



Good Governance and Sustainable Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment of Institutional Performance in Kaduna State

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Abstract

Original Research Article

Good governance should facilitate transparency and accountability in the management of public resources. But the lack of transparency and accountability in service delivery and the people's welfare, weakens the processes. The study therefore examined the extent to which transparency affect citizens' access to basic social services and determined the extent to which accountability affect citizens' standard of living. Descriptive survey research design was adopted, with 384 respondents sampled through multistage sampling technique. Data collection was carried out with the aid of a structured questionnaire that was thoroughly validated and achieved a reliability coefficient of 0.87 using the Inter-Rater Reliability Method. Descriptive statistics comprising frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation were employed for descriptive data analysis, while hypotheses were inferentially tested using one sample t-test through SPSS, 29. Results showed that transparency had significant effect on citizens' access to basic social services [$t(4) = 96.238, p < 0.05$] and that accountability had significant effect on citizens' standard of living [$t(4) = 128.572, p < 0.05$]. Government should reinforce transparency through budget and expenditure reports, which can be supported by the improved access to government information through open data portal, and reinforce accountability through independent audits, monitoring and citizens' inputs through civic feedback, on the use of public resources. The study fills the evidence gap in Kaduna State by examining the relationship between transparency and basic social services outcomes in Kaduna State and between accountability and citizen's standard of living in Kaduna State, thus providing location specific.

Keywords: Good Governance, Transparency; Accountability; Institutional Performance; Basic Social Services; Standard of Living.

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INTRODUCTION

Good governance influences the policies of public institutions, the utilization of resources and the benefits derived by the citizens and is widely accepted as an important component for alleviating Poverty. Good Governance implies

the responsible exercise of public power and focuses upon the delivery of development benefits to the citizenry through the accountability, transparency, participation, responsiveness and institutional efficiency. It ensures the well-being of the citizens, equitable



resource distribution and the provision of quality of public services. In this perspective, strong institutions can help to alleviate poverty; but corruption and weak governance can deepen spread poverty in Nigeria (Aguene 2024). Despite numerous intervention programmes, the continuance of poverty raises questions about the welfare of the people and the quality of governance as it concerns accountable, corruption and the abandonment of the planned beneficiaries, (Kudaisi & Ojeyinka, 2023).

Poverty alleviation involves active policies and effective interventions by government, non-government organizations and development partners in addressing poverty in the local setting (Itodo et al., 2026). Effective poverty reduction cannot be achieved with short term interventions; sustainable reduction in poverty rests on the formulation and implementation of sound economic policies, targeted social programmes and inclusive development strategies that can raise the standard of living of the citizenry (World Bank, 2018). As a result, the relative success of poverty alleviation programmes is largely determined by the effectiveness of public institutions in the idea of developing and executing policies and programmes and monitoring their various impacts.

Institutional performance is central to the achievement of good governance and sustainable poverty alleviation because effective institutions are expected to manage public resources responsibly, promote accountability and ensure that citizens have fair access to basic social services. Good governance therefore requires institutions to operate in ways that encourage transparency, accountability and effective service delivery. When public institutions allocate and utilise poverty-alleviation resources appropriately, they are better positioned to implement programmes that improve citizens' welfare and living conditions (Okolo & Kasikoro, 2024). In this sense, institutional performance reflects the extent to which governance principles are translated into responsible resource management, effective public service delivery and improved socioeconomic conditions.

Transparency is an important aspect of institutional performance because it promotes openness in government decision-making, resource allocation, expenditure and programme implementation. Through transparency, citizens can obtain information about government activities and monitor how public resources are managed. Practices such as fiscal disclosure, budget reporting, open procurement and access to public information can therefore strengthen transparency and improve governance in Nigeria (World Bank, 2025). When public institutions provide relevant information openly, citizens are better able to understand how resources are allocated and assess whether government funds are being used for their intended development and poverty-alleviation purposes.

