
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Psychology of Narcissism in Nigeria Political Leadership: The proposed reforms

Festus Uwakhemen Asikhia

LLM. PhD. Post-Doctoral Fellow, School of Social and Human studies, Atlantic International University/Academia.edu

Corresponding Author: Festus Uwakhemen Asikhia, **E-mail:** drfestusasikhia@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

The quality of leadership and governance affects the performance of the government, national development and public trust in democracy. Nigeria is beset with a number of challenges, including corruption, abuse of executive power, inadequate accountability, nepotism, and weak institutional governance, which have sparked concerns about the role of personality attributes of political leaders. Recently, a trait of the psyche that has caught the interest of many researchers is that of narcissism, especially narcissistic aspects linked with exaggerated self-relevance, need for admiration, absence of empathy, and an inclination to favor one's personal concerns over the welfare of the public. Narcissistic qualities can be associated with confidence and charismatic leadership but can also be detrimental to democratic functioning, institutional accountability and effective policy implementation. The study looks at the relationship between narcissism as an attribute of political leadership and governance challenges in Nigeria with a multidisciplinary approach of health psychology, political psychology and legal analysis. The study examines the pertinent psychological theories, constitutional provisions, legal provisions, judicial rulings and institutional structures that govern political accountability in Nigeria. It also looks at how well current laws and governance structures are functioning to prevent behaviours from leadership that lead to undermining of democratic institutions. The doctrinal legal research methodology is used to examine the interplay of personality, law and public administration, with a comprehensive analysis of the psychological and governance literature. The results show that Nigeria's existing legal and institutional structure largely focuses on tackling corruption and misuse of power rather than on preventing actions of leaders that are related to narcissistic tendencies. The study suggests a range of comprehensive reforms such as constitutional and legislative changes, institutional independence, Executive policy reforms, the implementation of ethics and leadership development programmes and research on political psychology and governance. These recommendations seek to enhance democratic accountability, enhance public leadership and enhance sustainable governance in Nigeria.

| KEYWORDS

Narcissistic traits, political leadership, health psychology, governance, legal reform, Nigeria, public administration

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Political leadership is one of the most basic elements that can influence the stability, development and success of any country in a democratic path. Leaders are expected to be integral and accountable, emotionally intelligent, empathetic and dedicated to the public interest. But when too much of the personality features of self-centeredness prevail in decision making, then leadership can become problematic.

Researchers in the field of psychology have increasingly suggested that some personality attributes relate to leadership effectiveness, organisational performance and governance outcomes.¹

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While some political leaders manifest narcissistic traits, the majority of those leaders likely do not fall within the clinical spectrum of NPD, based on the internationally recognized diagnostic criteria, but it is important to note that high levels of narcissistic traits can substantially impact the political leader's style of leadership, decision making processes, interactions with others, and institutional governance³

It is common knowledge that some individuals possess stronger narcissistic traits than others, and research in political psychology has demonstrated that such traits contribute to the political outcomes of better authoritarianism, corruption, policy consistency, intolerance of opposition, and empowerment of the executive.⁴ Existing scholarly literature has shown that, while institutional shortcomings are critical for explaining leadership failures, psychological traits of leaders also play a role in the quality of governance.

There is a significant context of the relationship between personality and governance in Nigeria. The nation has gone through military rule, democratic changes, constitutional changes, and many anti-corruption measures since its independence in 1960. While these developments have taken place, governance issues like corruption, abuse of office, political patronage, insecurity, electoral malpractices, weak institutions and low levels of public confidence continue to impede democratic development, notwithstanding the provisions of existing laws

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) Constitution, 1999 provides the principles of constitutional supremacy, separation of powers, accountability and rule of law. Likewise, laws that create institutions like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) aim to enhance the democratic process and mitigate corruption, but with some concerns over weak enforcement, political manipulation, selective prosecution, and insufficient institutional independence. The restrictions indicate that where a lack of institutional effectiveness is caused by the behavior of the leadership, legal tools might not be enough.

