GOOD GOVERNANCE AS A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND BALANCED DEVELOPMENT IN SUDAN

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This study investigates whether perceptions of good governance are associated with perceptions of sustainable development and developmental balance in Sudan. Using a descriptive–analytical design, the study administered a structured questionnaire to 150 targeted respondents from government, the private sector, civil society, and academia; 132 valid responses were retained for analysis. The analysis combines descriptive statistics, one-sample t-tests against the Likert midpoint, and Pearson's correlation coefficient. The findings suggest that respondents perceive governance in Sudan as uneven rather than uniformly weak: some dimensions cluster around the midpoint, while anti-corruption effectiveness, fiscal fairness, transparency in allocation, and institutional responsiveness receive comparatively low ratings. Perceptions of sustainable development and developmental balance are lower overall, particularly with respect to spatial justice, public service quality, and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. A strong positive correlation is observed between the aggregate governance score and the aggregate development score. The study contributes field-based evidence on the governance–development nexus in Sudan, while interpreting the results with appropriate caution: the data reflect informed stakeholder perceptions and support an association rather than a causal claim. The paper argues that improvements in transparency, accountability, decentralization, and institutional capacity are likely to be important for more balanced and sustainable development, but also notes the need for future research using broader samples and objective indicators.
Keywords: good governance, sustainable development, developmental balance, Sudan

INTRODUCTION

Good governance has become a central concept in contemporary public administration and development studies because it links institutional quality to the practical capacity of states to allocate resources fairly, deliver public services, uphold rights, and maintain public trust [OECD2020, WorldBank2023]. Although definitions vary across institutions and academic traditions, there is broad agreement that good governance encompasses transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, effectiveness, responsiveness, and equity [OECD2020, WJP2024]. These principles are especially relevant in settings where development outcomes are shaped not only by the availability of resources but also by the way institutions manage conflict, coordinate policy, and distribute opportunities.

The relevance of governance to sustainable development is now firmly embedded in international policy discourse. Sustainable development is no longer understood solely as economic growth; rather, it concerns the interaction between economic, social, and environmental goals, together with the institutional conditions that allow those goals to be pursued consistently over time [WCED1987, UN2024, UN2025]. In that sense, institutional quality is not a peripheral issue. It is a cross-cutting enabler of development performance, especially where weak administrative capacity, corruption risks, fragmented planning, and low trust undermine the effectiveness of public action [UNDPUNODC2024, UNDPUNODC2025, TI2025].

These issues are particularly acute in Sudan. The Sudanese context is marked by prolonged political instability, uneven state capacity, persistent regional disparities, and continuing pressures on public institutions and service delivery [UNSudan2022, UNDP2020]. Under such conditions, the question is not simply whether governance matters in principle; it is how far governance weaknesses are perceived to be connected to developmental imbalance, especially between the center and peripheral regions. The 2019 Constitutional Declaration and subsequent reform debates have renewed attention to decentralization, oversight, public accountability, and institutional rebuilding, but translating those commitments into effective developmental outcomes remains a major challenge [Sudan2019, IDEA2022].

This study addresses that challenge by examining how informed respondents in Sudan assess the level of governance implementation, the condition of sustainable development and developmental balance, and the relationship between the two. Its contribution is intentionally modest but important. Rather than claiming to measure governance performance through objective national indicators, the study analyzes structured stakeholder perceptions across several institutional domains. This enables the paper to contribute field-based evidence from Sudan while recognizing that perceptual survey data are best suited to identifying patterns of assessment and association, not causal proof. By doing so, the study seeks to clarify whether the governance–development nexus observed in international literature is also visible in the Sudanese case and whether it is perceived to have a meaningful spatial dimension.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND QUESTIONS

Research Problem

Despite the growing importance of governance in development theory and policy, Sudan continues to face substantial institutional and territorial challenges. Public institutions operate under conditions of political fragility, administrative weakness, uneven service provision, and marked disparities in the distribution of development opportunities across regions [UNSudan2022, UN2024]. These conditions raise an important analytical question: whether weaknesses in transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, and decentralization are perceived as being linked to the country's low and uneven development performance.

The problem addressed in this study therefore lies in the absence of sufficiently grounded field evidence on how informed actors in Sudan evaluate the relationship between governance and developmental balance. Much of the available discussion is either normative, highly aggregated, or based on international indicators that do not fully capture how institutional weaknesses are experienced and interpreted within the Sudanese setting.

Research Questions

Accordingly, the research problem is articulated through the following main question:

To what extent is good governance perceived to contribute to sustainable development and developmental balance in Sudan?

This main question is further explored through the following sub-questions:

1. What is the perceived level of implementation of good governance in Sudan?

2. To what extent are sustainable development and developmental balance perceived to be achieved in Sudan?

3. What is the nature and strength of the relationship between perceived good governance and perceived sustainable development/developmental balance in Sudan?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses are framed at the level of respondents' assessments of institutional reality and development outcomes. They are stated as follows:

1. *H1:* Respondents perceive the application of good governance principles in Sudan to be limited because of institutional weakness and insufficient transparency and accountability [UNSudan2022, Sudan2019].

