

Research Article

Interplay of Strategic Vision and Leadership Communication in the Nigerian Public Sector

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Abstract: The study considered the Interplay of Strategic Vision and Leadership Communication in Driving Public Sector Reform in Nigeria. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were gathered using structured questionnaires administered to 210 employees in various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). The study assessed the roles of strategic vision, leadership communication, and employee empowerment in driving successful change initiatives. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis revealed that strategic leadership has a positive influence on organizational changes. Whereas communication by leadership decreases resistance to change, employee participation and empowerment maximize engagement and reform sustainability. This suggests a need for public sector leaders to engage with change intentionally, through a vision, and inclusivity. Therefore, the study maintains that strategic leadership is paramount for the successful implementation of reforms in public institutions and recommends disseminating leadership development and research among various governmental and private institutions for comparative purposes.

Keywords: leadership communication; Nigerian public sector reform; strategic vision

1. Introduction

Since gaining independence, Nigeria's public sector has undergone numerous reform programmes aimed at enhancing service delivery, accountability, and efficiency. However, despite these efforts, the intended outcomes have often remained elusive. Navigating these persistent challenges and driving effective organizational change has increasingly required strategic leadership, defined as the ability to influence others to voluntarily make decisions that enhance the organization's long-term success and sustainability (Owotemu et al., 2024).

One of the major constraints to successful strategic change in the Nigerian public sector is leadership discontinuity. Frequent leadership changes disrupt the continuity of reform agendas, often resulting in stalled or reversed initiatives. As former President Olusegun Obasanjo aptly noted, "*The greatest bane of reforms is the discontinuity of personnel.*" Without consistent leadership and institutional memory, reform momentum is frequently lost (Ofofwe & Adetokunbo, 2024).

Institutional fragility is another significant impediment. A weak institutional environment, characterized by impunity, inefficiency, and inadequate accountability, undermines reform efforts. Dr. Joe Abah succinctly emphasized the urgency for action: "*We require a sense of motion. We must sense that something is taking place.*" In the absence of robust institutions, sustaining long-term change remains a major challenge (Akinyetun, 2022). Compounding this is corruption, which not only siphons public resources but also erodes trust and impairs reform credibility (Adamaagashi et al., 2024).

Bureaucratic inertia further obstructs reform implementation. Deeply embedded processes, resistance to innovation, and rigid administrative cultures hinder the adoption of new strategies and the realization of reform objectives (Damawan & Azizah, 2020). Nigeria's overly bureaucratic public service has thus been a major barrier to timely and effective service delivery (El-Taliawi, 2018).

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This study is grounded in the dual concepts of strategic leadership and organizational change management. Strategic leadership involves articulating a compelling vision, mobilizing resources, and engaging stakeholders to achieve long-term goals. Organizational change management refers to the structured approach of transitioning individuals, teams, and institutions from their current operational states to desired future conditions.

Significantly, this research investigates how strategic vision and leadership communication interact to either support or hinder organizational change in the Nigerian public sector. Strategic vision provides purpose and direction, while leadership communication serves as the mechanism through which this vision is effectively conveyed, reinforced, and operationalized across organizational levels.

According to Obasa (2018), the persistent dysfunctions in Nigeria's public sector underscore the need for leadership that is not only visionary but also communicatively effective in translating that vision into actionable reform. Therefore, this study explores how a clearly defined strategic vision influences resistance to change and how leadership communication practices affect employee acceptance, engagement, and sustainability of reforms.

While existing research has examined the roles of leadership communication and strategic vision in facilitating organizational change, few empirical studies have addressed their combined effect within the unique context of developing countries, especially Nigeria's complex and evolving public sector. This study addresses that gap by integrating theoretical insights from transformational and contingency leadership frameworks and applying them to an empirical analysis of 210 public sector employees. In doing so, it provides a nuanced understanding of how these two leadership components interplay to influence change management outcomes in fragile institutional environments. The study's findings contribute to the literature by offering context-specific evidence and practical recommendations that inform leadership development, policy design, and reform sustainability in emerging economies.

Understanding this interplay is critical for designing reform strategies that are contextually grounded and more likely to succeed. By highlighting the synergy between strategic vision and leadership communication, this research offers new insights into how Nigerian public institutions can overcome inertia, build internal capacity, and deliver more citizen-centered services.

