

The role of leadership in Nigeria development trajectory, 1999-2023

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the role of leadership role in Nigeria development trajectory from 1999 to 2023. This study adopted the empirical, survey and descriptive approach. This study made use of both primary sources and secondary sources of data. The primary source was obtained from a structured questionnaire. While the secondary source were obtained from the office of federal Civil service commission, National Bureau of Statistics, and Central Bank of Nigeria. Findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between leadership role and Nigeria Development trajectory from 1999 to 2023, that eight critical criteria are used in recruitment and promotion into leadership role in Nigeria Public service namely sex, age, religion, state of origin, medical fitness, character, minimum qualification, free criminal record and examination. Of the eight criteria pillars, four items were consider critical in promotion into leadership role in Nigeria public service namely Sex, Age, Religion and State of origin popularly refer to as federal character policy and that implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle in leadership role will influence Nigeria development trajectory. The study recommends the implementation of legal frameworks that would eliminate mediocrity and enforce meritocracy in selection and appointment into leadership role in Nigeria Public Service Commission.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is at the heart of public sector governance, and it is vital to the overall economic development of a nation as well as the wellbeing of the citizens. According to Lawal and Tobi (2006), the quality of leadership can affect all facets of development in any country. Baets (2011) opined that there is a shortage of leadership strategy required for effective public governance in Africa, and Ojo (2012) findings draw a relationship between leadership crisis and political instability in Nigeria. Ngowi (2009) studied the effect of political leadership on economic development in Tanzania and concluded that leadership is the determining factor that has shaped the nature and trajectory of economic development in that country. The lack of leadership and endemic bureaucratic corruption that have characterised public sector governance since independence in 1960 have been blamed for the slow pace of development in key sectors of the Nigerian economy, particularly in the public sector (Lawal and Tobi, 2006; Ogbeide, 2012). Government exists to meet the needs of the public, and good governance exists to ensure that these needs are met effectively, efficiently and equitably (Deloitte Global Series, 2012). This means that governance has much to do with how authority is exercised in government institutions and traditions, which includes the process of establishing government and holding it accountable (Davis, 2011). The United Nations (2007) defined governance as the way in which society establishes and manages the rules that guide policy-making and implementation. Toikka (2011) stated that public governance is about the conduct of governments at all levels to deliver the best possible benefits to their citizens. Therefore, governance can be good or bad depending on the manner and mode of government (Rotberg, 2005). Lawal and Tobi (2006) emphasized that good governance should focus on the welfare of the people and should be oriented towards the provision of good infrastructure that will promote the happiness of the citizens. Oyedele (2012) argued that the success or failure of a leader or government is measured by the level and nature of the leaders who work with him to achieve the objectives of administrative policy. Good and effective public governance contributes to strengthening democracy, promoting economic prosperity and social cohesion and reducing poverty (United Nations, 2007).

According to Dike (2000), good leadership is essential to the achievement of development in a given political system. In an increasingly changing and globalized world, leadership is the most visible aspect of management with its potential to transform the workforce into a willing and winning team, with the right relationships to realize the corporate goals collectively determined in the society. Only good leadership can pull Nigeria back from the brink of collapse, hence the essence of leadership is to create an environment in which individuals consistently give their best. A close look at the attitude and behavior of leaders in postcolonial Nigeria shows that

many civilian and military leaders were mired in the pursuit of selfish personal goals at the expense of broader national interests or needs. In other words, they were "instrumental" leaders or what David Apter called "consummatory" leaders. The myriad of challenges confronting Nigeria's development trajectory are linked to a singular factor and that is the role of leadership. The lack of selfless, non-corrupt and committed leaders has contributed immensely to the socio-political and economic challenges Nigeria is facing today. Thus, all the indicators of underdevelopment in Nigeria are due to the inability of our leaders to strategically mobilize our resources for the political and socio-economic progress of our nation and people.

