

Effect of Political Moral Failings on Governance and Public Trust in Nigeria: The Place of the Media

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Abstract: *This study investigates the impact of political moral failings on governance and public trust in Southeast Nigeria, focusing on the role of the media in holding politicians accountable. A descriptive survey design was adopted, targeting participants in Anambra and Imo States, selected for their significant demographic diversity and economic influence. Using a multistage sampling method, 400 respondents were surveyed, including politicians, media professionals, civil society members, and residents, to gain diverse perspectives on the issue. The results reveal that moral failings of political leaders negatively affect public trust, hinder policy implementation, undermine government integrity, and contribute to political instability. A majority of respondents agreed that unethical behavior in political leadership erodes citizens' confidence in government institutions, impedes effective governance, and destabilizes the political environment. The study emphasizes the need for systemic reforms focused on ethical leadership, transparency, and accountability to restore public trust and improve governance. The media's role in ensuring political accountability is critical in addressing these moral failings and fostering political stability. The findings call for mandatory ethics training for political leaders, enhanced accountability mechanisms, and strengthened media involvement in promoting ethical governance practices.*

Keywords: Political moral failings, Governance, Public trust, Southeast Nigeria, Media accountability, Unethical leadership, Political instability.

Introduction

The intersection between political moral failings, government function and trust in Nigeria is a complex and contentious area of scholarship and policy interrogation. After independence, a history of deep-seated, corrupt practices, poor leadership, and institutional breakdown have all contributed to the undermining of good governance, and fostered a crisis of legitimacy in the state (Adamaagashi, Adamaagashi, Awakessien & Awakessien, 2024). Political wrong-doing, e.g., wrongdoing, a moral decay, a failure of responsibility, self-serving politicians, not only have undermined the nation's capacity to make socio-economic advancement, but have also generated an underlying cynicism of the political elite. Existing literature provided significant understanding into the relationship between corruption, governance, and public trust. Okibe and Onyekachi (2020) argue that corruption is a major impediment to democratic governance and national development in Nigeria. The authors highlight how a lack of transparency compromises governance by undermining institutional capacity and hindering public participation in decision-making processes. They further assert that corruption erodes democratic principles and poses challenges to both academic and practical governance. These findings emphasize the need for a comprehensive transformation of Nigeria's political system, aimed at fostering good governance, eradicating corruption, and restoring public trust.

The media, an essential tool for governance and public accountability, is greatly influenced by ownership structures in Nigeria. Nguvese (2014) and Lawrence (2019) examine how media ownership affects news content and public discourse. According to Nguvese (2014), government-owned media often prioritize the interests of political elites over those of the public, resulting in biased reporting that weakens accountability. Likewise, Lawrence (2019) observes that the dominance of political and economic elites in Nigeria's media industry restricts the media's independence in shaping societal agendas. These studies highlight the media's potential role in promoting national development while emphasizing the challenges posed by issues of ownership and control. Media ownership and control also play a significant role in shaping the public's perception of governance. Apuke (2016) and Nweze et al. (2019) identify how both government and private media organizations are influenced by the interests of their owners, often at the expense of public accountability. Apuke (2016) highlights the dilemma faced by media managers in balancing the interests of owners with ethical journalism, while Nweze et al. (2019) reveal that gatekeeping practices in media organizations often align with in-house policies that prioritize owner interests. These findings point to the need for stronger regulatory frameworks to ensure that media organizations adhere to ethical standards and serve the public interest.

The role of social media in governance and public accountability has also emerged as a significant area of study. Oparaugo (2020) and Jimada (2019) explore the increasing influence of social media in Nigerian politics. Oparaugo (2020) notes that platforms like Facebook and Twitter have become essential tools for political campaigns, enabling politicians to engage directly with voters.

However, this shift to digital platforms has also raised concerns about the spread of misinformation and hate speech. Jimada (2019) highlights the role of social media in fostering accountability, particularly among young people and women, who use these platforms to demand transparency and good governance. Despite these benefits, the rise of social media has also led to government crackdowns on internet freedom, further complicating the relationship between governance and public trust. The moral failings of Nigeria's political leadership have been a central theme in the country's governance challenges. Anekwe (2020) identifies leadership deficiencies as a critical barrier to Nigeria's socio-economic development. The study highlights how political instability, ethnic conflicts, and corruption have been exacerbated by the lack of ethical and visionary leadership. Similarly, Adekunle and Alokpa (2023) link leadership failures to Nigeria's persistent insecurity crisis, emphasizing the need for strong political will to address these challenges. These studies underscore the importance of ethical leadership in rebuilding public trust and fostering national development.

