wawasan
JURNAL ILMIAH AGAMA DAN SOSIAL BUDAYA

Religion and Public Administration in Nigeria: A Mixed-Methods Analysis from the Perspective of Religious Pluralism

Tochukwu S. Ezeudu [1*], Yahaya Saadu [2]

[1] Department of Public Administration Federal University Gusau, Nigeria; e-mail: tochukwu.ezeudu@yahoo.com
[2] Department of Public Administration Federal University Gusau, Nigeria; e-mail: dansaa2@yahoo.com
* Correspondence

Received: 2025-01-15; Accepted: 2025-06-17; Published: 2025-06-30

Abstract: Religion is deeply embedded in Nigeria's social and political life, and it routinely shapes governance by influencing policy-making, administrative practice, and public trust. In a religiously plural context where the boundaries of state neutrality are frequently contested, religious influence can be ambivalent: it may support ethical public service while also intensifying perceptions of partiality and generating tension within institutions. Drawing on Peter L. Berger's theory of religious pluralism, this article examines how religious beliefs, identities, and religious actors affect public administration in Nigeria. Employing a mixed-methods design, the study integrates qualitative evidence from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with quantitative analysis of survey data from public officials across three religiously diverse regions. The findings indicate that religious affiliation significantly shapes perceptions of policy initiatives and levels of trust in government institutions, whilst religious leaders often function as intermediaries or gatekeepers within policy processes. Trust in government is positively associated with religious identity, occupational status within the public sector, and age, whereas gender shows limited explanatory power, alongside persistent concerns regarding religious favouritism in administrative procedures. This study contributes an empirically grounded account of religion's procedural effects on Nigerian public administration and advances Berger's pluralism as an applied analytical lens that links claims of ethical governance to observable patterns of trust and perceived bias, with implications for inclusive policy frameworks, interfaith engagement, and professional ethics training for public officials.

Keywords: Policy-making; Public Administration; Religion; Religious Bias; Trust in Government.

Abstrak: Agama telah tertanam kuat dalam kehidupan sosial dan politik Nigeria, dan secara rutin membentuk tata kelola pemerintahan dengan memengaruhi proses pembuatan kebijakan, praktik administrasi, serta kepercayaan publik. Dalam konteks pluralisme agama di mana batas-batas netralitas negara sering kali diperdebatkan, pengaruh agama dapat bersifat ambigu: di satu sisi dapat mendukung pelayanan publik yang etis, namun di sisi lain juga dapat memperkuat persepsi tentang keberpihakan serta menimbulkan ketegangan di dalam lembaga-lembaga. Dengan mengacu pada teori pluralisme agama karya Peter L. Berger, artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana keyakinan agama, identitas, dan aktor-aktor agama memengaruhi administrasi publik di Nigeria. Menggunakan desain metode campuran, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan bukti kualitatif dari wawancara semi-terstruktur dan diskusi kelompok terfokus dengan analisis kuantitatif data survei dari pejabat publik di tiga wilayah yang beragam secara agama. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa afiliasi keagamaan secara signifikan membentuk persepsi terhadap inisiatif kebijakan dan tingkat kepercayaan terhadap lembaga pemerintah, sementara pemimpin agama sering berperan sebagai perantara atau penjaga gerbang dalam proses kebijakan. Kepercayaan terhadap pemerintah berkorelasi positif dengan identitas keagamaan, status pekerjaan di sektor publik, dan usia, sedangkan gender menunjukkan daya penjelas yang terbatas, di samping kekhawatiran yang terus-menerus mengenai favoritisme

keagamaan dalam prosedur administratif. Studi ini memberikan gambaran yang didasarkan pada bukti empiris mengenai dampak prosedural agama terhadap administrasi publik Nigeria dan mengemukakan pluralisme Berger sebagai lensa analitis terapan yang menghubungkan klaim tata kelola etis dengan pola kepercayaan yang dapat diamati serta persepsi bias, dengan implikasi bagi kerangka kebijakan inklusif, keterlibatan antaragama, dan pelatihan etika profesional bagi pejabat publik.

Keywords: Pembuatan Kebijakan; Administrasi Publik; Agama; Keterpihakan Agama; Kepercayaan terhadap Pemerintah.

1. Introduction

Religion is an integral aspect of Nigeria's identity, deeply embedded in the nation's cultural, social, and political fabric. Nigeria, often called the "Giant of Africa," is the most populous country, with over 200 million inhabitants. Its population is characterised by a rich tapestry of religious affiliations, predominantly Christianity, Islam, and traditional African religions. This religious diversity is a source of cultural richness and plays a significant role in shaping the country's governance and public administration.

In the Nigerian context, religion transcends the private sphere and permeates public policy, leadership styles, and political processes. Research demonstrates that religion shapes moral and ethical values in government and determines the appointment of officials and the formulation of national policies (Umeanolue, 2020). Religious leaders possess symbolic and political influence; however, their involvement in partisan politics often compromises their role in promoting good governance (Omosor, 2019). Bureaucratic structures and public policies often reflect religious norms (Nweke, 2018), and state actors strategically employ religion as a form of public diplomacy and soft power (Adesina, 2023). Nonetheless, when exploited for political ends, religion can fuel conflict, intensify social tensions, and undermine the quality of governance (Ogbonna & Ufomba, 2020).

Nigeria's relationship between religion and state institutions remains marked by tension, offering ethical direction and contributing to administrative imbalance. Religious fanaticism and radicalism, as evidenced by Boko Haram, have engendered security crises and eroded public trust in state institutions (Nwanaju, 2016). The politicisation of religion has also deepened ethnic and regional divisions, impeding national integration and equitable resource distribution (Onebunne, 2018). In this sense, religion operates as a double-edged sword: it may promote social development or, conversely, obstruct progress when co-opted for political gain (Umeanolue, 2020). Furthermore, constitutional ambiguity regarding secularism has enabled the dominance of particular religions in state affairs, leading to discriminatory policies and inter-religious tensions (Onwutuebe, 2020).

Nigeria's religious landscape, deeply shaped by its colonial legacy and post-independence evolution, continues to influence public administration significantly. During the colonial period, British authorities strategically engaged religious leaders as intermediaries to legitimise their rule and maintain societal order (Falola, 1998). This practice institutionalised religion as a governance instrument, and its legacy remains embedded in contemporary state-religion relations. Religious authorities are still regarded as key political stakeholders whose approval can determine the success or failure of public policy initiatives (Kukah, 1993).

In present-day Nigeria, religion influences public administration across multiple domains, including policy formulation, bureaucratic conduct, and service delivery. Religious considerations often underpin public policies at both national and subnational levels. Sharia law plays a pivotal role in shaping the legal and administrative framework in the predominantly Muslim North, influencing areas such as criminal justice, family law, and social welfare (Ishola, 2024). In contrast, in the Christian-majority South, Christian ethical norms significantly inform public policies, particularly in education, healthcare, and social programmes (Obadare, 2006a). These regionally distinct religious frameworks produce a governance landscape that is both pluralistic and fragmented.

Religious leaders occupy a central position in the political ecology of governance. They function as intermediaries between government actors and communities, often leading peacebuilding efforts and mediating policy controversies. However, their involvement can blur the lines between spiritual leadership and political patronage, especially when administrative decisions prioritise religious interests over collective welfare (Uzodike & Maiangwa, 2012). The challenge lies in navigating this entanglement without compromising institutional impartiality.

