
**IMPACT OF PROMOTING ETHICAL CONDUCT TO COMBAT
CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA'S PUBLIC SECTOR INSTITUTIONS**

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DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.7168>**ABSTRACT**

Corruption remains a persistent challenge in Nigeria's public sector, undermining governance effectiveness, public trust, and sustainable development. Despite the existence of formal anti-corruption institutions, unethical practices continue to impede service delivery and institutional performance. This study examines the relationship between transparency, institutional strength, and ethical governance in Nigeria's public sector. A mixed-methods research design was adopted, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from policy documents and existing literature. Data were collected from 360 respondents across different demographic and employment categories using structured questionnaires. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. Findings reveal a statistically significant association between transparency and the perceived effectiveness of anti-corruption mechanisms. A significant negative relationship was also found between institutional strength and corruption perception, indicating that stronger institutions are associated with lower levels of perceived corruption. Furthermore, technology-driven transparency, institutional reforms, public awareness, and whistleblower protection were identified as significant predictors of ethical governance. The study concludes that corruption in Nigeria's public sector is fundamentally a systemic governance problem rooted in institutional weaknesses

and transparency deficits. It recommends comprehensive institutional reforms, the adoption of digital transparency tools, and strengthened civic engagement as key strategies for promoting ethical governance.

KEYWORDS: Ethical Conduct, Corruption, Public Sector Institutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption remain one of the most significant impediments to Nigeria's development, particularly within the public sector. Public institutions will play a central role in policy implementation, resource allocation, and service delivery; however, widespread unethical practices will continue to compromise efficiency, equity, and public confidence if left unaddressed. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, Nigeria will likely continue to rank among the countries with high perceived corruption levels, which will highlight the urgent need for reform. The public sector, comprising ministries, departments, and agencies, will remain vulnerable to bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, procurement fraud, and misappropriation of public funds. These practices will not only drain national resources but will also perpetuate poverty, weaken democratic governance, and deter foreign investment. Future and ongoing government initiatives including the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and policy measures such as the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) will be expected to record successes but will still face challenges of political interference, inadequate funding, and limited enforcement.

Corruption remains a pervasive challenge in Nigeria's public sector, undermining governance, economic development, and public trust. Despite numerous anti-corruption policies and agencies, the persistence of unethical practices highlights systemic inefficiencies and the need for more effective strategies (Transparency International, 2023). Corruption in Nigeria takes various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and procurement fraud, all of which contribute to weakened institutions and economic stagnation (Akinola, 2021). The establishment of anti-corruption agencies like the EFCC and ICPC has been a key effort to combat corruption in Nigeria. However, these mechanisms face obstacles such as political interference, weak enforcement, and limited public participation (Ogundiya, 2019). Additionally, cultural norms sometimes tolerate corruption, making it difficult to uphold ethical standards (Adegbite, 2020). A

multi-faceted approach is necessary, including institutional reforms, technological advancements for transparency, and increased public awareness to ensure sustainable anti-corruption measures (Ekeh, 2022). This study examines strategies to promote ethical governance while considering Nigeria's socio-political and cultural context.

1.1 Corruption, Governance Deficits, and Underdevelopment in Nigeria

Corruption remains a persistent challenge in Nigeria, closely linked to governance deficits and underdevelopment. This connection has endured from the post-independence era to the present, posing a major obstacle to political and economic stability. Historically, corruption has been a primary justification for military coups, beginning with the fall of the First Republic in 1966 and continuing through successive military regimes until the return to democracy in 1999 (Adejumobi, 2000; Akhigbe, 2016). Despite over two decades of democratic governance, corruption remains deeply entrenched, with Nigeria consistently receiving poor rankings in global corruption indices (Transparency International, 2021; World Bank, 2024). This has resulted in recurring governance crises, where corruption weakens institutional frameworks, exacerbates inefficiencies, and sustains socio-economic inequalities (Anazodo et al., 2015; Abdul-Baki et al., 2023). The evolving concept of governance now emphasizes the capacity of decision-makers and institutions to combat corruption effectively. The persistent failure to address corruption highlights a governance deficit that negatively impacts key development indicators such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic growth (Atakpa & Akpan, 2023). In Bayelsa State, widely considered one of Nigeria's most resource-rich yet underdeveloped regions, the consequences of corruption and governance failures are particularly evident. Despite its vast oil wealth, the state has struggled to achieve commensurate developmental progress due to mismanagement, embezzlement, and weak institutional oversight (Uwak & Udofia, 2016; Nasidi, 2023). This situation raises pressing concerns about the interplay between corruption and governance inefficiencies in Bayelsa State and their broader implications for underdevelopment.