The impact of leadership behavior on the well-being of the population is a matter of concern from a health psychology perspective. Political decisions affect areas of health care, economic security, education, employment, public security, and quality of life. Therefore, psychological unhealthiness in leadership can have indirect psychosocial and health implications for citizens, leading to stress, anxiety, loss of confidence in government, social instability and poor health outcomes, among other things, which makes health psychology a broader lens on the role of personality characteristics in the dynamics of governance and public welfare.

The study takes an interdisciplinary perspective to explore the narcissistic attributes of political leaders in Nigeria and the implications for their leadership in governance. The research is not so much intended to label individual political leaders as mentally ill, but to examine narcissistic traits found in psychological literature and the potential effect of these behavioral tendencies on leadership behavior and institutional accountability. The study also explores the extent to which Nigeria's constitutional and statutory provisions tackle the governance issues arising from narcissistic leadership traits

The study aims to explore the psychological attributes of Narcissism in political leadership, analyse their effect on governance in a democratic Nigeria, review the working order of the existing constitutional and institutional provisions in the country and recommend reforms that can enhance democratic accountability. The study therefore recommends legal reforms and amendments, executive policy, and academic research programmes and programmes aimed at fostering ethical leadership, institutional independence and sustainable democratic governance in Nigeria.

¹ Adrian Furnham, Steven Richards and Delroy Paulhus, 'The Dark Triad of Personality: A 10-Year Review' (2013) 2 *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 199.

² Adrian Furnham, Steven Richards and Delroy Paulhus, 'The Dark Triad of Personality: A 10-Year Review' (2013) 2 *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 199.

³ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th edn, American Psychiatric Association Publishing 2022).

⁴ Michael Maccoby, *The Productive Narcissist: The Promise and Peril of Visionary Leadership* (Broadway Books 2003).

2. Literature Review

2.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Narcissism and Leadership

The concept of narcissism has received a great deal of attention in psychology as an aspect of personality, affecting interpersonal interactions, social patterns, and leadership effectiveness. It was inspired by psychoanalytic theory, particularly by the terms "narcissism" and "excessive narcissism" coined by Sigmund Freud referring to the individual's excessive emphasis upon self-love and self-importance. Later, in psychology, the concept was extended to include a difference between healthy self-confidence and pathological narcissism.⁵

The distinction is significant in the study of political leadership as the leaders' behaviour does not necessarily indicate that they suffer from NPD, as narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is a clinical mental disorder.⁶ Scholars note that narcissistic personality traits can exist on a continuum, with some individuals exhibiting narcissism without falling into the clinical range.

The Dark Triad Theory is one of the most popular theories used to explain destructive leadership behaviours. The theory states that narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy are three undesirable personality traits that often are found concurrently in leaders.⁷ Narcissism traits include an excessive need for adoration, search for recognition, centralization of power, and the ability to withstand criticism. These actions can impact the effectiveness of accountability in institutions and compromise the effectiveness of democratic governance. Others, however, have noted that there are positive traits of narcissism that can lead to confidence, ambition and leadership vision; especially in times of organizational uncertainty.

Leadership psychology also implies that personality plays a significant role in determining the effectiveness of leaders. To this end, psychological theories are increasingly proposing the integration of personality assessment in the study of leadership and in public administration research, while narcissism is generally associated with authoritarian leadership, self-serving decision making and with the poor performance of the organization.⁸

2.2 Narcissistic Traits and Political Leadership

There has been increasing interest in political psychology on the link between narcissistic personality characteristics and political leadership. The public nature of politics, vying for influence, media attention, and high authority are all features of political contexts. People with high levels of narcissism can be drawn to positions of political power due to its potential for recognition, prestige, and personal influence.⁹

But, as noted by scholars, all of these traits of narcissistic political leaders could be helpful in the short term when charisma is needed for elections or a national emergency; in the long run, though, they can be harmful to society.¹⁰ However, a high degree of narcissism often has a negative impact on democratic governance, for it can lead to centralisation of power, reduced institutional control, disdain of constructive criticism, and individual decision-making.

