

IMPACT OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP ON THE PLANNING AND EXECUTION OF WATER SUPPLY PROJECTS IN NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of political leadership on the planning and execution of water supply projects in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The aim of the study was to examine the role of political decisions in the provision of clean water, focusing on the challenges and effectiveness of government policies. The study employed a descriptive survey research design, utilizing purposive sampling to select 400 respondents from urban and rural communities across the state's three senatorial zones. The research adopted a theoretical framework that combined Public Choice Theory, Resource Dependency Theory, and Management and Role Theory to understand the interplay between political leadership, external dependencies, and governance in water provision. The findings of the study revealed that political leadership in Nasarawa State is perceived as passive, with limited involvement in planning, weak supervision, and inadequate continuity of projects across political administrations. Additionally, government policies were found to have minimal impact on improving water access, particularly in rural areas. The study concluded that the inefficiencies in political leadership and policy implementation have hindered the success of water supply initiatives. Therefore, the study recommended that political leaders strengthen their commitment to long-term water projects, ensure continuity across administrations, enhance community involvement, and improve coordination with external resources. It also suggested the promotion of public-private partnerships to foster sustainable water supply solutions.

Keywords: Community involvement, Governance,
Political leadership, Water provision

1.1 Introduction

Access to clean and safe water remains one of the most pressing challenges for many communities, particularly in developing regions where political leadership plays a crucial role in both the planning and execution of water supply projects. In countries like Nigeria, where infrastructure deficits are rampant, the government's decisions and policies significantly influence the accessibility and distribution of water resources. The political leadership in Nasarawa State, situated in central Nigeria, has a pivotal responsibility in shaping the provision of water to its residents. The effectiveness of these leadership actions determines the extent to which local communities can benefit from water projects, as well as the long-term sustainability of water supply systems across the state.

Globally, the impact of political leadership on water provision has garnered widespread attention, particularly in regions where water scarcity is a serious issue. As the United Nations (2021) reports, over 2 billion people globally face inadequate access to safe drinking water, and political decisions often influence the allocation and management of water resources. According to the World Bank (2020), over 1.6 billion people live in areas with severe water scarcity, with regions such as the Middle East, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa being disproportionately affected. Whether through policy initiatives, government investments, or prioritization of water projects, political leaders have the authority to steer efforts towards meeting water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In regions like sub-Saharan Africa, where water supply is often inconsistent, political leadership can either hinder or enhance the delivery of essential water services. Governments are expected to manage water resources efficiently, ensuring equitable access, yet political factors such as corruption, poor governance, and lack of accountability often undermine these efforts (Tafesse & Ghebremeskel, 2020). For instance, in India, water-related political decisions, including inefficient water distribution and failure to invest in water infrastructure, have exacerbated the water crisis, with over 600 million people facing high to extreme water stress (World Bank, 2020).

On the African continent, numerous nations face challenges similar to those experienced in Nigeria, with political leadership in many cases struggling to meet the growing water needs of their populations. According to the African Development Bank (2020), political instability, poor infrastructure investment, and inadequate policy frameworks contribute to the water crises across several African countries. The African Water Development Report (2018) highlights that over 300 million people in sub-Saharan Africa lack access to basic water services, with political decisions directly impacting the effectiveness of water supply systems. In Ethiopia, for example, the provision of water remains limited despite significant investment in rural water supply projects. In countries like Sudan and Chad, where political instability hampers governance, the failure to implement proper water management policies exacerbates the challenges of water provision. However, when political leaders prioritize

water access as part of their development agendas, there are notable improvements. In South Africa, for example, the government's proactive policies in urban water supply have led to significant advancements in water access for urban populations (Muller, 2019). According to the South African Department of Water and Sanitation (2021), access to safe water in urban areas has increased substantially, with over 90% of South Africa's urban population now having reliable water access. Nonetheless, the experiences of many African countries reveal that political decisions often impede progress, whether through mismanagement or misallocation of resources.