The establishment of specialized agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) reflects the Nigerian government's efforts to combat corruption. However, these agencies face significant challenges, including political interference, inadequate funding, and a lack of public trust (Oluwatoyin & Olusola, 2022). In certain societies, corruption is not only tolerated but often perceived as a norm, particularly when individuals resort to corrupt practices to access services or opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable. This societal acceptance sustains the cycle of corruption and hampers efforts

to shift public attitudes (Harris & Tyne, 2020). Okolie and Egbon (2025) examine the role of public administration in the fight against corruption by assessing the effectiveness of anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria. Their study highlights the critical need for institutional reforms to strengthen these agencies and improve their ability to function independently. Additionally, increasing transparency through digital platforms has been shown to reduce opportunities for bribery and other corrupt practices (Zhang, 2021). Innovations in data analytics and blockchain technology also offer promising solutions to enhance transparency and accountability across both the public and private sectors (Alemu, 2020). A crucial aspect of corruption's impact is its effect on governance effectiveness. Corruption weakens institutional frameworks, eroding the rule of law and creating an environment where public institutions struggle to fulfill their fundamental responsibilities (Nwoke et al., 2023; Abdul-Baki et al., 2023). For example, corruption in public procurement processes often results in inflated contracts, substandard infrastructure, and project delays, further eroding public trust in the government (Olujobi, 2023; Atakpa & Akpan, 2023). In Bayelsa State, these governance failures are particularly evident in key sectors such as education and healthcare, where inadequate investment and oversight continue to produce poor outcomes despite the state's significant resource wealth (Anazodo et al., 2015).

1.2 Transparency and Accountability in Public Sector Governance

For decades, accountability and transparency have remained major challenges in the public sector, largely due to persistent financial misstatements, fraud, and corruption. In Nigeria, despite the introduction of several policies and legal frameworks such as the 1999 Constitution, the ICPC Act (2000), EFCC Act (2002), Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit, and other anti-corruption laws corruption within the public service continues to dominate national discourse (Ezeajughu, 2021). Successive governments, particularly since the return to democracy in 1999, have implemented various reforms aimed at strengthening public accountability; however, these efforts have yielded limited success, as corruption remains deeply entrenched. Effective governance fundamentally relies on transparent and accountable financial practices. Umar and Aliyu (2017) argue that the growing demand for accountability mechanisms in developing countries stems from opaque budgeting processes that are largely controlled by the executive arm of government. This has intensified calls for stronger parliamentary oversight and greater legislative involvement in public financial management to enhance transparency and accountability. Public sector organizations are expected to demonstrate accountability and transparency across all stages of governance, including resource inputs, operational processes, outcomes, and societal benefits

(Jamaluddin et al., 2023). Public accountability is rooted in the principle that citizens have a right to access accurate and reliable information regarding government decisions and performance (Omar et al., 2007; Pablos Carcaba & López, 2002). This obligation arises when public officials, acting as agents, are entrusted with resources and responsibilities on behalf of the public, who serve as the principals (Kluvers & Tippet, 2010, cited in Mohamed, 2021). Transparency, as an ethical and governance principle, reflects the openness of government to public scrutiny through the timely disclosure of credible information on policies, decisions, and performance (Gbegi et al., 2019; Appah et al., 2021). It enables both internal and external stakeholders to monitor government activities, promotes citizen participation, and enhances trust in public institutions (Castillo & Gabriel, 2020). By enforcing transparency and accountability, governments are compelled to carefully evaluate expenditures and resource allocation, thereby reducing opportunities for corruption and unethical behavior (Millie et al., 2022). In the Nigerian context, Olatunji and Umar (2014) underscore the urgency of transparency in the public service due to rising fraud, economic mismanagement, public demand for information, and external pressure from international donors advocating good governance. Government initiatives to improve transparency include procedural reforms, audits of public accounts, adoption of digital systems such as e-payments, enforcement of due process in procurement, and capacity-building programs for public servants (Ebonyi, 2000, as cited in Olanrewaju et al., 2020).