Maccoby believes that narcissistic leaders have good and bad qualities. The ability to think visionary, be courageous and determined might aid in innovation and organisational change. These strengths, however, come with the challenge of arrogance, rash decision-making, lack of listening and no ability to admit error, as do political leaders with over-narcissistic tendencies, who may view opposition as personal criticism, which raises the risk of political conflict and institutional instability.¹¹

⁵ Sigmund Freud, *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (James Strachey tr, Hogarth Press 1957).

⁶ W Keith Campbell, Craig A Hoffman, Steven M Campbell and Stacy Marchisio, 'Narcissism in Organisational Contexts' (2011)

⁷ Delroy L Paulhus and Kevin M Williams, 'The Dark Triad of Personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Psychopathy' (2002) 36 *Journal of Research in Personality* 556.

⁸ Daniel Goleman, *Leadership: The Power of Emotional Intelligence* (More Than Sound 2011).

⁹ Jerrold M Post, *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World: The Psychology of Political Behaviour* (Cornell University Press 2004).

¹⁰ Jean M Twenge and W Keith Campbell, *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement* (Atria Books 2009).

¹¹ Robert I Rotberg (ed), *Corruption, Global Security and World Order* (Brookings Institution Press 2009).

It is also noted that in recent publications about governance, a connection has been made between narcissistic leadership and corruption and the misuse of public resources. While institutional and socio-economic conditions are important determinants of corruption, personal characteristics can reinforce patterns that increase the likelihood of corruption, in the form of patronage networks, nepotism, and selection of policies.

2.3 Nigerian Political Environment and institutional challenges

Nigeria's political system is a complex setting to explore the dynamics of personality and governance. Nigeria has been an independent nation since 1960, and over the years it has witnessed a series of military dictatorships, democratic alternations in power, constitutional changes and many anti-corruption campaigns. Notwithstanding these advances, issues of governance remain such as corruption, electoral violence, political patronage, poor governance institutions, insecurity and loss of public trust in government.

These factors contribute to a politics that is dominated by patron-client relationships, ethnic mobilisation and informal politics networks, which can foster a lack of institutional accountability, thereby fostering personalised politics where political office is seen as a place of power for individuals rather than public service.¹² As a result, institutional procedures can be dominated by individual influence and political favoritism.

To promote integrity and combat the abuse of public office, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) lays down democratic principles of separation of powers, judicial independence, accountability, and rule of law, while additional laws include the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission Act, the Electoral Act 2022, and the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act. However, it is argued that enforcement also suffers from irregularity due to the problem of political interference, lack of institutional autonomy and selective prosecution of cases.¹³

Inadequate political leadership is not just a product of institutional weaknesses, as the failures are also ongoing despite the long-standing legal reform efforts. Personality attributes and other behavioural factors may also impact policy implementation, public accountability and administrative effectiveness. This observation confirms the trend of a growing call for a move to incorporate perspectives on behaviour and psychology into governance reforms in addition to constitutional and legislative changes.

2.4 Comparative Perspectives and Proposed Reforms

Comparative studies have shown that some democratic states have enhanced governance through institutional accountability, rather than through individual political accountability. The introduction of independent anti-corruption bodies, the openness of processes for selecting candidates for public office, parliamentary supervision of public officials, judicial independence, requirements to declare assets, or training in ethical leadership are widespread measures designed to limit the potential for abuse of leadership, irrespective of the nature of the leadership characteristics of elected officials.¹⁴

The role of health psychology in understanding leadership also requires an appreciation of the fact that key political choices have a profound impact on the social determinants of health such as employment, education, access to health care, housing, and public security. Therefore, leadership cannot only be seen as a political situation but also as a public health problem, where poor leadership due to unethical or self-centred leadership can indirectly contribute to increased psychological stress, decreased public trust, economic instability and poorer health outcomes in society.¹⁵

There has been a growing body of research recently that advocates for a multi-disciplinary strategy in leadership reform. Scholars argue that instead of trying to bar people out of public service based on their personality traits, greater institutional protections are needed to foster accountability, transparency and ethical leadership irrespective of personality.¹⁶

¹² Richard Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* (Cambridge University Press 1987).

