

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA: LESSON, IMPACTS AND CRITICAL PARADIGMS.

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Abstract

The achievement of the political, economic, and social goals of any political community has been acknowledged as being dependent on leadership and governance (Oni and Nchekwube 1). Leadership is a crucial and significant issue facing Africa and other developing nations worldwide. Finding the right leadership to advance good governance has been a persistent problem in Africa and developing countries in general, with Nigeria being no exception. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of leadership on public sector governance and development in Nigeria. The conceptual framework was built on theories of leadership and governance that had been modified for the Nigerian context. The study involved using the theories of transformational leadership and servant leadership theory as the most appropriate conceptual frameworks. The research demonstrates that Nigeria's history is rife with examples of poor governance and leadership that, in most cases, lacked vision, were primarily preoccupied with corruption and the improper use of public resources, selfless leaders since independence, a lack of accountability, a lack of transparency, and false promises that resulted in insecurity, a decline in the economy, and extreme poverty. According to the study's findings, corruption is a significant problem across the board in Nigerian society. According to the study, Nigeria needs future leaders who are dedicated to combating corruption and ensuring that resources are made available for national development. This measure is vital for building public trust and maintaining good governance.

Keywords: Governance, Leadership, lesson, impacts, critical paradigms.

Introduction

Governance and leadership in Africa have been subjects of intense scrutiny and analysis for several decades. The continent has had a long history of authoritarian and ineffective leadership, resulting in poor governance and limited development. However, recent years have seen some positive developments, with several African countries experiencing significant economic growth and democratic reforms. This article explores the lessons learned, the impacts made, and critical paradigms in Nigerian governance and leadership.

The level of political stability and development in a country is directly affected by the quality of its leadership and governance, a well-known fact. Poor leadership and bad governance lead to underdevelopment and political instability. Nnablife (2010) emphasized the importance of leadership and governance to the survival of a system, stating that all things rise and fall on leadership and reiterating that effective leadership is crucial in driving a nation or organization towards development and productivity through the application of good governance.

However, post-independence Nigeria is still struggling with the challenges of bad leadership and governance, which have hindered political stability and development in the country. Despite Nigeria's vast resources and reserves, the nation continues to suffer socio-economic, political, and infrastructural decay. The collapse of ethical governance and the abuse of moral norms have led to a loss of conscience toward what is right and objective in the polity. It is doubtful whether Nigeria can overcome its impoverished state if its leaders lack the morality and sanity to drive the nation's steering toward emancipation. It is against this background this study reflects on the issue of governance and leadership, its effect on society, and possible solutions to the effect of bad governance and leadership.

Conceptual Clarification of Terms

Leadership: The word leadership has been defined in many ways by different scholars, and as a result, it has become almost an impossibility to come up with a single definition. Ward ((2009) has defined leadership as “the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal” and not a selfish objective. As Northouse (2007) has aptly noted, leadership “is a process of getting things done through people”; it “means responsibility” and having “passion for the purpose and the mission of the organization” or society one leads.

Governance: Governance was created out of the word govern, which means; to rule a country, control or direct the public affair of a city, control, influence something or somebody, and determine something. Governance is the act or manner of governing (Ogbeidi, 2017).

The United Nations (2007) defined governance as the way society sets and manages the rules that guide policymaking and policy implementation. The World Bank Group (2011) defined governance as the way power is exercised through a country's economic, political, and

social institutions. It is the political leadership of a country that exercises power.

Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2006) perhaps offer a comprehensive definition of governance. According to them, governance is the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised, which include the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them. Kaufmann & Mastruzzi (2006) further espouse six indicators of governance, including accountability, the political effectiveness of public service provision and the quality of the bureaucracy, quality or soundness of policies pursued by the government, the rule of law, while the sixth indicator is control of corruption.

Lesson: All Nations English Dictionary (1992) defined a lesson as a unit of instruction given to students on a particular topic or subject. It usually involves the teacher presenting information, facilitating learning activities, and assessing students' understanding of the material. It can also refer to a difficult or unpleasant experience that provides a valuable learning opportunity. Overall, the word lesson refers to an experience or period of instruction that provides knowledge, skills, or insights that can be applied in various contexts.

Impacts: According to UK Research and Innovation (2019), the word "impact" can have different meanings depending on the context, but concerning a particular subject or topic, it generally refers to the effect, influence, or consequence that it has on something or someone. In both cases, the term "impact" refers to the significant effect or consequence that the subject or topic is having on the specific area or aspect being considered.

Critical paradigms: Critical paradigms refer to theoretical frameworks that challenge dominant power structures and social norms and seek to promote social justice, equity, and inclusivity (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Critical paradigms seek to confront the governing norms and structures that perpetuate social injustices and inequalities and promote alternative ways of thinking and organizing society.