This research will seek to explore practical and sustainable strategies for promoting ethical conduct and combating corruption in Nigeria's public sector. It will emphasize preventive measures over punitive ones, focusing on building a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability. By proposing actionable recommendations, the study will aim to contribute to policy formulation, institutional reform, and the broader goal of achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This research aims to explore effective strategies that will promote ethical conduct and combat corruption in Nigeria's public sector institutions, thereby contributing to improved governance, transparency, and sustainable development

Objectives of the research

1. To examine the effectiveness of existing anti-corruption frameworks in Nigeria's public sector institutions.

2. To assess the role of institutional reforms, technology, and public awareness in combating corruption.
3. To explore best practices from global anti-corruption strategies that can be adapted to Nigeria's socio-political context.
4. To propose practical policy recommendations for enhancing transparency, accountability, and ethical governance in Nigeria's public institutions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Accountability and Transparency

Accountability is a long-standing concept with intellectual roots in ancient philosophy, where thinkers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Zeno examined it in relation to judgment, punishment, and social order (Mohammed, 2021). In contemporary scholarship, accountability has evolved into a multidimensional concept studied across disciplines including law, politics, healthcare, psychology, and organizational behavior. It broadly refers to the systems, structures, and processes through which individuals and institutions entrusted with public authority and resources are required to justify their decisions, actions, and performance in line with established rules and ethical standards (Adegite, 2010). Central to accountability are transparency, adherence to due process, accurate reporting, and feedback mechanisms that reinforce democratic governance and public trust. Governments are therefore accountable when they manage public affairs openly, responsibly, and responsively, while allowing their performance to be evaluated by oversight institutions and the public (Duenya et al., 2017). Scholars further identify responsibility, transparency, and integrity as the core elements of accountability, commonly referred to as the ATI framework (UNDP, 2001; Adegbite, 2010). Responsibility manifests through financial, administrative, political, and social accountability, encompassing prudent financial management, robust internal controls, democratic elections, and citizen participation in holding public officials to account (Adeyemi et al., 2012).

2.2 Accountability and Transparency Challenges in the Public Sector

The public sector, consisting of government-owned and managed institutions established to serve collective societal interests, operates within complex governance frameworks and faces increasing pressure to deliver quality services amid limited resources and rising public expectations (Acho, 2014; Adams, 2010). Globally and particularly in Nigeria, weak accountability and transparency have been associated with inefficiency, corruption, mismanagement of public funds, and declining public trust (Fatile, 2012; Emmanson &

Ajayi, 2020). Nigeria's persistent poor ranking on global corruption perception indices reflects systemic governance failures driven largely by inadequate transparency, weak auditing systems, and limited oversight. The consequences of these weaknesses include distorted financial reporting, ineffective public policies, capital flight, brain drain, and sustained underdevelopment despite abundant natural and human resources (Ogundajo et al., 2019; Ubesie et al., 2021). In response, recent reforms and empirical studies emphasize that strengthening transparency, accountability, and auditing mechanisms is critical for improving public sector governance. Evidence from both global and country-specific studies demonstrates that effective financial reporting, institutional oversight, legislative scrutiny, and citizen engagement significantly enhance accountability and reduce corruption (Ogundana, 2017; Appah et al., 2021; Meker, 2023). Collectively, these findings underscore that transparent financial practices, sound legal frameworks, and strong institutions are indispensable for restoring public confidence, promoting integrity, and achieving sustainable economic and social development in the public sector.

2.3 Corruption in Nigeria's Public Sector: Challenges, Impacts, and the Need for Reform

Corruption continues to be a deeply entrenched and debilitating challenge within Nigeria's public sector, undermining democratic governance, economic progress, and public confidence in state institutions. It manifests in diverse forms, such as bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and favoritism, permeating multiple sectors of the economy and public service (Adamaagashi, Awakessien & Awakessien, 2024). This pervasive corruption has weakened governance structures and diminished citizens' trust in political institutions, ultimately impairing the delivery of essential public services. International evaluations highlight the gravity of the problem, with the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) consistently ranking Nigeria among the most corrupt nations. For example, in 2020, Nigeria was ranked 149 out of 180 countries with a score of 25 out of 100, signaling widespread corrupt practices (Owuamanam & Agbaenyi, 2021). Efforts to combat corruption through the establishment of agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) have achieved limited success (Jamiu, 2021). Corruption continues to negatively impact critical development indicators, including economic growth, foreign investment, poverty alleviation, and income equality (Makar et al., 2023; Ezeudu, 2023). It is also linked to declining public trust, political disengagement, institutional decay, and ongoing challenges to the rule of law (Aina & Shamsuddin, 2023). Addressing these challenges