¹³ Richard Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* (Cambridge University Press 1987).

¹⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Public Integrity Handbook* (OECD Publishing 2020).

¹⁵ Michael Marmot, *The Health Gap: The Challenge of an Unequal World* (Bloomsbury 2015).

¹⁶ Mark Bevir (ed), *Encyclopedia of Governance* (SAGE Publications 2007).

In sum, the literature available indicates that there is a distinct connection between the narcissistic personality and the results of governance. Theories of psychology suggest that over-investment in self-focussed leadership, entitlement and lack of empathy could affect leadership behaviour, and governance studies show the power of adequate legal and institutional structures to reduce organizational power abuses. But only a few studies have linked health psychology, constitutional law, and the governance in Nigeria in an analytical framework. This research fills that vacuum by analyzing the interaction of psychological traits with legal institutions and suggesting legal, legislative, executive and academic reforms which can boost democratic governance in Nigeria.

3. Legal and Institutional Framework

Nigeria has put in place a robust legal and institutional framework to support good governance and accountability in politics. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) is the highest law that regulates public administration and political powers, and it entails separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government, in addition to the principles of accountability, rule of law and democratic governance. It also establishes the Code of Conduct for Public Officers under Fifth Schedule, which mandates that public officials must declare assets and refrain from conflict of interest, maintain integrity in public office.

A number of laws have been passed to increase the accountability of the constitution. Also, the Freedom of Information Act 2011 further promotes transparency in the provision of information to the public through the provisions in the Act. Further, the Electoral Act 2022 introduces provisions to improve the electoral transparency by ensuring electronic transmission of electoral results, regulating electoral finance and improving management of elections.¹⁷ The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act 2004 was enacted to investigate and prosecute economic and financial crimes including corruption by public officials. The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission Act 2000 was enacted to prevent and investigate corruption while promoting integrity in the public institutions.¹⁸ The Electoral Act 2022 introduces provisions to improve the electoral transparency by ensuring electronic transmission of electoral results, regulating electoral finance and improving management of elections.

There are a number of institutions that promote the implementation of these laws. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) regulates political parties and conducts elections, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) investigates corrupt activities and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) investigates financial misconduct. The Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) is tasked with keeping a check on asset declarations and ethical behaviour of public officials, while the judiciary exercises constitutional oversight over asset declaration and interpretation of the law.

Even with all this legislation in place, governance issues are still very pronounced. Political pressures, anti-corruption laws that are not applied evenly, insufficient institutional independence, delayed judicial processes, and weak accountability continue to persist and hinder good governance. Current legislation deals with corruption and abuse of office largely after the fact, rather than to prevent behaviours of leaders with excessive narcissistic traits such as entitlement, manipulation, intolerance of criticism and excessive concentration of power. This has led to the view by scholars that legal reforms should be supplemented with behavioural governance strategies, institutional independence, ethics training for leadership and interdisciplinary studies of the interface between psychology and constitutional law and public administration.

¹⁷ *Attorney-General of Bendel State v Attorney-General of the Federation* [1981] 10 SC 1.

¹⁸ *Attorney-General of Abia State v Attorney-General of the Federation* [2006] 16 NWLR (Pt 1005) 265.