The media's role in promoting good governance is further explored by Dunu (2013) and Busari and Amedu (2022). Dunu (2013) emphasizes that the media serves as a watchdog for democracy, holding leaders accountable and reflecting the principles of good governance. However, the effectiveness of the media in this role depends on its ability to remain objective and free from undue influence. Busari and Amedu (2022) draw on Section 22 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution to argue that the media has a constitutional responsibility to ensure government accountability. They note that factors such as technological advancements and legal frameworks play a crucial role in enabling the media to fulfill this mandate. Political moral failings not only hinder governance but also have profound implications for public trust. Yagboyaju and Akinola (2019) attribute Nigeria's governance failures to the self-interest and parochial considerations of its political leadership. These failures manifest in the state's inability to provide security, uphold the rule of law, and deliver visionary leadership. Onifade, Imhonopi, and Urim (2013) argue that addressing these challenges requires a revival of moral values and virtue ethics across all societal institutions. They emphasize that political leaders must demonstrate exemplary moral conduct to stabilize the polity and restore public trust.

This research examines the varied effects of political moral failings on governance and public trust in Nigeria. By synthesizing insights from existing literature, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how unethical practices and weak leadership undermine governance and erode public confidence. The study further seeks to explore potential strategies for fostering ethical leadership, enhancing media accountability, and rebuilding trust in Nigeria's political institutions. Through this approach, the research contributes to the broader discourse on governance and development in Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to investigate the moral dearth of politicians and the role of the media in holding politicians accountable in Southeast Nigeria.

Concept Clarifications

Moral Failings of Political Leaders in Southeast Nigeria

Moral dearth among political leaders in Nigeria, especially in the Southeast region, has been a persistent and troubling issue that has raised significant concerns about governance, accountability, and the future of democracy in the country. In the Southeast, political leaders are frequently accused of engaging in corrupt practices, neglecting public welfare, and prioritizing their own personal and political interests over the well-being of their constituents (Okibe, 2020). This situation is reflective of a broader pattern observed across the country, where public office is often viewed not as a responsibility to serve the people, but as a means to accumulate personal wealth and power. According to Okoi and Iwara (2021), many politicians in Nigeria treat public service as a vehicle for personal enrichment rather than a platform for advancing the common good, thereby undermining the essential purpose of governance.

This moral failure has had dire consequences for the delivery of public services, which are crucial for the development of the region and the nation at large. Essential services such as infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and public security are often neglected or poorly managed, leading to a growing sense of frustration and disenchantment among the electorate. As the World Bank (2020) notes, inadequate investment in these sectors has contributed to widespread dissatisfaction with the government and has further eroded the public's trust in political leaders. The citizens, who are directly affected by the shortcomings of their leaders, often feel abandoned, as their leaders' focus remains primarily on personal gain rather than the advancement of public welfare. A key factor exacerbating this problem is the culture of impunity that prevails in Nigeria, where political leaders frequently evade justice for their corrupt actions and malfeasance. This impunity has created a climate in which public officials feel emboldened to act with little fear of repercussion, thus perpetuating the cycle of corruption and moral degradation. As Yagboyaju (2017) argues, this failure to hold leaders accountable for their actions contributes significantly to the deepening crisis of governance in the country. Without the enforcement of the rule of law and the proper channels for accountability, the moral failings of political leaders continue to thrive unchecked.

In the Southeast region, this pattern of neglect and self-interest is even more pronounced, contributing to an atmosphere of widespread disillusionment. The political elite's failure to prioritize the needs of the people and to deliver on their promises has led to a growing sense of alienation among citizens. The public is increasingly frustrated by the repeated unfulfilled promises and the

lack of tangible development, which has fostered a deep sense of mistrust in the political process (Osimen et al., 2024). This disenchantment is not merely a result of poor governance, but also stems from a deeper sense of betrayal, as political leaders are seen as prioritizing their own political survival and financial interests over the needs of their constituencies.

Furthermore, these moral shortcomings are often viewed as systemic and deeply rooted in the political culture of the region. Iwuoha and Iwuoha (2020) point to the role of political patronage, where leaders reward loyal supporters with positions, contracts, and other favors in exchange for political loyalty. This system of patronage incentivizes leaders to focus on consolidating their power and wealth rather than addressing the pressing needs of the people. This deeply entrenched system not only perpetuates corruption and inefficiency but also creates a political environment where the interests of the public are consistently sidelined. As the moral failings of political leaders continue to undermine governance and public trust, the need for comprehensive reforms in both political and media systems becomes increasingly urgent. Without meaningful changes, the cycle of corruption, impunity, and public disillusionment is likely to persist, further hindering the region's development and democratic progress.

