achieve economic sustainability, social sustainability is still far from being achieved. For instance, the removal of subsidies has caused and brought serious hardship to many Nigerians.

Also, to achieve social sustainability, the National Social Investment Program (NSIP) is a social welfare initiative launched by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2015. Overseen by the National Social Investment Office, the program aims to promote equitable resource distribution to vulnerable populations, including children, youth and women (Lamidi&Igbokwe, 2021). Under the previous administration, President Muhammadu Buhari, four key social investment programs to address the problem of persistent poverty and income inequality. The first one is the N-Power (Nigeria) program, which was used to develop both vocational and academic skills of young Nigerians with a monthly stipend of NGN30,000 (Achimugu et al., 2024). Another program was the Conditional Cash Transfer Program (CCT) to provide financial assistance for the poorest of the poor to support their basic needs and education.

Another program is the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP), which was an investment program targeting young and women entrepreneurs. These loans were provided to offset some of the start-up costs (Adam, 2018). Also, the Home Grown School Feeding Program (HGSF) was launched to increase school enrolment as meals were provided for students (Ayuba et al., 2023). However, these programmes seemed to have failed to achieve the social sustainability goals as poverty and economic inequality continue to increase. Recently, the current administration detected a major financial scandal in the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, which housed the programs. Consequently, the administration suspended all the programs and set up a six-person panel to reposition the country's social investment programs (Olaore, 2023). With increasing global appeals and commitments towards achieving sustainability, the Nigerian government is also making giant strides to ensure a sustainable future (PwC Nigeria, 2023).

One of these efforts is the launching of the Energy Transition Plan, as well as the innovative financing options such as the Debt for Climate Initiative. Also, Nigeria has adopted the International Sustainability Standards Board's (ISSB) IFRS sustainability disclosure standards (PwC Nigeria, 2023). Also, Nigerian government has formulated several environmental laws and regulations such as Territorial Waters Decree 1967, Petroleum Decree 1969, Oil in Navigable Waters Decree 1968, Forestry Act 1958, Antiquities Act 1958, Sea Fisheries Decree 1971, Land Use Decree 1978, Quarries Decree 1969, Sea Fisheries Decree 1971, National Environmental Protection (Management of Solid and Hazardous Waste) Guidelines and



Standards for Environmental Impact Assessment Decree 1992, Regulations 1991, Minerals and Mining Act 1999 and Water Resources Act 101 of 1993 among others.

Following the return of democracy to Nigeria in 1999, the Federal Ministry of Environment and State Ministries of Environment at the state levels were established. The aim was to ensure that all Local, State and Federal agencies, as well as companies operating in Nigeria, adhere to extant regulations. Also, the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) were established in 2007 to enforce environmental regulations. However, despite the above regulations and policies, environmental problems continue unabated in Nigeria. The goal of environmental sustainability is still far-fetched. Existing studies have shown that the problem could be linked to a lack of a national database on environmental quality, a lack of technical capacity among staff charged with the responsibility of enforcement, inadequate funding, overlapping regulatory agencies, and corruption (Njar & Enagu, 2019; Oyebanji et al., 2017).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study posited that to achieve sustainability goals, it is imperative for the leadership framework to have elements of ethicality, connectedness, collaboration, creativity and courage. Also, the importance of place and context should be emphasised for identifying leadership characteristics for a sustainable future. Leadership should no longer be seen as a set of capabilities possessed by an individual or a position held only. Rather, it should be seen as a process, which means a dynamic, collective and creative process of influence, which shapes behaviours and organisational climate. Also, it should be seen as requiring a purpose, which indicates clear, meaningful goals which inspire or motivate leaders and followers to organise and operate with a clear intention to serve and achieve specific goals.

In addition, it should be seen as place or context specific as it is embedded in and influenced by particular times and places. Also, there is a need for strategic partnerships and collaboration between the public and private sectors to have enough resources required to achieve sustainability goals. These partnerships and collaborations can only be achieved through pragmatic and effective leadership. The government needs to pay more attention to addressing the challenges of deforestation, desertification, pollution and climate change. Also, the government needs to make committed efforts to reduce poverty, inequality and promote education and healthcare access. Also, to achieve economic sustainability, there is a need for economic diversification and supporting SMEs.

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