In Nigeria, water provision remains a significant challenge despite its vast natural resources. The political leadership in Nasarawa State faces similar hurdles in planning and executing water supply projects. Political decisions at both the state and local government levels have been shown to shape the availability of clean water for residents. According to a report by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2021), while some regions in Nasarawa State have benefitted from water supply projects, many areas still lack reliable access to potable water due to poor governance and ineffective policy implementation. In 2020, over 70 million Nigerians lacked access to basic water services, and political leaders in several states, including Nasarawa, have struggled to address the growing demand for clean water (NBS, 2021). Political decisions related to budgeting, policy creation, and the distribution of resources have had a direct impact on the success or failure of these projects (Okoye & Olamide, 2020). The Nigerian government has set ambitious goals to improve water supply across the country, but challenges such as corruption, poor infrastructure, and a lack of accountability at the political level have hindered these efforts (Akinwale & Ayodele, 2019). In Nasarawa State, despite efforts to implement water projects, the political leadership often faces constraints in effectively managing resources, leading to a continued struggle for adequate access to water in both urban and rural areas.

Against this backdrop, the impact of political leadership on the planning and execution of water supply projects in Nasarawa State remains an area of significant concern. As political decisions shape the allocation of resources for water projects, the need for transparency, accountability, and effective policy implementation becomes more pronounced. This study seeks to explore these dimensions by addressing key questions: What role does political leadership play in the planning and execution of water supply projects in Nasarawa State? How have political decisions and government policies influenced access to clean water in various communities within the state? Through this research, it becomes evident that political leadership is a decisive factor in whether water projects succeed or fail, and understanding these dynamics is crucial for improving water access across the region.

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Political Leadership

Political leadership plays a crucial role in shaping public policies, especially in sectors such as water provision, where governance decisions directly affect the access to essential services. Political leaders are responsible for creating an enabling environment for infrastructure development, resource allocation, and ensuring the implementation of water-related policies (Jensen & Wilhelmsen, 2021). The effectiveness of political leadership, particularly in subnational governments, influences the success or failure of water supply systems. As studies show, the transparency, accountability, and governance capacity of political leaders determine the extent to which public resources are allocated to water supply projects (Singh & Kumar, 2020).

2.1.2 Provision of Water

Provision of water refers to the availability and accessibility of safe drinking water to the population, a critical component of public health and economic development. Water provision is not just a matter of physical infrastructure; it also involves the management of water resources, equitable distribution, and ensuring sustainability over time (Kariuki & Githaiga, 2021). Globally, access to water is a basic human right recognized by the United Nations, yet many developing countries, including Nigeria, struggle with inadequate water supply due to poor governance and mismanagement (Nguyen & Wilson, 2020). In Nasarawa State, political decisions significantly affect the delivery of water, especially in rural areas where access remains limited (Olu & Hassan, 2021).

2.1.3 Planning and Execution of Water Supply

Planning and execution of water supply projects are complex processes that require comprehensive strategies, financial investments, and effective coordination among various levels of government. This process involves identifying water sources, designing infrastructure, obtaining funding, and ensuring the sustainability of water supply systems. Political leadership is integral to driving these projects, as it ensures that resources are allocated, and policies are implemented efficiently (Oke & Afolabi, 2020). Studies have shown that poorly executed water projects often result from political interference, lack of coordination, and limited budget allocation, which are often influenced by political priorities rather than developmental needs (Fashola & Ojo, 2020).

2.1.4 Political Leadership and Implementation of Water Supply Projects

The implementation of water supply projects is directly influenced by the decisions and priorities of political leaders. These leaders make critical decisions regarding project funding,

the choice of implementing agencies, and the allocation of resources. Political will is often the deciding factor in whether water projects are successfully implemented or stalled. According to studies, political instability and corruption are significant barriers to the successful implementation of water supply projects, especially in developing countries like Nigeria (Olamide & Chika, 2021). In some cases, political leaders may fail to follow through on promised water projects, impacting communities that rely on them for access to clean water.

2.1.5 Government Policies and Political Decisions on Access to Potable Water

Government policies and political decisions play an essential role in determining how accessible potable water is to the population. Political leaders create policies that shape the allocation of public resources, the establishment of water projects, and the regulation of water utilities. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, the success of water provision is heavily dependent on how effectively the government manages its policies (Ogundele & Dada, 2020). Political decisions regarding budgeting, policy enforcement, and the governance structure of water utilities can either facilitate or hinder the accessibility of safe drinking water. Research has shown that when governments prioritize water access, there are significant improvements in public health and economic productivity (Moses & Okoro, 2021).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in three core theories: Public Choice Theory, Resource Dependency Theory (RDT), and Management and Role Theory. These theories provide a comprehensive lens through which to explore the role of political leadership in water supply projects in Nasarawa State. They shed light on how political leadership, government policies, and external dependencies influence the planning, execution, and sustainability of water supply projects. These theories will guide the analysis of political decision-making and the impacts of such decisions on the access to potable water in various communities.