Access to basic social services provides another important basis for assessing institutional performance. Such access refers to citizens' ability to obtain essential services required for decent living and human development, including healthcare, education, water and sanitation. However, access to these services depends not only on their availability but also on their affordability, proximity, quality and equitable distribution. Effective governance can improve the delivery and accessibility of essential services, whereas weak institutional practices may limit access, particularly for vulnerable members of society (Adeoye et al., 2024). The limited success of some poverty-alleviation initiatives in Nigeria therefore makes it necessary to examine whether transparent institutional practices can improve citizens' access to basic social services.

Accountability is equally important to good governance and effective institutional performance. It requires public officials to explain their decisions, justify the use of public resources and accept responsibility for the outcomes of their actions. Effective accountability is supported by appropriate monitoring and oversight, clearly defined institutional responsibilities, citizen participation and sanctions for misconduct (Duru & Onoh, 2026). Where these mechanisms are weak, resources intended to improve citizens' welfare may be poorly managed, diverted or used

inefficiently. Such weaknesses can reduce the capacity of public institutions to implement poverty-alleviation programmes effectively and achieve their intended outcomes (Kudaisi & Ojeyinka, 2023).

The quality of institutional accountability can also have implications for citizens' standard of living. Standard of living relates to the material and socioeconomic conditions in which individuals and households live, including their ability to access food, shelter, healthcare, education and other basic necessities. It is also influenced by public services, employment opportunities and income. In Nigeria, persistent poverty, inflation and low household incomes continue to constrain improvements in citizens' living conditions (World Bank, 2022). Effective institutional accountability is therefore important because responsible management of public resources and proper implementation of government programmes can support improvements in citizens' welfare and overall living conditions.

Despite the importance of these governance mechanisms, weaknesses in transparency and accountability may limit access to healthcare, education, water and other essential services. Poor accountability can also affect the effective implementation of poverty-alleviation programmes by making it difficult to ensure that public resources reach their intended beneficiaries (Popoola et al., 2022). These challenges raise concerns about the capacity of public institutions to convert government policies, resources and poverty-alleviation programmes into tangible improvements in citizens' welfare. This concern becomes particularly significant when poverty alleviation is viewed from a sustainability perspective, since weak institutional practices may reduce the durability and long-term benefits of government interventions.

Although existing studies have established relationships between governance, institutional performance and poverty-related outcomes, there remains limited attention to the specific relationship between institutional performance and sustainable poverty alleviation in Kaduna State. Mogues et al. (2023), for instance, found

no significant overall improvement in health, education, infrastructure or public services, although agricultural services recorded improvements. In contrast, Kibria and Toufique (2023), found that voice and accountability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality and the rule of law positively influenced quality of life. Ilawagbon and Ajisebiyawo (2024) indicated that e-administration enhanced transparency, accessibility, scrutiny and accountability in public service delivery. Similarly, Ndako et al. (2025) found that voice and accountability significantly influenced life sustainability alongside other determinants. These findings demonstrate the relevance of governance mechanisms to institutional and welfare outcomes while also highlighting the importance of examining such relationships within specific geographical and institutional contexts.

Without empirical evidence on these relationships, policymakers may have limited information for determining whether institutional governance mechanisms are effectively translating poverty-alleviation resources and programmes into meaningful improvements in citizens' welfare. Such a situation could allow weaknesses in institutional performance and persistent poverty to continue, thereby undermining efforts towards sustainable poverty alleviation. It is against this background that the study became sacrosanct, as it ascertains the extent to which transparency affect citizens' access to basic social services and determines the extent to which accountability affect citizens' standard of living. The study is therefore positioned to contribute evidence that can inform the strengthening of institutional governance and the improvement of poverty-alleviation efforts in Kaduna State.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design and Study Area

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design because it facilitated the collection of field data without manipulating the study variables and was conducted in Kaduna State, located in the north western part of Nigeria and

has an area of about 46,053 km. It is located between latitudes 8°59'9"N and 11°31'53"N and longitudes 6°4'28"E and 8°49'54"E. There are 23 Local Government in the State, characterized by tropical savanna climate which has rain and dry season (Abubakar et al., 2024). The State has an estimated population of 9,845,077 inhabitants, according to the Nigeria Population Projections and Demographic Indicators (2025), making it an appropriate setting for investigating the phenomenon under study

Sampling Size and Sampling Procedure

The researchers employed Freund and Williams' statistical formula to determine an appropriate sample size. The formula is presented as follows:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 N(pq)}{N(e)^2 + Z^2(pq)}$$