Empirical Review

Okibe and Onyekachi (2020) examine the relationship between corruption and democratic governance in Nigeria, highlighting how these issues undermine national development. The study argues that transparency, a core principle of democracy, is severely compromised by corruption, leading to poor governance and hindering public participation in decision-making. The authors note that corruption contradicts democratic practices and creates significant challenges for both academic discourse and practical governance. Using post-colonial state theory and content analysis, the study reveals that corruption, driven by a lack of transparency, damages institutional capacity and stifles infrastructural development. The authors recommend a comprehensive transformation of the political system, emphasizing the need to strengthen good governance, restore public trust, and eradicate corruption to foster national development.

Nguvесе (2014) examined the influence of ownership on radio news coverage. Categories of media ownership in Nigeria are privately owned and government owned, but the researcher concentrated more on government-owned media, as it is the researcher's area of study. The aim of the study was to determine the influence of ownership on radio news coverage, specifically whether the news covered is oriented towards the owner's interests or the public's interests. A survey of the selected broadcasting stations' news coverage for a period of two weeks was carried out using questionnaires. The data obtained were used to obtain the frequency for the study. The data were analyzed using the simple percentage method and chi-square. This was used to obtain the percentage prominence and the degree of freedom of news coverage in the study. The result of the analysis revealed that radio news coverage is highly influenced by the owner's (government) interests, and the news covered is more aligned with the owner's interests rather than the public's. The research also showed that the government has a significant influence on radio news coverage. Recommendations were made based on the study, suggesting that the government should interfere less in the running of the station and focus more on subventions and overall performance, using the station as a tool for national development, covering news that is oriented toward the public's interests rather than the owner's.

Lawrence (2019) studied the influence of media ownership and control on media agenda-setting, using Nigeria as a case study. The core method of data collection in this study was in-depth interviews. The sampling methods employed included cluster sampling and purposive sampling, as the data required an in-depth understanding of the Nigerian media landscape. The findings of the study revealed that various levels of government in Nigeria, including state and federal governments, as well as retired high-level public and private officials, politicians, and influential businessmen and women, own most media organizations in Nigeria. It was observed that this group of people are the core newsmakers whose views and opinions populate most of the news, views, and information disseminated in the media in Nigeria. The findings further show that the current media ownership pattern and the level of media control in Nigeria hinder the media from independently setting society's agenda.

Apuke (2016) explored some of the issues in media ownership and control in Nigeria. The study used secondary sources of data collection, including books, magazines, and journals. The study identified four types of media ownership: government ownership, private ownership, mixed ownership, and community ownership. It revealed, among other things, that media managers are often faced with the dilemma of balancing the media owner's interests and the public's interests without infringing on the laws of the land or the ethics of the profession. Whether media ownership is private or public, the interest of the owner plays a dominant role in determining what media managers do or fail to do. Hardly can an owner tolerate a manager who operates contrary to their interests. Media ownership has remained a topical issue in media discourse, as the popular saying goes, "he who pays the piper dictates the tune." The type of media ownership also determines the level of freedom and efficiency of the organization. To address these issues, the study recommends that both private and government media should be allowed to practice freely without internal or external forces. The media should not be left in the hands of the rich at the expense of the poor.

The study by Nweze, Ario, Nwafor, Nwamba, Aneke, Ekuma, Anyachonkeya, and Chidi-Irem (2019) analyzes the management of government and private media in South East Nigeria, using Unity FM in Abakaliki (Ebonyi State) and Dream FM in Enugu (Enugu State) as case studies. Anchored in the gatekeeping theory of mass media, the research employed a survey method with interviews of 12 respondents from both media houses, using open-ended questions. The findings reveal that both government and private media operate under in-house policies. Government-owned media primarily aim to relay government activities and present the government positively to the public. Private media, however, are driven by the goal of profit-making. The study further

indicates that gatekeeping influences the quality of program content in both types of media. It also highlights that media owners personally employ and educate editors to ensure content aligns with in-house policies. The study suggests that professional bodies like the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) should ensure that journalists in both public and private media strictly adhere to the ethical code of their profession.