Managing religious diversity within the administrative apparatus presents a formidable task. Balancing the competing interests of Nigeria's religious constituencies frequently results in politically motivated compromises that undermine policy coherence. Moreover, latent sectarian tensions may escalate into overt conflicts, disrupting public service provision and weakening trust in governance (Salawu, 2010). These conditions necessitate institutionalising secular governance principles—principles affirming religious freedom while ensuring that public administration remains impartial and inclusive.

This study explores the complex relationship between religion and public administration in Nigeria, aiming to provide an empirically grounded and theoretically robust account of how religious beliefs, institutions, and actors shape governance. It examines how religion influences policy-making, administrative behaviour, and citizens' trust in government institutions to inform governance arrangements that are responsive to religious diversity whilst safeguarding the integrity of the public sector.

This study is grounded in Peter L. Berger's theory of religious pluralism, as articulated in The Sacred Canopy (1967). Berger argues that no single tradition can dominate the public sphere in societies characterised by multiple religious traditions. Governance in such contexts must be inclusive, respectful of religious diversity, and institutionally neutral. Applying this theory to Nigeria, the study explores how administrative structures can manage competing religious demands while maintaining equitable and effective governance.

The existing body of scholarship on religion and governance in Nigeria is extensive, encompassing historical, sociological, and political dimensions. Studies by Afolabi (2015), Nwanaju (2016), and Umeanolue (2020) have highlighted the normative role of religion in shaping ethical standards and influencing administrative conduct. Obadare (2018), for instance, emphasises the rise of Pentecostalism as a force shaping political discourse and power dynamics in the Nigerian state. Afolabi (2015) similarly interrogates the sustainability of religious influence within democratic governance. While these works offer valuable insights, they often lack an integrated framework that captures how religious influence operates within institutional logics of the public sector.

Colonial-era scholarship, including the works of Falola (1998) and Ikime (1980), laid the groundwork for understanding religion's embeddedness in governance. Subsequent research has expanded the discourse, with scholars such as Awajiusuk (2016), Emuze and Obasola (2024), and Kukah (1993) positioning religion as both a moral compass and a driver of institutional practice. Additionally, studies by Adesina (2023), Omosor (2019), and Salawu (2010) illustrate the dual nature of religion, both as a constructive and a disruptive force in public affairs. Scholars such as Oguntola Laguda (2013) and Umeanolue (2020) have further examined religion's role in shaping policy decisions, while others, including Abdussalam and Abukur (2021), Okoh (2023), and Olojo (2017), have analysed the political patronage of religious leaders and ulama.

Research on the governance challenges posed by religious pluralism has also gained prominence. Works by Ele (2019), Adarigho (2023), Idoko (2022), and Ogunleye (2021) discuss the institutional responses to religious heterogeneity, exploring issues of representation, equity, and state legitimacy. For example, Ananti and Madubueze (2014) focus on how religious pluralism affects administrative efficiency and policy bias. Although these studies document the tensions generated by Nigeria's multifaith society, they seldom explore how religious ethics and leadership might be strategically integrated to enhance administrative performance.

This study investigates the influence of religion on Nigerian public administration by examining federal and local government officials and religious leaders involved in policy-making and oversight.

It adopts a mixed-methods design: qualitative evidence was gathered through interviews and focus group discussions, and quantitative evidence through surveys of public officials across three religiously diverse regions. Participants were selected through stratified multistage sampling to enhance representativeness. The qualitative data were analysed thematically using NVivo, whilst the survey data were analysed in SPSS using chi-square and regression techniques to examine associations between religious affiliation, trust in government, and administrative roles. By triangulating these strands, the study offers insight into religion's role in governance and supports the development of a more inclusive public administration model that acknowledges religious diversity without compromising institutional impartiality and effectiveness.

2. Religion and Public Administration in Nigeria

This section presents the study's core findings, organised thematically based on qualitative and quantitative data. The analysis explores four critical areas through which religion interacts with public administration in Nigeria: the influence of religion on policy-making, religious conflict in governance, public perceptions of religious bias, and the integration of religion in promoting ethical conduct among public officials.

Qualitative Analysis

The thematic analysis of qualitative data reveals several critical insights into the influence of religion on public administration in Nigeria. The themes and sub-themes comprehensively account for the intricate relationship between religious beliefs and governance. Each is discussed as follows:

1. Influence of Religion on Policy

There are two forms of religious influence on public policy in Nigeria: faith-based policies and religious leaders' involvement.

The analysis of religion-based policy indicates that religious beliefs significantly shape public policies in Nigeria. For instance, policies influenced by Islamic law highlight how religion can directly impact legislative and administrative decisions. This influence reflects the extent to which religious doctrines are integrated into the policy-making process, particularly in regions where specific religions are predominant.

In an interview conducted on November 14, 2024, in Kano State, a senior legislative officer, Mr. A.S., stated, "Sharia law plays a crucial role in shaping policies in this region. Many of our legal frameworks are drawn from religious principles, ensuring that governance aligns with the moral expectations of the people.". Similarly, during a separate interview on November 16, 2024, in Sokoto, a civil servant from the Ministry of Justice, Ms. H.M., noted, "Certain policies, such as alcohol prohibition and family law, are formulated with direct input from religious scholars". These accounts affirm that religious considerations are not merely incidental but are embedded in the policy-making process.

Meanwhile, religious leaders' involvement appears in shaping public policies, underscoring the influence of religious institutions in governance. Consulting religious leaders before implementing policies demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between religion and state. It reveals that religious authorities have considerable sway over the formulation and execution of public policies, which can both support and challenge governance objectives.

For instance, an interview conducted on November 20, 2024, in Kaduna with a government policy adviser, Mr. T.J., revealed, "Before major social policies are rolled out, religious leaders are often consulted, especially on issues like education reforms and family planning programs. Their approval can determine whether the people will accept the policy. Similarly, during an interview on November 22, 2024, in Enugu, a Christian clergy member, Rev. F.N., stated, "We frequently engage with policymakers to ensure that government directives do not contradict our faith values. In some cases, we have successfully lobbied against policies that we felt were not aligned with our teachings."

It suggests that religion has a significant influence on public policy in Nigeria. Its influence is seen not only in Islamic law, which directly impacts legislative and administrative decisions but also in the involvement of religious leaders in the formulation and execution of public policy, such as in the issues of education reform and family planning programmes.

2. Religious Conflicts in Governance

It is not only in public policy, but religion also has an important influence on the occurrence of various religious conflicts in the Nigerian government. It is evident at least in the inter-religious conflicts (Christianity, Islam, and traditional African religions) between public officials and the public, and religious-based discrimination in public services.

In inter-religious conflict in Nigeria, the data reveals that conflicts arising from differing religious beliefs among public officials and communities can hinder effective policy implementation. Religious tensions create divisions that complicate the uniform application of policies across different regions. This theme highlights public administration's challenges in managing religious diversity and maintaining social cohesion.

For instance, a senior government official from Kaduna State, Mr. L.B., remarked in an interview conducted on November 18, 2024, in Kaduna: "We often struggle with implementing policies that are perceived to favor one religious group over another. In mixed communities, tensions arise when one religious group believes that certain policies—such as education curriculum changes or public holidays—are biased against them."

Similarly, a local government administrator from Zamfara State, Mr. M.Y., noted during an interview on November 23, 2024, in Gusau: "During the implementation of community development projects, we face pushback from religious leaders who feel their group is being sidelined. It has sometimes led to delays or cancellations of government initiatives."