2. *H2:* Respondents perceive sustainable development and developmental balance in Sudan to be low because of inequitable distribution of resources and unequal opportunities among regions [UN2024, UN2025, Sachs et al. 2025].

3. *H3:* There is a positive relationship between respondents' assessments of good governance and their assessments of sustainable development and developmental balance in Sudan [WorldBank2023, WJP2024].

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Previous Empirical Studies

Empirical and comparative literature generally supports the view that governance quality matters for development outcomes, although the mechanisms and magnitudes vary by context. Ramzy et al. [Ramzy et al. 2019] discuss governance and sustainable development as mutually reinforcing, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and institutional effectiveness as enabling conditions for durable development practice. Moving

beyond conceptual linkage, Omri and Ben Mabrouk [Omri and Ben Mabrouk 2020] provide panel evidence from MENA economies showing that good economic, political, and institutional governance is associated with more balanced sustainable development outcomes across economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

Within the Arab regional context, Al-Adlani [Al-Adlani 2019] finds that multiple governance dimensions are related to economic growth performance, reinforcing the argument that institutional quality has measurable developmental consequences in Arab states. Cross-country evidence at the continental level points in the same direction: the Ibrahim Index of African Governance documents substantial differences in development-relevant governance dimensions such as accountability, participation, human development, and public management across African countries [MoIbrahim2024]. More recently, Bisogno et al. [Bisogno et al. 2025] report that higher governance quality is associated with stronger Sustainable Development Goal performance, although the strength of the relationship differs across governance components and policy domains.

In Sudan specifically, the most relevant evidence is often found in country and institutional reports rather than in a large body of quantitative academic studies. United Nations reporting highlights the interaction between political crisis, uneven access to services, food insecurity, institutional fragility, and regional vulnerability [UNSudan2022]. International IDEA's analysis of the 2019 Constitutional Declaration likewise shows that decentralization, accountability, and institutional design have been central to debates about transition and state rebuilding in Sudan [IDEA2022]. Together, these sources suggest that governance is not an abstract institutional issue in Sudan; it is closely tied to territorial equity, service delivery, and the credibility of development policy.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The reviewed literature points to three broad conclusions. First, governance quality is repeatedly associated with development performance across comparative settings. Second, regional and fragile-state contexts show that institutional weakness often translates into uneven distribution of services, opportunities, and public trust. Third, Sudan is widely discussed in policy reports and transition analyses, but there remains limited field-based research that captures how knowledgeable stakeholders within Sudan assess the relationship between governance and developmental balance.

This study addresses that gap in a focused way. It does not attempt to replace objective governance or development indicators. Instead, it contributes a structured perception-based assessment of how respondents from multiple sectors and states evaluate governance implementation, development conditions, and the connection between them. The study therefore adds empirical value by bringing informed stakeholder evidence into a debate that is often dominated either by broad normative claims or by international aggregate indicators.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Good governance gained prominence in international development discourse as part of institutional reform agendas concerned with integrity, effectiveness, accountability, and the rule-bound exercise of public authority [OECD2020, WorldBank2023]. Although classifications differ, core principles recur across the literature: transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, responsiveness, efficiency, and equity [OECD2020, WJP2024]. These principles matter because they affect both the legitimacy and the performance of public institutions.

Sustainable development, as defined in the Brundtland Report, concerns meeting present needs without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs [WCED1987]. In contemporary policy usage, however, sustainable development also requires institutions capable of planning coherently, coordinating actors, allocating resources fairly, and maintaining social trust over time. For this reason, SDG monitoring frameworks continue to treat institutional quality and peaceful, just, and inclusive societies as enabling conditions for wider progress across the 2030 Agenda [UNDPUNODC2024, UNDPUNODC2025, UN2024, UN2025].

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN SUDAN: STATUS, CHALLENGES, AND REFORM EFFORTS

Since independence in 1956, Sudan's public administration has been shaped by repeated political transitions, conflict, centralization, and uneven institutional development. These dynamics have weakened policy continuity, reduced administrative effectiveness, and contributed to uneven service provision across regions [UNSudan2022, UNDP2020]. The 2019 Constitutional Declaration provided an important normative and institutional reference point by recognizing multi-level government, rights protections, and oversight arrangements, but implementation has remained difficult in practice [Sudan2019, IDEA2022].

Challenges to Good Governance

Major challenges to good governance in Sudan include political instability, weak oversight capacity, corruption risks, limited rule-of-law enforcement, constrained civic participation, fiscal stress, and persistent center–periphery inequalities. In combination, these conditions undermine both institutional credibility and the state's ability to translate public resources into broad-based development outcomes [TI2025, UN2024, UNSudan2022].

Reform Efforts

Sudan has nonetheless witnessed recurrent attempts at governance reform, including constitutional restructuring, discussion of decentralization, and efforts to align development planning with the Sustainable Development Goals [Sudan2019, UCLG2023]. International and national actors have also emphasized institutional rebuilding, service delivery recovery, and more inclusive governance arrangements. Available evidence suggests, however, that reform efforts have been uneven and frequently interrupted by wider political and economic instability [IDEA2022, UNSudan2022].