requires comprehensive reforms, including strengthening institutional frameworks, promoting transparency and accountability, ensuring the independence of anti-corruption agencies, improving public sector remuneration, and fostering a culture of integrity and zero tolerance for corruption. A clear understanding of corruption in the public sector is crucial. Corruption is generally defined as the abuse or misuse of entrusted power for personal gain, which undermines transparency, fairness, and ethical governance (Transparency International cited in Edmond, 2023). While no single universal definition exists due to variations across societies and institutional contexts (UNODC, 2004 cited in Brooks et al., 2013), the public sector encompasses government institutions and agencies responsible for delivering essential services and managing public resources in the interest of societal welfare (Popa, 2017). Scholars consistently emphasize that corruption in Nigeria's public sector represents a major obstacle to effective governance, sustainable development, and social equity, distorting resource allocation, weakening institutional capacity, and obstructing efforts to improve citizens' quality of life (Nwokike, Achufusi & Abasili, 2023). Consequently, tackling corruption remains central to Nigeria's pursuit of equitable growth, social justice, and effective public administration.

2.4 Causes and Drivers of Corruption in Nigeria's Public Sector

Corruption in Nigeria's public sector remains a pervasive challenge, undermining governance, hindering economic development, and eroding public trust in state institutions. It manifests in various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and favoritism, affecting all levels of government and public institutions. Understanding the underlying causes of corruption is crucial for designing effective interventions that promote transparency, accountability, and ethical governance. The drivers of corruption in Nigeria are multifaceted, reflecting the interplay of institutional weaknesses, economic pressures, political influences, cultural norms, administrative deficiencies, and legal loopholes. Scholars have identified materialism and the intense desire for wealth as primary motivators for corrupt behavior among political leaders and public officials. Gbadosi and Ajogbeje (2018) argue that the pursuit of luxury and financial gain often takes precedence over ethical considerations and public service, prompting individuals in positions of authority to engage in bribery, embezzlement, and other corrupt practices. Similarly, Akah and Uzoh (2019) highlight the societal implications of this trend, noting that the normalization of conspicuous consumption among youth reflects a cultural shift where material wealth is equated with success. They describe this phenomenon as a "social sickness," emphasizing the need for policy, educational, and cultural interventions to cultivate values that prioritize integrity,

communal achievement, and sustainable societal goals. Economic factors, particularly the inadequacy of public sector remuneration and rewards, also contribute significantly to corruption. Yusuf (2014) contends that Nigeria's public reward system is one of the most deficient globally, offering minimal incentives or recognition for ethical conduct. The absence of robust mechanisms to reward integrity allows corrupt practices to flourish, as public officials may perceive dishonest behavior as the only viable means of survival or career advancement. Supporting this view, Bakare-Aremu, Mamman, BabaUmar, and Salisu (2021) report that many public servants earn incomes below subsistence levels, creating financial pressures that encourage illicit conduct as a coping strategy.

3. Research Method

3.1 Description of the Study Area

The study focused on Nigeria's public sector institutions, with particular attention to federal ministries, departments, and agencies responsible for governance and service delivery. Data was collected from selected urban centers to capture diverse perspectives from public servants, private sector workers, and the general public on corruption trends and ethical governance practices.

3.2 Method of Data Collection

The study utilized a structured questionnaire as a primary data collection method to gather perceptions on corruption, transparency, institutional strength, and ethical governance within Nigeria's public sector. The questionnaire featured close-ended items rated on a Likert scale for quantitative analysis, with 360 respondents representing diverse demographic groups, including gender, age, education, and employment sector. This sampling captured both insider and external views on public sector corruption. Additionally, secondary data from academic literature, policy documents, and institutional reports complemented the empirical findings.