Oparaugo (2020) explored the relationship between social media and politics in Nigeria, highlighting the growing role of social media as a crucial tool for political campaigns. Politicians increasingly use platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp to directly engage with voters, particularly the youth, who make up the largest demographic of social media users. This shift from traditional media (print and electronic) to new media allows for more direct communication with electorates. The paper emphasizes the significant influence of social media on voting patterns and encourages Nigerian political leaders to avoid spreading false information, hate speech, or negative portrayals of opponents. Instead, they are advised to focus on presenting their positive contributions to society.

Jimada (2019) studied the role of social media in fostering accountability in Nigeria's public sphere. The rise of new social media platforms has created an avenue for increased citizen-state interaction, particularly empowering younger people and women to demand greater accountability from the government. As corruption scandals fuel public dissatisfaction with governance in Africa, social media has emerged as a key tool for independent journalism, especially as traditional media faces censorship and threats. While social media activists and bloggers provide crucial space for accountability, there is growing concern over declining internet freedom, as governments increasingly target communication platforms that facilitate anti-government protests and calls for transparency. The article examines these dynamics within the context of Nigeria's governance

. The study by Anekwe (2020) explored the leadership challenges in Nigeria and their impact on the nation's development. It identified leadership as the most critical issue hindering Nigeria's progress, citing failures in past and present administrations to provide effective leadership. This deficiency has led to political, social, and economic instability, as well as ethnic, communal, and religious crises, all of which have severely affected socio-economic development. The pervasive effects of poor leadership, corruption, and bad governance are evident across all sectors of Nigerian society. Using Fred Fiedler's Contingency Theory of Leadership as a framework, the study emphasized the importance of leadership and good governance in achieving development. It argued that Nigeria requires ethical leaders who prioritize respect, justice, honesty, service, and community interests. Such leaders must ensure fairness in decision-making, balancing individual needs with the broader community's welfare. The study concluded that ethical and morally responsible leadership is essential to address the country's challenges. It recommended that leaders demonstrate good moral conduct and ethical responsibility to effectively respond to citizens' needs and drive development.

Dunu (2013) discusses the role of the media in promoting good governance in Nigeria, emphasizing that the media is widely recognized as a critical watchdog for democracy and governance. Despite Nigeria's constitutional provisions for good governance and its abundant resources, the country continues to face challenges in achieving effective governance. The paper argues that the media's ability to contribute to good governance depends on how well they reflect and enforce the principles of governance. It also identifies key opportunities and challenges in engaging with the media sector. The paper concludes by asserting that the media must uphold principles such as patriotism, accountability, transparency, objectivity, and truthfulness to effectively contribute to good governance.

The paper by Adekunle and Alokpa (2023) examined the connection between leadership failure and the persistence of insecurity in Nigeria, focusing on Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015–2023). Using an ex post facto research design, the study relied on secondary data and content analysis, framed by social contract theory. The findings revealed that despite Buhari's initial pledge to resolve insecurity in the Northeast within six months of taking office, leadership deficiencies allowed the crisis to persist and worsen, spreading to other regions. The authors recommend that effective leadership must demonstrate strong political will to address security challenges, particularly by prosecuting offenders to curb insecurity.

Yagboyaju and Akinola (2019) critically analyze governance challenges in Nigeria, attributing the state's underperformance to a lack of capacity to address modern governance complexities. The article, based on primary and secondary data, reveals that political leadership in Nigeria prioritizes self-interest and parochial considerations over the public good. This failure manifests in three key areas: ensuring security, upholding the rule of law, and providing visionary leadership. The authors conclude that the inherent nature and characteristics of Nigeria's political leadership fundamentally undermine the state's ability to deliver effective governance.

Onifade, Imhonopi, and Urim (2013) argue that Nigeria's escalating insecurity crisis requires not only a multistakeholder approach but also a revival of moral values and virtue ethics across all societal institutions. The authors highlight how violence and bloodshed often serve as expressions of frustration with the state and its institutions, underscoring the urgent need to embed moral principles within Nigeria's socioeconomic, political, religious, and educational systems. They emphasize that leaders and politicians must demonstrate exemplary moral conduct, as their actions and rhetoric can either stabilize or inflame tensions within the polity.