Nigeria's development trajectory has suffered a setback since independence due to the choice of leadership. The greatest enemy to Nigeria's economic development is the choice of leadership role. For instance, in the second republic, Nigeria elected President Shehu Shagari as its leader against President Obafemi Awolowo who possesses leadership qualities that would have put Nigeria on the path to greatness. The Federal Government of Nigeria traded the choice of Nigerian leadership on the basis of regional politics which gave birth to a politics called the Federal Character Policy. Again in the fourth republic, when Nigeria returned to democracy, President Olusegun Obasanjo traded leadership role on the altar of regional politics rather than meritocracy, pragmatism and the principle of honesty. He gave power to President Musa Yaradua against several qualified candidates who expressed interest namely Donald Duke of Cross River State, Peter Odili of River State and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, a former Vice President of Nigeria. But when President Musa Yaradua came to power with the aim of showing his power and the independence of his government administration from his predecessor, he revoked majority of the policies put in place by his predecessor to advance Nigeria's development trajectory. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the role of leadership role in Nigeria's development trajectory from 1999 to 2023.

1.1 Statement of Problems of the Study

People in leadership role in Nigeria do not see government administration as a continuum. Thus, every leader comes with a new agenda without ensuring alignment with previous administration agenda. In 2015, Nigeria made a choice of electing a leadership role by quota system (region politics) rather than meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle and that decision has impaired Nigeria development trajectory goals. The greatest problem of Nigeria development trajectory is leadership role. Addressing the criteria for leadership role in Nigeria public service is critical to Nigeria development strides. Promotion into leadership role in Nigeria civil service is suffering leadership innovation as a result of quota system and federal

character commission principle applied to the process of promotion and recruitment in Nigeria Public Service. Most literature on leadership focused on leadership style and organizational performance, leadership and corruption in Nigeria Public Service, leadership crisis and nation building, leadership and governance of infrastructure development, leadership and public sector administration in Nigeria, leadership management and succession planning in Nigeria public service, leadership challenges & perspectives in Nigeria e.t.c, with little or no research on leadership role and Nigeria development trajectory from historical data. In the light of the above, this study is set out to find out the role of leadership role in Nigeria development trajectory from 1999 to 2023.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study is aimed at analyzing the role of leadership role in Nigeria development trajectory from 1999 to 2023. Other objectives are as follows;

- Examine the relationship between leadership role and Nigeria Development trajectory from 1999 to 2023.
- Discover the criteria for promotion into leadership role in Nigeria civil service from 1999 to 2023.
- Find out whether implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle in leadership role will influence Nigeria development trajectory.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research question were sought so as to provide solutions to the problems of the study.

- Is there a significant relationship between leadership role and Nigeria Development trajectory from 1999 to 2023?
- What are the criteria for promotion into leadership role in Nigeria civil service from 1999 to 2023?
- Will Implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle in leadership role influence Nigeria development trajectory?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to help address the problems of the study.

H1: There is a significant relationship between leadership role and Nigeria Development trajectory from 1999 to 2023

H2: Implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle in leadership role will influence Nigeria development trajectory.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Leadership Role

Leadership involves the use of power, which is “the ability of one person to influence the behavior of another. Exercising power or influence involves “making things happen” through other people. Leadership involves the ability to inspire others to work toward a common goal. Leadership is therefore essential in any organization or community because a manager must use it to gain the cooperation of his or her subordinates. With the cooperation of subordinates, decisions can be converted into actions and results achieved. Craig Johnson (2009) defines leadership as “the exercise of influence in a group setting... the individuals who have the greatest impact on the group or organization. Leaders are change agents engaged in promoting the needs, wants, and goals...”. Oshionebo and Ariyo (2007) argue that leadership is the exercise of influence within a group of people so that the collective goals of that group are achieved and in an optimal manner. This “group” can be the whole world, a country or a part of it, or a club, and any other similar group. According to Munroe (1984), “leadership is like beauty, it is difficult to define but you know it when you see it”. Furthermore, leaders, according to him, are “ordinary people who accept or are placed in extraordinary circumstances that bring out their latent potential, producing a character that inspires the confidence of others”.