Table 3.1 Legal framework matrix

Case Law	Current Act/Legislation	Impact	Problem	Nexus with Narcissistic Leadership	Academic Research Solution
Attorney-General of Bendel State v Attorney-General of the Federation [1981]	Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended)	Upholds constitutional supremacy and limits executive powers	Weak enforcement of constitutional principles	Excessive concentration of power may encourage self-centered leadership	Strengthen constitutional checks and judicial independence
Fawehinmi v President [2007]	Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act	Promotes ethical conduct and asset declaration	Poor compliance and weak sanctions	Weak ethical oversight allows abuse of office	Introduce leadership ethics assessment and continuous integrity monitoring
Attorney-General of Abia State v Attorney-General of the Federation [2006]	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act 2004	Investigates corruption and financial crimes	Selective prosecution and political interference	Institutions react after misconduct instead of preventing unethical leadership	Enhance institutional autonomy and preventive governance reforms
Electoral Petition Cases	Electoral Act 2022	Improves electoral integrity and democratic accountability	Vote buying, electoral violence, and weak campaign finance enforcement	Personality-based politics undermines democratic competition	Strengthen electoral reforms, civic education, and campaign transparency
Constitutional Accountability Cases	Freedom of Information Act 2011	Promotes transparency and citizen oversight	Limited access to information and poor compliance	Lack of transparency enables personalised governance	Expand open government initiatives, digital transparency, and citizen participation

4. Psychological Impacts of the Narcissistic Leadership

The leadership style of narcissism can lead to noteworthy psychological and organisational effects of governments, institutions and societies. In the early stages, narcissistic qualities like self-confidence and grandiosity, entitlement, and a need for attention can give the impression of strong leadership and charisma. When these characteristics take precedence, however, they frequently diminish people's empathy, inhibit consultation and undermine collective decision-making processes: leaders with higher narcissistic scores may be more focused on their own recognition than on institutional objectives, making it more likely that they will engage in poor governance and ineffective public administration.¹⁹

The main psychological impact is that of centralisation of authority. In a narcissistic leadership style, the leader's perception of his own decisions being better than others makes him less likely to listen to advice or criticism, which can hinder both in terms of participation in decision-making and accountability.²⁰ This leadership style can undermine democratic institutions by reducing participation in decision making and accountability. Consequently, public institutions can be reliant on the individual leadership of public officials instead of the formal and legal processes. These settings stifle creativity and foster a culture of fear, silence and less professional independence within the organisation.

Narcissistic leadership also has an impact on citizens' psychological health. Inadequate governance, driven by self-centred leadership, could add to political instability, economic uncertainty, corruption and to the loss of peoples' trust in government institutions. From a health psychology perspective, the lack of mental health outcomes in the face of prolonged political

¹⁹ Michael Maccoby, *The Productive Narcissist: The Promise and Peril of Visionary Leadership* (Broadway Books 2003).

²⁰ Jerrold M Post, *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World: The Psychology of Political Behaviour* (Cornell University Press 2004).

instability and poor governance is likely to have a negative effect on mental health due to heightened psychological stress and a decreased sense of trust in public institutions among citizens.²¹

Furthermore, narcissistic leadership may encourage unethical behaviour within public organisations. Public officials can model this kind of entitlement, intolerance for criticism or favouritism and replicate it to garner political support and/or career opportunities. This adds to the corruption, nepotism, patronage and diminished integrity of institutions. The result is the deterioration of the ethical climate, falling organizational efficiency, and potentially the perverse use of public funds for projects not in line with national development goals. As time goes on, ethical norms weaken, organizational effectiveness declines and the public funds may be used for projects that are not consistent with national priority development.

However, it is possible to mitigate the adverse consequences of narcissistic leadership through the support of robust democratic institutions, according to scholars. To improve governance, not only do legal reforms need to be made, but behavioural measures are also required to foster emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, accountability and respect for democratic institutions – all of which serve as “institutional checks” to deter abuses of power.²² It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that psychological research could enrich leadership development and public policy, thus enhancing public confidence and trust in the governance system in Nigeria.

5. Discussion

The literature reviewed shows that narcissistic personality characteristics are likely to affect political leadership and governance if they are not properly checked by effective institutions. The psychological analysis indicates that excessive grandiosity, entitlement and seeking admiration can be a driver for leaders to become overly authoritarian, tolerate criticism poorly and focus on personal interests over public service.²³ Governance practices that have a negative impact on accountability, transparency and democratic decision-making may be driven by such traits, which do not necessarily indicate a clinical mental disorder.