Meanwhile, religious discrimination occurs in perceptions of or actual discrimination based on religious affiliation, pointing to inequities within public administration. The marginalization of Christians in predominantly Muslim regions—or vice versa—presents a significant challenge in ensuring fair and unbiased treatment within public service roles. This theme reflects the broader issue of religious bias impacting the equitable distribution of public resources and opportunities.

A civil servant from Kano State, Mr. S.A., shared during an interview conducted on November 15, 2024, in Kano: "In recruitment and promotions, there have been instances where candidates from certain religious backgrounds were overlooked in favor of others. It fosters resentment and weakens trust in the system." Likewise, a Christian public officer working in a northern state, Ms. E.C., recounted in an interview held on November 19, 2024, in Zamfara: "Many government positions are unofficially reserved for people of the dominant faith. This makes it difficult for minorities to advance in their careers, even when qualified."

This finding shows that religious influence in Nigeria is important not only in positive social activities, such as public policy and the involvement of religious leaders in policy decisions but also in issues of social tension involving adherents of different religions in the form of inter-religious conflict and religious discrimination.

As Berger states, public institutions have a role in mediating religious differences and fostering social cohesion. In Nigeria, this role is particularly significant given the frequent religious conflicts that have disrupted public administration and service delivery. It underscores the importance of institutions bridging religious divides and promoting national unity, even in deep-seated religious differences (Kukah, 1993; Uzodike & Maiangwa, 2012).

3. Public Perception of Governance

Religious influence also manifests in public perceptions of governance, especially trust in government officials and suspicions of religious bias. Religious affiliation strongly affects public trust. Many citizens demonstrate greater confidence in officials who share their religious background, believing them more likely to uphold shared values. In Kano, a community leader explained, "People

here tend to trust government officials who practice the same faith. There's an assumption that they will govern fairly and uphold shared values" (M.K, personal communication, November 17, 2024). A local official in Lagos confirmed this tendency: "During elections and policy implementation, we observe that religious identity significantly affects public support. Officials who align with the dominant faith in a region often receive more cooperation from the people" (J.O, personal communication, November 24, 2024).

Additionally, perceptions of religious bias in public services challenge the notion of neutral governance. A civil servant in Kaduna commented, "There's a widespread belief that certain policies are designed to benefit one religious group over another. This perception makes it difficult for the government to implement policies without resistance" (A.D, personal communication, November 21, 2024). A policy analyst at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, observed, "Many people feel that federal appointments and resource allocations are influenced by religious favouritism, which leads to distrust in government institutions" (K.U, personal communication, November 25, 2024). These findings confirm the challenge of cultivating neutrality in a multi-religious society. The public remains alert to signs of favouritism, affecting their confidence in institutions.

Berger's theory suggests that in a pluralistic society, public institutions must adopt a stance of neutrality towards religious differences while ensuring that governance structures are inclusive and representative of all religious groups. This approach is crucial in Nigeria, where religious identity often intersects with ethnic and regional identities, influencing political behavior and administrative decisions (Ele, 2019; Salawu, 2010).

Religious pluralism also implies that governance in such a society must be guided by principles of fairness and equity, avoiding the dominance of any single religious group in formulating and implementing public policies. In Nigeria, the influence of religious groups on public administration can be seen in various aspects of governance, from the legal system in the predominantly Muslim North to the educational policies in the predominantly Christian South (Obadare, 2006a). Berger's framework helps to critically examine these influences and assess how they affect the inclusiveness and effectiveness of governance in Nigeria. It is not only in public policy, but religion also has an important influence on the occurrence of various religious conflicts in the Nigerian government. It is evident at least in the inter-religious conflicts (Christianity, Islam, and traditional African religions) between public officials and the public, and religious-based discrimination in public services.

In inter-religious conflict in Nigeria, the data reveals that conflicts arising from differing religious beliefs among public officials and communities can hinder effective policy implementation. Religious tensions create divisions that complicate the uniform application of policies across different regions. This theme highlights public administration's challenges in managing religious diversity and maintaining social cohesion.

For instance, a senior government official from Kaduna State, Mr. L.B., remarked in an interview conducted on November 18, 2024, in Kaduna: "We often struggle with implementing policies that are perceived to favor one religious group over another. In mixed communities, tensions arise when one religious group believes that certain policies—such as education curriculum changes or public holidays—are biased against them."

Similarly, a local government administrator from Zamfara State, Mr. M.Y., noted during an interview on November 23, 2024, in Gusau: "During the implementation of community development projects, we face pushback from religious leaders who feel their group is being sidelined. It has sometimes led to delays or cancellations of government initiatives."

Meanwhile, religious discrimination occurs in perceptions of or actual discrimination based on religious affiliation, pointing to inequities within public administration. The marginalization of Christians in predominantly Muslim regions—or vice versa—presents a significant challenge in ensuring fair and unbiased treatment within public service roles. This theme reflects the broader issue of religious bias impacting the equitable distribution of public resources and opportunities.

A civil servant from Kano State, Mr. S.A., shared during an interview conducted on November 15, 2024, in Kano: "In recruitment and promotions, there have been instances where candidates from

certain religious backgrounds were overlooked in favor of others. It fosters resentment and weakens trust in the system." Likewise, a Christian public officer working in a northern state, Ms. E.C., recounted in an interview held on November 19, 2024, in Zamfara: "Many government positions are unofficially reserved for people of the dominant faith. This makes it difficult for minorities to advance in their careers, even when qualified."

This finding shows that religious influence in Nigeria is important not only in positive social activities, such as public policy and the involvement of religious leaders in policy decisions but also in issues of social tension involving adherents of different religions in the form of inter-religious conflict and religious discrimination. As Berger states, public institutions have a role in mediating religious differences and fostering social cohesion. In Nigeria, this role is particularly significant given the frequent religious conflicts that have disrupted public administration and service delivery. It underscores the importance of institutions bridging religious divides and promoting national unity, even in deep-seated religious differences (Kukah, 1993; Uzodike & Maiangwa, 2012).

4. Integration of Religion in Public Administration

Religion also influences public service by fostering ethical conduct among officials, while raising tensions concerning secularism. Religious teachings often serve as moral guides for civil servants. Ethical decision-making in governance can benefit from religious frameworks that emphasise honesty, accountability, and service. In Katsina, a senior official remarked, "Many public officials draw moral guidance from their religious beliefs, which helps them maintain ethical standards in governance" (M.N, personal communication, November 13, 2024). A civil servant in Enugu added, "Whenever we conduct ethics training for public officials, we find that those with strong religious convictions often demonstrate a higher commitment to transparency and integrity" (C.I, personal communication, November 26, 2024).

However, the entrenchment of religious values in governance presents challenges to secularism. In a context where religion permeates society, public officials often find it difficult to separate personal convictions from policy obligations. In Lagos, a policy analyst noted, "The principle of secularism is often challenged because religious values are deeply ingrained in society. Public officials sometimes struggle to separate personal religious beliefs from policy decisions" (T.E, personal communication, November 27, 2024). Similarly, a government officer in Kaduna explained, "We face significant resistance when implementing policies perceived as contradicting religious doctrines. Balancing secular governance with religious expectations remains one of the biggest challenges in policy-making" (B.Y, personal communication, November 28, 2024).

These findings illustrate religion's pervasive and multifaceted nature in Nigerian public administration. Religion shapes ethical norms, policy preferences, perceptions of fairness, and institutional dynamics. In such a religiously diverse country, neutrality becomes both necessary and elusive. Table 1 summarises the influence of religion on public administration from which qualitative data was obtained due to the four themes described above.