Requirements for Strengthening Good Governance

Strengthening governance to support sustainable and balanced development requires several interrelated conditions:

1. Legal and policy reforms that institutionalize transparency, accountability, and public integrity [OECD2020].

2. Institutional capacity building, including strategic planning, digital governance, and administrative monitoring capabilities [UNDESA2024].

3. Decentralization that is administrative and fiscal in substance rather than nominal in design [Sudan2019].

4. Broader civic participation in planning, oversight, and evaluation [UN2023].

5. Stronger anti-corruption and public financial management systems [OECD2020, Malaysia2024].

6. Sustained investment in public-sector human resources and organizational learning [UNDP2020].

DEVELOPMENTAL BALANCE: CONCEPT AND DIMENSIONS

Developmental balance refers to the equitable distribution of resources, services, and opportunities across territories and social groups so that development gains are not concentrated in a limited geographic or political core. It complements sustainable development by introducing an explicit territorial and distributive lens [UN2023]. Its main dimensions include:

1. *Spatial:* fair allocation of projects, infrastructure, and services between urban and rural areas and among regions.

2. *Social:* reduction of disparities in income, education, health, and participation.

3. *Economic:* widening productive opportunities and integrating historically marginalized regions into the national economy.

In Sudan, long-standing center–periphery dynamics make developmental balance a particularly important analytical category. Governance reform is therefore relevant not only because it may improve aggregate development performance, but because it may affect where and for whom development occurs [UNDP2020, UNSudan2022].

GOOD GOVERNANCE AS A STRATEGIC OPTION FOR BALANCED DEVELOPMENT

Good governance can support developmental balance by shaping the procedures through which priorities are set, funds are distributed, and institutions are held accountable. Its most relevant pathways include:

1. *Decentralization:* enabling subnational actors to identify and implement local development priorities [Sudan2019].

2. *Equitable resource distribution:* allocating funds and projects through transparent and intelligible criteria rather than opaque bargaining [WorldBank2023].

3. *Transparency and accountability:* making expenditure, procurement, and performance more open to review and correction [OECD2020].

4. *Community empowerment:* incorporating citizens and civil society into planning and monitoring processes [UN2023].

5. *Institutional reliability:* improving predictability and public trust in ways that support investment, service delivery, and social stability [WJP2024, WorldBank2023].

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR BALANCED DEVELOPMENT

Comparative experiences do not provide a ready-made model for Sudan, but they do illustrate how governance reforms can be linked to more balanced development when supported by coherent institutions and political commitment.

- *Malaysia:* integrity and anti-corruption reforms, including the *National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024–2028*, emphasize accountability, prevention, and institutional coordination as foundations for better public administration [Malaysia2024].

- *Cross-country governance measurement:* global frameworks such as the Worldwide Governance Indicators show that government effectiveness, rule of law, regulatory quality, and control of corruption remain central to comparative assessments of development-relevant governance [WorldBank2023].

- *Ghana:* medium-term national planning guidance emphasizes coordination between national priorities and subnational implementation, underscoring the planning value of institutional clarity and territorial integration [NDPC2025].

The main lesson from these experiences is not policy copying. Rather, it is that strategic vision, institutional accountability, decentralization, and implementation capacity are recurring ingredients of governance systems that are better able to support inclusive development [OECD2020, UN2023, WorldBank2023].

FIELD STUDY PROCEDURES

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive–analytical research design using an analytical survey method. Data were analyzed both descriptively and inferentially to assess the level of good governance implementation and its relationship with sustainable development and developmental balance in Sudan.

Population and Sample

A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed to respondents from different institutions. Of these, 132 questionnaires were completed and deemed valid for analysis, yielding a response rate of approximately 88%.

The demographic distribution of respondents (gender, age, education, workplace, administrative position, years of experience, and state) is reported in Appendix A (Tables A1–A7). The sample was predominantly male (77.3%), highly educated, and professionally experienced: 70.5% reported more than 10 years of work experience, and nearly all respondents held a university degree or higher. Participants were drawn from government ministries and agencies, the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia, with the largest share coming from government institutions. Geographically, the sample includes respondents from Khartoum and a range of other states, thereby incorporating views from multiple territorial settings.

These characteristics are useful for the purpose of the study because they provide access to informed institutional perceptions regarding governance practices, public administration, and development planning. At the same time, the composition of the sample imposes clear limits on generalizability. The findings should not be interpreted as statistically representative of the entire Sudanese population, especially rural residents, informal workers, and citizens who are not directly connected to institutions or professional organizations. Rather, the sample is best understood as a knowledgeable stakeholder sample whose responses offer analytically valuable insight into how governance and developmental balance are perceived by comparatively experienced actors.

The age structure of the sample is also notable. Respondents aged 50 years and above represented the largest proportion (40.2%), followed by those aged 40–49 (37.9%). This profile suggests that many respondents have observed multiple phases of administrative and political change in Sudan. Their assessments are therefore

potentially enriched by comparative institutional experience, although this same feature may also mean that the results reflect elite or professional perspectives more strongly than mass public opinion.