The Nigerian legal framework has a number of constitutional and statutory provisions that seek to regulate political activities, such as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), the Electoral Act 2022, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission Act 2000 and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act 2004.²⁴ These laws provide sanctions for corruption and abuse of office and create oversight institutions. The evidence examined, however, suggests that these mechanisms tend to be reactive, addressing problems after they have arisen and address behaviours of leaders that do not help to strengthen democratic governance.

The discussion also shows that weak institutions such as the lack of institutional independence, selective enforcement and political interference, limit the value of accountability structures. Without the reinforcement of institutional protections and leadership development, therefore, legal change alone is not likely to resolve governance problems. Combining knowledge and skills from health psychology and constitutional law helps to develop a more complete picture of the role that behavioural attributes can play in governance and public trust.

Overall, the results confirm the importance of taking a whole-of-personalities approach to reform, by linking legal accountability with ethical leadership development, civic education, and sound public policy. The strengthening of democratic institutions along with the promotion of emotional intelligence, integrity and responsible leadership can minimize negative impacts of narcissistic characteristics of leadership and enhance the governance outcome in Nigeria.

6. Findings

The literature review on psychological, legal and governance aspects showed that narcissistic personality traits can affect political leadership in the context of decision making, interpersonal relations and institutional performance. Although grandiosity, high self-confidence, entitlement and low empathy are not indications of a clinical mental disorder, a great deal of research has linked high levels of narcissistic traits to leadership behaviors that may undermine democratic governance and public accountability.

²¹ Michael Marmot, *The Health Gap: The Challenge of an Unequal World* (Bloomsbury 2015).

²² W Keith Campbell and Joshua D Miller (eds), *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder* (John Wiley & Sons 2011).

²³ W Keith Campbell and Joshua D Miller (eds), *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder* (John Wiley & Sons 2011);

²⁴ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended); Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act 2004;

The second is that Nigeria has a well-developed legal framework in place to encourage ethical leadership and fight against corruption. The laws such as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act 2004, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission Act 2000, Electoral Act 2022, among others, as well as the Freedom of Information Act 2011 contain provisions that would enhance transparency, financial accountability and constitutional oversight, provided the implementing institutions are independent and have the capacity to do so.

The study also identifies the lack of legislation as not being a major problem of the existing system, but rather inconsistent implementation. Oversight institutions like EFCC, ICPC, INEC and the Code of Conduct Bureau are ineffective due to issues of political interference, selective prosecution, lengthy and delayed judicial processes, and low levels of institutional autonomy. As a result, there are numerous governance failures, even in the presence of constitutional protection and anti-corruption legislation.

Another key observation is that current governance reforms are mainly reactive to misbehaviour once it has happened. Current laws do not prevent leadership behaviors that could lead to unethical governance, but rather investigate, prosecute and settle electoral issues arising from corrupt behavior. Such a reactive strategy ignores the possibility of having value of behavioural governance mechanisms such as ethics education, leadership development, emotional intelligence training and evidence-based public administration.

Lastly, an important interdisciplinary research gap is identified. Although the relationship between personality attributes and leadership behavior is explored in the psychology literature, legal scholarship is concentrated on constitutional accountability and institutional regulation. Very few studies combine health psychology, constitutional law and governance to examine how the behavioural characteristics relate to the legal institutions. Multidisciplinary research could bridge this gap, which could bolster policy development and facilitate reforms to encourage ethical leadership, institutional independence, and sustainable democratic governance in Nigeria.