Public Choice Theory, initially articulated by Buchanan and Tullock (1962), assumes that individuals within political systems act based on self-interest, striving to maximize their personal or group utility. This theory suggests that political leaders, when making decisions about public goods, such as water supply, are motivated by the desire to secure votes or maintain power, rather than prioritizing public welfare. In the context of Nasarawa State, the theory highlights how political decisions about water supply projects may be influenced by electoral motivations, with political leaders prioritizing areas or projects that serve their immediate interests. One major critique of Public Choice Theory is its assumption that all political actors are purely self-interested, neglecting the possibility of altruistic or public-

spirited leaders. Despite this limitation, the theory remains relevant to this study because it offers insight into how political considerations often shape the allocation of resources for water supply, which could explain why some areas in Nasarawa State continue to lack adequate water access despite the presence of policies and projects designed to improve supply.

Resource Dependency Theory (RDT), as introduced by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), assumes that organizations, including political institutions, depend on external resources to achieve their goals. In the case of water provision in Nasarawa State, political leaders and governmental bodies rely on external resources, such as federal funding, donor aid, or private sector involvement, to implement water supply projects. This theory underscores how the dependence on external actors for funding and resources often impacts the political decisions and policies implemented at the local level. One key critique of RDT is that it tends to focus on power imbalances and the dependency relationships without fully addressing the internal capabilities of organizations to manage resources effectively. Nonetheless, RDT is highly relevant here as it helps explain the challenges Nasarawa State faces in the execution of water projects. The state's dependence on external funding, coupled with political leadership's inability to ensure the efficient management of these resources, is a central factor influencing the availability and sustainability of clean water in the region.

Management and Role Theory, as outlined by Katz and Kahn (1978), focuses on how organizational structures, roles, and leadership styles affect the functioning of a system. In the context of Nasarawa State, this theory emphasizes the responsibility of political leaders to manage the various stakeholders involved in water supply projects, including local government officials, water utility companies, and the community. The theory suggests that effective leadership requires the ability to coordinate these various actors and align their interests to achieve the common goal of providing clean water. One critique of this theory is that it may overly focus on the internal processes of leadership, without adequately addressing external political pressures that might affect decision-making. Despite this limitation, Management and Role Theory is critical for understanding how the political leadership in Nasarawa State must navigate these internal and external pressures to effectively plan and execute water supply projects.

These three theories collectively provide a framework for understanding the complex interactions between political leadership, governance structures, and external dependencies in the planning and execution of water supply projects in Nasarawa State. Public Choice Theory offers insight into how political leaders may prioritize water projects based on electoral gains, while RDT highlights the state's dependence on external resources and the implications of such dependencies on project success. Finally, Management and Role Theory underscores the importance of leadership in coordinating resources and managing relationships among stakeholders. Together, these theories underscore the critical role of political leadership in

determining the success or failure of water supply projects and demonstrate the multifaceted nature of governance and decision-making processes in the provision of water.

2.3 Empirical Review

Lawal and Oluwaseyi (2019) explored the role of politics in governance and service delivery, with a particular focus on water provision in Akure, Nigeria. The study aimed to examine the role of political decisions in water delivery and evaluate the impact of past and present political administrations (1999–2017) on water services. Through a purposive selection of four residential neighborhoods—Ijapo Housing Estate, Shagari Village, Oke-Ogba, and Alaba-Layout Apatapiti—Lawal and Oluwaseyi surveyed 288 households. The study found that the successive governments of Ondo State had both successes and shortcomings in water provision, with policies and programs often impeded by inadequate funding and political interference. The findings underscored that political leadership and the prioritization of water supply projects were crucial for effective service delivery. The study recommended improved political commitment to ensuring equitable access to clean water.