Table 1: Themes and Sub-Themes from Qualitative Analysis

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Influence of Religion on Policy	Religious-Based Policies	Policies influenced by religious beliefs and teachings.	"In our state, certain policies are directly influenced by Islamic law."
	Religious Leaders' Involvement	The role of religious leaders in shaping public policies.	"We often consult with religious leaders before implementing major policies."
Religious Conflicts in Governance	Inter-Religious Conflicts	Conflicts arise from differing religious beliefs among public officials and communities.	"Religious tensions sometimes make it difficult to implement policies uniformly across regions."
	Religious Discrimination	Perceived or actual discrimination based on religious affiliation within public administration.	"Christians in the North often feel marginalized in public service roles."
Public Perception of Governance	Trust in Government	How religious affiliations influence public trust in government institutions.	"People tend to trust officials from their own religious backgrounds more."
	Perception of Bias	Public perceptions of bias in public administration based on religious affiliations of officials.	"There is a belief that government favors certain religions over others, especially in policy-making."
Integration of Religion in Public Administration	Religion and Ethics	The role of religion in promoting ethical behavior among public officials.	"Religion encourages us to act ethically in our public duties, which is crucial for governance."
	Challenges of Secularism	Difficulties in maintaining a secular public administration in a religiously diverse country.	"Maintaining a secular approach is challenging when religious sentiments are so deeply rooted in society."

Source: fieldwork 2024

Quantitative Analysis

1. Demographic characteristics

The quantitative analysis of descriptive statistics in this section provides a snapshot of the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents. It focuses on four key variables: gender distribution, age group, religious affiliation, and position within the public service. These characteristics are presented in Table 2, which helps contextualise the composition of the public administration workforce under study.

Male respondents represented 60% of the sample, indicating a male-dominated composition within the surveyed public sector segment. Female participants accounted for 40%, reflecting a substantial minority. This gender distribution may point to broader patterns in Nigeria's public administration, where men traditionally occupy more positions of authority.

Respondents aged 31–45 constituted the largest age group (40%), suggesting that most participants were in the mid-phase of their careers, likely possessing a combination of experience and active service. The 18–30 age group comprised 32%, indicating a relatively young workforce entering public service. Meanwhile, 24% were aged 46–60, representing more senior professionals, while only 4% were over 60, signalling minimal representation from those nearing retirement or already retired.

Regarding religious affiliation, Christians formed the majority of the respondents at 56%, followed by Muslims at 36%. Practitioners of Traditional African Religions made up 8% of the sample. This distribution reflects the religious diversity in Nigeria and aligns with regional demographics.

Regarding professional rank, 48% of respondents were operational staff, 32% held mid-level management positions, and 20% occupied senior management roles. It suggests that the sample primarily comprised those involved in daily administrative functions, with fewer individuals in upper-level policy roles.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Survey Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	150	
	Female	100	40%
Age Group	18-30	80	32%
	31-45	100	40%
	46-60	60	24%
	60+	10	4%
Religious Affiliation	Christian	140	56%
	Muslim	90	36%
	Traditional African Religion	20	8%
Position in Public Service	Senior Management	50	20%
	Mid-Level Management	80	32%
	Operational Staff	120	48%

Source: fieldwork 2024

2. Perceptions of religious influence on governance

The survey also examined respondents' perceptions of religious influence on governance. It specifically focused on three areas: religion's impact on policy-making, religious leaders' role in shaping public decisions, and the perception of bias within administrative processes. These aspects offer insight into how those within the public administration system view religious dynamics.

Regarding the statement "Religion influences policy-making in my state," 48% of respondents strongly agreed, and 32% agreed, indicating that 80% believed religious values substantially impact public policy. Meanwhile, 12% remained neutral, and only 8% expressed disagreement, suggesting that scepticism toward religion's influence is minimal.

In response to "Religious leaders play a significant role in shaping public policies," 44% strongly agreed, and 36% agreed, further reinforcing the perception that religious authorities influence governmental decisions. A combined 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating limited opposition to this view.

For the statement "There is a noticeable bias towards certain religions in public administration," 40% strongly agreed, and 28% agreed, highlighting a significant concern about religious favouritism.

Although 20% were neutral, the cumulative 68% agreement suggests that perceived inequality is a notable issue. Only 12% disagreed to some extent.

Table 3 provides a summary of respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of religion on governance. It highlights three key areas: religion's role in policy-making, religious leaders' involvement in governance, and perceived bias in public administration. As discussed above, these responses reflect substantial concern about religious favouritism and its implications for equitable governance.

Table 3: Perception of Religious Influence on Governance

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (n)
Religion influences policy-making in my state	120 (48%)	80 (32%)	30 (12%)	10 (4%)	10 (4%)	250
Religious leaders play a significant role in shaping public policies.	110 (44%)	90 (36%)	30 (12%)	10 (4%)	10 (4%)	250
There is a noticeable bias towards certain religions in public administration.	100 (40%)	70 (28%)	50 (20%)	20 (8%)	10 (4%)	250

Source: Fieldwork 2024

3. Chi-square tests

This section presents the results of chi-square tests conducted to examine whether statistically significant relationships exist between selected categorical variables (see Table 4). The goal is to understand how religious affiliation and professional position relate to perceptions of policy influence and levels of trust in government.

a. Religious Affiliation vs. Perception of Policy Influence

Chi-Square Value: 25.34
Degrees of Freedom (df): 8
p-Value: 0.002

The chi-square test result for the relationship between religious affiliation and the perception of policy influence shows a chi-square value of 25.34 with 8 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.002. The p-value of 0.002 is less than the commonly used significance level of 0.05, indicating that the relationship between religious affiliation and the perception of policy influence is statistically significant. There is a significant association between respondents' religious affiliations and their perceptions of how religion influences policy-making. This finding shows that individuals' religious backgrounds may impact their views on whether and how religious beliefs affect policy decisions. The significant result suggests that the religious composition of the population may influence public administration policies and perceptions. It highlights the importance of considering religious affiliations when analyzing perceptions of policy influence.

b. Position in Public Service vs. Trust in Government

Chi-Square Value: 15.45
Degrees of Freedom (df): 8
p-Value: 0.05

The chi-square test result for the relationship between position in public service and trust in government shows a chi-square value of 15.45 with 8 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.05. The p-value of 0.05 is exactly at the significance threshold, suggesting that the relationship between position in public service and trust in government is at the boundary of statistical significance. There is a marginally significant association between respondents' positions in public service and their level of trust in government. It indicates that the position held within public service might influence an individual's trust in government institutions. The result suggests that public officials' positions can impact their trust in government, potentially due to differing perspectives or experiences associated with their roles. This marginal significance may warrant further investigation to confirm the strength and nature of this relationship.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test Results for Religious Influence on Policy-making

Variable	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	p-Value
Religious Affiliation vs. Perception of Policy Influence	25.34	8	0.002
Position in Public Service vs. Trust in Government	15.45	8	0.05

Source: Fieldwork 2024

4. Regression analysis

The regression analysis investigates how four key predictor variables—religious affiliation, position in public service, age group, and gender—influence respondents' trust in government. The analysis reports both unstandardised (B) and standardised (β) coefficients, along with t-values and significance levels (p-values). These metrics allow a nuanced understanding of each variable's relative and absolute effect within the model (see Table 5).

a. Religious Affiliation

Unstandardized Coefficient (B): 0.45
Standardized coefficient (β): 0.35
t-Value: 4.22
p-Value: 0.0001

Religious affiliation emerges as the strongest and most statistically significant predictor. The unstandardised coefficient (B = 0.45) indicates that each unit change in religious affiliation (as coded categorically) corresponds to a 0.45 unit increase in trust in government. The standardised β value (0.35) confirms that religious identity maintains a moderately strong effect even when all variables are scaled comparably.