The high educational profile of the sample (Bachelor's 56.1%, Master's 23.5%, PhD 19.7%) is relevant because the questionnaire addresses conceptually demanding issues such as transparency, accountability, decentralization, and developmental justice. Respondents are therefore likely to have understood the concepts under study. Nevertheless, educational strength does not eliminate possible perception bias, and the analysis remains based on self-reported assessments rather than objective performance measures.

Sectorally, 58.3% of participants were employed in government ministries or agencies, followed by the private sector (18.2%), civil society organizations (12.9%), and academia/research institutions (10.6%). This distribution is appropriate for a governance-focused study, but it also means that institutional insiders are prominent in the data. In terms of administrative hierarchy, more than half of the sample occupied senior or mid-level management positions, which increases the likelihood that respondents are familiar with planning, budgeting, and implementation processes.

Taken together, the sample provides informed and geographically dispersed stakeholder evidence on the governance–development nexus in Sudan. Its strengths lie in experience, education, and institutional diversity; its main limitation lies in the fact that it captures knowledgeable perceptions rather than nationally representative citizen experience.

Data Sources

The study relied on two main types of data sources:

1. *Primary data:* Structured questionnaires administered to employees in government institutions, the private sector, civil society organizations, and to experts, academics, and researchers interested in development issues.

2. *Secondary data:* Official government reports and national statistics; previous studies and research related to good governance and sustainable development; and relevant academic references and scholarly articles.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument consisted of four main sections:

1. *Respondent characteristics:* Personal and professional information (gender, age, educational qualification, workplace, administrative position, years of experience, and state).

2. *Good governance principles:* Items measuring transparency and accountability, community participation, rule of law, administrative decentralization, and administrative efficiency and effectiveness.

3. *Sustainable development and developmental balance indicators:* Items covering spatial justice, efficiency and quality of public services, equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, and economic and social growth.

4. *Perceived relationship between good governance and sustainable development:* Items assessing respondents' views on how governance affects sustainable and balanced development.

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed based on an extensive review of previous empirical and theoretical studies on good governance and sustainable development. It was further reviewed by specialized faculty members and experts to ensure comprehensiveness, clarity, and alignment with the research objectives, thereby enhancing content validity and ensuring accurate measurement of the main variables.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire dimensions.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha for Questionnaire Dimensions

Dimension	*Number of Items*	*Cronbach's Alpha*
Transparency & Accountability	6	0.885
Community Participation	5	0.863
Rule of Law	4	0.889
Administrative Decentralization	5	0.893
Efficiency & Administrative Effectiveness	5	0.890
Spatial Justice	3	0.851
Service Efficiency	3	0.867
Distribution of Resources & Opportunities	3	0.873
Economic & Social Growth	4	0.857
Relationship between Good Governance & SD	5	0.911

All dimensions recorded alpha values exceeding 0.80, indicating a very good level of internal consistency and reliability for the study instrument.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques:

1. *Descriptive analysis:*

   - Frequencies and percentages for demographic variables.
   - Means and standard deviations for each item and dimension of good governance and sustainable development/developmental balance.
   - Interpretation of implementation levels was based on a hypothetical mean of 3 on the five-point Likert scale.

2. *Inferential analysis:*

   - A one-sample t-test was applied to compare calculated means with the hypothetical mean (3) in order to determine whether respondents' assessments were statistically above or below the midpoint.
   - Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength and direction of the association between the aggregate good-governance score and the aggregate sustainable-development/developmental-balance score.
   - All inferential tests were conducted at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, using p-values and confidence intervals to guide interpretation.

Given the survey-based and cross-sectional nature of the data, inferential results are interpreted as evidence about respondents' perceptions rather than as proof of causal effects in the population. In particular, the correlation analysis indicates association, not directionality, and should be read alongside the descriptive patterns of individual dimensions rather than as a stand-alone basis for strong causal claims.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis of Good Governance Dimensions

Means for transparency and accountability items ranged from 2.3106 to 3.2500. The highest mean (3.2500) was recorded for the item related to the regular publication of financial and administrative reports, reflecting a moderate level of governmental disclosure. The lowest mean (2.3106) concerned the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts, indicating weak performance in combating corruption and limited independence of oversight institutions. Relatively high standard deviations suggest heterogeneous perceptions among respondents on these items. Overall, transparency and accountability are perceived as implemented at a moderate to weak level.

Means for community participation ranged from 2.6288 to 3.4242. The highest mean (3.4242) was associated with youth and women participation in decision-making processes, signaling a relatively positive trend in this area. However, the lowest mean (2.6288) related to citizen involvement in monitoring government projects, pointing to limited actual community participation in oversight. Thus, participation appears to be more visible at the symbolic or consultative levels than in substantive monitoring and accountability processes.

Means ranged from 2.7424 to 3.2500, reflecting an overall moderate level of rule of law. Clarity of legal bases for administrative decisions and the protection of citizens' rights scored relatively higher, whereas judicial independence and fairness recorded weaker perceptions. This indicates that while legal frameworks exist, their impartial application and independence remain areas of concern.

Means varied significantly across decentralization items. Participation of local administrations in development planning scored the highest mean (3.4545), indicating a relatively good level of involvement in planning processes. In contrast, fair distribution of financial resources between the central government and states scored low (2.3561), highlighting practical challenges in the fiscal dimension of decentralization and its implications for developmental balance.