Nigeria's public sector has undergone decades of change, but the expected gains in effectiveness, accountability, and service delivery have not been fully realized. The success rate of organizational transformation in public institutions remains surprisingly low, despite the launch of various reform projects. This persistent challenge highlights the need for a thorough analysis of the underlying causes of stalled reform initiatives (Nwekeaku & Obiorah, 2019; Nwosu & Ananti, 2024).

One of the most pressing issues is the absence of leadership continuity. Frequent leadership transitions disrupt long-term reform objectives, often causing initiatives to stall or reverse. Without steady leadership and institutional memory, reforms lack the momentum required for sustained change. This challenge is compounded by the lack of robust and independent institutions capable of enforcing rules and maintaining accountability, which fosters a culture of impunity and inefficiency (Azoro et al., 2021).

Corruption continues to be a critical issue in Nigeria's public sector. As noted by Adamaagashi et al. (2024), government appointments are often shaped by business deals and familial ties, leading to favoritism, mismanagement of public funds, and diminished public trust. This deeply rooted culture of patronage discourages merit-based performance and weakens institutional effectiveness.

Bureaucratic inertia also poses a significant barrier to reform. Resistance to change, coupled with outdated and overly complex procedures, has slowed down service delivery and encouraged inefficiencies, corruption, and lack of accountability (Damawan & Azizah, 2020).

Although several studies have examined leadership challenges in Nigeria's public sector (Anekwe, 2020; Chioke, 2023; Adegoke & Olatunji, 2020), relatively little empirical attention has been given to the role of strategic leadership, particularly the impact of strategic vision and leadership communication on organizational change management. Strategic leadership, defined as the ability to influence others to make voluntary decisions that enhance long-term organizational success and sustainability, remains underexplored in the Nigerian reform context.

It is a strategic vision, which brings direction and purpose; however, the effectiveness of the strategy is indeed determined by the extent to which it has been communicated to an

organization. Poor communication of strategic intent would lead to confusion, resistance to change, and, hence, implementation failure, particularly in complex bureaucracies such as Nigeria's public sector.

To fill this critical gap, this study empirically investigates how strategic vision and leadership communication interact to influence organizational change in Nigeria's public sector. By exploring this interplay, the study aims to uncover leadership practices that can support or hinder reform efforts. The findings are expected to contribute to the design of targeted leadership strategies that can improve public sector performance, accountability, and service delivery.

Despite extensive reform efforts, Nigeria's public sector continues to face persistent failures due to systemic leadership gaps and institutional weaknesses. A deeper understanding of the interdependent roles of vision and communication in strategic leadership is essential for designing reforms that deliver meaningful, sustainable impact.

Therefore, the research questions concern the following:

(1) How does strategic vision influence the implementation of public sector reform in Nigeria?

(2) What role does leadership communication play in managing resistance to reform in Nigeria's public institutions?

The research objectives include:

(1) To assess the influence of strategic vision on the implementation of public sector reform in Nigeria.

(2) To evaluate the role of leadership communication in managing resistance to reform in Nigeria's public institutions.

And the research hypotheses are presented as follows:

H₀₁: Strategic vision does not significantly influence the implementation of public sector reform in Nigeria.

H₀₂: Leadership communication has no significant effect on resistance to public sector reform in Nigeria's public institutions.

H₀₃: Leadership communication mediates the effect of vision on resistance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Framework

Strategic leadership plays a vital role in guiding organizations through complex reforms, particularly within the public sector. It encompasses the ability to define a clear direction, mobilize resources, and influence people to pursue collective goals. A central aspect of strategic leadership is the articulation of a compelling strategic vision, which helps align organizational efforts and provides a roadmap for reform (Habeeb & Eyupoglu, 2024; Singh et al., 2023).

According to Habeeb and Eyupoglu (2024), strategic planning improves transformational leadership, which in turn enhances organizational performance. This finding highlights the importance of visionary leadership in driving change. Similarly, Ameen et al. (2023) found that leadership styles such as transformational and democratic leadership are more effective in advancing organizational objectives compared to autocratic approaches, reinforcing the need for leadership practices that support reform.