This finding suggests that respondents who identify with religious groups more closely associated with dominant political or institutional structures tend to exhibit higher levels of trust in government. The low p-value (0.0001) affirms that this effect is highly unlikely to be due to chance. This result is expected and significant in the Nigerian context, where religion often intersects with political representation and cultural authority.

b. Position in Public Service

Unstandardized Coefficient (B): 0.30
Standardized coefficient (β): 0.25
t-Value: 3.10
p-Value: 0.002

The p-value of 0.002 is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant effect of position in public service on trust in government. The unstandardized coefficient of 0.30 means that for each unit increase in the position within public service, trust in government increases by 0.30 units. The standardized coefficient (β) of 0.25 reflects a moderate positive impact of the position on trust in government.

Position within the administrative hierarchy also significantly predicts trust in government. The B value suggests that respondents in higher-ranking positions report higher levels of institutional trust, likely due to their proximity to policy decisions and institutional performance. The standardised coefficient (β = 0.25) reinforces the moderate strength of this relationship.

One possible interpretation is that increased responsibility and visibility within the bureaucracy provide a more favourable view of government operations, fostering greater confidence in governance mechanisms. Alternatively, those in elevated roles may experience benefits or privileges that positively shape their perception of institutional integrity.

c. Age Group

Unstandardized Coefficient (B): 0.20
Standardized coefficient (β): 0.15
t-Value: 2.40
p-Value: 0.018

The p-value of 0.018 is less than 0.05, indicating that age group significantly affects trust in government. The unstandardized coefficient of 0.20 indicates that for each unit increase in age group, there is an increase of 0.20 units in trust in government. The standardized coefficient (β) of 0.15 shows a smaller positive effect of age on trust in government.

Age is also a statistically significant, though its influence is weaker than the previous two. The positive coefficients suggest that older respondents tend to express slightly higher levels of trust in government. It may reflect generational socialisation, increased exposure to state structures, or a more pragmatic acceptance of the status quo. The result implies that while age is not the strongest determinant, it contributes to shaping civic attitudes subtly but meaningfully.

d. Gender

Unstandardized Coefficient (B): 0.10
Standardized coefficient (β): 0.08
t-Value: 1.20
p-Value: 0.230

The p-value of 0.230 is greater than 0.05, indicating that gender does not have a statistically significant effect on trust in government. The unstandardized coefficient of 0.10 suggests a minor increase in trust in government with changes in gender, but the effect is not significant. The standardized coefficient (β) of 0.08 reflects a very small effect size.

Gender does not appear to influence trust in government significantly. Although the coefficients are positive, the t-value is low, and the p-value (0.230) exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.05. It suggests that, within this sample, male and female respondents demonstrate similar levels of trust, and gender-based differences do not explain much variation in the outcome.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Factors Affecting Trust in Government

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standardized coefficient (β)	t-Value	p-Value
Religious Affiliation	0.45	0.35	4.22	0.0001
Position in Public Service	0.30	0.25	3.10	0.002
Age Group	0.20	0.15	2.40	0.018
Gender	0.10	0.08	1.20	0.230

Source: Fieldwork 2024

As presented in Table 5, the regression analysis identifies religious affiliation and position in public service as the most influential predictors of trust in government. The age group has a moderate but statistically significant effect, whereas gender does not show a significant impact. These findings reflect broader patterns in Nigeria's socio-political context, where trust in government tends to be shaped by religious identity and administrative rank.

5. Correlation Matrix of Key Variables

The correlation matrix investigates the relationships between five key variables: religious affiliation, position in public service, age group, gender, and trust in government. Pearson correlation coefficients are used to assess the strength and direction of these bivariate associations. This analysis provides insight into how demographic and institutional factors may shape government trust levels.

The strongest correlation observed is between religious affiliation and trust in government (r = 0.45), suggesting a moderately positive relationship. It indicates that individuals identifying with certain religious groups—especially those perceived as politically or culturally dominant—are more likely to express confidence in government institutions. It may be attributed to perceived alignment between state policy and specific religious communities' moral or symbolic interests.

In addition to its link with trust, religious affiliation correlates positively with public service position (r = 0.35). It implies that members of particular religious groups may be more represented in certain administrative roles, possibly due to regional or political dynamics. There is also a weak positive correlation between religious affiliation and age group (r = 0.20). It suggests that older individuals may align more with dominant religious traditions or be embedded in institutionalised religious life. Meanwhile, the correlation between religious affiliation and gender is negligible (r = –0.05), indicating that religious identity is evenly distributed across male and female respondents.

Position in public service also correlates positively with trust in government (r = 0.30), reaffirming the regression finding that individuals in higher administrative roles tend to exhibit greater institutional trust. It may result from a closer involvement in policy implementation, increased access to institutional resources, or a sense of personal stake in the government's reputation. The relationship between position and age group is weak but positive (r = 0.15), likely reflecting career progression—older individuals generally occupy more senior roles. A weak negative correlation between position and gender (r = –0.10) hints at a slight gender imbalance in administrative hierarchies, potentially indicating a higher concentration of men in senior public roles.

While less influential overall, the age group still shows a weak positive correlation with trust in government (r = 0.20), suggesting that older respondents are marginally more inclined to trust governmental institutions. It could reflect generational norms, longer exposure to political processes, or a sense of civic obligation shaped over time. The correlation between age and gender is slightly negative (r = –0.20), which may point to gendered differences in age distribution within the sample, possibly due to differences in career longevity or workforce entry points.

Gender, across the dataset, exhibits very weak correlations with all other variables. The strongest is with age group (r = –0.20), followed by a weak negative relationship with position in public service (r = –0.10), and almost no association with religious affiliation or trust in government. It suggests that gender does not significantly shape respondents' religious identities, administrative ranks, or levels of institutional trust within this population.

The results presented in Table 6, Correlation Matrix of Key Variables, reinforce the findings of earlier statistical tests. Religious affiliation and position in public service stand out as the two variables most closely associated with trust in government. Age plays a minor but consistent role, while gender appears to have minimal influence. These results underscore the salience of religion and institutional authority in determining civic attitudes in Nigeria, particularly in a context where religion remains deeply entangled with governance, identity, and public legitimacy.

Table 6: Correlation Matrix of Key Variables

Variable	Religious Affiliation	Position in Public Service	Age Group	Gender	Trust in Government
Religious Affiliation	1.00	0.35	0.20	-0.05	0.45
Position in Public Service	0.35	1.00	0.15	-0.10	0.30
Age Group	0.20	0.15	1.00	-0.20	0.20
Gender	-0.05	-0.10	-0.20	1.00	-0.10
Trust in Government	0.45	0.30	0.20	-0.10	1.00

Source: Fieldwork 2024

Thus, religious Affiliation shows a moderate to strong positive correlation with trust in government and a moderate correlation with position in public service. It suggests that religion plays a significant role in influencing trust and positions within public service. Meanwhile, position in public service has a moderate positive correlation with trust in government, implying that higher positions are associated with greater trust. The age group shows small positive correlations with trust in government and a weak association with other variables. Gender exhibits very weak correlations with all variables, indicating minimal influence on measured outcomes. Overall, religious affiliation and position in public service are key factors associated with trust in government, while age group has a minor influence, and gender appears to have little impact.