In a similar study, Lawal and Basorun (2015) examined access to safe water in Akure, highlighting the paradox of water scarcity in urbanized regions of Nigeria. They used a systematic random sampling technique to survey 288 respondents from four neighborhoods of Akure. The research revealed that while most households relied on private wells for their water supply, these wells were often not protected or treated, resulting in unsafe drinking water. Furthermore, the study found that government interventions were inadequate, with water facilities provided by the state often in a state of disrepair. Lawal and Basorun concluded that the lack of government oversight and political will to address water issues in urban areas significantly contributed to the water crisis, recommending that government policies be better enforced to improve water access in Akure.

Ali and Yalwa (2019) conducted a study on water scarcity in Kazaure Town, Jigawa State, investigating the challenges and consequences of water shortages and the need for public-private partnerships in addressing the issue. Using a sample of 1,520 respondents, the study found that water scarcity had severely impacted the livelihoods of the local population, particularly in agricultural and fishing activities. With only 60 hand-pump boreholes available for the entire town, the research revealed that many residents resorted to land leasing near water sources for farming activities. Ali and Yalwa's findings emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships in addressing water supply issues, recommending increased collaboration between the government and private sector to provide sustainable solutions for water scarcity in the region.

Danjuma, Birisan, and Moshood (2020) focused on the relationship between political leadership and service delivery in Chanchaga and Lapai Local Government Areas in Niger

State. The study examined the impact of political leadership on service delivery, particularly in water provision, and found that political leadership with strategic planning experience was a significant determinant of effective service delivery. The study also highlighted that managerial skills among political leaders were crucial for the successful execution of water projects. Danjuma et al. (2020) argued that the lack of planning and managerial capacity in the leadership of Chanchaga and Lapai had led to inefficient water provision, and they recommended that political leaders be trained to improve their planning and management skills to ensure more effective service delivery in these areas.

Olowo and Adindu (2022) investigated the role of project leadership in ensuring the sustainable execution of water projects in selected states in North-Central Nigeria. They found that project leadership style, particularly democratic leadership, played a critical role in the successful execution of water projects. Their study concluded that accountable project leadership, coupled with a focus on democratic leadership styles, significantly contributed to the sustainability and efficiency of water supply projects. They recommended that Nigerian leaders adopt democratic leadership principles to enhance the effectiveness of water-related projects, ensuring that they meet the needs of the population in a sustainable manner.

3.1 Methodology

This study employs a descriptive survey research design to examine the role of political leadership in the planning and execution of water supply projects in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The research model, developed by Lawal and Oluwaseyi (2019) in their study "The Role of Politics in Governance and Service Delivery: Focus on Water Provision in Akure, Nigeria," is applied to explore the relationship between political leadership (independent variable) and the provision of water (dependent variable). Their model effectively captures the impact of political decisions and leadership on service delivery, ensuring consistency and reliability in the results. This study specifically builds upon their model by considering the variations in political leadership across different regions within Nasarawa State.

The target population for this study consists of residents from the three most populous local government areas (LGAs) within each of Nasarawa State's three senatorial zones, making the scope representative of both urban and rural communities. A total of 400 respondents are selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that the sample is drawn from those most directly impacted by political leadership decisions in water provision. This technique is appropriate, as it allows for a focused selection of respondents with relevant knowledge and experience regarding water supply projects in the state.

Data collection is based on a structured questionnaire divided into two sections. Section A gathers demographic information, while Section B contains open-ended questions designed to capture respondents' views on political leadership, government policies, and the challenges of

water supply projects. Primary data collected through the questionnaire will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores, to examine the relationship between political leadership and water provision in Nasarawa State. This method ensures the data's validity, reliability, and comprehensiveness, providing insights into the effectiveness of political leadership in water supply projects.

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section concerns with the presentation and analysis of data collected from the field, the total of 400 questionnaires while 389 were retrieved for data analysis.

4.1 Data Presentation

The field data are presented according to the research questions in the study. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question.