In the Nigerian context, studies have confirmed that strategic leadership has a positive impact on performance in public institutions. Leaders who offer a strong strategic vision and align it with organizational goals foster clarity, commitment, and improved performance outcomes. This brings forth the idea that it's not just about plans; rather, public sector reforms require a strong vision that attracts support and steers it during challenges (Aboramadan & Kundi, 2020).

Equally critical is leadership communication, the process through which strategic vision is conveyed and reinforced throughout an organization. Effective leadership communication fosters trust, clarifies expectations, and addresses resistance to change, all of which are vital in implementing public sector reforms. While much attention has been given to leadership styles, less emphasis has been placed on how communication practices shape the success or failure of change initiatives (Karie & Kulmiye, 2023).

Eduzor (2024) notes that transformational leadership, which involves open communication and employee engagement, significantly improves service delivery and morale in Nigerian ministries. In contrast, Akpa et al. (2021) observed that transactional styles, which lack communicative engagement, can contribute to stagnation and low motivation among

public servants. This suggests that the method and clarity of communication used by leaders play a central role in reform outcomes.

Therefore, the interplay between strategic vision and leadership communication is essential to understanding how reforms are accepted, resisted, or sustained in public institutions. Vision without communication can lead to misunderstanding, while communication without vision risks directionless efforts.

2.2. *Theoretical Analysis*

2.2.1. Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory explains how leaders inspire followers by appealing to higher values, shared purpose, and long-term organizational goals. Originally conceptualized by Burns (1978) and later operationalized by Bass (1985), the theory identifies four core dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These dimensions describe how leaders act as ethical role models, articulate compelling visions, encourage innovation, and attend to individual employee needs.

Recent scholarship confirms the continued relevance of transformational leadership in complex organizational change environments. Singh et al. (2023) identify transformational leadership as a central pillar of strategic leadership, particularly in contexts characterized by uncertainty, reform, and institutional pressure. Similarly, Aboramadan and Kundi (2020) demonstrate that transformational leadership predicts higher employee engagement, commitment, and performance across nonprofit and public organizations. Further, Eduzor (2024) finds that transformational leadership significantly enhances employee morale and service delivery in public sector organizations, especially where reform initiatives demand behavioral change.

This theoretical perspective is particularly suited to explaining how strategic vision and leadership communication function as change mechanisms. Leaders who articulate an inspiring strategic vision and communicate it consistently are more likely to generate psychological readiness for change and reduce resistance (Pettit et al. 2023). In public sector reform contexts, transformational leadership fosters trust, shared meaning, and voluntary commitment to change initiatives (Giorbelidze & Odisharia, 2025).

In the Nigerian public sector, where leadership instability, bureaucratic inertia, and low institutional trust persist, transformational leadership offers a pathway for overcoming resistance and building reform legitimacy. Recent Nigerian studies confirm that transformational leadership positively influences employee motivation, organizational commitment, and reform outcomes (Njoku, 2022). Consequently, Transformational Leadership Theory provides the conceptual foundation for this study's core constructs of strategic vision and leadership communication.

2.2.2. Contingency Theory of Leadership

Contingency Theory of Leadership, advanced by Fiedler (1967), asserts that leadership effectiveness depends on the alignment between leadership style and situational context. The theory identifies two primary leadership orientations: task-oriented and relationship-oriented, and proposes that their effectiveness is contingent upon three situational variables: leader-member relations, task structure, and position power.

Recent leadership research reinforces the relevance of contingency principles in modern public administration. Backhaus and Vogel (2022) and Obuba (2022) show that leadership outcomes in public organizations are strongly conditioned by contextual variables such as institutional stability, political constraints, and organizational culture. Similarly, Knox and Sharipova (2023) argue that public sector reforms in developing economies succeed only when leadership strategies are adapted to institutional realities and stakeholder dynamics.

In Nigeria's public sector, reform efforts are frequently undermined by weak accountability structures, political interference, and low trust in leadership (Akhere, 2025). Under such conditions, Contingency Theory explains why leadership communication and strategic vision cannot be universally effective but must be calibrated to organizational climate, employee morale, and institutional support. This perspective underscores that leadership success is not simply about possessing the right style, but about deploying it appropriately within a given context.

Thus, Contingency Theory complements Transformational Leadership Theory by introducing situational flexibility. While transformational leadership explains how leaders motivate and inspire change, contingency theory explains when and under what conditions

such leadership will be most effective.

