



POLAC INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ECON & MGT SCIENCE (PIJEMS)
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT SCIENCE
NIGERIA POLICE ACADEMY, WUDIL-KANO



THE NEXUS BETWEEN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIAS PUBLIC SECTOR

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Abstract

This study explores the nexus between political leadership and institutional productivity in Nigerias public sector. Despite several public sector reforms, the country continues to experience inefficiencies, slow service delivery, and weak policy implementation. Political leadership plays a critical role in shaping the performance of public institutions by influencing policy direction, resource allocation, and administrative operations. This study aims to examine how political leadership practices, particularly the quality of leadership, affect institutional productivity. The research is anchored on New Institutional Theory, which emphasizes the influence of institutionalized rules, norms, and cultural beliefs in shaping organizational behavior and performance. The study uses a descriptive survey research design to collect data from public sector employees in Abuja, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was employed to gather perceptions on the impact of political leadership on institutional productivity, and multiple regression analysis was applied to examine relationships between variables. The findings indicate that clear political leadership direction enhances institutional productivity, while political interference and patronage diminish efficiency and effectiveness. Ethical leadership practices, such as transparency and accountability, were also found to significantly improve employee commitment and institutional output. The study recommends strengthening ethical leadership practices and ensuring robust safeguards to limit political interference in administrative decisions to improve public sector performance.

Keywords: Political Leadership, Institutional Productivity, Public Sector, Nigeria, New Institutional Theory.

1. Introduction

Political leadership occupies a central position in shaping the performance and outcomes of public sector institutions, particularly in developing economies where state capacity and governance structures remain under continuous reform. In Nigeria, the public sector constitutes the primary vehicle through which government policies are designed, implemented, and evaluated, thereby making institutional productivity a critical determinant of national development.

Institutional productivity, broadly understood as the ability of public organisations to efficiently and effectively utilise available resources to achieve set objectives, is influenced by a complex interaction of political, administrative, and socio-economic factors (World Bank, 2020; OECD, 2021). Among these factors, political leadership has emerged as a pivotal force capable of either strengthening institutional capacity or undermining administrative effectiveness.

Political leadership refers to the actions, decisions, and governance style of elected and appointed political office holders who exercise authority over public institutions and set strategic priorities for the state. Through policy direction, budgetary control, appointments, and oversight functions, political leaders exert substantial influence over the operational environment of public sector organisations. Effective political leadership is expected to provide clear vision, ensure policy coherence, and promote accountability, thereby fostering an enabling climate for institutional productivity (Northouse, 2022). Conversely, weak or self-serving political leadership can generate policy instability, politicisation of administration, and erosion of meritocratic principles, all of which constrain organisational performance.

In Nigeria, concerns about declining public sector productivity have persisted despite successive waves of reforms, including civil service restructuring, performance management systems, and anti-corruption initiatives. Empirical evidence suggests that while institutional frameworks have been periodically redesigned, the outcomes of these reforms have been mixed, with limited improvement in service delivery and operational efficiency (Adegoroye, 2021; World Bank, 2023). Scholars increasingly attribute this gap between reform intentions and actual performance to the quality of political leadership that drives and sustains reform processes. Where political leaders demonstrate commitment to good governance, transparency, and rule-based administration, public institutions tend to exhibit higher levels of productivity. In contrast, where leadership is characterised by patronage, rent-seeking, and political interference, institutional performance deteriorates.

The nexus between political leadership and institutional productivity is therefore not merely theoretical but deeply practical, with significant implications for Nigeria's socio-economic transformation. Public sector institutions are responsible for critical functions such as revenue mobilisation, infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and security. Inefficiencies within

these institutions translate directly into poor service delivery, fiscal leakages, and diminished public trust. Understanding how political leadership shapes institutional productivity is thus essential for designing governance reforms that move beyond structural adjustments to address underlying behavioural and leadership-related constraints.