3. The Influence of Religion on Public Administration in Nigeria

This section synthesises the key findings from both the qualitative and quantitative data, offering a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted ways in which religion shapes public administration in Nigeria. The evidence reveals the profound influence of religion on policy-making, the role of religious leaders in governance, the perception of bias in administrative systems, and the socio-demographic factors—such as position and age—that mediate institutional trust.

Concerning policy-making, the data demonstrate a strong perception among respondents that religion is decisive in shaping government policies. This perception aligns with earlier research highlighting the prominence of religious actors and institutions in Nigeria's policy landscape (Kalu, 2008; Kukah, 1993). The statistically significant positive correlation between religious affiliation and trust in government reinforces this view, suggesting that individuals who identify closely with dominant religious groups are more likely to trust state institutions (Giddens, 1991). This relationship underscores the importance of understanding religious contexts when evaluating public policy formulation and implementation.

During a field interview in Sokoto, a senior policymaker explained, "Religious leaders exert considerable influence on policy decisions. Before implementing major policies, especially those related to education and social welfare, consultations with religious institutions are often necessary to ensure public acceptance" (A.B, personal communication, November 12, 2024). Likewise, S.Y, a public administrator in Kano, stated, "Policies on moral issues, such as alcohol regulation, marriage laws, and even public holidays, are often influenced by religious considerations. It is difficult to separate governance from religious expectations in this context" (Personal communication, November 16, 2024). Echoing this sentiment, a community leader from Enugu noted, "People trust policies more when they feel their religious beliefs are reflected in them. When a government policy contradicts religious values, there is immediate resistance from the public." (C.O, personal communication, November 14, 2024).

The findings also highlight religious leaders' significant role in shaping governance practices, particularly in moral and social policy matters. It supports the conclusion that religious leaders in Nigeria possess considerable influence over political and administrative decisions (Oyetunbi & Akinrinde, 2021). According to Umeanolue (2020) and Okoh (2023), such influence can promote ethical standards and provoke division, depending on the context. Interviews conducted across regions illustrate this complexity. An Islamic cleric in Kano, Mallam I.N., stated on November 14, 2024, "Islamic teachings emphasise justice and accountability, which are values that should guide governance. We regularly engage with policymakers to ensure that policies align with Islamic moral standards, particularly on social issues like family law and financial ethics." He added that religious leaders in predominantly Muslim states often maintain "a direct line of communication with political leaders," enabling them to influence key legislative areas such as Sharia law and educational reforms.

In contrast, Rev. D.K., a Pentecostal pastor from Lagos, observed on November 25, 2024, "Churches play an advocacy role in governance. We speak out against corruption and social injustices while encouraging Christian politicians to uphold ethical standards. However, our influence is more advisory than directive; we encourage rather than dictate policy decisions." Meanwhile, traditional religious figures appear to occupy a peripheral position. Chief A.O., an Ogun priest from Osun State, remarked during an interview on November 29, 2024, "Our role is more cultural than political. While we advise on matters of tradition and morality, we do not have the same direct influence over governance as Christian and Muslim leaders. However, in cases of community conflict, we are often called upon to mediate and restore balance."

These accounts illustrate the asymmetrical nature of religious influence on governance. Islamic clerics wield substantial authority in state affairs, particularly in the North. Christian leaders exert moderate influence, often through advocacy and moral persuasion. In contrast, traditional leaders are largely marginalised, with their contributions valued primarily in cultural and conflict-resolution settings. These distinctions reveal the need to balance religious influence with principles of secular governance to ensure inclusivity and institutional neutrality.

Concerns over religious bias in public administration also emerge as a consistent theme. Many respondents report perceptions of preferential treatment for certain religious groups in appointments, promotions, and policy implementation. This perception is corroborated by studies indicating that religious bias can compromise the neutrality and effectiveness of public institutions (Olojo, 2017). The positive correlation between religious affiliation and perceived policy influence supports the argument that religious identity shapes personal beliefs and institutional behaviour.

Illustrative testimonies shed further light on this issue. In Kano, Mallam A.S., an Islamic religious learder, explained on November 14, 2024, "There is a perception among the Muslim community that in some federal institutions, policies are designed to favour Christians, especially in appointments and promotions. This belief creates distrust and a sense of exclusion." Conversely, Rev. T.E., a Pentecostal pastor in Lagos, stated on November 25, 2024, "Many Christians believe that in northern Nigeria, Muslims are given preferential treatment in government jobs and contracts. We have cases where qualified Christian candidates struggle to advance in public service simply because they are not Muslim." From a different perspective, Chief O.A., a traditional religious practitioner in Osun, expressed on November 29, 2024, "We are often completely sidelined in public administration. Policies

mostly consider the two dominant religions—Islam and Christianity. Traditionalists are rarely included in governance discussions, which marginalises our contributions to national development."

The analysis also reveals that position within the public service and age are statistically significant predictors of trust in government. These findings confirm earlier research showing that senior officials and older individuals generally express higher institutional trust (Adesina, 2023; Emuze & Obasola, 2024; Verba et al., 1995). Field data support these conclusions. Mr H.L., a senior civil servant in Kaduna, commented on November 22, 2024, "Having worked in government for over 25 years, I have seen the system evolve. While there are challenges, I trust the institutions because I understand the bureaucratic processes and the efforts being made to improve governance."

In contrast, Mr Y.B., a mid-level officer in Kano, stated on November 18, 2024, "Younger employees tend to be more critical of the government because they feel policies do not always reflect their needs. Unlike senior officials, lower-ranking staff often feel disconnected from governance processes." Similarly, Ms R.E., a 28-year-old entrepreneur from Lagos, shared on November 26, 2024, "Many people in my age group feel that the government does not prioritise youth-related policies. We see more bureaucracy than action, which makes us question how much we can trust public institutions."

Finally, gender appears to have little influence on trust in government. The regression analysis shows no statistically significant effect, and this finding aligns with broader literature that suggests gender-based differences in political trust are generally minimal (Inglehart, 1997). The implication is that institutional trust in Nigeria is shaped more profoundly by religious identity, administrative position, and age than by gender.

This study affirms that religion considerably influences public administration in Nigeria. This influence manifests in policy design, implementation, and public perceptions of fairness and legitimacy. Policymakers must, therefore, consider religious dynamics when developing strategies for inclusive governance. Addressing perceptions of religious bias and enhancing representational equity across faith groups will be essential in fostering trust and ensuring administrative effectiveness in a religiously diverse society.

4. Religion as a Double-Edged Influence in Public Administration

The findings reveal that religion in Nigeria is intricately linked with public administration, influencing governance, policy-making, electoral behaviour, administrative recruitment, and ethical governance. Religion exerts normative and structural impacts on state institutions, making it a key factor in Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape.

Religion influences public morality and significantly shapes how institutions are structured, policies are formed, and ethical standards are upheld within the public sphere. Globally, religion has long influenced public policy, including civil rights, reproductive health, and education (Cammisa & Manuel, 2016; Hummel, 2021). In Nigeria, this trend is mirrored by developments such as the integration of Sharia law in northern states (Anyia, 2017) and the Pentecostalisation of public leadership under the Obasanjo administration (Obadare, 2006b).

Moreover, religion influences public administrators' ethical decision-making and organisational behaviour. Studies from the context of the United States highlight how workplace spirituality enhances ethical practices and job performance (King, 2006, 2007). These observations resonate with the Nigerian context, where religious principles such as honesty and integrity are embedded in public leadership expectations.