Nyongesa (2021) highlighted the vital role of media in promoting accountability and transparency within the Kakamega County Government in Kenya. An objective, free, and skilled media is crucial for a devolved government, as it informs the public, enabling responsible and informed decision-making. Additionally, the media serves as a "watchdog," ensuring that elected officials fulfill their duties and honor campaign promises, while also reflecting the electorate's wishes. Despite the media's tendency towards sensationalism, it remains a key guardian of public interest, connecting governors and the governed. The adoption of devolution

across African countries aims to address issues like bureaucratic inefficiency, poor accountability, unequal resource distribution, and low community participation in development, which are common in centralized systems.

Busari and Amedu (2022) explored the accountability role of the media in contemporary Nigeria, drawing on Section 22 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, which emphasizes the media's responsibility to ensure government accountability to the people. The study examines factors such as the media environment, technological innovation, the legal system, and media regulation. Using a qualitative approach, the authors conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) with 12 journalists from different media houses in Ibadan, Oyo State. The findings revealed that the media environment is unfavorable, with societal and welfare challenges for journalists, and that legal regulations could hinder media effectiveness in promoting government accountability. The study recommends that journalists should uphold their social responsibility and maintain their role as the Fourth Estate, ensuring proper checks and balances on the government.

Ukweru, Dunu, and Ukwueze (2023) examined the challenges and perceptions of broadcasters in South-East Nigeria regarding their adoption of new media technologies. The study, conducted across 15 federal, state, and private radio and television stations in Anambra, Enugu, and Imo states, employed a qualitative design using Key Informant Interviews (KII) with managers and department heads. A multi-stage sampling approach ensured representation across various broadcast categories. Findings revealed that most public broadcast stations in the region lack adequate training and access to modern technology, limiting their effective integration of new media tools. These challenges are particularly pronounced in federal broadcast stations. The study aligns with the technological determinism theory, emphasizing that technological advancements drive societal transformation. It highlights the need for broadcast stations to be well-equipped for adopting and utilizing new media technologies effectively. The researchers recommend that public broadcast station owners prioritize providing essential resources and training to enhance capacity building and facilitate the effective adoption of new media technologies in the broadcasting industry.

The study by Nwankwo, Nwanchor, Onwe, Orji-Egwu, and Idowu (2023) explores the persistent security challenges in Nigeria, characterized by insurgent groups, bandits, and unknown gunmen operating with minimal resistance, leading to extensive loss of lives, destruction of property, economic instability, and restricted freedom of movement. Using a literature review approach grounded in the Democratic Peace Theory, the authors evaluate the role of the mass media in addressing these threats to nation-building. The study reveals that Nigerians rely heavily on the mass media for accurate and timely information, and the traditional media functions of informing, educating, and entertaining are essential for national progress. It identifies the media's significant potential in combating insecurity but notes that this potential has not been fully harnessed. The authors also highlight the challenges the media face in fulfilling their roles amidst the insecurity crisis. Based on their findings, the scholars recommend a shift from force-driven strategies to dialogue and communication-based approaches in tackling security issues. They advocate for journalists to utilize the mass media as agents of social change and intensify their efforts in setting the public agenda for discussions on resolving insecurity. The study also calls for periodic media security summits organized by government officials to engage the public in promoting attitudinal change and safeguarding the nation. Additionally, it advises security agents to rely on intelligence-driven strategies to mitigate risks and enhance effectiveness in combating insecurity.

Research Method

A descriptive survey design was adopted to facilitate data collection from participants in Southeast Nigeria, focusing on Anambra and Imo States due to their significant population sizes, economic influence, and balanced demographic diversity. The area of study covered Anambra Central and Imo North Senatorial Districts, where participants were sampled using a multistage sampling method. Stratification by state and senatorial districts was followed by random sampling to select local government areas, communities, and individuals, resulting in a sample size of 400 calculated using Taro Yamane's formula. The study's population comprised politicians, media professionals, civil society members, and residents, providing diverse perspectives on the moral dearth of politicians and the media's role in accountability. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic data and key responses using frequencies and percentages. This methodological approach ensured the study's validity, reliability, and comprehensiveness in examining the relationship between political conduct and media accountability.

Results and Discussion

How do the moral failings of politicians in Southeast Nigeria impact governance and public trust?