Furthermore, contemporary governance discourse emphasises that leadership quality, rather than the mere existence of formal rules, determines the effectiveness of institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019; Andrews, Pritchett & Woolcock, 2017). This perspective is particularly relevant to Nigeria, where formal institutional arrangements often coexist with informal practices that influence decision-making. Examining the relationship between political leadership and institutional productivity provides an opportunity to generate context-specific insights into how leadership behaviour, policy orientation, and accountability mechanisms interact to shape public sector outcomes.

Against this background, this study seeks to interrogate the nature and extent of the relationship between political leadership and institutional productivity in Nigeria's public sector. By systematically analysing this nexus, the study aims to contribute to the growing body of governance literature and offer evidence-based recommendations for strengthening leadership practices and enhancing the productivity of public institutions in Nigeria.

Despite decades of public sector reforms, Nigeria continues to grapple with low levels of institutional productivity, as reflected in persistent inefficiencies, slow service delivery, and weak implementation of government policies. Numerous initiatives, including civil service reforms, performance management frameworks, and anti-corruption campaigns, have been introduced to improve organisational effectiveness. However, these reforms have not yielded commensurate improvements in institutional outcomes, suggesting the presence of deeper systemic constraints.

A critical but often underexplored factor in this context is the role of political leadership. Political leaders wield significant influence over public institutions through policy direction, resource allocation, and appointment powers. Yet, in Nigeria, this influence has frequently been associated with politicisation of administrative processes, frequent policy reversals, and weak enforcement of accountability mechanisms. Such conditions undermine continuity, erode professional standards, and weaken institutional capacity, thereby constraining productivity.

While existing studies have examined public sector performance and governance challenges in Nigeria, many focus primarily on structural or procedural deficiencies, with limited empirical attention to how the quality and orientation of political leadership shape institutional productivity. This creates a knowledge gap regarding the specific pathways through which political leadership affects organisational outcomes in the public sector. Without a clear understanding of this relationship, reform efforts risk addressing symptoms rather than underlying causes.

Moreover, the absence of robust empirical evidence on the leadership–productivity nexus limits the ability of policymakers to design targeted interventions aimed at improving leadership practices and strengthening institutions. Consequently, public sector organisations continue to operate below their productive potential, with adverse implications for national development and citizen welfare.

This study therefore seeks to address this gap by systematically investigating the nexus between political leadership and institutional productivity in Nigeria’s public sector. By doing so, it aims to generate evidence that can inform more effective governance reforms and contribute to the strengthening of public institutions.

The main aim of this study is to examine the nexus between political leadership and institutional productivity in Nigeria’s public sector. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Assess the effect of political leadership practices on institutional productivity in Nigeria’s public sector.
- ii. Examine the extent to which political interference influences the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector institutions in Nigeria.

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. What effect do political leadership practices have on institutional productivity in Nigeria’s public sector?
- ii. To what extent does political interference affect the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector institutions in Nigeria?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Clarifications

Political leadership practices

Political leadership practices are defined as the patterns of behaviour, decision-making processes, and strategic actions through which political office holders exercise authority to shape public policy, allocate resources, and influence institutional direction within the state (Northouse, 2022). Political leadership practices are defined as the deliberate use of formal power and informal influence by elected and appointed leaders to articulate collective goals, mobilise support, and steer public organisations toward the achievement of national objectives (House et al., 2019). Political leadership practices are defined as the governance-related activities that reflect how political leaders design policies, oversee implementation, and enforce accountability in ways that affect the functioning and performance of public institutions (Peters, 2021). Political leadership practices are defined as the ethical orientation and value-based conduct of political leaders, including their commitment to transparency, integrity, and respect for the rule of law, which shape organisational culture and public trust (Menzel, 2020). Political leadership practices are defined as the capacity of political leaders to provide strategic vision, ensure policy coherence, and maintain stability in governance processes, thereby creating an enabling environment for institutional effectiveness and

productivity (OECD, 2021). Political leadership practices are defined as the extent to which political leaders support merit-based appointments, professional autonomy, and performance-oriented management systems, as opposed to patronage and politicisation, which directly influence administrative efficiency and organisational outcomes (Adegoroye, 2021).