Myles Munroe (2009), gives an insightful meaning of leadership as “the ability to influence others through inspiration motivated by a passion, generated by a vision, produced by a conviction ignited by a purpose”. Adepoju (1998) examined leadership in two ways, namely: (a) as an organizational position as well as (b) as a process of influence. He further explained that leadership as an organizational position speaks of a person who has been placed in a leadership or decision-making role. The second view emphasizes that a leader inspires others to follow him. This gives an idea of the dynamics of leadership as a means of influencing others towards the achievement of organizational goals.

2.2 Qualities of a Good Leader

Researchers and practitioners have identified certain qualities that a leader should or must possess to help him lead effectively. Based on this, the article identifies the following fundamental qualities of a leader:

- **Honesty:** A good leader must be free from deception and must be honest and sincere. When leaders rise above ethical divides and make honesty their watchword and a key value, it becomes easier to influence people as they will willingly follow or obey.
- **Integrity:** Many authors attribute integrity to competence and of course, it is essential but it is not enough. It is about having strong moral principles. Lack of integrity destroys competence. Integrity supports competence. A leader must not allow his personal feelings or emotions to override his integrity.
- **Vision:** To be an effective leader, you must have a clear vision. That is, a leader must be aware of what is and have the ability to think or plan for the future with an imaginative picture of what should be. There is a proverbial saying that goes, “Where there is no vision, the people perish...” It is the leader’s responsibility to capture the vision and communicate it to his followers, as well as influence, motivate and guide others to achieve the shared vision.
- **Communication:** This involves leaders sharing their vision with their followers. The leader may have a clear knowledge of what he wants to accomplish (vision), but explaining or sharing this vision to the followers will give them a sense of ownership and they will be driven towards achieving the common goals. Communication connects the leader and the followers, which gives the followers a sense of ownership. Followers without a sense of belonging are as good as adversaries. Effective communication also involves listening. It is said that Abraham Lincoln’s ability to listen to people was one of the reasons he was considered one of the great American presidents.
- **Self-confidence:** It is built through experience. Leaders who lack self-confidence cannot act proactively and cannot initiate or inspire confidence in their subordinates or followers (see Mohammed, 2004).

2.3 National Development

Development is a complex concept that has varied interpretations and applications. For a nation, development refers to the positive transformation of all facets of human activity. It refers to progress in the economic, social, political, cultural and environmental contexts of the nation’s activities. The level of development of a country is based on the perceived role, leadership and relevance of the state, which has been the subject of much debate over the years and evolves from time to time. Fundamentally, national development refers to the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens. Measures of improvement can be material, such as an increase in gross domestic product, or social, such as literacy rates and the availability of health care and other social amenities. Governments develop national development plans and policies based on the perceived needs of their citizens. Many of these focus on poverty reduction, affordable and available housing and community development. Whatever the view, the central issue remains that the goal of any national development is to improve the lives of the citizens in question in the context of a growing economy and with an emphasis on the good of the community as a whole. National development is therefore the ability of a country or countries to improve the social well-being of the population, for example by providing social amenities such as quality education, clean water, electricity, transport infrastructure, medical care, etc.

2.4 Federal Character

The concept of federal character or quota system has been part of the Nigerian Constitution since 1979. It is intended to ensure that candidates selected for positions in federal civil service organizations reflect the diversity of the nation in terms of language, ethnicity, religion and geography (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979). This explicitly states in section 14 subsection 3 of the 1979 constitution that the composition of the government of the federation or any agency thereof and the conduct of its affairs shall be conducted in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity...or any other sectoral group within that government or any agency thereof. Notably, the recruitment of civil servants as well as military and paramilitary personnel using the principles of federal character, otherwise known as quota system, appears quite challenging as there are often difficulties associated with maintaining the balance between meritocracy and quota system. This compels public institutions to face challenges of discipline, morale, general efficiency, production and service delivery in their organizations, which has negative effects on their existence. The civil service is at the heart of the Nigerian public administration structure as it is the primary tool used by the government, whether military or civil administration, to manage the growth

of the public sector (Olu-Adeyemi, 2009). In particular, civil servants are required by law and professional orientation to be apolitical and loyal to the government of the day (Anazodo, Okoye and Chukwuemeka 2012; Kolawole 2008). The apolitical nature of civil servants has enabled them to work until retirement age without worrying about political notions or the constant turnover of the administration.