Where n = Sample Size

N = the population

p = Probability of success/proportion

q = Probability of failure/proportion

Z = Standard error of the mean

e = Limit of tolerable error of 0.05 (or level of significance)

$$N = 9,845,077$$

$$p = 0.5$$

$$q = (1 - 0.5) = 0.5$$

$$Z = 95 \text{ percent} = 1.96$$

$$e = 0.05 \text{ percent}$$

$$= \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 9,845,077 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{9,845,077(0.05)^2 + (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}$$

$$\frac{3.8416 \times 9,845,077 \times 0.25}{24,612.6925 + 3.8416 \times 0.25}$$

$$\frac{9,455,211.9508}{24,612.6952 + 0.9604}$$

$$= \frac{9,455,211.9508}{24,613.6556}$$

$$n = 384.1449683240062886$$

Therefore, $n = 384$ citizens to the nearest whole number

Sampling Procedure

To guarantee both representativeness and practicality in the selection of participants throughout Enugu State, the study used a multistage sampling technique. At the first stage, Kaduna State was purposefully divided into its three senatorial zones during the first phase. In order to ensure that the entire state was sufficiently represented both geographically and administratively, this stratification was crucial, as every senatorial district has unique sociocultural and environmental traits that affect how communities view and use indigenous knowledge to address climate change issues. At the second stage, one Local Government Area (LGA) was selected from each of the three Senatorial Districts using simple random sampling. This gave the LGAs within each Senatorial District an equal opportunity of being selected, thereby reducing selection bias and promoting fairness in the sampling process. At the third stage, one community was selected from each of the selected LGAs using convenience sampling. This enabled the researchers to gain access to residents, beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programmes and other citizens who possessed relevant knowledge and experience of government policies, transparency, accountability and the provision of basic social services. At the final stage, 128 eligible adult residents were selected from each of the three selected communities, giving a total sample of 384 respondents. The equal allocation of respondents across the selected communities provided balanced representation and facilitated the collection of information. See table 1

Table 1 Sampling Procedure

S/N	Senatorial Dist.	LGA	Community	Participants
1	Kaduna South	Giwa	Giwa Town	128
2	Kaduna Cental	Igabi	Rigasa	128
3	Kaduna North	Kubau	Anchau	128
Total				384

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Instrument, Validity, Reliability and Analysis Method

A structured questionnaire was employed as the primary instrument for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by experts to ensure that its items adequately represented the study objectives and accurately measured the constructs under investigation. To establish its reliability, a pilot study was conducted outside the main study area

using respondents with characteristics similar to those of the target population. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Inter-Rater Reliability Method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87, indicating that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for the study. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation, based on a 4-point Likert scale, with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29.

ANALYSIS AND REESULTS

Table 2 Respondents' views on extent to which transparency affect citizens' access to basic social services

Item	Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Government transparency improves citizens' access to healthcare services	130	101	67	50	2.89	1.064
2	Public information disclosure enhances access to educational services	129	106	53	60	2.87	1.095
3	Transparent resource allocation improves access to clean water	100	124	66	58	2.76	1.045
4	Open government spending enhances access to sanitation services	107	119	58	64	2.77	1.078
5	Transparency promotes equitable access to basic social services	121	118	61	48	2.90	1.033
Aggregate		587	568	305	280	2.84	1.063

Source: Field Survey, 2026 and SPSS, 29.

Table 2 indicates that respondents perceived transparency as having a high effect on access to basic social services. The aggregate mean of 2.84

exceeds the 2.50 criterion, while the standard deviation of 1.063 indicates moderate variability across the assessed indicators.

Table 3 Respondents' views on extent to which accountability affect citizens' standard of living

Item	Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	Std. Dev.
6	Government accountability improves citizens' household living conditions	111	123	69	45	2.86	1.009
7	Accountable public officials promote effective use of resources	121	105	60	62	2.82	1.097
8	Accountability improves citizens' access to essential necessities	127	99	63	59	2.84	1.097
9	Effective accountability enhances employment and income opportunities	125	107	68	46	2.89	1.047
10	Public accountability contributes to improved citizens' welfare	103	119	65	61	2.76	1.062
Aggregate		587	553	325	273	2.83	1.062

Source: Field Survey, 2026 and SPSS, 29.