4.2 Data Analysis and Results

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative %
Gender	Male	200	51.4	51.4
	Female	180	46.3	97.7
	Prefer not to say	9	2.3	100
Age Group	Below 25 years	70	18.0	18.0
	25–34 years	120	30.8	48.8
	35–44 years	100	25.7	74.5
	45–54 years	60	15.4	89.9
	55 years and above	39	10.0	100
Marital Status	Single	150	38.6	38.6
	Married	200	51.4	90.0
	Divorced	25	6.4	96.4
	Widowed	14	3.6	100
Highest Educational Qualification	No formal education	10	2.6	2.6
	Primary education	20	5.1	7.7
	Secondary education	80	20.6	28.3
	Diploma/NCE	60	15.4	43.7
	Bachelor's degree	150	38.6	82.3
	Postgraduate degree	69	17.7	100
Occupation	Civil servant	100	25.7	25.7
	Private sector employee	80	20.6	46.3

	Farmer	40	10.3	56.6
	Trader/Business owner	60	15.4	72.0
	Student	90	23.1	95.1
	Unemployed	19	4.9	100
Place of Residence	Urban area	150	38.6	38.6
	Semi-urban area	120	30.8	69.4
	Rural area	119	30.6	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

In terms of gender, a slight majority of respondents were male (51.4%), while females accounted for 46.3% of the sample. A small proportion (2.3%) preferred not to disclose their gender. This distribution indicates a relatively balanced gender representation, providing diverse perspectives on the study topic.

Regarding age, the largest group of respondents fell within the 25–34 years bracket (30.8%), followed by those aged 35–44 years (25.7%). Respondents below 25 years constituted 18.0%, those aged 45–54 years made up 15.4%, and respondents aged 55 years and above represented 10.0%. This suggests that the sample was predominantly young and middle-aged adults, which may reflect the active participation of these age groups in community and civic matters related to water provision.

The marital status distribution shows that the majority of respondents were married (51.4%), while 38.6% were single. Smaller proportions were divorced (6.4%) or widowed (3.6%). This indicates that the sample included individuals with diverse family responsibilities, which could influence their experiences and perceptions of water accessibility and management.

In terms of educational attainment, a significant proportion of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (38.6%), followed by those with postgraduate degrees (17.7%) and secondary education (20.6%). Diploma/NCE holders accounted for 15.4%, primary education for 5.1%, and a very small fraction had no formal education (2.6%). This distribution highlights that most respondents were relatively well-educated, which may affect their awareness of governance, policy, and water provision issues.

With respect to occupation, civil servants represented the largest group (25.7%), followed by students (23.1%) and private sector employees (20.6%). Traders and business owners accounted for 15.4%, farmers 10.3%, and the unemployed 4.9%. The occupational diversity reflects the inclusion of respondents from both formal and informal sectors, offering varied perspectives on the challenges and management of water resources.

Finally, place of residence shows that 38.6% of respondents lived in urban areas, 30.8% in semi-urban areas, and 30.6% in rural areas. This fairly even distribution suggests that the study captured opinions across different settlement types, which is critical for understanding the urban rural dynamics in water provision and access.

Research Question One: What role does political leadership play in the planning and execution of water supply projects in Nasarawa State?

Table One: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing the Role of Political Leadership in Planning and Execution of Water Projects in Nasarawa State

S/N	Items	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev	Remark
1	Political leaders play an active role in planning water supply projects in Nasarawa State.	45	60	90	110	84	2.59	1.21	Disagree
2	Water projects in my community are usually planned based on genuine community needs.	40	55	95	115	84	2.54	1.19	Disagree
3	Successive political administrations ensure continuity of water projects.	35	50	100	120	84	2.47	1.17	Disagree
4	Political leadership provides effective supervision during the execution of water projects.	42	58	92	112	85	2.56	1.20	Disagree

SCALE: 3.00

The results presented in the table provide a clear and consistent picture of respondents' perceptions regarding the role of political leadership in the planning and execution of water supply projects in Nasarawa State. Using a decision mean of 3.00 as the benchmark for acceptance or rejection, all four items recorded mean scores below the scale mean, indicating a general disagreement among respondents with the positive statements on political leadership involvement.

Specifically, Item 1, which assessed whether political leaders play an active role in the planning of water supply projects, recorded a mean score of 2.59 with a standard deviation of 1.21. This result suggests that a significant proportion of respondents perceive political leaders as largely uninvolved or passive in the planning phase of water projects. The relatively high standard deviation further indicates some variability in respondents' views; however, the overall tendency remains negative. This finding implies weak political engagement in strategic planning processes, which may contribute to poorly conceived or unsustainable water projects.