2.5 Meritocracy, Pragmatism and Honesty

According to Kishore (2024), meritocracy is about choosing the best people to lead a business or organization, a society or a country. Since Singapore's independence in 1965, Lee Kuan Yew (LKY) has ensured that only the best are selected to serve in government and we have selected the best possible people to hold leadership positions in academia and administration. Pragmatism refers to the willingness to experiment and adopt new ideas, even if they go against conventional wisdom. Pragmatism is about the willingness to learn best practices from any source anywhere in the world. Goh Keng Swee told him, "Kishore, whatever problem Singapore faces, someone somewhere has faced it before. Let's see how they solved it. Then we can adapt their solution for Singapore." Honesty refers to the importance of maintaining sincerity, high ethical standards and integrity in public life and business dealings. Honesty is always the most difficult principle to implement. According to Kishore in his 1990 essay, "The Ten Commandments for Developing Countries in the 1990s," he wrote: "You will recognize that corruption is the main cause of development failures." Singapore's three founding fathers, Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng Swee and S. Rajaratnam, were exceptionally incorruptible. So they set very high standards of probity that citizens were all expected to uphold.

2.6 Transformational Leadership Theory

This article adopts the theories of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership refers to leaders who seek to create ideas and new perspectives, to create a new path of growth and prosperity on behalf of an organization. By developing loyalty, passion and commitment among managers and staff, they mobilize organizational members to make fundamental changes to the foundations and base of the organization in order to be prepared and acquire the necessary capabilities to evolve in new directions and achieve higher ideal performance peaks (Mirkamali et al., 2014, p. 23). The transformational leader constantly searches for potential motivations in his followers and aims to draw their attention to higher needs and the conversion of individual interests into collective interests. According to Bass and Avolio, transformational leadership is a conscious, moral, and spiritual process that provides development models for the organization through reliable and egalitarian leadership. Transformational leaders explain the future prospects of the organization and provide the model consistent with the prospects, improve the acceptance of the group goals, provide a wide range of support to the individuals in the organization and encourage them to pursue the goals of the organization (Mortazavi & Nikkar, 2014, p105). At present, the processes of change and the diversity of instruments used in our daily lives are increasing day by day. Changes are happening so fast that no human being, even in the last century, could have anticipated them. Global competition and business growth in the East and West, in developed and developing countries, have created an extremely unstable environment for all companies. To cope with this uncertain environment and continuous changes, leaders are indispensable. The world needs transformational leaders. Transformational leadership actions enable organizations to improve their performance in a turbulent and unpredictable environment. When transformational leadership components complement other leadership actions, they can become a source of competitive advantage for organizations. Using this competitive advantage can be a significant aid in strategic competition and achieving higher returns in the short and long term. In fact, without effective transformational leadership, the likelihood that the organization will be able to face global economic challenges, in order to achieve superior and satisfactory performance, will be reduced (Eskandari, 2014, p. 124).

2.7 Leadership Role and Nigeria Development Trajectory

Leadership is the gateway to national development. This is because development aims at reducing poverty, creating wealth and distributing it equitably, providing nutrition and health, housing and ancillary services, social security and welfare (Agaboh, 2010). It involves capacity building to advance material and human capital for efficient production of goods and services that will improve the quality of life to the extent that a free democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation is built (Agba et al, 2010; Akanji and Akosile, 2001). It is therefore clear that all these elements inherent in development can never be achieved or realized without leadership. It is a leader who will develop a network of activities across the people and set a direction through vision

creation, goal setting, strategy formulation, people mobilization, change management, value promotion, development of others, strategic problem solving and decision making (Oginni, 2011). Integrity in leadership is paramount to national development in order to bring about maximum improvement in the material, social, cultural and political well-being of the society.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the empirical, survey and descriptive approach. The population for this study consists of staff of Federal Civil Service Commission, Abuja. A sample size of 300 respondents was randomly selected from among employees of Federal Civil Service Commission, Abuja to participate in this study. Both primary and secondary data were employed for this study. Secondary data were sourced from the office of Federal Civil Service Commission, National Bureau of Statistics and the Central Bank of Nigeria. Primary data were sourced through a structure questionnaire titled leadership role and Nigeria development trajectory. Secondary data for this study were sourced using historical data obtained from the office of the Federal Civil Service Commission, National Bureau of Statistics and the Central Bank of Nigeria drawing on data from Nigeria foreign direct investment from 1999-2023. Data were presented in tables and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. T-test is used to analysis the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable.