2.2.3. Application of Theory to Hypotheses Development

Drawing from both theoretical perspectives, this study develops its hypotheses by integrating the motivational mechanisms of transformational leadership with the contextual sensitivity emphasized by contingency theory.

Transformational Leadership Theory suggests that strategic vision and inspirational communication are fundamental drivers of organizational change. Leaders who clearly articulate a compelling vision and communicate it persuasively reduce uncertainty, build commitment, and weaken resistance to change (Singh et al., 2023). Empirical evidence from public sector organizations indicates that strategic vision significantly lowers employee resistance to reform, while effective leadership communication increases change acceptance and implementation success (Eduzor, 2024). Therefore, this study hypothesizes that strategic vision reduces employee resistance to change, leadership communication enhances employees' acceptance of change, and leadership communication mediates the relationship between strategic vision and resistance to change.

Contingency Theory further informs the model by emphasizing that these leadership effects are shaped by institutional conditions. In the Nigerian public sector, bureaucratic rigidity, leadership discontinuity, and low institutional trust moderate the effectiveness of leadership strategies (Njoku, 2022). Consequently, the relationship between strategic vision and resistance to change is expected to be influenced by institutional context, while the impact of leadership communication on change acceptance is contingent upon leader-member relations and organizational structure.

Together, these hypotheses reflect the dynamic interplay between leadership motivation and organizational context. Transformational Leadership Theory explains the mechanisms of influence, while Contingency Theory explains the conditions of effectiveness, thereby providing a robust theoretical foundation for the study.

2.3. Empirical Review of Literature

Omokhualé and Tarurhor (2025) conducted a study to examine the influence of organizational learning and change management on the performance of governmental agencies in Delta and Edo States. Utilizing a survey research design and multiple regression analysis, the study found that both organizational learning and proactive change management significantly enhance agency performance. The authors emphasized the importance of cultivating a learning-oriented culture and adopting responsive change strategies to achieve improved service delivery and institutional outcomes.

Similarly, Madekwe (2025) explored how political leadership styles affect the efficiency of public administration in Nigeria. Through a qualitative analysis of multiple case studies, the research revealed that transparent, accountable, and stable political leadership significantly enhances institutional performance, while authoritarianism, corruption, and political instability undermine public sector effectiveness. The study concluded that leadership quality is a crucial determinant of administrative efficiency and recommended governance frameworks that prioritize integrity and accountability.

Habeeb and Eyupoglu (2024) examined the impact of strategic planning on transformational leadership and institutional performance within Nigerian higher education institutions. Drawing data from 388 staff members across 48 state universities, the study employed quantitative methods to establish that strategic planning positively influences transformational leadership, which subsequently mediates improved organizational performance. The study highlighted the importance of integrating strategic planning with leadership development to navigate institutional goals effectively.

Ameen et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between leadership styles and organizational performance in the Kwara State Head of Service. Using a quantitative approach and Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis, the study surveyed 152 staff members and revealed that transformational, transactional, and democratic leadership styles significantly enhance organizational performance. In contrast, autocratic and laissez-faire approaches were associated with lower performance levels. The authors recommended adopting a balanced leadership style tailored to organizational needs to optimize effectiveness.

In another relevant study, Ume and Agha (2022) analyzed the impact of change resistance on university performance in South West Nigeria. Surveying 382 respondents, the study categorized resistance into four types – passive, active, attachment, and uncertainty – and found that all forms of resistance negatively affected institutional performance. The

authors recommended enhancing organizational readiness for change through strengthened institutional culture, leadership engagement, and infrastructure development to reduce resistance and support reform efforts.

Ikeanyibe and Ukah (2022) focused on the underlying causes of inefficiency within Nigeria's public service. Using content analysis of secondary data and policy documents, the study identified corruption, ethnic favoritism, and inadequate remuneration as key barriers to effective service delivery. The authors emphasized that without structural reforms targeting these systemic issues, public sector transformation would remain elusive. Recommendations included merit-based recruitment, enhanced transparency, and professional capacity development.

Okoli et al. (2021) examined the influence of transformational leadership on organizational success in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria. Employing a cross-sectional survey design and analyzing 154 valid responses using Pearson's correlation, the study found a strong positive relationship between transformational leadership dimensions and institutional success. The study concluded that effective leadership practices are crucial for driving employee commitment, institutional innovation, and sustainable organizational performance.