Table 3 indicates that respondents perceived accountability as having a high effect on citizens' standard of living. The aggregate mean of 2.83 exceeds the 2.50 criterion, while the standard deviation of 1.062 indicates moderate variability across the assessed accountability indicators.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: Transparency has no significant effect on citizens' access to basic social services

Mean scores of tables 2 were used for this hypothesis

Table 4 One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Hi	96.238	4	.000	2.84026	2.7583	2.9222

SPSS, 29.

Table 4 presents the one-sample t-test examining transparency’s effect on citizens’ access to social services. The t-value of 96.238, with 4 degrees of freedom and $p = .000$, is significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a significant effect on access to basic social services.

Hypothesis Two: Accountability has no significant effect on citizens’ standard of living

Mean scores of tables 3 were used for this hypothesis

Table 5 One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Hii	128.572	4	.000	2.83448	2.7733	2.8957

SPSS, 29.

Table 5 presents the one-sample t-test examining accountability’s effect on citizens’ standard of living. The t-value of 128.572, with 4 degrees of freedom and $p = .000$, is significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a significant overall effect of accountability on citizens’ standard of living

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study established that transparency had a significant effect on citizens’ access to basic social services in Kaduna State, as reflected in the aggregate mean of 2.84 and the significant one-sample t-test result ($t = 96.238$, $p < 0.05$). This finding agrees with Ilawagbon and Ajisebiyawo (2024), who found that e-administration strengthened transparency, accessibility, public scrutiny and accountability in public service delivery in Nigeria. Their finding suggests that when government information, procedures and activities are more open, citizens are better positioned to monitor service delivery and demand appropriate public services. However, the present finding differs from Mogue et al. (2023), whose randomized controlled trial in Uganda found no significant

overall improvement in health, education, infrastructure and public services through community-based monitoring, although agricultural services improved. The difference may arise from variations in governance institutions, mechanisms of citizen participation, implementation capacity and the nature of transparency interventions across the two settings. The present study therefore extends existing knowledge by providing evidence from Enugu State that transparency is perceived to contribute directly to access to healthcare, education, water and sanitation services, thereby linking governance openness with concrete poverty-alleviation outcomes.

The study also found that accountability had a significant effect on citizens’ standard of living in Kaduna State, with an aggregate mean of 2.83 and a significant one-sample t-test result ($t = 128.572$, $p < 0.05$). This finding is consistent with Kibria and Toufique (2023), who examined institutional governance and quality of life across 21 developing countries and reported that voice and accountability positively influenced quality of life. It is also in agreement with Ndako et al. (2025), who found that voice and

accountability significantly influenced life sustainability in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The consistency across these studies indicates that accountable governance may improve welfare by encouraging responsible resource utilization, effective oversight and responsiveness to citizens' needs. The present finding may also be explained by the fact that accountability can reduce opportunities for resources intended for public welfare to be poorly utilized or diverted, thereby improving the delivery of services and opportunities that influence household welfare. The study extends existing knowledge by specifically connecting accountability with citizens' standard of living in Enugu State, rather than examining quality of life or life sustainability at broader levels. It consequently provides location-specific evidence on the governance–welfare relationship.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Good governance remains relevant in the process of poverty alleviation in Kaduna State. Transparency plays an important role in enhancing the access of the citizens to essential social services; accountability plays an important role in raising the standard of living of citizens. These results show that openness, prudent use of resources and responsiveness are significant governance factors which are relevant to poverty alleviation in the State. Increased emphasis on transparency and accountability will be instrumental to the realization of noble achievements in service delivery, living condition and poverty alleviation. Government should reinforce transparency through budget and expenditure reports, which can be supported by the improved access to government information through open data portal, and reinforce accountability through independent audits, monitoring and citizens' inputs through civic feedback, on the use of public resources. The study fills the evidence gap in Kaduna State by examining the relationship between transparency and basic social services outcomes in Kaduna State and between accountability and citizen's standard of living in Kaduna State, thus providing location specific.

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