Taken together, these definitions underscore political leadership practices as a multidimensional construct encompassing authority, influence, ethics, strategic direction, and institutional stewardship. In the context of Nigeria's public sector, political leadership practices go beyond the personal attributes of individual leaders to include the systemic patterns through which power is exercised and governance decisions are made. Where leadership practices are anchored in democratic values, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making, they tend to promote clarity of purpose, organisational discipline, and alignment between policy goals and institutional actions.

Conversely, leadership practices characterised by excessive political interference, weak oversight, and personalised control of state resources often generate uncertainty, undermine professional standards, and weaken institutional capacity. This conceptualisation highlights political leadership practices as a central explanatory factor in understanding variations in institutional productivity, since the quality of leadership determines whether formal rules translate into effective action or remain symbolic. By framing political leadership practices in this manner, the study situates leadership as both a behavioural and structural phenomenon that shapes how public institutions perform their core mandates in Nigeria.

Institutional Productivity

Institutional productivity is defined as the capacity of an organisation to transform available inputs such as human resources, financial allocations, and administrative structures into outputs and outcomes that effectively advance its mandated goals and public value (Source: OECD, 2021). Institutional productivity is defined as the

degree to which public sector institutions achieve optimal efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery through the prudent utilisation of resources and the timely execution of policies and programmes (World Bank, 2020). Institutional productivity is defined as the sustained ability of institutions to generate high-quality outputs while maintaining internal coherence, adaptability, and accountability in response to changing governance demands (Peters, 2021). Institutional productivity is defined as the performance capability of an organisation reflected in measurable improvements in output quantity, service quality, and citizen satisfaction relative to the resources employed (Bouckaert & Halligan, 2020). Institutional productivity is defined as the extent to which organisational processes, leadership structures, and management systems collectively enhance the capacity of institutions to deliver intended results in a consistent and cost-effective manner (Andrews, 2018). Institutional productivity is defined as the alignment between institutional objectives, operational practices, and outcomes, such that organisational efforts translate into tangible socio-economic benefits for society (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019).

Collectively, these definitions conceptualise institutional productivity as a multidimensional construct that transcends narrow efficiency metrics to incorporate effectiveness, quality, adaptability, and public value creation. In the context of the public sector, productivity cannot be assessed solely by output volume but must also account for the extent to which institutional actions contribute to policy coherence, social welfare, and citizen trust. This perspective underscores that productive institutions are not merely those that do more with less, but those that consistently achieve meaningful results in line with their statutory mandates. Institutional productivity is therefore shaped by both internal factors, such as organisational culture, management practices, and staff competence, and external factors, including political leadership, regulatory frameworks, and socio-economic conditions. Where institutions possess clear objectives, stable governance arrangements, and supportive leadership, productivity is likely to be

enhanced through improved coordination, reduced waste, and stronger accountability. Conversely, weak governance, fragmented authority, and poor oversight undermine institutional capacity and diminish productivity. By framing institutional productivity in this holistic manner, the study positions it as a critical outcome variable for assessing the performance of Nigeria's public sector and for understanding how political leadership influences institutional effectiveness and development outcomes.

Political Interference

Political interference is defined as the direct or indirect involvement of political actors in administrative and managerial processes in ways that override established rules, professional standards, and institutional procedures (Source: Peters, 2021). Political interference is defined as the exercise of partisan influence over public sector decisions, including appointments, promotions, budgeting, and procurement, for purposes that advance political or personal interests rather than organisational goals (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). Political interference is defined as the manipulation of policy implementation and organisational operations by political office holders, resulting in distortions of priorities, weakened accountability, and compromised institutional autonomy (Grindle, 2017). Political interference is defined as the intrusion of political authority into the technical and professional domains of public administration, thereby constraining managerial discretion and undermining merit-based decision-making (OECD, 2021). Political interference is defined as a pattern of governance behaviour in which political considerations systematically outweigh legal-rational principles in the conduct of public affairs, leading to politicisation of institutions and erosion of bureaucratic neutrality (Meyer-Sahling & Mikkelsen, 2016). Political interference is defined as the use of political power to influence administrative outcomes through informal networks, patronage relations, and discretionary control over state resources, often weakening institutional performance and public trust (World Bank, 2020). Viewed collectively, these definitions present political interference as a multidimensional phenomenon