Collectively, these empirical studies affirm the pivotal role of leadership, particularly transformational and strategic forms, in driving public sector reform, institutional performance, and effective change management. They also underline the importance of context-sensitive leadership approaches, employee engagement, and systemic reform in enhancing the effectiveness of Nigeria's public institutions.

3. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the interplay between strategic vision and leadership communication in driving public sector reform in Nigeria. This design facilitates the objective measurement of leadership behaviours, communication practices, and change outcomes through structured data collection and statistical modeling.

3.1. Population and Sampling

The target population comprises employees from the Federal Ministry of Industries and other selected Federal Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) currently undergoing or having recently completed reform initiatives. A total of 250 employees were targeted, and 210 valid responses were obtained for analysis.

A two-stage sampling technique was applied. The first one is purposive sampling that was used to select MDAs actively involved in reform programmes. The second one – stratified random sampling – ensured representation across key departments (e.g., leadership, planning, human resources) and organizational levels (managerial, supervisory, and operational). This sampling strategy provided a diverse and representative group of stakeholders engaged in or affected by change implementation.

3.2. Instrumentation

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections: (1) demographics (e.g., age, gender, organizational role, years of experience); (2) strategic leadership vision, measured using adapted items; (3) leadership communication, measured using validated communication effectiveness scales; and (4) change management outcomes, including employee resistance, acceptance, and perceived success of reform initiatives.

Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.80 across all key constructs.

An optional open-ended item invited participants to share qualitative insights on perceived enablers and barriers to reform in their respective institutions.

3.3. Data Analysis Strategy

To test the study's hypotheses and enhance analytical rigor, both descriptive and advanced inferential statistical techniques were employed. Descriptive analyses, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were used to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and item-level responses. For inferential analysis, hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to examine the incremental contribution of leadership communication to reform outcomes beyond the effect of strategic vision. Variables were entered sequentially, with control variables (age, gender, and role) included in the first step,

strategic vision in the second step, and leadership communication in the third step, allowing for the assessment of both unique and combined effects on reform outcomes. In addition, mediation analysis was performed to investigate whether leadership communication mediated the relationship between strategic vision and resistance to change. This analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4), with the significance of indirect effects evaluated through bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals based on 5,000 resamples. Mediation was considered statistically significant when the 95% confidence interval did not include zero, providing robust, non-parametric evidence for the mediating effect.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

All study procedures complied with established ethical standards for research. Participation was entirely voluntary and based on informed consent, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study. Data were collected digitally via email and WhatsApp using a secure distribution and tracking strategy, and no personally identifiable information was collected or stored at any stage of the research process.

4. Results

This section presents the findings from the analysis of data collected through structured questionnaires administered to public sector employees across various Nigerian ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). The study was conducted using SPSS version 26 and Hayes' PROCESS macro, employing descriptive statistics, hierarchical multiple regression, and mediation analysis to investigate the interplay among strategic vision, leadership communication, and public sector reform outcomes.

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 210 valid responses were included in the analysis. The sample was predominantly male (79%), with female respondents accounting for 21%. Nearly half of the participants (49%) were aged between 41 and 50 years, representing mid-career professionals. In terms of organizational roles, respondents included Directors (7.1%), Deputy Directors (8.1%), Department Heads (14.8%), Senior Managers (24.8%), Principal Officers (13.8%), and other positions (31.4%). Regarding work experience, 42.9% of participants reported 11–20 years of professional experience, while 25.8% had more than 20 years. A substantial majority (77.1%) indicated prior involvement in organizational reform or change initiatives. Participants were drawn from a range of departments, including education, finance, human resources, science and technology, and media (e.g., NTA). Collectively, these demographic characteristics reflect a diverse and experienced workforce, thereby enhancing the reliability and contextual relevance of the study's findings.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1. Perceptions of Strategic Vision

The first objective of this study is to assess the influence of strategic vision on public sector reform by examining how clearly articulated long-term goals, shared direction, and future-oriented leadership practices contribute to the effectiveness and outcomes of reform initiatives within public sector organizations. Further, Table 1 presents strategic leadership indicators.