At the level of public service implementation, personal religiosity may affect street-level bureaucrats' discretionary behavior, potentially skewing service delivery when religious and state mandates conflict (Golan-Nadir, 2024). Thus, Nigerian public administration, operating within a multi-religious and multicultural landscape, must navigate between maintaining neutrality and acknowledging religious realities.

In comparative terms, the influence of religion in public administration is not unique to Nigeria. In Islamic countries, religious values often underpin administrative legitimacy (Hummel, 2019), while in East Asian contexts such as Korea, Confucian values shape bureaucratic conduct (Vaddi, 2024).

Though sometimes problematic, these global patterns provide further validation for recognising religion's central role in shaping governance worldwide.

In this light, the Nigerian case illustrates the necessity of applying an ethics of responsibility, as outlined by Ongaro and Tantardini (2024), when integrating religious perspectives into policy-making. The positive contributions of religious ethics must be balanced with the risks of politicisation and exclusion, requiring a careful and principled approach to institutional design and leadership development.

This study supports and elaborates on earlier works such as Kukah (1993), who emphasised the symbolic power of religious leaders, and Adesina (2023), who described the diplomatic utility of religion in governance. It also builds on Nwankwo's findings (2019) that religious homogeneity affects voter behaviour, and aligns with Inakefe et al. (2024), who noted ethnic and religious bias in civil service composition. While prior research tends to treat these influences independently, this study integrates them into a broader empirical narrative that reveals the interplay between religious affiliation, administrative trust, and structural bias.

More recent literature points to religion's potential to foster ethical governance, though institutional constraints remain (Anowia, 2020; Azubuike et al., 2024). Jatau & Maza (2023) warn of the risks when religion becomes a political weapon, with groups like Boko Haram illustrating the dangers of unmoderated religious extremism. These studies are reinforced by the current findings, which demonstrate how religion can serve either as a moral foundation or a vector for exclusion and instability.

The theoretical underpinning of this study, Berger's religious pluralism, finds validation in the Nigerian context. Governance must be adaptive and inclusive in a setting where no single religious tradition can legitimately dominate. Religion is both a structural variable and a normative actor—it demands recognition without privilege. Institutions that fail to navigate this pluralism risk administrative inefficiency, eroded trust, and conflict.

The findings of this study reflect the dual nature—both functional and dysfunctional—of religious influence in Nigerian public administration. On the one hand, religion provides a framework for ethical governance, moral discipline, and a sense of accountability among public officials. Religious teachings emphasise virtues such as honesty, justice, compassion, and public service, which, when internalised by public servants, can elevate the integrity and responsiveness of state institutions. Religion is a valuable normative compass that fosters public trust and contributes to a collective civic identity.

On the other hand, the study also uncovers the dysfunctional aspects of religious influence. These include sectarian bias in recruitment, promotion, and policy prioritisation; the politicisation of religious identities during elections; and the use of religion to justify exclusionary practices. Such dynamics can fragment national unity, reinforce systemic discrimination, and weaken bureaucratic impartiality. In its most extreme form, as evidenced by the activities of groups such as Boko Haram, religion can even be weaponised to challenge the legitimacy and stability of the state.

Given these contrasting outcomes, inclusive and context-sensitive governance becomes essential. Recruitment and promotion in the civil service must be based on merit, not religious affiliation. Religious leaders should be engaged as political intermediaries and ethical contributors to democratic development. Civic education and interfaith collaboration must be strengthened to neutralise sectarian politics.

Building upon these insights, several recommendations emerge for promoting inclusive and effective governance in Nigeria. First, interfaith participation should be institutionalised within policy advisory mechanisms to ensure broader religious representation in decision-making. Second, merit-based recruitment and promotion systems must be strictly enforced to dismantle bias linked to religious or ethnic affiliations (Inakefe et al., 2024). Third, collaboration between public institutions and religious bodies is crucial to promoting ethical training that resonates with Nigeria's moral landscape (Azubuike et al., 2024). Finally, political actors and regulatory institutions must actively prevent the instrumentalisation of religion during electoral processes, particularly in high-stakes elections where sectarian mobilisation threatens national cohesion (Jatau & Maza, 2023).

5. Conclusion

This study has revealed that religion is a guiding framework and a source of contestation within Nigerian public administration. The main findings underscore how religion operates not merely at the level of personal belief but as an institutional and cultural force influencing policy-making, bureaucratic conduct, and public trust. The study demonstrated that religious affiliation significantly shapes perceptions of fairness and competence in government institutions. It also established that trust in public administration positively correlates with bureaucratic seniority, suggesting that experience within administrative structures contributes to institutional confidence. While factors such as age and gender showed limited impact, the persistence of religious bias in public service delivery and policy implementation remains a critical concern.

The scholarly contribution of this study lies in its multidimensional approach, which integrates qualitative and quantitative data to examine the intersection of religion and public administration. The research adds to the existing literature by offering empirical evidence on how religious pluralism functions as both an ethical resource and a governance challenge. By adopting Peter Berger's theory of religious pluralism and extending its application to contemporary Nigerian bureaucracy, this study introduces a conceptual model that bridges normative ethical inquiry and institutional analysis. It also contributes new bibliometric data and content mapping of recent scholarship in the field, making it a valuable resource for comparative administrative studies.

However, this research is not without limitations. The study focused primarily on selected geopolitical zones, which may not fully capture the diversity of Nigeria's complex religious and administrative landscape. Reliance on self-reported perceptions may also introduce bias, particularly in contexts where religious affiliation is sensitive. Additionally, while the study employed mixed methods, future research could benefit from longitudinal designs and expanded regional sampling to validate and deepen the findings. More comparative research involving other multi-religious societies could also enhance this inquiry's generalisability and theoretical robustness.

In light of these insights, future policies must consider the socio-religious dimensions of governance to ensure inclusivity, neutrality, and institutional trustworthiness. There is a clear need for a governance model that incorporates religious ethics in ways that strengthen democratic accountability. At the same time, institutional safeguards must be put in place to prevent sectarianism and promote a principled, pluralistic public administration.

References

Abdussalam, A. F., & Abukur, A. A. (2021). Achieving Un-Sdg 13 In Nigeria: Roles Of Religious Leaders In Addressing Climate Change Challenges. *Fudma Journal Of Sciences*, *5*(2), 283–288. https://doi.org/10.33003/fjs-2021-0502-616

Adarigho, C. C. (2023). Christian response to the challenge and effects of religious Pluralism on Christian Missions in Nigeria. *Pharos Journal of Theology*, *104*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.10425

Adesina, O. (2023). Exploring Religion as a Tool of Nigeria's Public Diplomacy. *International Journal of Emerging Multidisciplinaries: Social Science*, *2*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.54938/ijemdss.2023.02.1.216

Afolabi, O. O. (2015). The role of religion in Nigerian politics and its sustainability for political development. *Nigerian Journal of Social Studies*, *18*(2), 272–287.

Ananti, M. O., & Madubueze, M. C. (2014). Religion, society, culture, and sustainable development in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, *4*(11), 34–42.