4. RESULT AND DATA ANALYSIS

A cross examination of leadership role on Nigeria development trajectory was drawn from FDI attraction to Nigeria from 1999 to 2023.

Table 4.1: Leadership and Nigeria Development Trajectory 1999-2023

Leader	Senate	FDI INFLOWS
Obasanjo	1999	\$1.00 B
	2000	\$1.14B
	2001	\$1.19B
	2002	\$1.87B
Obasanjo	2003	\$2.01B
	2004	\$1.87B
	2005	\$4.98B
	2006	\$4.85B
Yaradua	2007	\$6.04B
	2008	\$8.19B
	2009	\$8.56B
Jonathan	2010	\$6.03B
Jonathan	2011	\$8.84B
	2012	\$7.07B
	2013	\$5.56B
	2014	\$4.69B
Buhari	2015	\$3.06B
	2016	\$3.45B
	2017	\$2.41B
	2018	\$0.78B
Buhari	2019	\$2.31B
	2020	\$2.39B
	2021	\$3.31B
	2022	\$-0.19B
	2023	\$1.87B

Source: Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, 2024

Table 4.1 shows how Nigeria leaders influence foreign direct investment into Nigeria economy between 1999-2023. The table above illustrate the historical and current realities of Nigeria development trajectory from 1999-2023. It indicates that there was a significant growth of Nigeria foreign direct investment during the transition from military government to civilian government. For instance, before transition to democracy Nigeria foreign direct investment in 1998 was N300 Million Dollar only. On the return to democracy it took a quantum leap from N300 Million Dollar to one billion dollar in 1999. During President Olusegun Obasanjo reign we saw Nigeria Foreign Direct Investment attraction increasing year to year. It moved from one Billion dollar in 1999 to 4.85 Billion Dollar in 2026. When President Musa Yaradua took over government we saw Nigeria foreign direct investment attraction increase from 4.85 Billion dollar to 6.04 Billion dollar in 2007 and in 2008 we saw an increase in Nigeria foreign direct investment to 8.19 Billion dollar. But when Buhari took over leadership of Nigeria, we have seen Nigeria foreign direct investment attraction suffering decrease and fluctuations. We saw Nigeria foreign direct investment attraction recording the lowest during Buhari administration leadership role. For instance, in 2018 Nigeria foreign direct investment recorded 0.78 Billion dollar and in 2022 it recorded 190 Million Dollar, an attraction that is less than the figures obtained during the military reign in Nigeria. A testimonial of the role of leadership on a nation development trajectory was seen in the global stage when within 72 hours of President

Donald Trump inauguration as the 47th President of United States of America, Saudi Arabia announced investment of \$600 Billion Dollar into America economy and Trump announced \$500 Billion Dollar Artificial Intelligence Investment into America economy. Thus, the inauguration of Donald Trump has attracted \$1.1 Trillion Dollar to America economy within 72 hours. The significance of leadership role in Nations development trajectory cannot be underscore.