Table 1. Strategic leadership indicators.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Leadership articulates a clear vision	3.8%	2.9%	13.3%	41.9%	38.1%	100%
Communicates reasons for change	4.8%	4.3%	9.5%	52.4%	29.1%	100%
Considers long-term impact	4.3%	2.4%	11.4%	51.9%	30%	100%
Staff empowered to contribute	3.8%	7.1%	19%	43.8%	26.2%	100%
Innovation encouraged	2.9%	2.9%	6.7%	60.3%	27.3%	100%

These results show strong support for leadership's strategic vision, with over 80% agreement in key areas of vision clarity, communication, long-term focus, and innovation encouragement.

4.2.2. Leadership Communication and Resistance to Change

The second objective of this study is to evaluate the role of leadership communication in managing resistance to reform by examining how the clarity, consistency, and transparency of leaders' communication practices influence employees' understanding of change initiatives, reduce uncertainty, and mitigate resistance during the reform process. concerning this, table 2 shows change management indicators.

Table 2. Change management indicators.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Follows a clear process	2.9%	9.4%	21.4%	48.1%	18.1%	100%
Resistance due to poor communication	3.8%	7.6%	7.1%	45.2%	36.2%	100%
Training/resources provided	5.2%	11.9%	18.6%	44.3%	20%	100%
Leaders build change coalitions	4.8%	6.2%	13.3%	49%	26.7%	100%
Reform efforts are sustainable	3.8%	6.2%	12.9%	51%	26.2%	100%

The findings highlight communication failures as a major source of resistance, while also emphasizing the importance of training, coalition-building, and structured change processes.

4.3. Inferential Analysis

4.3.1. Hierarchical Multiple Regression

This section presents the results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis conducted to examine the impact of strategic vision and leadership communication on employees' acceptance of organizational change, controlling for demographic variables (age and role). The analysis was structured to assess the incremental contribution of each independent variable to explaining variance in the dependent variable. Two sets of results are reported: the Model Summary, which provides an overview of explained variance, and the Regression Coefficients, which indicate the strength and significance of individual predictors.

The hierarchical regression analysis was performed in three steps. Table 3 presents the model summary, showing the proportion of variance explained (R^2), change in R^2 (ΔR^2), the F-change statistic, and significance level for each step.

Table 3. Model summary of hierarchical regression.

Step	Predictor(s)	R^2	ΔR^2	F-change	Sig.
1	Control variables (age, role)	0.072	—	—	—
2	+ Strategic Vision	0.152	0.080	19.84	0.000
3	+ Leadership Communication	0.249	0.097	25.17	0.000

Step 1, which included only the control variables (age and role), explained approximately 7.2% of the variance in employees' acceptance of organizational change. The inclusion of strategic vision in Step 2 significantly increased the explained variance by 8% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.080$, F-change = 19.84, $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees' perception of strategic vision contributes meaningfully to change acceptance beyond demographic factors. Step 3 added leadership communication as an additional predictor, further increasing explained variance by 9.7% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.097$, F-change = 25.17, $p < 0.001$). Overall, the final model explained approximately 24.9% of the variance in change acceptance, suggesting a substantial combined effect of strategic vision and leadership communication on employees' responsiveness to organizational change.

Table 4 presents the standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients for the final model, along with standard errors, t-values, and significance levels for each predictor.

Table 4. Regression coefficients (final model).

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	3.393	0.169	—	20.133	0.000
Strategic Vision	0.093	0.041	0.154	2.249	0.026
Leadership Communication	0.148	0.038	0.296	3.895	0.000

The constant (intercept) of 3.393 indicates the expected level of change acceptance when all predictors are zero. Strategic vision was a significant predictor ($B = 0.093$, $\beta = 0.154$, $t = 2.249$, $p = 0.026$), confirming that higher perceptions of strategic vision are associated with increased acceptance of organizational change. Leadership communication also emerged as a

strong, significant predictor ($B = 0.148$, $\beta = 0.296$, $t = 3.895$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that clear and consistent communication by leaders substantially enhances employees' readiness for change. Notably, the standardized beta coefficients show that leadership communication has a stronger effect on change acceptance than strategic vision, emphasizing the importance of communication in facilitating successful organizational change.

From the above analysis, leadership communication significantly improves the prediction of change management outcomes, even after accounting for strategic vision. This supports the importance of communication as a distinct and powerful leadership function in reform efforts.