The overall mean for efficiency and administrative effectiveness was 2.9985, approximating the midpoint and reflecting a moderate level. Perceived competence of government employees recorded the highest mean (3.4924), suggesting relatively positive assessments of human capital. However, responsiveness to citizens' needs scored the lowest (2.5076), indicating weak institutional flexibility and limited citizen-oriented service culture.

Taken together, the descriptive results indicate that the implementation of good governance principles in Sudan is moderate to weak, with notable shortcomings in transparency, anti-corruption mechanisms, equitable resource distribution, and judicial independence. At the same time, some positive indicators are observed in relative disclosure, youth and women participation, certain aspects of coordination, and administrative efficiency.

Descriptive Analysis of Sustainable Development and Developmental Balance

The overall mean for spatial justice was 2.4722, below the hypothetical mean of 3, indicating weak spatial justice in the distribution of development projects among states. The lowest mean (2.3485) corresponded to the perception that "development projects are distributed fairly among the states," reflecting a negative assessment of fairness. Most respondents disagreed that the developmental gap between the center and the regions has decreased in recent years (54.5% disagreement), and 64.3% disagreed that their state has projects comparable to the capital. These results point to persistent developmental disparities and imbalances between the center and peripheral states.

Mean scores for public service efficiency ranged from 2.4621 to 3.0758, with an overall mean of 2.8661, indicating a moderate level. The item "Government services in my state (education, health, water, electricity) are of high quality" had a low mean (2.4621), reflecting poor perceived quality of basic services. In contrast, items related to improvement in service delivery and regular evaluation of service institutions registered means slightly above 3, suggesting some progress in efficiency and performance monitoring. Frequency distributions showed that 63.7% of respondents disagreed regarding the high quality of government services, while 51.5% acknowledged improvements in service efficiency, indicating a gap between current service levels and ongoing improvement efforts.

The overall mean for resource and opportunity distribution was 2.7601, again below the hypothetical mean, indicating relative weakness in fairness and transparency. The lowest mean (2.2803) was associated with the statement that "financial resources are allocated to regions according to transparent and clear criteria," reflecting a perceived lack of transparency. The item "Local governments participate in setting developmental spending priorities" recorded a higher mean (3.0985), suggesting some degree of participation at the local level. Frequency analysis revealed that 66.6% of respondents disagreed that resource allocation is transparent, while more than half recognized some participation of local governments. Opinions on whether states benefit equally from national resources were mixed, with a slight positive tendency but no strong consensus.

Means for economic and social growth items ranged from 2.7273 to 3.4015, with an overall mean of 3.0530, indicating a moderate level. Most respondents agreed that government policies have contributed to creating new job opportunities and that there has been a noticeable improvement in living standards and social services. However, more than half disagreed that development projects adequately address the needs of poor and marginalized groups, reflecting a weakness in the social justice dimension of growth. Responses regarding sustainable economic growth at the state level were also mixed, suggesting that the impact of national policies on local economies remains uneven and not clearly perceived as sustainable.

Overall, sustainable development and developmental balance in Sudan are perceived as moderate to weak. The main challenges lie in spatial justice, public service quality, and transparency in resource allocation, whereas some improvement has been observed in economic growth and job creation. However, this growth has not translated into equitable and inclusive development across regions and social groups.

Perceptions of the Relationship Between Good Governance and Sustainable Development

Mean scores range between 3.8864 and 4.2803, with an overall mean of 4.1485, reflecting strong agreement regarding the positive role of governance principles in achieving sustainable development and developmental balance.

The highest mean (4.2803) relates to the statement that "strong and effective institutions are necessary to achieve sustainable development," indicating high awareness of the importance of institutional capacity. The statement "weak governance leads to widening the developmental gap between the center and the peripheries"

also received a high mean (4.2652), underscoring recognition of the negative impact of governance deficits on regional inequality.

Furthermore, 80.3% of respondents agreed that transparency and accountability contribute to balanced development, and 86.3% agreed that decentralization and popular participation help reduce regional disparities. Additionally, 82.5% supported leveraging international governance experiences to build a successful Sudanese model. Low standard deviations (all below 1.13) indicate relatively high homogeneity of opinions and a strong consensus on the centrality of good governance for sustainable and balanced development.

Hypothesis Testing

The first hypothesis stated that:

"The application of good governance principles in Sudan is limited due to weak institutional capacity and lack of transparency and accountability."

A one-sample t-test was conducted to compare the mean score of the good governance variable with the hypothetical midpoint (3) on the Likert scale.

Table 2: One-Sample t-Test Results for Good Governance Variable

Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval
Good Governance	-0.412	131	0.681	-0.03451	Lower: -0.2001, Upper: 0.1311

The t-value (-0.412) with 131 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.681 indicates that the aggregate good-governance score is not statistically different from the midpoint of the scale. The mean difference is small (-0.03451), and the 95% confidence interval includes zero, which means the data do not support a clear conclusion that the overall governance score is below average.