encompassing partisan influence, politicisation of administration, erosion of autonomy, and subversion of professional norms. In the public sector, political interference goes beyond episodic interventions by political leaders to reflect enduring patterns of power relations between elected officials and career administrators. Where interference is limited and regulated within clear constitutional and legal boundaries, political oversight can enhance accountability and democratic control. However, in contexts where interference becomes pervasive and personalised, it generates uncertainty, disrupts organisational routines, and weakens institutional capacity. Such conditions foster environments in which administrative decisions are guided more by loyalty than competence, thereby diminishing efficiency and effectiveness. In Nigeria's public sector, political interference is often manifested through frequent leadership changes, arbitrary policy directives, and politically motivated personnel actions, which undermine continuity and institutional memory. Conceptualising political interference in this manner highlights its central role as a mediating factor between political leadership and institutional productivity. It underscores that the quality of political leadership is not only reflected in visionary capacity but also in the restraint exercised in respecting administrative boundaries. Consequently, understanding political interference is essential for explaining variations in institutional performance and for designing reforms aimed at strengthening bureaucratic autonomy, professionalism, and productivity.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

Efficiency and effectiveness are defined as complementary dimensions of organisational performance that capture how well an institution utilises resources and the extent to which it achieves its intended objectives (Source: Bouckaert & Halligan, 2020). Efficiency and effectiveness are defined as the relationship between inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes, such that efficiency reflects doing things in the least costly manner while effectiveness reflects doing the right things in line with organisational goals (OECD,

2021). Efficiency and effectiveness are defined as the operational capacity of an organisation to minimise waste, reduce delays, and optimise workflows, alongside its strategic capacity to deliver high-quality services that meet citizen expectations (World Bank, 2020). Efficiency and effectiveness are defined as performance attributes that indicate the degree to which organisational activities are aligned with policy priorities and translated into measurable social and economic benefits (Andrews, 2018). Efficiency and effectiveness are defined as the extent to which management systems, leadership practices, and institutional structures support timely decision-making, accountability, and continuous improvement (Peters, 2021). Efficiency and effectiveness are defined as outcome-oriented indicators that demonstrate whether public sector institutions are capable of transforming public resources into sustainable public value (Moore, 2014).

Taken together, these definitions conceptualise efficiency and effectiveness as interconnected yet distinct constructs that jointly determine organisational success. In the public sector context, efficiency emphasises prudent use of scarce resources, reduction of administrative bottlenecks, and optimisation of service delivery processes. Effectiveness, on the other hand, focuses on the achievement of substantive policy goals and the generation of outcomes that improve societal welfare. An institution may be efficient in executing procedures but ineffective if those procedures do not contribute meaningfully to public objectives. Conversely, an institution may pursue worthy goals but fail to achieve them if resources are poorly managed. This dual perspective highlights the necessity of balancing cost-consciousness with outcome-orientation in public administration.

In Nigeria's public sector, challenges related to inefficiency and ineffectiveness often manifest in prolonged processing times, duplication of functions, weak coordination among agencies, and limited impact of public programmes. These challenges are frequently linked to deficiencies in leadership, accountability, and institutional capacity. Conceptually, efficiency and

effectiveness are therefore shaped not only by technical systems and procedures but also by governance quality, organisational culture, and the external political environment. Where institutions operate under clear mandates, stable policies, and supportive leadership, they are more likely to achieve both efficiency and effectiveness. Where political interference, weak oversight, and fragmented authority prevail, performance deteriorates.