4.3.2. Mediation Analysis

To further examine the mechanisms through which strategic vision influences employees' resistance to organizational change, a mediation analysis was conducted to assess whether leadership communication serves as an intervening variable. Mediation analysis helps determine whether the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable is transmitted through a third variable, clarifying the processes underlying organizational outcomes (Hayes, 2022). In this study, we tested whether the effect of strategic vision on resistance to change operates indirectly through leadership communication, using bootstrapped confidence intervals to establish statistical significance.

Table 5 presents the path coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and p-values for all components of the mediation model, including the total, direct, and indirect effects.

Table 5. Mediation analysis of leadership communication between strategic vision and resistance to change.

Path	Coefficient (B)	SE	t	p
a (Vision → Communication)	0.49	0.07	7.00	<0.001
b (Communication → Resistance)	-0.42	0.06	-7.00	<0.001
c (Total Effect: Vision → Resistance)	-0.27	0.09	-3.00	0.003
c' (Direct Effect: Vision → Resistance, controlling for Communication)	-0.06	0.08	-0.75	0.45

The mediation analysis indicates that leadership communication fully mediates the relationship between strategic vision and employees' resistance to change. Specifically, Path a (Vision → Communication) shows a strong, positive, and significant effect ($B = 0.49$, $t = 7.00$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees' perception of strategic vision significantly enhances leadership communication behaviours. Path b (Communication → Resistance) is negative and significant ($B = -0.42$, $t = -7.00$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that effective leadership communication substantially reduces employees' resistance to change. At the same time, total effect (c) of strategic vision on resistance to change is significant ($B = -0.27$, $p = 0.003$), but the direct effect (c') becomes non-significant ($B = -0.06$, $p = 0.45$) once leadership communication is accounted for. And the bootstrapped indirect effect (-0.21 , 95% CI $[-0.32, -0.12]$) confirms significant mediation, as the confidence interval does not include zero.

Collectively, these findings suggest that strategic vision alone is insufficient to reduce resistance to change unless it is effectively communicated. This result aligns with the principles of transformational leadership, which emphasize that inspiring and clear communication are essential to translate strategic intent into actionable outcomes. In practice, leaders must not only define a compelling vision but also ensure that it is consistently and persuasively communicated to achieve organizational acceptance and engagement.

4.4. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

This section presents the results of hypothesis testing, linking the study's theoretical framework to empirical evidence. The hypotheses were formulated to assess the impact of strategic vision and leadership communication on organizational reform outcomes, as well as the mediating role of communication in reducing employees' resistance to change. Testing these hypotheses allows for the validation of the study's conceptual framework and provides insights into the mechanisms through which transformational leadership principles operate in the Nigerian public sector.

Table 6 summarizes the hypotheses, corresponding statements, and results based on the regression and mediation analyses conducted in this study.

Table 6. Hypothesis statements and results.

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Strategic vision significantly influences reform outcomes	Supported
H2	Leadership communication significantly reduces resistance	Supported
H3	Leadership communication mediates the effect of vision on resistance	Supported

The findings reveal several important patterns:

Concerning H₀₁, strategic vision was found to have a direct positive effect on reform outcomes, confirming that leaders' articulation of a clear, compelling direction is essential for guiding public sector reforms. However, its impact is enhanced when combined with effective communication, indicating that vision alone is insufficient without proper dissemination and reinforcement.

The testing of H₀₂ showed that leadership communication significantly reduces employees' resistance to change. Clear, persuasive, and consistent communication by leaders fosters understanding, trust, and alignment with reform objectives, which is crucial in environments marked by bureaucratic inertia and institutional fragility.

Considering H₀₃ communication fully mediates the effect of strategic vision on resistance, highlighting that vision must be translated into action through effective leadership communication. This underscores a central tenet of Transformational Leadership Theory – inspirational communication transforms strategic intent into organizational behavior.

Key insights aligned with objectives. They regard the following:

Firstly, strategic vision has a direct positive effect on reform outcomes but is significantly amplified when combined with strong communication.

Secondly, leadership communication not only predicts reform outcomes but also acts as a bridge between strategic vision and reduced resistance to change.

These findings empirically validate both Transformational Leadership Theory and Contingency Theory, demonstrating that leadership strategies must align with organizational context and incorporate persuasive communication to be effective.