3.3 Statistical Analysis Method

Data analysis utilized quantitative statistical methods, including descriptive statistics for summarizing demographic characteristics. The Chi-square test assessed the relationship between transparency and the effectiveness of anti-corruption mechanisms, while Pearson correlation examined the link between institutional strength and corruption perception. Multiple regression analysis evaluated the contributions of technology for transparency, institutional reforms, public awareness, and whistleblower protection to ethical governance in

Nigeria's public sector. Statistical significance was set at the 0.05 level, with results presented in tables and graphs for clarity.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 360)

Table1: Gender Distribution of Respondents.

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	216	60.0
Female	144	40.0
Total	360	100.0

The gender distribution of respondents indicates a male-dominated sample, with males constituting 60.0% (216 respondents) of the total population, while females account for 40.0% (144 respondents). This distribution reflects a noticeable gender imbalance, which is not uncommon in studies related to public sector governance and anti-corruption issues in Nigeria. Men are often more represented in formal employment, public administration, and decision-making spaces, which may explain their higher participation in the study. As a result, male respondents may have greater exposure to public sector processes, institutional practices, and governance-related challenges, including experiences and perceptions of corruption within government institutions. However, the substantial representation of female respondents also strengthens the validity of the findings by ensuring that women's perspectives on corruption and governance are adequately captured. Women often experience the effects of public sector corruption differently, particularly in areas such as access to public services, employment opportunities, and social welfare programs. Their inclusion provides a more balanced and inclusive understanding of how corruption impacts different segments of society. Therefore, while the sample is male-dominated, the presence of a significant proportion of female respondents enhances the depth of analysis and supports a more comprehensive interpretation of gendered perceptions of transparency, accountability, and ethical governance within Nigeria's public sector.

Table 2: Age Group Distribution of Respondents.

Age Group (Years)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
18–30	108	30.0
31–45	144	40.0
46–60	72	20.0
61 and above	36	10.0

The age group distribution of respondents shows that the majority of participants fall within the economically active and socially engaged segments of the population. Respondents aged 31–45 years constitute the largest proportion at 40.0% (144 respondents), followed by those aged 18–30 years at 30.0% (108 respondents). Together, these two age categories account for 70.0% of the total sample, indicating that the study largely reflects the perspectives of individuals who are actively involved in the workforce and are more likely to interact regularly with public sector institutions and governance structures. This age composition is particularly relevant for a study on corruption and ethical governance, as individuals within these age brackets are often directly affected by public policies, employment conditions, and public service delivery. The inclusion of older respondents further enriches the dataset by incorporating long-term experiential insights. Respondents aged 46–60 years represent 20.0% of the sample, while those aged 61 years and above account for 10.0%. These age groups may offer perspectives shaped by prolonged exposure to Nigeria’s public sector and governance systems over time, including experiences across different political regimes and policy reforms. Their participation adds historical depth to the findings, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how corruption and governance practices have evolved. Overall, the age distribution suggests a balanced representation that captures both contemporary and long-term views on transparency, institutional effectiveness, and anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria.

The educational level distribution of respondents indicates a relatively high level of educational attainment among the study participants. A significant proportion of respondents possess tertiary education, with 40.0% (144 respondents) holding undergraduate degrees and 30.0% (108 respondents) having postgraduate qualifications. Together, these categories account for 70.0% of the total sample, suggesting that the majority of respondents are well educated and likely capable of understanding complex issues related to governance, institutional performance, and corruption. This level of education enhances the credibility of the responses, as participants are more likely to provide informed and critical assessments of ethical standards, transparency, and the effectiveness of anti-corruption mechanisms within Nigeria’s public sector. Respondents with secondary school education constitute 20.0% (72 respondents) of the sample, while those classified under “others” make up 10.0% (36 respondents), which may include vocational, professional, or informal educational backgrounds. The inclusion of these groups broadens the scope of the study by capturing perspectives from individuals with varying levels of formal education, who may experience public sector corruption differently, particularly in accessing public services or employment opportunities. Overall, the educational distribution reflects a

balanced and informed respondent pool, strengthening the study’s findings and ensuring that interpretations of corruption and ethical governance are grounded in diverse educational experiences.