Theories of Governance and Leadership

There are many different theories of governance and leadership, each with its unique perspective on how best to manage organizations, communities, and societies. The researcher used two theories below to achieve the goal of this paper.

Transformational leadership Theory: This theory was developed in the 1970s and 1980s by researchers like James MacGregor Burns and Bernard Bass, who argued that effective leaders inspire and motivate their followers to achieve common goals. Transformational leadership has been applied in a wide range of settings, including business, education, healthcare, and government. While it is not a new concept, it has gained renewed attention in recent years as organizations have become more focused on employee engagement and retention.

Transformational leadership is a powerful approach that can create positive change in organizations and communities by inspiring and motivating followers to work towards a shared vision or purpose.

Servant leadership Theory: This theory was developed in the 1970s by Robert Greenleaf, who argued that effective leaders prioritize the needs of their followers over their interests and focus on empowering others to achieve their goals (Greenleaf, 1970). According to Greenleaf, the servant-leader is a person who has a natural desire to serve others and put their needs ahead of their own. Servant leaders focus on the personal growth and development of their followers and strive to create a sense of community and collaboration within their organizations.

Overview of Governance and Leadership in Nigeria

In Africa, in general, leadership and governance have been identified as major problems militating against growth and development in all sectors of the economy, and the grassroots levels are not being exempted. The need for leadership in any nation or state is essential. This is because nations or states exist with stated ideologies, and leaders are 'machinery' for achieving such stated ideologies. Organizational goals will remain unrealistic without a 'designated individual' known as a leader. As a result, leaders are 'central instruments' to any organization. The success or failure of an organization lies in the hand of a leader (Agere, 2019).

One of the major challenges facing Nigeria is how to create a context of stable political and socio-economic environment for policies and

programmes to be implemented. The issue of getting the right leadership to fight corruption and propel good governance has been a recurring decimal in Nigeria and Africa in general. Once this enabling environment is created, it becomes easy for the people to confront and resolve challenges facing them by using resources within their environment to create a condition of life where each stage is progressively better than the preceding one. However, this is not the case in Nigeria due to corruption and bad governance. Good governance encapsulates transparency, accountability, freedom of choice and liberty for the people to pursue their individual and corporate interests. Indeed, at the core of Africa's underdeveloped status are corruption and leadership deficit.

Leadership and good governance are crucial to realizing any giant stride taken in pursuit of development anywhere in the world; Nigeria is no exception. The reverberation effects of the failure of leadership, corruption and bad governance are visible and being felt down to the grassroots levels of Nigerian society. Unemployment and employment for cash, insecurity, crude oil thefts, the crisis in education, dearth of infrastructures such as health services, transportation, accommodation, communication, medication, etc, are all common features in Nigeria. It is an irony that of all oil-producing nations, Nigeria is the only country with a history of crude oil thefts.

The root cause of inequality, poverty and underdevelopment in Nigeria is attributed to bad leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with Nigerian land, climate, water, air, or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibility to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership.

Developmental research indicates that Nigeria is fraught with poor leadership, bad governance, corruption, and weak bureaucratic institutions. It is an axiom that since the attainment of political independence, Nigeria has never been governed by selfless, truly transformational, and intellectually endowed leaders. Sadly, the country has not been able to enjoy the services of good, visionary, and selfless leaders since the time of independence.

Going by all the development parameters and performance indices, Nigerian leaders have failed economically, with low growth, massive unemployment, and rising inequality between the rich and the poor.

Nigeria's per capita GDP is nothing to reckon with, poverty is widespread, and about 54 per cent of the population is living on less than one US dollar per day.

Nigerian Governance and Leadership, Lesson, Impacts and Critical Paradigms

Governance and leadership in Nigeria have experienced significant challenges, lessons, impacts, and critical paradigms, leading to the emergence of critical paradigms. This article explores these aspects in the Nigerian context.

Lessons Learned

In the Nigerian context, there are several important lessons learned from governance and leadership:

Corruption and Mismanagement: Corruption has been a longstanding challenge in Nigeria, affecting governance and leadership. Rampant corruption and mismanagement of resources have had detrimental effects on Nigeria's development. The diversion of public funds meant for essential services, such as healthcare and education, has resulted in poor infrastructure, limited access to basic amenities, and low quality of life for many Nigerians.

Transparency and accountability: This is closely linked to corruption. Governance at national, state, and local levels is neither accountable nor transparent, while due process is boycotted. The various public sectors are shrouded in weak structures and poverty while lots of money are allotted to them in the budget. This is an offshoot of non-transparent governance by those in authority (Julius-Adeoye, 2011). Lack of transparency and accountability has been a major challenge in Nigeria, leading to corruption and mismanagement of public resources.