Table 4.2: Criteria for promotion into leadership role in Civil Service, 1999-2023

Appointment Nature	Appointment Types	Criteria
By letter written by the Director of the Public Service Commission	As trainee or pupil	Sex
	On probation in a pensionable post	Age
By formal agreement between the officer and the government or its appointed agents.	On non-pensionable contract to a non-pensionable post or against a pensionable post	Religion
	On temporary basis	State of Origin
		Medical Fitness
		Minimum Qualification
		Character
	Free Criminal Record	
	Examination	

Source: Compiled (Federal Civil Service Commission Office, 2024)

Table 4.2 provides us with data on the criteria for promotion into leadership role in Nigeria civil service from 1999 to 2023. The data above showed eight critical criteria used in recruitment and promotion into leadership role in Nigeria Public service namely sex, age, religion, state of origin, medical fitness, character, minimum qualification, free criminal record and examination. Of the eight criteria pillars, four items were consider critical in promotion into leadership role in Nigeria pubic service namely Sex, Age, Religion and State of origin. It is those four items that is refer to as the federal character policy. This four items are consider important than any other criteria. The issue of meritocracy is traded for federal character policy in appointment of persons into leadership role in Nigeria public service. This manifested as a result of consistent interference of political office holders in the issue of recruitment. Whenever there is recruitment taking place, politicians do interfere and make sure that their candidates scaled through irrespective of whether they are qualified or not. This eventually leads to recruiting staff that are in most cases incompetent. It is however, a well known fact that for any organization to achieve its objectives it must have people with proven competence. It was on the realization of the need for competence in organizations that made Max Weber the greatest exponent of bureaucracy to state that candidates for positions in organizations must be selected on the basis of technical qualifications. However, in the case of Nigeria, recruitment and selection are based purely on sentimental reasons. The principle of federal character has also compounded the problem, since it has legalized nepotism and segregation in employment in the form of ethnic balancing. The principle of federal character is a principle saddled with the responsibility of given equal opportunity to all the six geopolitical zones in terms of employment into the federal civil service. But the problem is that some of the zones are backward in terms of paper qualification and as such their vacancies cannot be properly filled fully. Again, regarding this issue, since all the geo-political zones have representation in the commission, in most cases those representatives intrude candidates from their respective zones irrespective of their qualification, this is where the issue of ethnicity and favoritism comes in and this has a serious drawback as the outcome of those employed through this means will not yield any fruitful result. Incompetency of staff in Nigeria has resulted to gross inefficiency. It is therefore not surprising that staff of the Nigerian Public Service have not been able to over the years deliver effective service. This finding is in agreement with Omisore & Okofu (2014) report findings that 40.8% of respondents who participated in the study are of the view that recruitment and selection into the Public Service of Nigeria are guided by the Federal Character Principle while 30% are of the opinion that the Federal Character Principle is not applied in recruitment and selection. The remaining 29.2% are not used while the balance are not sure whether or not the principle is applied in employment purposes. Also, 34.2% agree that training and professionalism are guiding principles in employment purposes in the Public Service while 41.6% are of the opinion that training and professionalism are not used as guides when recruitment exercises are being embarked upon in the Public Service. The findings is further supported by Omisore & Okofu (2014) assertion that the indigenization of the public service that accompanied independence in the 1960s, which was coated with the

perpetuated problems of sectionalism, nepotism, tribalism and religion, could be traced from the rationalization and popular purges which gave birth to competitions among ethnic groups in the country who want to favour their ethnic cleavages. Ever since then, these issues became and remain critical and never left the Nigerian Public Service.

Table 4.3: Meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle and Nigeria Development

Variable	Options	Frequency (N =179)	Percentage (%)
Will Implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle in leadership role influence Nigeria development trajectory	SA	48	18.97%
	A	200	79.05%
	D	3	1.19%
	SD	2	0.79%
	Total	253	100

Source: Field Study (2024)

Table 4.3 shows that majority of the respondents supported the opinion that implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle in leadership role will influence Nigeria development trajectory. 98.02% of the respondents support the opinion that implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle in leadership role will influence Nigeria development trajectory. While 1.98% disagree with the view that implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle in leadership role will influence Nigeria development trajectory. This finding is in line with Ume (2022) assertion that the Federal Character Commission was established to address the paradox that the British colonial master had created by bringing together individuals from various sociocultural backgrounds. Regrettably, by endorsing mediocrity above meritocracy, it has so far caused additional issues. It is unfair and inappropriate to adhere to the Federal Character Principle in a circumstance when merit is sacrificed for state of origin. The Commission also aims to promote unity among all Nigerians, but if, in the name of the Federal Character Principle and promotion of unity, a less qualified and less experienced person is given authority over a more qualified and experienced person, it will actually increase state loyalty and undermine national unity. This finding was further supported by Oyovbaire cited in Akinwale, (2014) states that the Federal Character Principle has made meritocracy impotent, worthless, and unwelcome and encouraged mediocrity in positions of authority. This, places the country at a disadvantage position, as it results in underdevelopment, a divided society, low productivity, corruption, and bad governance.