Effect of Moral Failings on Governance

S/N	Item Description	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total
1	The moral failings of political leaders negatively affect public trust in governance.	128 (32.5%)	122 (31%)	1 (0.3%)	64 (16.2%)	80 (20.3%)	394

S/N	Item Description	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total
2	Unethical actions by political leaders hinder the effective implementation of policies.	135 (34.3%)	141 (35.8%)	5 (1.3%)	46 (11.7%)	67 (17%)	394
3	Moral shortcomings among political leaders undermine their ability to uphold integrity in government.	161 (40.9%)	143 (36.3%)	2 (0.5%)	52 (13.2%)	36 (9.1%)	394
4	The moral failings of political leaders contribute significantly to political instability.	154 (39.1%)	136 (34.5%)	3 (0.8%)	46 (11.7%)	55 (14%)	394
	Total	678 (34.3%)	642 (32.4%)	11 (0.6%)	208 (10.5%)	238 (12%)	1475

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study on the impact of the moral failings of politicians in Southeast Nigeria highlight significant effects on governance and public trust. The responses are analyzed based on four key items that examine public perception regarding the implications of politicians' ethical shortcomings.

Impact on Public Trust in Governance

The first item indicates that a majority of respondents believe the moral failings of political leaders negatively affect public trust in governance. Specifically, 32.5% of respondents strongly agreed (SA), while 31% agreed (A), amounting to a combined 63.5%. Only a small percentage (0.3%) remained undecided, while 36.5% either disagreed (16.2%) or strongly disagreed (20.3%). This significant agreement suggests that unethical behaviors erode citizens' confidence in government institutions, as political leaders are expected to exemplify moral integrity.

Effect on Policy Implementation

The second item reveals that 70.1% of respondents (34.3% SA, 35.8% A) agreed that unethical actions by political leaders hinder the effective implementation of policies. Conversely, only 11.7% disagreed, and 17% strongly disagreed. This highlights a crucial linkage between leadership morality and governance effectiveness, as unethical actions often result in policy failure due to mismanagement, corruption, or prioritization of personal interests over public welfare.

Undermining Government Integrity

The third item shows that 77.2% of respondents (40.9% SA, 36.3% A) agreed that moral shortcomings undermine politicians' ability to uphold integrity in government. This reflects widespread concern that political leaders' unethical conduct compromises transparency, accountability, and fairness in governance. When integrity is lacking, it weakens democratic institutions and stifles efforts to establish effective public administration.

Contribution to Political Instability

Regarding political instability, 73.6% of respondents (39.1% SA, 34.5% A) agreed that moral failings contribute to political instability. This connection demonstrated the disruptive impact of unethical leadership on political systems, including factional conflicts, electoral malpractice, and civil unrest. A smaller proportion (25.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that while some individuals may perceive other factors contributing to instability, and moral failings are still viewed as significant drivers of political dysfunction.

Across all four items, the results demonstrate a strong consensus among respondents that the moral failings of politicians in Southeast Nigeria adversely impact governance and public trust. With 34.3% strongly agreeing and 32.4% agreeing overall, the cumulative perception aligns with existing literature that unethical political leadership undermines effective governance, destabilizes

institutions, and erodes trust. This study reinforces the need for systemic reforms that emphasize ethical leadership, transparency, and accountability in political governance. Addressing these moral failings is essential for restoring public trust, improving policy outcomes, and fostering political stability in Southeast Nigeria.

Conclusion

The findings from this study highlight the significant negative impact of the moral failings of political leaders on governance and public trust in Southeast Nigeria. The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that unethical behaviors by political leaders undermine public trust, hinder effective policy implementation, erode integrity in government, and contribute to political instability. These findings suggest that moral shortcomings in leadership not only affect the functioning of government institutions but also destabilize the broader political environment, creating challenges for the progress and development of the region. Given the central role that integrity and ethical conduct play in ensuring effective governance, the moral failings of politicians have profound implications for the long-term health of democratic institutions and the overall socio-political landscape of Southeast Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to address the moral failings of politicians and restore public trust in governance:

1. To address the erosion of public trust, political leaders should undergo mandatory ethics training and adhere to a clear code of conduct. Public accountability and transparency must be prioritized, and leaders should demonstrate integrity in their actions to regain public confidence.
2. To ensure that policies are effectively implemented, it is essential to strengthen accountability mechanisms. This can be achieved by establishing independent oversight bodies to monitor and report on policy execution. Political leaders should face consequences for unethical behavior, which will discourage misconduct and improve policy outcomes.
3. The government should establish auditing and monitoring systems to ensure that ethical standards are maintained in public offices. Regular scrutiny by independent bodies, civil society organizations, and the media will ensure that political leaders maintain integrity in their governance practices.
4. To reduce political instability, there should be a focus on fostering ethical governance practices. Political parties should promote unity, prioritizing the public's well-being over personal interests. Conflict resolution mechanisms within political organizations should be implemented to prevent divisions and enhance political stability.

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