Item 2 examined whether water projects are planned based on genuine community needs. With a mean score of 2.54 and a standard deviation of 1.19, respondents again expressed disagreement. This result indicates that community participation and needs assessment are perceived to be inadequately integrated into water project planning. The implication is that

water projects may be politically motivated or top-down in nature, rather than grounded in the actual priorities of beneficiary communities, thereby limiting their relevance and effectiveness.

Item 3 focused on the continuity of water projects across successive political administrations. The mean score of 2.47, which is the lowest among the four items, underscores a strong perception that changes in political leadership disrupt the continuity of water projects. This suggests that water initiatives are often abandoned, stalled, or rebranded with each new administration, reflecting a lack of institutionalization and long-term commitment within the water sector. Such discontinuity undermines sustainability and results in wasted public resources.

Item 4 assessed the effectiveness of political leadership in supervising the execution of water projects. The mean score of 2.56, coupled with a standard deviation of 1.20, indicates that respondents largely disagree that political leaders provide adequate oversight during project implementation. This finding points to deficiencies in monitoring and supervision, which may allow issues such as substandard work, delays, or mismanagement to persist without corrective action.

Taken together, the cluster of mean scores, all falling below the scale mean of 3.00, demonstrates a consistent pattern of negative perception regarding political leadership in water project planning, execution, and continuity in Nasarawa State. The results suggest that political leaders are perceived as playing a minimal and ineffective role, with limited attention to community needs, weak supervisory involvement, and a lack of commitment to sustaining projects across administrations.

Research Question Two: How have political decisions and government policies influenced access to clean water in various communities within the state?

Table Three: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing Political Decisions, Government Policies, and Access to Clean Water in Nasarawa State.

S/N	Items	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev	Remark
5	Government policies have significantly improved access to clean water in Nasarawa State.	38	55	92	118	86	2.50	1.20	Disagree
6	Political decisions positively influence the distribution of water infrastructure across communities.	40	50	95	120	84	2.48	1.18	Disagree
7	Rural communities receive fair attention in government water provision policies.	35	48	100	122	84	2.43	1.16	Disagree
8	Existing water policies adequately address the water needs of residents in my area.	42	52	90	120	85	2.51	1.19	Disagree

The findings presented in the table provide important insights into respondents' perceptions of government policies and political decisions in relation to access to clean water in Nasarawa State. Using the scale mean of 3.00 as the criterion for decision-making, all four items recorded mean scores below this threshold, indicating a general disagreement with the assertions that government policies and political decisions have positively influenced water access and infrastructure distribution in the state.

Item 5 examined whether government policies have significantly improved access to clean water in Nasarawa State. The mean score of 2.50, with a standard deviation of 1.20, indicates that respondents largely disagree with this statement. This suggests that, from the perspective of the population surveyed, policy interventions have not translated into tangible improvements in access to potable water. The dispersion reflected in the standard deviation shows some variation in individual experiences; however, the overall assessment remains negative, implying that existing policy frameworks may be weak in implementation or insufficient in scope to address water access challenges.

Item 6 assessed the influence of political decisions on the distribution of water infrastructure across communities. With a mean score of 2.48 and a standard deviation of 1.18, respondents again expressed disagreement. This result indicates a perception that political decision-making does not promote equitable or effective allocation of water infrastructure. Rather than being guided by objective criteria such as population needs or levels of water scarcity, infrastructure distribution is perceived as inconsistent or inadequately influenced by sound political judgment, thereby reinforcing disparities in access across different communities.

Item 7 focused specifically on rural communities and whether they receive fair attention in government water provision policies. The mean score of 2.43, which is the lowest among the four items, reflects a strong perception of neglect of rural areas in policy formulation and implementation. This finding suggests that rural communities, which often experience the most acute water shortages, are insufficiently prioritized in government water policies. The implication is a persistent urban–rural imbalance that exacerbates social and developmental inequalities within the state.