Accordingly, *H1* is not supported at the aggregate level. This does not mean that governance in Sudan is strong. Rather, it indicates that respondents' overall assessments cluster around the midpoint when all governance dimensions are combined. The descriptive analysis remains important here because it shows that weakness is concentrated in specific areas—especially anti-corruption effectiveness, fiscal fairness, transparency in allocation, and institutional responsiveness—instead of appearing as a uniformly low score across every governance dimension.

The second hypothesis stated that:

"Sustainable development and developmental balance indicators in Sudan are low due to poor resource allocation and unequal opportunities between regions."

A one-sample t-test was conducted to compare the mean of the sustainable development and developmental balance variable with the hypothetical mean (3).

Table 3: One-Sample t-Test Results for Sustainable Development and Developmental Balance

Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval
Sustainable Development & Developmental Balance	-2.557	131	0.012	-0.21212	Lower: -0.3762, Upper: -0.0480

The t-value (-2.557) with 131 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.012 indicates that the aggregate score for sustainable development and developmental balance is statistically below the midpoint. The mean

difference is negative (-0.21212), and the confidence interval does not include zero.

Therefore, *H2* is supported. Respondents perceive sustainable development and developmental balance in Sudan as significantly weaker than the neutral benchmark of the scale. This result is consistent with the descriptive findings on spatial injustice, limited service quality, and weak transparency in the territorial distribution of resources and opportunities.

The third hypothesis stated that:

"There is a statistically significant integrative relationship between good governance and achieving sustainable development and developmental balance in Sudan."

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength and direction of this relationship.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation between Good Governance and Sustainable Development/Developmental Balance

Variable	Good Governance as a Strategic Option	Sustainable Development & Developmental Balance
Good Governance as a Strategic Option	Pearson Correlation = 1	0.843**
	Sig. (2-tailed) = –	0.000
	N = 132	132
Sustainable Development & Developmental Balance	Pearson Correlation = 0.843**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000	–
	N = 132	132

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results show a very strong positive correlation (r = 0.843) between the aggregate governance score and the aggregate sustainable-development/developmental-balance score. The probability value is below 0.01, indicating statistical significance.

Accordingly, *H3* is supported in associational terms. Respondents who rate governance more positively also tend to rate development and developmental balance more positively. This is an important finding, but it should be interpreted carefully. Because both variables are measured through the same questionnaire at a single point in time, the correlation should be understood as evidence of a strong perceived association rather than proof that better governance, by itself, causes better development outcomes.

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This study examined whether informed respondents in Sudan perceive a meaningful relationship between good governance and sustainable development/developmental balance. Taken together, the results present a consistent but nuanced picture. Governance is not rated as uniformly collapsed across all dimensions; rather, respondents describe an uneven institutional landscape in which some governance components hover around the midpoint while several high-stakes dimensions remain clearly weak. By contrast, the development-related dimensions are evaluated more negatively overall, especially where they concern territorial fairness and service quality.

The descriptive governance results are substantively important. Respondents identify anti-corruption effectiveness, fairness in fiscal distribution, transparency in resource allocation, judicial independence, and responsiveness to citizens as the weakest areas. These are precisely the components that matter most for translating public authority into developmental legitimacy. The absence of a statistically significant aggregate deficit in the one-sample t-test does not negate these weaknesses; instead, it suggests that the governance

profile is mixed, with some more positively viewed items offsetting serious deficits in other areas. This distinction matters because policy failure in fragile contexts often stems less from universal institutional collapse than from weakness in a limited number of decisive governance mechanisms.

The results on sustainable development and developmental balance are more straightforward. Respondents evaluate spatial justice, service quality, and transparency in territorial allocation negatively, and the aggregate score is significantly below the midpoint. This indicates that developmental imbalance is not merely a rhetorical claim within the sample; it is a patterned assessment that appears across multiple dimensions. Economic and social growth items perform somewhat better, but even there respondents remain unconvinced that benefits are sufficiently inclusive or well targeted to poor and marginalized groups. The implication is that growth, where perceived, is not viewed as equitably distributed.

The correlation result is one of the most important findings of the study. The strong positive association between governance and development assessments suggests that respondents do not regard governance as a secondary administrative concern. Rather, they see it as closely intertwined with the possibility of achieving fairer and more sustainable development. This is consistent with comparative literature showing that institutional quality conditions how effectively states convert resources, plans, and authority into development outcomes [Omri and Ben Mabrouk 2020, Al-Adlani 2019, Bisogno et al. 2025]. At the same time, methodological caution is necessary. Because the study relies on cross-sectional self-reports, the strong correlation may partly reflect shared perceptions, common response tendencies, or conceptual overlap between governance and development items. The result is therefore best interpreted as evidence of a powerful perceived linkage, not as definitive causal confirmation.

The demographic profile of the sample provides both strength and limitation to the interpretation of the results. The high educational level, substantial work experience, and concentration of respondents in managerial or professional roles increase the likelihood that participants understand the institutional issues being assessed. This lends credibility to the substantive interpretation of the responses. However, the same characteristics mean that the study reflects the perceptions of comparatively informed stakeholders more than those of the general population. For that reason, the findings are most convincing as an institutional reading of the Sudanese case, not as a nationally representative account of citizen opinion.