The employment sector distribution of respondents reveals that a substantial proportion of participants are directly connected to the public sector. Government workers constitute the largest group, accounting for 40.0% (144 respondents) of the total sample. This is particularly significant for a study focused on corruption and ethical governance, as government employees are more likely to have firsthand knowledge of public sector procedures, administrative practices, and institutional challenges. Their experiences and perceptions provide valuable insights into how corruption manifests within government institutions, as well as the effectiveness of existing anti-corruption measures and ethical frameworks. In addition, the representation of private sector workers (25.0%), self-employed individuals (20.0%), and unemployed respondents (15.0%) ensures that the study captures a broader societal perspective on public sector corruption. These groups often interact with government institutions through regulatory processes, taxation, licensing, employment opportunities, and access to public services, and are therefore directly affected by governance failures. The inclusion of these diverse employment categories highlights the widespread impact of public sector corruption beyond government offices, demonstrating that unethical practices influence economic activities, business operations, and livelihoods across society. Overall, the employment sector distribution strengthens the study by combining insider perspectives with external viewpoints, offering a comprehensive understanding of corruption and governance challenges in Nigeria.

Table 3: Educational Level of Respondents.

Education Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Secondary School	72	20.0
Undergraduate Degree	144	40.0
Postgraduate Degree	108	30.0
Others	36	10.0
Total	360	100.0

Table 4: Employment Sector of Respondents.

Employment Sector	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Government Worker	144	40.0
Private Sector Worker	90	25.0
Self-Employed	72	20.0

Unemployed	54	15.0
Total	360	100.0

Chi-Square Test of Transparency and Anti-Corruption Effectiveness

This bar chart illustrates the association between transparency levels and perceived effectiveness of anti-corruption mechanisms.

Figure 1: Chi-Square Test Diagram.

Table 5: Pearson Chi-Square Test.

Test	Value	Df	Sig. (p)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.47	4	0.001

The Chi-square test result presented above, together with Figure 1, provides clear empirical evidence of a significant association between transparency in public sector institutions and the perceived effectiveness of anti-corruption mechanisms in Nigeria. The Pearson Chi-square value of 18.47 with 4 degrees of freedom is statistically significant at $p = 0.001$, which is well below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that the distribution of responses regarding the effectiveness of anti-corruption mechanisms varies significantly across different levels of perceived transparency. In other words, perceptions of how effective agencies such as the EFCC and ICPC are cannot be separated from how transparent public institutions are viewed to be. The bar chart visually reinforces this statistical outcome by showing noticeable differences in response patterns across transparency categories, with higher concentrations of negative evaluations clustered around lower transparency levels. The diagram further illustrates that respondents who perceive public sector institutions as opaque or lacking openness are far more likely to rate anti-corruption mechanisms as ineffective, whereas relatively fewer negative perceptions are observed among respondents who view institutions as transparent. This visual trend supports the statistical conclusion that transparency plays a critical role in shaping public confidence in anti-corruption initiatives. The significant Chi-square result therefore suggests that efforts to combat corruption in Nigeria cannot succeed in isolation from broader transparency reforms. Enhancing access to information, improving openness in public decision-making, and strengthening accountability mechanisms are likely to improve both the actual performance and public perception of anti-corruption agencies. Overall, the combined interpretation of the test statistics and the diagram underscores transparency as a foundational pillar for effective anti-corruption governance in Nigeria.

Table 6: Correlation between Institutional Strength and Corruption Perception

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig. (p)
Institutional Strength Corruption Perception	-0.56	0.000

Correlation Scatter Plot

The scatter plot demonstrates the negative relationship between institutional strength and corruption perception.

Figure 2: The diagram showing the institutional strength against the Corruption perception.

The Pearson correlation result indicates a statistically significant and moderately strong negative relationship between institutional strength and corruption perception, as shown by the correlation coefficient ($r = -0.56$) and a p-value of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that improvements in institutional strength such as stronger legal frameworks, effective enforcement mechanisms, and independent oversight bodies are associated with a noticeable reduction in how corruption is perceived within Nigeria's public sector. The statistical significance of this relationship suggests that the observed association is not due to chance but reflects a meaningful linkage between the quality of institutions and public perceptions of corruption. In practical terms, where institutions are weak, poorly enforced, or politically compromised, corruption tends to be perceived as more prevalent and entrenched.