5. Discussion

This study set out to examine the interplay between strategic vision and leadership communication in driving public sector reform in Nigeria. Using a quantitative research design and advanced statistical modeling, the findings offer robust empirical evidence on how leadership practices influence reform implementation, resistance to change, and overall change management effectiveness.

The analysis confirmed that strategic vision significantly influences the effectiveness of organizational change management. Over 80% of respondents agreed that their leaders clearly articulate reform goals, consider long-term impact, and encourage innovation, key indicators of visionary leadership.

The regression analysis further supported this finding, with strategic vision contributing significantly to reform outcomes ($\beta = 0.154$, $p < 0.05$). This aligns with Transformational Leadership Theory, which posits that inspirational vision serves as a guiding force that mobilizes commitment and fosters direction during complex organizational transitions (Bass, 1985).

In Nigeria's public sector context, often characterized by political interference, institutional fragility, and bureaucratic inertia, this result underscores the importance of visionary leaders who can frame reform not merely as a technical process but as a shared strategic journey.

The study also found that leadership communication plays a critical role in managing resistance to change. Descriptive results showed that 81.4% of respondents believed poor communication was a major driver of resistance during change initiatives.

Beyond this, hierarchical regression analysis demonstrated that leadership communication independently and significantly predicted reform outcomes ($\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.001$), even after accounting for strategic vision. This finding emphasizes that how vision is communicated is as crucial as the vision itself.

According to Contingency Theory, leadership effectiveness depends on contextual fit. In the Nigerian public sector, where mistrust and ambiguity often impede reform, effective communication helps reduce uncertainty, clarify roles, and build buy-in. This situational adaptability in communication strategies reflects the contingency-based need for flexibility in leadership behavior.

Perhaps most significantly, the mediation analysis revealed that leadership communication fully mediates the relationship between strategic vision and resistance to change. This means that vision alone, while necessary, is not sufficient; it must be translated into action through deliberate, transparent, and inclusive communication.

This supports transformational leadership principles that view communication not only as a managerial tool but as a transformative mechanism through which leaders inspire trust, reduce resistance, and drive sustained change (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

This insight has strong practical implications: reform leaders must prioritize communication planning alongside vision development. Without consistent messaging, even the most compelling vision may fail to take root within the institution.

6. Conclusions

This study investigated the interplay between strategic vision and leadership communication in driving public sector reform in Nigeria. Drawing on Transformational Leadership Theory and Contingency Theory, the findings reveal that:

Firstly, strategic vision significantly enhances reform effectiveness by providing clarity, direction, and long-term orientation.

Secondly, leadership communication plays a critical role in reducing resistance to change, improving employee buy-in, and ensuring reform sustainability.

Thirdly, communication mediates the relationship between vision and reform outcomes, suggesting that a compelling vision alone is insufficient unless effectively communicated and reinforced throughout the organization.

These findings confirm that strategic leadership, characterized by clear vision, empowered participation, adaptive communication, and innovation, has a direct and positive impact on change management in the Nigerian public sector. In a bureaucratic context prone to resistance, inertia, and institutional fragility, leadership effectiveness is determined not only by what leaders intend but also by how they engage and mobilize stakeholders.

Based on the study's findings, several concise recommendations are proposed for public sector reform. Organizational leaders should strengthen leadership communication through transparent, consistent, and two-way approaches to build trust and reduce resistance, while also promoting staff participation in planning and implementation to enhance ownership of reform initiatives. In addition, fostering a culture of innovation and investing in continuous training and capacity development are essential to equip employees with the skills required to sustain organizational change.

At the policy level, reform frameworks should institutionalize strategic visioning by anchoring all change initiatives in a clearly articulated and widely shared vision. Policies should also mandate structured communication plans to guide stakeholder engagement, prioritize communicative competence in leadership selection, and establish formal feedback mechanisms that enable employees to voice concerns and contribute throughout the reform process.

Future research should broaden the scope of analysis by including diverse public institutions across federal, state, and local levels and by conducting comparative studies across sectors or geopolitical zones. Longitudinal and mixed-methods designs are recommended to capture changes in leadership behaviour over time and to provide deeper insights into the roles of organizational culture, trust, and political factors in shaping public sector reform outcomes.

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