Overall, the study's central contribution lies in showing that, within this sample, developmental imbalance in Sudan is perceived as real and substantial, and that it is closely associated with governance weaknesses in specific institutional domains. The findings therefore support the argument that governance reform deserves to be treated as part of the core architecture of development strategy rather than as a parallel administrative agenda.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study suggest several policy implications for Sudanese decision-makers, public institutions, and development partners:

1. *Governance as a Developmental Lever, Not a Parallel Agenda.* The strong positive relationship between governance and development assessments suggests that governance reform should not be treated as a separate or secondary agenda. Instead, governance should be integrated into national development planning, budgeting, and sectoral policy design. Within the limits of the present evidence, strengthening governance appears to be an enabling condition for more sustainable and territorially balanced development rather than a peripheral administrative concern.

2. *Prioritizing Spatial Justice in Development Planning.* The persistent weaknesses identified in spatial justice indicate that development strategies should explicitly incorporate territorial equity objectives. This requires revising national and state-level plans to incorporate clear criteria for project allocation among states, ensuring that neglected and marginalized regions receive priority attention in infrastructure, services, and economic opportunities.

3. *Reforming Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations.* Weaknesses in transparency and fairness of resource and opportunity distribution underscore the need to reform intergovernmental fiscal arrangements. A more transparent and rules-based system of transfers and allocations, supported by public disclosure and independent oversight, is essential to reduce regional disparities and enhance developmental balance.

4. *Strengthening Institutions and Anti-Corruption Frameworks.* The low scores for anti-corruption effectiveness and perceptions of weak oversight institutions highlight the need to enhance the operational independence, resourcing, and enforcement powers of integrity and audit bodies. This includes improving legal frameworks, protecting whistleblowers, and institutionalizing risk-based monitoring in high-exposure sectors such as procurement and public investment.

5. *Deepening Decentralization and Local Participation.* Although local participation in planning recorded relatively better scores, fiscal and decision-making powers at the subnational level remain constrained. Policy reforms should deepen decentralization by providing states and localities with greater autonomy in priority-setting, budgeting, and implementation, while simultaneously building their administrative and technical capacity and ensuring robust accountability mechanisms.

6. *Embedding Social Justice in Development Programs.* The finding that development projects do not adequately address the needs of poor and marginalized groups implies a need to mainstream social justice criteria into the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects. Social impact assessments, participatory planning, and targeted programs for vulnerable groups should be institutionalized within national and state-level development frameworks.

7. *Leveraging International and Regional Governance Experiences.* Respondents' strong support for learning from international governance experiences suggests that Sudan can benefit from carefully adapted lessons from countries that have successfully used governance reforms to enhance development outcomes. South–South cooperation, peer learning, and technical assistance can be used to support context-sensitive governance reforms that enhance institutional resilience and developmental justice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the empirical results and policy implications, the study proposes the following recommendations:

1. *Develop a National Good Governance and Developmental Balance Strategy.* Formulate a comprehensive national strategy that explicitly links good governance principles to sustainable development and regional equity objectives. This strategy should set measurable targets for transparency, accountability, spatial justice, and service quality, and should be aligned with national development plans and the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. *Institutionalize Transparent Allocation Criteria and Public Reporting.* Introduce legally binding criteria for the allocation of development projects and financial resources among states, based on indicators such as population, poverty levels, infrastructure gaps, and vulnerability. Annual reports detailing allocations, projects, and performance at the state level should be published in accessible formats to strengthen public oversight.

3. *Establish or Strengthen Independent Oversight and Integrity Bodies.* Enhance the mandate, independence, and capacity of anti-corruption agencies, audit institutions, and ombudsman offices. This includes secure funding, protection from political interference, and robust follow-up mechanisms to ensure that findings translate into corrective actions.

4. *Enhance Judicial Independence and Access to Justice.* Address weaknesses in the rule of law by reinforcing the independence of the judiciary, improving legal protections for citizens, and expanding access to justice in underserved regions. Legal and judicial reforms should be complemented by capacity building and monitoring of judicial performance.

5. *Promote Participatory and Inclusive Local Governance.* Expand mechanisms for citizen participation in local planning and monitoring, including participatory budgeting initiatives, community advisory councils, and regular public consultations. Special attention should be given to ensuring meaningful participation of women, youth, and marginalized groups in decision-making processes.

6. *Improve the Quality and Equity of Public Services.* Prioritize investments in basic services—education, health, water, and electricity—in states and localities with the lowest indicators. Service quality standards and performance indicators should be defined, monitored, and publicly reported, with corrective measures taken where persistent underperformance is observed.

7. *Strengthen Data Systems for Governance and Development Monitoring.* Develop integrated national and subnational data systems for tracking governance indicators, service delivery performance, spatial distribution of projects, and development outcomes. Reliable data are essential for evidence-based planning, policy evaluation, and public accountability.

8. *Support Capacity Development in Public Administration.* Provide continuous training and professional development for public officials at central and state levels in areas such as strategic planning, public financial management, performance monitoring, and citizen engagement, with a particular focus on regions facing capacity deficits.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Like any empirical study, this research has several limitations that should be acknowledged and that also point toward priorities for future work.