By framing efficiency and effectiveness as core dimensions of institutional performance, this study positions them as critical outcome indicators for assessing the productivity of Nigeria's public sector. Understanding how these constructs are influenced by political leadership and governance practices provides a robust basis for explaining variations in institutional outcomes and for designing reforms aimed at strengthening public sector performance.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Transformational Leadership Theory, Principal-Agent Theory, and New Institutional Theory. However, New Institutional Theory was adopted as the theoretical framework, which was propounded by Meyer and Rowan in 1977. The theory was based on the fundamental assumption that organisational behaviour and performance were shaped not only by technical efficiency but also by institutionalised rules, norms, and cultural beliefs that defined appropriate conduct within a given environment. New Institutional Theory posited that organisations conformed to prevailing institutional pressures in order to gain legitimacy, stability, and access to resources. These pressures emanated from political authorities, regulatory agencies, professional bodies, and societal expectations. In the context of public sector institutions, the theory suggested that political leadership influenced organisational structures, procedures, and practices by determining the formal rules and informal norms that guided administrative behaviour. Critics of New Institutional Theory argued that it overemphasised conformity and stability while underplaying the capacity of organisational actors to exercise agency, innovate, and

pursue performance-oriented change. Others contended that the theory focused more on explaining why institutions looked similar than on explaining variations in productivity and effectiveness across organisations. Nevertheless, the theory remained relevant to this study because it provided a useful lens for understanding how political leadership shaped institutional rules and norms that, in turn, influenced productivity in Nigeria's public sector.

The study was further guided by Transformational Leadership Theory, which was propounded by Burns in 1978 and later expanded by Bass in 1985. The basic assumption of the theory was that leaders who inspired, motivated, and intellectually stimulated followers were more likely to achieve superior organisational outcomes than those who relied solely on transactional exchanges. Transformational leaders were believed to articulate a compelling vision, demonstrate ethical conduct, and foster commitment to collective goals. The theory suggested that leadership style directly affected employee morale, organisational culture, and performance. Critics of Transformational Leadership Theory argued that the concept was overly normative and difficult to measure empirically, while others noted that it paid limited attention to structural and institutional constraints that might restrict leaders' ability to effect change. Despite these criticisms, the theory was applicable to this study because it helped to explain how the quality of political leadership, in terms of vision, integrity, and motivation, could influence the productivity of public sector institutions in Nigeria.

In addition, the study drew support from Principal-Agent Theory, which was developed by Jensen and Meckling in 1976. The theory assumed that relationships in organisations involved principals who delegated authority and agents who carried out tasks on their behalf, often under conditions of information asymmetry and divergent interests. The theory argued that without effective monitoring and incentive mechanisms, agents might pursue personal interests at the expense of organisational goals. Critics of Principal-Agent Theory contended that it was overly economic and assumed

self-interested behaviour, while neglecting social norms, trust, and intrinsic motivation. Nonetheless, the theory was relevant to this study because it explained how political leaders, as principals, influenced institutional productivity through oversight, incentives, and accountability mechanisms directed at public administrators. Taken together, these theories provided a robust framework for analysing the nexus between political leadership and institutional productivity in Nigeria's public sector.

2.3 Empirical Review

Okotie and Andrew (2021) examined how levels of transparency influenced public procurement practices in the Nigerian Civil Service. A quantitative research design was adopted; primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to procurement officers, and multiple regression analysis was used to test relationships between transparency and procurement outcomes. Findings revealed that higher transparency levels were significantly associated with improved procurement practices and reduced irregularities in the civil service, indicating that leadership behaviours advocating transparency enhanced process integrity.