4.1 Test of Hypotheses

Ho: There is no significant relationship between leadership role and Nigeria Development trajectory from 1999 to 2023.

Table 4.4: T- Test of the relationship between leadership role and Nigeria development trajectory

Variable	N	X	SD	DF	(t)-cal	(t)-table
Leadership Role	3	24	8.2	253	9.33	1.96
Nigeria Development Trajectory	3	18	6.6			

Source: Field Study (2024)

Table 4.4 shows the relationship between leadership role and Nigeria Development trajectory from 1999 to 2023. The result obtained from the analysis shows that the value of (t)-calculated of 9.333 is greater than the (t)-table value of 1.960. Hence the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. Hence it is concluded there is a significant relationship between leadership role and Nigeria Development trajectory from 1999 to 2023. The findings above is consistent with Akanji & Akosile (2001) report that It is crystal clear that all the factors of development can never be achieved or brought to reality without leadership. Further supported by Oginni (2011) assertion that It is a leader that will develop network of activities through the people and set direction through creation of vision, goal setting, formulate strategy, mobilise people, manage change, value promotion, develop other people, strategic problem solving and decision making. Leadership integrity is paramount to the national development to usher in maximum improvement in material, social, cultural and political well being of society.

Hypothesis Two:

Ho: Implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty (MPH) principle in leadership role will not influence Nigeria development trajectory.

Table 4.5: T- Test of the implementation of MPH principle in leadership role in Nigeria

Variable	N	X	SD	DF	(t)-cal	(t)-table
Singapore MPH principle	3	19	4.5	253		
Nigeria Development Trajectory	3	22	3.7		7.32	1.96

Source: Field Study (2024)

The result in table 4.5 shows respondents view on whether the implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle in leadership role will influence Nigeria development trajectory. The result obtained from the analysis shows that the value of (t)-calculated of 7.317 is greater than the (t)-table value of 1.960. Hence the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Thus it is concluded that the implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle in leadership role will influence Nigeria development trajectory. This finding is consistent with Agba, Agba, Ettah, Enang & Ata-Agboni (2023) findings report assertion that the principle of meritocracy emphasizes the need to base appointments of persons into public and political offices on the grounds of merit, competence, qualification, integrity, and ability to deliver assigned tasks. This has been absent in the conduct of government business. Public managers of the country's affairs need to cultivate the culture of meritocracy. Awards of contracts, public procurements, and handling official matters should be based on the merit of cases. It is important that the political processes that produces political appointees should be transparent and tailored to produce competent personnel who have the mind to serve and lead for the good of the masses.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study analyzed the role of leadership role in Nigeria development trajectory from 1999 to 2023. Findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between leadership role and Nigeria Development trajectory from 1999 to 2023, that eight critical criteria are used in recruitment and promotion into leadership role in Federal Civil Service Commission namely sex, age, religion, state of origin, medical fitness, character, minimum qualification, free criminal record and examination. Of the eight criteria pillars, four items were consider critical in promotion into leadership role in Nigeria pubic service namely Sex, Age, Religion and State of origin popularly refer to as federal character policy and that implementation of Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle in leadership role will influence Nigeria development trajectory. This paper has given rise to the following recommendations.

- There should be an implementation of legal frameworks that would eliminate mediocrity and enforce meritocracy in selection and appointment into leadership role in Federal Civil Service Commission.
- Political office holders and other top government functionaries should minimize or stop constant interference in the issue of recruitment and selection of staff in the public service.
- Finally, there is a need to replace the federal character policy with Singapore meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty principle.

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