First, the study relied on cross-sectional survey data collected at a single point in time. The findings therefore capture perceived relationships at one moment rather than demonstrating how changes in governance over time affect development outcomes. Longitudinal or repeated-survey designs would be better suited to assessing temporal change.

Second, the analysis is based on self-reported perceptions rather than objective administrative, fiscal, or socio-economic indicators. This is appropriate for understanding how governance and development are interpreted by informed respondents, but it also creates the possibility of common-method bias and shared response tendencies. Future studies should triangulate perception-based evidence with administrative data such as audit findings, budget execution patterns, service coverage indicators, poverty data, and territorial expenditure records.

Third, although the sample is geographically dispersed and institutionally diverse, it is not statistically representative of all population groups in Sudan. Rural communities, informal-sector workers, displaced populations, and other marginalized groups may experience governance and development differently from the

respondents included here. Subsequent research should broaden the sampling frame and incorporate more citizen-level and community-level evidence.

Fourth, the inferential analysis is deliberately simple. The study uses midpoint comparisons and bivariate correlation, which are useful for an initial empirical assessment but cannot isolate the relative contribution of individual governance dimensions or control for potentially confounding influences. Future work could employ multivariate models, factor analysis, structural equation modeling, or mixed-method designs to examine which governance components matter most for which development outcomes.

Finally, Sudan's political, security, and economic conditions are highly fluid. This means that institutional perceptions and development assessments may shift rapidly over time. Comparative and longitudinal research would therefore be valuable not only for strengthening causal inference but also for tracking whether governance reforms alter patterns of spatial justice, service delivery, and developmental balance.

CONCLUSION

This study examined good governance as a strategic option for achieving sustainable development and developmental balance in Sudan. Using a descriptive–analytical design and survey data from 132 respondents drawn from government, the private sector, civil society, and academia, the study assessed perceptions of governance implementation, evaluated perceptions of development and developmental balance, and analyzed the association between the two aggregate constructs.

The results show that governance in Sudan is perceived as uneven rather than uniformly weak. Some dimensions are assessed around the midpoint, but important deficits are concentrated in anti-corruption effectiveness, fiscal fairness, transparency in allocation, judicial independence, and institutional responsiveness. By contrast, sustainable development and developmental balance are evaluated more negatively overall, particularly in relation to spatial justice, public service quality, and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Economic and social growth receives somewhat more positive ratings, but respondents do not view this growth as sufficiently inclusive.

A very strong and statistically significant positive correlation was found between the aggregate governance score and the aggregate development score. This indicates that respondents who evaluate governance more positively also tend to evaluate sustainable development and developmental balance more positively. The finding is substantively important because it reinforces the view that governance is closely intertwined with development performance in the Sudanese context. At the same time, the design of the study requires caution: the data support a strong association in stakeholder perceptions, not a definitive causal claim.

The study contributes empirical value by bringing structured field-based evidence to a question that is often discussed in Sudan in normative or purely policy terms. Its practical implication is that reforms aimed at transparency, accountability, decentralization, institutional capacity, and fairer territorial allocation are likely to matter for development strategy. Its methodological implication is equally important: future research should combine stakeholder perceptions with objective indicators and broader sampling in order to test more rigorously how governance influences developmental balance over time.

In sum, the manuscript supports the argument that good governance is not merely a desirable administrative principle in Sudan. It is perceived by informed respondents as closely connected to whether development is equitable, territorially balanced, and institutionally sustainable.

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APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Table 5: Frequency Distribution of the Study Sample by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	102	77.3%
Female	30	22.7%
Total	132	100%

Table 6: Frequency Distribution of the Study Sample by Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Under 30 years	8	6.1%
30–39 years	21	15.9%
40–49 years	50	37.9%
50 years and above	53	40.2%
Total	132	100%

Table 7: Frequency Distribution of the Study Sample by Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	74	56.1%
Master's Degree	31	23.5%
Doctorate (PhD)	26	19.7%
Other	1	0.8%
Total	132	100%

Table 8: Frequency Distribution of the Study Sample by Workplace

Workplace	Frequency	Percentage
Government Ministry or Agency	77	58.3%
Civil Society	17	12.9%
Private Sector	24	18.2%
Academic / Researcher	14	10.6%
Total	132	100%

Table 9: Frequency Distribution of the Study Sample by Administrative Position

Administrative Position	Frequency	Percentage
Senior Management	26	19.7%
Department Manager	44	33.3%
Unit Head / Director	32	24.2%
Expert / Specialist	8	6.1%
Other	22	16.7%
Total	132	100%

Table 10: Frequency Distribution of the Study Sample by Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	9	6.8%
5–10 years	30	22.7%
More than 10 years	93	70.5%
Total	132	100%

Table 11: Frequency Distribution of the Study Sample by State

State	Frequency	Percentage
Khartoum	22	16.7%
Al Jazirah	6	4.5%
White Nile	2	1.5%
Blue Nile	17	12.9%
Sennar	5	3.8%
Gedaref	6	4.5%
Kassala	6	4.5%
Red Sea	10	7.6%
River Nile	13	9.8%
Northern	3	2.3%
South Kordofan	11	8.3%
West Kordofan	12	9.1%
South Darfur	8	6.1%
West Darfur	5	3.8%
Total	132	100%

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