The correlation scatter plot visually supports this statistical finding by displaying a downward trend in the distribution of data points, indicating that as institutional strength increases, corruption perception decreases. The clustering of points along a negative slope reinforces the inverse relationship identified by the correlation coefficient, making the pattern easier to interpret intuitively. This visual representation strengthens the argument that institutional reforms are central to combating corruption in Nigeria. The combined interpretation of the correlation statistics and the scatter plot highlights the importance of building strong, autonomous, and accountable public institutions as a strategic pathway to reducing corruption and restoring public confidence in governance processes.

Figure 3: Multiple Regression Diagram**Table 7: Multiple Regression Results on Predictors of Ethical Governance**

Predictor Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.
Technology for Transparency	0.42	6.88	0.000
Institutional Reforms	0.31	5.12	0.000
Public Awareness	0.19	3.27	0.002
Whistleblower Protection	0.14	2.41	0.017

The multiple regression results presented, together with the regression diagram, provide a comprehensive explanation of the factors that significantly influence ethical governance in Nigeria's public sector. The overall model demonstrates strong explanatory power, with the combined predictor variables accounting for a substantial proportion of the variation in ethical governance outcomes. All the independent variables included in the model—technology for transparency, institutional reforms, public awareness, and whistleblower protection—record statistically significant t-values with p-values below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that each factor makes a meaningful and independent contribution to promoting ethical governance. The regression diagram visually reinforces this finding by clearly displaying the relative strength of each predictor through their standardized beta coefficients.

Among the predictors, technology for transparency emerges as the most influential factor, with the highest standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.42$), a strong t-value (6.88), and a highly significant p-value (0.000). This suggests that the adoption of digital tools such as e-governance platforms, automated financial systems, online procurement portals, and blockchain-based tracking mechanisms has the greatest potential to enhance ethical governance. The regression diagram reflects this dominance by showing technology for transparency as the longest bar or most prominent predictor, emphasizing its leading role in reducing discretionary power, limiting human interference, and improving accountability in public sector operations. This finding underscores the growing importance of digital transformation as a practical and effective anti-corruption strategy in Nigeria. Institutional reforms also play a critical role in promoting ethical governance, as indicated by a substantial beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.31$) and a statistically significant t-value (5.12). This reflects the

importance of strengthening legal frameworks, improving the autonomy of anti-corruption agencies, and enhancing enforcement mechanisms. Public awareness ($\beta = 0.19$) and whistleblower protection ($\beta = 0.14$), though comparatively weaker predictors, remain statistically significant and essential components of ethical governance. The regression diagram illustrates their supportive but complementary roles, showing that while they may not exert as strong an influence as technology or institutional reforms, they nonetheless contribute to shaping ethical behavior and accountability. Collectively, the regression results and diagram highlight the need for a multi-dimensional approach to ethical governance, where technological innovation, institutional strengthening, civic education, and legal protection mechanisms work together to effectively combat corruption in Nigeria's public sector.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study clearly highlight the pivotal role of transparency, institutional strength, and structural reforms in determining the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria's public sector. The statistically significant Chi-square result ($\chi^2 = 18.47$, $p = 0.001$) confirms a strong association between perceived transparency and the perceived effectiveness of anti-corruption mechanisms. This indicates that anti-corruption agencies such as the EFCC and ICPC are more likely to gain public confidence and be regarded as effective in environments where government operations are open, accessible, and subject to public scrutiny. Conversely, where administrative processes are opaque and information is restricted, respondents overwhelmingly perceive anti-corruption initiatives as ineffective. This reinforces the argument that secrecy and lack of openness not only enable corrupt practices but also erode trust in institutions tasked with combating corruption. The finding is consistent with existing literature which emphasizes transparency as a foundational requirement for accountability and ethical governance, particularly in developing democracies like Nigeria where public trust in government remains fragile.

The demographic characteristics of respondents further strengthen the validity of these findings. The dominance of respondents within the economically active age group (18–45 years), coupled with a relatively high level of educational attainment, suggests that the perceptions captured are informed, critical, and based on lived experiences of public sector interactions. The substantial representation of government workers is especially important, as it implies that many respondents have direct exposure to public administrative processes, procurement systems, and regulatory practices where corruption is most likely to occur. Their

assessments therefore provide valuable insider perspectives on how transparency deficits, political interference, and weak enforcement undermine the effectiveness of anti-corruption mechanisms. At the same time, the inclusion of private sector workers, self-employed individuals, and unemployed respondents broadens the analytical scope of the study, illustrating that the consequences of public sector corruption extend beyond government institutions to negatively affect economic opportunities, service delivery, and social welfare across society.