The rule of law: The leaders in Nigeria do not show respect for the rule of law, especially judicial decisions. This lends its bearing to the fact that the judiciary, which is an arm that upholds the rule of law, is held by the jugular political actors. Nwekeaku (2014) averred that Nigeria's constitution provides for the fundamental rights of the citizens and roles for every level of government. Thus it is not the lack of good laws that trouble Nigeria but the lack of good governance that seeks to twist these laws to their curves. Weak institutions and a lack of adherence to the rule of law have undermined governance and leadership in Nigeria.

Ineffective Economic Policies: Poor economic policies, including excessive reliance on oil revenues and inadequate diversification of the economy, have left Nigeria vulnerable to external shocks and economic instability. This has resulted in high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality.

Inadequate Security: Nigeria has faced significant security challenges, including insurgency, terrorism, and communal conflicts. Weak security institutions and inadequate responses to these threats have resulted in the loss of lives, displacement of communities, and disruption of economic activities.

Neglect of Rural Areas: Rural areas in Nigeria have often been neglected in terms of development and access to basic services. This has contributed to rural-urban disparities, poverty, and limited opportunities for rural dwellers.

Lack of Youth Empowerment: Nigeria's large youth population has not been adequately empowered or provided with opportunities for education, skill development, and employment. This has resulted in high levels of youth unemployment, social unrest, and youth involvement in criminal activities (The World Bank, 2018).

Electoral malpractices challenges: This problem has become a popular phenomenon in Nigerian politics. An average Nigerian believes that elections cannot be won except if it is rigged. The state of our electoral system has indeed gotten worse to this extent. Election fraud has been a problem ever since the country's independence, and it still exists today in a modernized form. Election rigging was allegedly committed by the leadership of several political parties during the first republic, as an example of how our leaders are the architects of electoral fraud. The same happened in the second republic. Similarly, the fourth republic was not any different (Toyin and Adetoye 2014). It is doubtful that good governance can be established by the same group of people who are so desperate to gain power at any cost if, by now, our leaders and politicians are not prepared to face free and fair elections.

Impacts Made

Nigeria's socio-economic and political landscape have both been positively and negatively impacted by the country's governance and leadership. Here are some key impacts:

Political Stability and Security: Effective governance and leadership are crucial for ensuring political stability and maintaining security in Nigeria. Weak governance and poor leadership have often led to political instability, inter-ethnic conflicts, and insurgency issues like Boko Haram. On the other hand, strong governance and capable leadership contribute to maintaining law and order, fostering peace, and ensuring the safety of citizens (Kenny, 2019).

Economic Development: Good governance and effective leadership are essential for promoting economic development in Nigeria. Sound policies, transparent institutions, and competent leadership are crucial for attracting investments, stimulating economic growth, and reducing poverty. Conversely, weak governance and corrupt leadership hinder economic progress, discourage investments, and perpetuate poverty (World Bank, 2020).

Corruption and Transparency: Governance and leadership play a critical role in addressing corruption and promoting transparency. Corruption erodes public trust, diverts resources away from public services, and undermines development efforts. Transparent governance structures, strong anti-corruption measures, and accountable leadership are key in combating corruption and ensuring responsible resource management (Transparency International, 2021).

Social Services and Human Development: Effective governance and leadership are instrumental in delivering essential social services and promoting human development in Nigeria. Good governance facilitates the provision of quality education, healthcare, infrastructure, and other public services. Moreover, strong leadership is required to prioritize and allocate resources effectively, ensuring the welfare and well-being of the population (United Nations, 2015).

Democratic Consolidation: Governance and leadership are pivotal in consolidating democracy in Nigeria. Promoting democratic values, protecting human rights, ensuring free and fair elections, and fostering inclusive participation are vital for democratic governance. Competent leadership committed to democratic principles strengthens institutions, enhances political participation, and deepens democracy (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2020).

Critical Paradigms

Despite the progress made, there are still critical paradigms that need to be addressed in Nigeria's governance and leadership.

Several critical paradigms have emerged from Nigeria's governance and leadership experiences. One paradigm is the shift towards inclusive governance, recognizing the importance of diverse voices and the participation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes. Another paradigm is the emphasis on ethical leadership, promoting integrity, honesty, and the avoidance of corruption. Additionally, the paradigm of institutional strengthening has gained prominence, focusing on building robust institutions that can effectively deliver public services and enforce accountability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, good governance and effective leadership are critical for the development of Nigeria. The lessons learned from past experiences, the impacts made, and the critical paradigms that need to be addressed provide a roadmap for Nigerian leaders to build a strong and prosperous nation. By promoting strong institutions, inclusive and participatory governance, regional integration, and sustainable development, Nigeria can achieve its full potential. Good governance is a prerequisite for successful development, which every country craves.

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