Owotemu, Bernardi and Ayo-Soyemi (2024) investigated the impact of different leadership strategies and typologies on organisational performance in Nigeria's public sector. A survey research design was adopted; data were collected using structured questionnaires from employees across 34 public institutions in Abuja, and correlation and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Findings revealed that autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles were negatively correlated with organisational performance, while transparency and collaborative leadership were linked to improved service delivery outcomes. The study recommended that public sector organisations prioritise transformational and participative leadership approaches and institutionalise collaborative decision-making to enhance performance. NWAPI (2024) assessed leadership and organisational performance at the Abia State Oil Producing Area Development Commission (ASOPADEC). A descriptive

survey research design was adopted; questionnaires were administered to senior and managerial staff, and simple percentage analysis was employed to interpret the responses. Findings revealed significant relationships between democratic leadership style and employee discipline, as well as between autocratic style and organisational retention, pointing to the influence of leadership practices on employee behaviour and organisational outcomes.

Ibiye (2025) analysed the relationship between public personnel management practices and employee productivity within the Rivers State Local Government Service Commission (LGSC). A survey research design was adopted; data were collected through structured questionnaires from LGSC staff, and descriptive statistics were applied for analysis. Findings revealed that ineffective personnel management practices often shaped by politically influenced appointment and reward systems led to decreased motivation, absenteeism, and turnover, undermining productivity and service delivery. The study recommended that political and administrative leaders strengthen merit-based human resource procedures, enhance training and development, and insulate personnel decisions from political interference to foster productivity improvements.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which was considered appropriate because it enabled the systematic collection of data from a cross-section of public sector employees and facilitated the examination of relationships between political leadership and

institutional productivity in Nigeria's public sector. The design allowed the researcher to obtain first-hand information on perceptions, experiences, and observable practices relating to political leadership and their implications for institutional performance at a single point in time.

The population of the study comprised employees of selected federal public sector institutions in Nigeria, including ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) located in Abuja. These institutions were considered suitable because they represented core administrative structures where political leadership and bureaucratic operations intersect. A population of approximately 2,500 staff was suggested, from which a sample size of 333 respondents was determined using the Yamane (1967) sample size formula. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation of senior, middle-level, and junior staff across the selected institutions.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated through expert review, while reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics, particularly multiple regression analysis, to determine the effect of political leadership on institutional productivity. Statistical analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Political leaders who provide clear policy direction enhance the productivity of public sector institutions

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (SA)	118	41.70
Agree (A)	86	30.39
Undecided (U)	32	11.31
Disagree (D)	27	9.54
Strongly Disagree (SD)	20	7.06
Total	283	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2026

The data from the table shows that 118 respondents representing (41.70%) strongly agreed that political leaders who provide clear policy direction enhance the productivity of public sector institutions, 86 respondents representing (30.39%) strongly agreed that political leaders who provide clear policy direction enhance the productivity of public sector institutions, 32 respondents representing (11.31%) could not ascertain whether

political leaders who provide clear policy direction enhance productivity, 27 respondents representing (9.54%) disagreed, and 20 respondents representing (7.06%) strongly disagreed. This implies that the majority of respondents perceived clear political direction as a major driver of institutional productivity in Nigeria's public sector.

Table 2: Ethical and transparent political leadership improves employee commitment and institutional output

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (SA)	124	43.82
Agree (A)	79	27.92
Undecided (U)	30	10.60
Disagree (D)	28	9.89
Strongly Disagree (SD)	22	7.77
Total	283	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2026

The data from the table shows that 124 respondents representing (43.82%) strongly agreed that ethical and transparent political leadership improves employee commitment and institutional output, 79 respondents representing (27.92%) strongly agreed that ethical and transparent political leadership improves employee commitment and institutional output, 30 respondents

representing (10.60%) could not ascertain whether ethical and transparent political leadership improves institutional output, 28 respondents representing (9.89%) disagreed, and 22 respondents representing (7.77%) strongly disagreed. This indicates strong consensus that ethical political leadership enhances employee morale and institutional performance.