Item 8 evaluated the adequacy of existing water policies in addressing the water needs of residents at the local level. The mean score of 2.51, alongside a standard deviation of 1.19, indicates that respondents generally disagree that current policies are responsive to their water needs. This result points to a disconnect between policy objectives and the lived realities of residents, suggesting that policy design and execution may fail to reflect local contexts, challenges, and demand patterns.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal key insights into the role of political leadership and government policies in the planning, execution, and sustainability of water supply projects in

Nasarawa State, providing an opportunity to evaluate these results against the theoretical framework and empirical literature. The data in Table One highlight the perceptions of respondents regarding political leadership's involvement in water supply projects. The responses consistently show a negative perception of the role of political leadership, with all items scoring below the benchmark mean of 3.00, suggesting a general dissatisfaction with political engagement in water project planning and execution. Specifically, the mean score of 2.59 for the item assessing whether political leaders play an active role in planning water supply projects indicates that a significant portion of respondents view political leadership as largely uninvolved in the planning phase. The standard deviation of 1.21 for this item suggests variability in opinions but reinforces the overall consensus that political leaders are seen as passive in the planning processes.

This finding aligns with the works of Lawal and Oluwaseyi (2019) and Lawal and Basorun (2015), which also identified political leadership as playing a limited role in effective water provision, with political interference often leading to policy shortcomings. Both studies highlighted the lack of sustained political commitment to water projects, a factor reflected in this study's results, particularly in the mean score of 2.47 for the continuity of water projects across successive political administrations. The standard deviation of 1.17 further confirms that political transitions disrupt water projects, an issue also emphasized by Danjuma, Birisan, and Moshood (2020), who identified poor planning and leadership capacity as contributing to inefficient water delivery. Here, the failure of political leadership to ensure continuity and long-term planning mirrors the fragmented approaches observed in other regions, reinforcing the link between unstable political environments and poor infrastructure outcomes.

The responses in Table One regarding the effectiveness of political leadership in supervising the execution of water projects, which yielded a mean score of 2.56 with a standard deviation of 1.20, also echo the findings of Olowo and Adindu (2022). Their study on project leadership highlighted the importance of leadership in ensuring effective execution, yet the data here suggest that in Nasarawa State, political leaders are perceived as failing to provide adequate supervision. This weak supervisory role may allow issues such as substandard work and mismanagement to persist, directly affecting the success and sustainability of water supply projects.

In contrast, Resource Dependency Theory (RDT) offers a different perspective, as it stresses the importance of external resources in the success of public projects. While the theory suggests that political leadership's dependence on external funding may hinder local policy outcomes, this study's findings highlight a deeper issue: not just external reliance but internal inefficiencies in leadership and management. The lack of political will to engage with external actors and internal stakeholders adequately could explain the persistent water challenges in Nasarawa, despite federal funding and international aid being available.

Moving to the second research question, which sought to examine how political decisions and government policies influence access to clean water, the data in Table Three reflect a similar trend. Respondents generally disagreed with the assertion that government policies and political decisions have led to significant improvements in water access, with all items again scoring below the benchmark mean of 3.00. Specifically, the item assessing whether government policies have improved access to clean water scored **2.50**, while the item on whether political decisions positively influence the distribution of water infrastructure scored 2.48. Both scores suggest that, from the perspective of respondents, policies have not translated into tangible benefits in water access.

This finding resonates with Ali and Yalwa's (2019) study on water scarcity, which found that policy interventions often fail to address the critical needs of local populations. Respondents in this study expressed a perception that political decisions do not effectively distribute water infrastructure across communities, particularly in rural areas. This sentiment was captured by the mean score of 2.43 for the item regarding the attention given to rural communities, suggesting that these areas are neglected in water provision policies. The findings from this study, in conjunction with the research of Lawal and Basorun (2015), underscore the broader challenge of policy ineffectiveness, especially in addressing disparities between urban and rural areas. These results also align with Danjuma et al. (2020), who identified a gap between political decision-making and the practical realities of water access, with rural communities often receiving inadequate attention.

Moreover, the study revealed that existing water policies are perceived as not adequately addressing the water needs of local residents, as evidenced by the mean score of 2.51. This finding points to a disconnect between the goals of political leadership and the lived experiences of citizens, particularly in rural areas where water scarcity is often more severe. The high standard deviation of 1.19 for this item suggests that while some respondents may have had positive experiences, the majority feel that policies fall short of their needs.