7. Conclusion And Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The study sought to examine the relationship between Narcissistic personality and political leadership in Nigeria in the Health psychology, constitutional law and governance perspective. The reviewed literature shows that as well as institutional structures, psychological traits that play a role in decision-making, accountability, and public administration can influence leadership behaviour. In such environments where institutional protection is low or not well established, there are indications that narcissism, represented by grandiosity, entitlement, overconfidence and lack of empathy, can play a role in governance issues.²⁵

The study also showed that Nigeria has a wide array of laws to curb political malfeasance, such as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act 2004, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission Act 2000, the Electoral Act 2022 and others that address accountability in politics. Political interference, selective enforcement, institutional weakness, and sluggish processes hinder their effectiveness, however.

Overall, the findings suggest that existing governance mechanisms are mainly reactive, rather than pro-active, in addressing misbehaviour, and do not address behaviours that are likely to threaten democratic institutions. In this context, the governance problem can be solved only by interdisciplinary methods that integrate constitutional protection, institutional reform, ethical behavior of leaders and psychological studies. Therefore, there is a need to reinforce accountability and this should include legal changes as well as behavioural measures that can foster ethical leadership, emotional intelligence and respect for democratic institutions. This will, undoubtedly, enhance governance, build public trust and promote sustainable democratic development in Nigeria.

7.2 Recommendations

7.2.1 Legal Solutions

The Constitution should be strengthened by reforming it to guarantee judicial independence, constitutional accountability and the effective separation of powers. There should be greater constitutional oversight, and a stronger mandate, for oversight institutions to ensure impartial implementation of anti-corruption legislation. The current laws and regulations on conflicts of interest, abuse of office and asset declaration should be implemented in a more efficient manner by conducting timely investigations and judicial review. In addition, there should be further strengthening of whistleblower protection legislation to promote reporting of unethical practices without penalty. All these measures would enhance the legal accountability and diminish chances for the abuse of political power.

²⁵ Michael Maccoby, *The Productive Narcissist: The Promise and Peril of Visionary Leadership* (Broadway Books 2003).

7.2.2 Legislative Solutions

The National Assembly should examine current laws to enhance transparency, integrity and accountability of leadership. There is a need to strengthen the campaign finance regulations in the Electoral Act, impose more electoral malpractice sanctions and improve transparency of political party financing. Also, there should be an improvement in compliance of rules and regulations under the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act with regard to asset declaration and conflict of interest rules. Parliament should also approve a detailed law that encourages the continuous training of elected and appointed public officials on good governance and ethics in the public service. Such changes would enhance prevention-oriented instead of just reaction-oriented governance.

7.2.3 Executive Order Solutions

The Executive should put in place administrative policies which encourage ethical leadership and transparency in government ministries, departments and agencies. Political officeholders and senior public administrators should be introduced to: Additionally, digital governance, open budgeting, public access to government information and transparent government procurement processes should be supported by executive directives. Performance monitoring systems should be enhanced to provide a way for public officials to be assessed in a manner that is objective and grounded in accountability, professionalism and service delivery. These administrative measures would go hand in hand with the constitutional and legislative reform and promote ethical leadership practices in the government.

7.2.4 Academic Research Solutions

There is a need to promote interdisciplinary research into political psychology, governance and constitutional law and public administration in universities and research institutions. Future research should explore how personality traits relate to effectiveness of leadership, performance of institutions, public trust, and democratic governance in African settings. The insertion of leadership ethics into public administration, political science, psychology and law programs at higher education institutions must be made. Inter-disciplinary research between psychologists, legal experts, governance specialists and researchers/policy makers should also be encouraged in order to provide evidence-based policy recommendations. Last, the government must facilitate empirical studies that could lead to the development of leadership programs and institutional changes that foster accountability and democratic governance.

7.3 Final Remark

Effective institutions and responsible leadership are both essential for good governance for the planet. However, constitutional protection is best complemented by ethical leadership, institutional autonomy and evidence-based public policy. Combining health psychology with changes in law and governance provides a great opportunity for a holistic discussion of behavioural factors that could threaten public administration. Therefore, it is believed that the enhancement of the legal accountability, combined with leadership development and academic research can help to achieve more responsible, transparent and citizen-centred governance in Nigeria.

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