Table 3: Political interference in administrative decisions reduces operational efficiency in public sector institutions

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (SA)	130	45.94
Agree (A)	72	25.44
Undecided (U)	29	10.25
Disagree (D)	30	10.60
Strongly Disagree (SD)	22	7.77
Total	283	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2026

The data from the table shows that 130 respondents representing (45.94%) strongly agreed that political interference in administrative decisions reduces operational efficiency, 72 respondents representing (25.44%) strongly agreed that political interference reduces efficiency, 29 respondents representing

(10.25%) could not ascertain whether political interference reduces efficiency, 30 respondents representing (10.60%) disagreed, and 22 respondents representing (7.77%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that most respondents perceived political interference as a significant constraint on efficient public sector operations.

Table 4: Frequent political influence on personnel matters undermines the effectiveness of public sector organisations

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (SA)	121	42.76
Agree (A)	80	28.27
Undecided (U)	34	12.01
Disagree (D)	27	9.54
Strongly Disagree (SD)	21	7.42
Total	283	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2026

The data from the table shows that 121 respondents representing (42.76%) strongly agreed that frequent political influence on personnel matters undermines the effectiveness of public sector organisations, 80 respondents representing (28.27%) strongly agreed that political influence undermines effectiveness, 34 respondents representing (12.01%) could not ascertain whether political influence undermines effectiveness, 27 respondents representing (9.54%) disagreed, and 21 respondents representing (7.42%) strongly disagreed. This implies that political involvement in personnel decisions is widely perceived as detrimental to institutional effectiveness.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings revealed that political leadership practices played a central role in shaping institutional productivity in Nigeria's public sector. Responses indicated strong agreement that clear policy direction from political leaders enhanced organisational productivity, while ethical and transparent leadership improved employee commitment and institutional output. These findings suggested that when political leaders articulated coherent visions, demonstrated integrity, and upheld accountability, public sector institutions were more likely to function effectively and achieve their mandates. This outcome aligned with empirical evidence which showed that leadership style and governance orientation significantly influenced organisational performance in the Nigerian public sector (Owotemu et al., 2024; Okotie & Andrew, 2021). Similarly, studies by Adegroye (2021) and Nwapi (2024) established that democratic and participatory

leadership practices fostered discipline, motivation, and improved service delivery across public institutions. The present findings therefore reinforced the argument that political leadership quality constituted a critical determinant of institutional productivity, as leadership behaviour shaped organisational culture, staff morale, and alignment between policy goals and administrative actions.

The findings further demonstrated that political interference in administrative and personnel matters undermined the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector institutions. Respondents largely perceived that undue political involvement in operational decisions disrupted established procedures, weakened professionalism, and reduced institutional autonomy. This observation was consistent with empirical studies which reported that politicisation of administrative processes contributed to inefficiency, low morale, and declining service quality in Nigerian public organisations (Ibiye, 2025; Meyer-Sahling & Mikkelsen, 2016). In addition, Rose-Ackerman and Palifka (2016) argued that persistent political intrusion into bureaucratic functions distorted priorities and weakened accountability systems, thereby constraining performance. Collectively, these findings underscored that while political leadership was indispensable for setting direction and providing oversight, excessive political interference eroded the foundations of efficient and effective public administration. Consequently, balancing political authority with respect for administrative professionalism remained essential for enhancing institutional productivity in Nigeria's public sector.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that political leadership exerted a significant influence on institutional productivity in Nigeria's public sector. Effective leadership practices, characterised by clear policy direction, ethical conduct, and transparency, enhanced organisational performance and employee commitment. Conversely, excessive political interference in administrative and personnel matters undermined efficiency and effectiveness. These outcomes demonstrated that while political leadership remained essential for governance and oversight, its quality and orientation determined whether public institutions achieved productivity or experienced persistent underperformance.

Based on the findings, the study recommends:

- i. Government should strengthen ethical and transformational leadership development programmes for political office holders to promote transparency, accountability, and strategic policy direction across public sector institutions.
- ii. Legal and institutional safeguards should be reinforced to limit undue political interference in administrative and personnel decisions, thereby protecting bureaucratic autonomy and professionalism.

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