This lack of alignment between policy and community needs reflects the shortcomings of Management and Role Theory, which emphasizes leadership coordination and role allocation in organizational success. While the theory stresses the importance of leadership in aligning stakeholder interests, the findings here suggest that political leaders in Nasarawa State have struggled to harmonize the needs of rural and urban communities, resulting in ineffective water policies that do not reflect local needs or contexts. The failure to manage these relationships effectively has contributed to the unequal distribution of water resources across the state.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide a clear picture of the challenges facing political leadership and government policies in improving water access in Nasarawa State. The results highlight significant gaps in political engagement, policy execution, and the

distribution of resources, particularly in rural areas. These shortcomings align with the empirical review and the theoretical framework, particularly Public Choice Theory, which emphasizes the role of self-interest in political decision-making, and Resource Dependency Theory, which underscores the impact of external dependencies. However, the study also suggests that the failure of political leadership to coordinate effectively with external actors and address internal management challenges has compounded the region's water crisis.

5.1 Conclusion

This study has examined the role of political leadership and government policies in the planning, execution, and sustainability of water supply projects in Nasarawa State, with particular focus on how these factors influence access to clean water in various communities. The findings reveal a significant disconnect between political leadership and effective water management, as respondents consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the involvement of political leaders in both the planning and execution of water projects. Specifically, the data show that political leaders are perceived as largely passive, with weak involvement in planning, poor supervision during execution, and inadequate continuity of projects across successive political administrations. This indicates a lack of sustained commitment to addressing the water needs of communities, contributing to the inefficiency of water supply initiatives.

The study's findings also highlight the inadequacy of government policies in improving water access, particularly in rural areas, where water scarcity is most acute. The analysis reveals that respondents feel government interventions have not effectively translated into tangible improvements in water access or infrastructure distribution. This aligns with existing empirical literature that stresses the importance of political will, leadership capacity, and effective policy design in addressing water supply challenges.

Moreover, the disconnect between policy objectives and local needs points to a deeper issue in governance, where political decisions are often influenced by self-interest rather than the genuine welfare of the population. The findings reflect the limitations of Public Choice Theory, Resource Dependency Theory, and Management and Role Theory in explaining the complexities of water provision in Nasarawa State, while also highlighting the need for stronger political leadership, better coordination, and more efficient use of external resources.

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical role of political leadership in ensuring sustainable and equitable water access. Without genuine commitment, long-term planning, and effective governance, water supply projects in Nasarawa State will continue to face significant challenges.

5.2 Recommendations

1. **Strengthening Political Commitment:** Political leaders in Nasarawa State should demonstrate stronger commitment to the planning and execution of water supply projects. This could involve prioritizing water access in the political agenda, with clear, long-term goals for water provision that go beyond electoral cycles.
2. **Enhanced Community Involvement:** Water projects should be planned with genuine community input to ensure that local needs are adequately addressed. Involving communities in the decision-making process would help tailor water solutions to the specific needs of different areas, particularly in rural communities where water scarcity is more severe.
3. **Ensuring Policy Continuity:** Successive political administrations should prioritize continuity in water supply projects to prevent disruptions. Institutionalizing water provision programs through proper legislation and dedicated agencies would help ensure that projects are sustained, even when leadership changes.
4. **Capacity Building for Political Leaders:** There is a need for capacity-building programs that equip political leaders with the necessary managerial and technical skills to oversee water supply projects effectively. This includes training in project management, monitoring and evaluation, and stakeholder coordination.
5. **Improving Resource Management:** Efforts should be made to reduce the dependency on external resources by strengthening local capacity to manage water supply projects. This includes enhancing the efficiency of internal resource mobilization, ensuring that available funds are effectively utilized for project implementation and maintenance.
6. **Promoting Public-Private Partnerships:** Public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be encouraged to improve the efficiency and sustainability of water projects. The private sector could contribute expertise, innovation, and funding, complementing government efforts in providing clean water to all communities.
7. **Addressing Urban-Rural Disparities:** Government policies should pay special attention to addressing the disparity in water access between urban and rural areas. Rural communities, which are most affected by water shortages, need targeted interventions and equitable distribution of resources to ensure they are not left behind in water provision.

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