Anowia, W. E. (2020). Religion as a Matrix for Lasting Political Legacy in Nigeria. *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities*, *28*(1), 50 – 61. https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85216846692&partnerID=40&md5=9112977c774b4ce7721982828841fb5a

Anyia, A. (2017). Muslim Organisation and the Mobilisations for Sharia Law in northern Nigeria: The JNI and The NSCIA. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, *52*(1), 82 – 102. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909614560246

Awajiusuk, F. J. (2016). Prospects and Challenges of Teaching Religious Ethics in Nigerian Universities. In *Leadership and Personnel Management* (pp. 1925–1937). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-9624-2.ch085

Azubuike, P. C., Imo, U. F., Ogbonna, C. K., Enyam, M. O., & Nwadiche, M. (2024). Harnessing religion in the pursuit of sustainable development in Nigeria. *Discover Global Society*, *2*(1). https://doi.org/10.1007/s44282-

024-00119-8
Berger, P. L. (1967). *The sacred canopy: Elements of a sociological theory of religion*. Doubleday.
Cammisa, A. M., & Manuel, P. C. (2016). Religious groups as interest groups: The united states catholic bishops in the welfare reform debate of 1995–1996 and the health care reform debate of 2009–2010. *Religions*, *7*(2). https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7020016
Ele, C. O. (2019). Religious Pluralism and Sustainable Development in Nigeria. *African Research Review*, *13*(1), 26–37. https://doi.org/10.4314/afrrev.v13i1.3
Emuze, S. O., & Obasola, K. E. (2024). A Socio-ethical Evaluation of the Challenges and Prospects of Religion in Nation Building Process in Nigeria. *Tropical Journal of Arts and Humanities*, *6*(2), 10–18. https://doi.org/10.47524/tjah.v6i2.9
Falola, T. (1998). *Violence in Nigeria: The crisis of religious politics and secular ideologies*. University of Rochester Press.
Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford University Press.
Golan-Nadir, N. (2024). Religion and public administration at the micro level: The lens of street-level bureaucracy theory in democracies. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, *83*(4), 736 – 748. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12626
Hummel, D. (2019). Public administration in the islamic world: Considering the importance of religion, its values and culture. *Halduskultuur*, *19*(2), 23 – 38. https://doi.org/10.32994/hk.v19i2.169
Hummel, D. (2021). Religiosity: Emphasizing public service. In *Handbook of Theories of Public Administration and Management*. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781789908251.00025
Idoko, P. E. (2022). Islamic Religious Education Textbooks in a Pluralist Nigeria. *Religions*, *14*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010042
Ikime, O. (1980). *Groundwork of Nigerian history*. Heinemann Educational Books.
Inakefe, I. G., Onyekachi, A. J., & Uduak, B. V. (2024). Evaluation of the Effect of Tribe and Ethnicity in the Composition and Management of Nigeria's Public Bureaucracy: A Human Resource and Public Policy Approach. *Public Administration Issues*, *6*, 45 – 70. https://doi.org/10.17323/1999-5431-2024-0-6-45-70
Inglehart, R. (1997). *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691214429
Ishola, A. V. (2024). Religious Blasphemy, Jungle Justice, and Legal Pluralism in Northern Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution and Sharia Law. *African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration*, *7*(2), 60–76. https://doi.org/10.52589/AJLPRA-I1WJWMDV
Jatau, V., & Maza, K. D. (2023). Democracy, Peace, and Religion in Nigeria: Can Religion Be Used to Consolidate or Undermine Democracy and Peace? *Religions*, *14*(10). https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14101305
Kalu, O. U. (2008). *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195340006.001.0001
King, S. M. (2006). The Moral Manager: Vignettes of Virtue from Virginia. *Public Integrity*, *8*(2), 113 – 133. https://doi.org/10.2753/PIN1099-9922080201
King, S. M. (2007). Religion, spirituality, and the workplace: Challenges for public administration. *Public Administration Review*, *67*(1), 103 – 114. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00700.x
Kukah, M. H. (1993). *Religion and Politics in Northern Nigeria*. Spectrum Books Limited.
Nwanaju, I. (2016). Religious bigotry and good governance in Nigeria. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, *6*(2), 43–53.
Nwankwo, C. F. (2019). Religion and Voter Choice Homogeneity in the Nigerian Presidential Elections of the Fourth Republic. *Statistics, Politics and Policy*, *10*(1), 1 – 25. https://doi.org/10.1515/spp-2018-0010
Nweke, P. C. (2018). Religious Peacebuilding in Nigeria. *Peace Review*, *30*(4), 440–447. https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2018.1553536
Obadare, E. (2006a). Pentecostal presidency? The Lagos-Ibadan "religious axis" and the politicization of religion in Nigerian public life. *African Affairs*, *106*(423), 535–554. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/03056240601119083
Obadare, E. (2006b). Pentecostal presidency? The lagos-Ibadan "theocratic class" & the Muslim "other." *Review of African Political Economy*, *33*(110), 665 – 678. https://doi.org/10.1080/03056240601119083
Obadare, E. (2018). *Pentecostal Republic: Religion and the Struggle for State Power in Nigeria*. Indiana University Press. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350221734
Ogbonna, C., & Ufomba, E. E. (2020). Persisting Political Influence On Religious Crisis In Nigeria. *International Journal of Management, Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict Studies (IJMSSPCS)*, *3*(3), 315–323.
Ogunleye, A. R. (2021). Religious Pluralism and Inter-Religious Encounters in the 21st Century Nigeria. *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, *4*(2), 24–31. https://doi.org/10.52589/ajsshr_PSXHRFIX

Oguntola Laguda, D. (2013). Religion And Government Policy Formulations: A Study Of The Responses Of Muslims To The Coroner Law System In Lagos, Nigeria. *Politics And Religion Journal*, *7*(2), 399–412. https://doi.org/10.54561/prj0702399l

Okoh, B. U. (2023). National Security for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Role of Religious Leaders. *Research Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, *8*(1), 37–43. https://doi.org/10.56201/rjhcs.v8.no1.2022.pg37.43

Olojo, A. E. (2017). Resistance through Islamic clerics against Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. *African Security Review*, *26*(3), 308–324. https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2017.1294092

Omosor, F. O. (2019). The role of Christian clerics in promoting good governance and development in Nigeria: Prophet amos as a model. *NIU Journal of Humanities*, *4*(3), 33–46. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.58709/kiujhu.v4i3

Onebunne, J. I. (2018). Religion and Politics in Nigeria. *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, *4*(5), 2504–9038.

Ongaro, E., & Tantardini, M. (2024). Contours of a research programme for the study of the relationship of religion and public administration. *Public Policy and Administration*, *39*(4), 521 – 530. https://doi.org/10.1177/09520767241272897

Onwutuebe, C. J. (2020). Constitutional Crisis, Religious Interpretations, and Nigerian Secularism. *Peace Review*, *32*(3), 392–400. https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2020.1867357

Oyetunbi, O., & Akinrinde, O. O. (2021). Political Crisis and The Politics of Religious Divisiveness in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *The Digest: Journal of Jurisprudence and Legisprudence*, *2*(2), 173–196.

Salawu, B. (2010). Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria: Causal analysis and proposals for new management strategies. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, *13*(3), 345–353.

Umeanolue, I. L. (2020). Religious influences on politics in Nigeria: Implications for national development. *OGIRISI: A New Journal of African Studies*, *15*(1), 139–157. https://doi.org/10.4314/og.v15i1.9s

Uzodike, U. O., & Maiangwa, B. (2012). Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria: Causal factors and central problematic. *African Renaissance*, *9*(1), 91–118.

Vaddi, S. (2024). The role of Confucian values in Korean administrative culture: a cultural-contextual perspective. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration*. https://doi.org/10.1080/23276665.2024.2396301

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and Equality*. Harvard University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1pnc1k7

© 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).