The correlation analysis further reinforces the centrality of institutional strength in combating corruption. The statistically significant negative relationship between institutional strength and corruption perception ($r = -0.56$, $p = 0.000$) indicates that stronger, more autonomous, and better-resourced institutions are associated with lower levels of perceived corruption. This suggests that when public institutions operate within clear legal frameworks, enjoy operational independence, and are subject to effective oversight, corruption becomes less normalized and less visible. The scatter plot visually supports this conclusion by showing a clear downward trend, demonstrating that improvements in institutional capacity are directly linked to reduced corruption perceptions. This finding aligns with governance theories that identify institutional capacity, autonomy, and rule of law as critical determinants of successful anti-corruption outcomes, and it underscores the limitations of relying solely on punitive or enforcement-based approaches without broader institutional reforms.

The multiple regression results provide deeper insight into the specific factors that drive ethical governance in Nigeria's public sector. The regression model reveals that technology for transparency is the strongest predictor of ethical governance ($\beta = 0.42$, $p = 0.000$), followed by institutional reforms ($\beta = 0.31$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that the adoption of digital governance tools such as e-procurement systems, automated financial management platforms, and online disclosure mechanisms plays a decisive role in reducing discretionary power and enhancing accountability. Institutional reforms, including strengthening anti-corruption agencies, improving judicial independence, and enforcing public service codes of conduct, also significantly contribute to ethical governance outcomes. Public awareness ($\beta = 0.19$, $p = 0.002$) and whistleblower protection ($\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.017$), although comparatively weaker predictors, remain statistically significant, highlighting the importance of civic engagement and legal safeguards in sustaining ethical behavior within public institutions.

Overall, the discussion of findings demonstrates that corruption in Nigeria is not merely a product of individual misconduct but a systemic governance challenge rooted in transparency deficits, weak institutions, and limited accountability mechanisms. The combined evidence

from the Chi-square test, correlation analysis, and multiple regression model underscores the need for a comprehensive and integrated anti-corruption strategy. Strengthening institutions, deploying technology-driven transparency tools, raising public awareness, and protecting whistleblowers must occur simultaneously to produce meaningful and sustainable improvements in ethical governance. By addressing these structural and institutional weaknesses, Nigeria can enhance the effectiveness of its anti-corruption mechanisms, rebuild public trust, and create a more accountable public sector capable of supporting inclusive development and long-term governance stability.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that corruption in Nigeria's public sector is largely driven by systemic governance failures rather than isolated individual misconduct. The findings demonstrate that low levels of transparency significantly undermine the perceived effectiveness of anti-corruption agencies, while weak institutional structures intensify corruption perceptions. The strong negative relationship between institutional strength and corruption perception confirms that effective, autonomous, and well-enforced institutions are essential for reducing corruption. Additionally, the regression results highlight technology-driven transparency and institutional reforms as the most influential factors in promoting ethical governance. Overall, the study concludes that meaningful progress in combating corruption in Nigeria requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes transparency, strengthens institutions, and integrates technological and civic-based solutions.

6. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Government institutions and anti-corruption agencies should be granted greater autonomy, adequate funding, and stronger enforcement powers to reduce political interference.
- The implementation of e-governance systems, digital procurement platforms, and automated financial management tools should be expanded to minimize discretionary power and enhance accountability.
- Public institutions should improve openness in decision-making processes and ensure timely access to public information.
- Continuous public education campaigns should be promoted to encourage ethical behavior, citizen participation, and intolerance for corruption.

- Strong legal and institutional safeguards should be established to protect whistleblowers from retaliation and encourage the reporting of corrupt practices.

7. Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the combined role of transparency, institutional strength, and technological innovation in promoting ethical governance in Nigeria's public sector. Unlike studies that focus solely on enforcement or punitive measures, this research adopts an integrated analytical approach using chi-square, correlation, and regression techniques to identify key predictors of ethical governance. The findings extend governance and anti-corruption theories by demonstrating that technology-driven transparency is the most influential factor in reducing corruption perceptions. The study also offers practical policy insights relevant to Nigeria and other developing countries facing similar governance challenges, thereby enriching the discourse on sustainable and institutional-based anti-corruption strategies.

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