

Review Article

Blame Game, Corruption, and Leadership Failure in Nigeria

**Azowue O. Emmanuel¹, Kalu Samuel Obasi¹, Ojohu Obongha Richard¹, Jude Ani¹,
Anierobi Ogomegbunam Perpetua^{1*}**

¹ Peace and Conflict Studies, School of General Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Correspondence should be addressed to Anierobi Ogomegbunam Perpetua: perpetuaogoo@yahoo.com

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Abstract: Nigeria is replete with abundant material and human resources that demand to be exploited through innovative, strategic, and creative leadership. An approach to leadership that is grounded in the cultural values of the populace and operates from the bottom up is critical in resolving the current development impasse that Nigeria is mired in. Nonetheless, this is not the case as a result of ineffective leadership, corruption, and poor governance. This paper adopts an eclectic approach, drawing upon theories of the public and nature of society, to analyze the interconnectedness of corruption, governance, and leadership. Its objective is to provide an overview of the path towards an effective leadership and governance model that can effectively address the numerous challenges faced by Nigeria. Additionally, the lucrative nature of corruption in Nigeria, which has been shrouded in mystery, is investigated. The paper reaffirms a previous stance that leadership deficiencies, corruption, and poor governance are detrimental factors impeding Nigeria's progress. Hence, it is imperative that every effort be made to install competent leadership and sound governance that can eradicate the pervasive problem of corruption from the political system of the nation. Among other measures, the initial fundamental stage is to transform the state from an external force into an organization that looks out for the welfare and prosperity of the people. However, it is impossible to overstate the importance of having leaders who are missionary, visionary, and patriotic, as a strong nation can only have such leaders who plant trees whose shade they are certain they will never sit in. In addition, the adherents ought to carry out their mandatory and discretionary civic obligations and responsibilities.

Keywords: Blame Game, Corruption, Leadership, Failure, Nigeria

Introduction

Making the political and socioeconomic climate stable enough to support the implementation of policies and initiatives is one of the biggest problems Nigeria and other emerging nations face. In Nigeria and throughout Africa, finding the proper leadership to

combat corruption and advance good governance has proven to be a persistent challenge. After this supportive atmosphere is established, individuals may easily face and overcome obstacles by utilizing resources in their surroundings to establish a life where each stage is gradually better than the last. However, due to corruption and poor leadership, this is not the situation in Nigeria. Transparency, accountability, freedom of choice, and the opportunity for individuals to pursue their own and their company's interests are all components of good governance. Indeed, a lack of leadership and corruption are the main causes of Africa's underdevelopment.

Any significant advancement made in the global pursuit of development, including in Nigeria, depends on strong leadership and sound governance. The consequences of poor leadership, corruption, and governance are apparent and being felt by every area and group in Nigerian society. Nigeria is known for its high rates of unemployment and cash jobs, instability, theft of crude oil, educational crises, and a lack of infrastructure, including communication, lodging, transportation, health care, and medicine. It is ironic that Nigeria is the only nation that produces oil and has a history of theft of crude oil. According to Michels (in Olayiwola, 2019), a study of Nigeria's socioeconomic and political history shows that many of its leaders have employed the "iron law of oligarchy" throughout the years to justify their aspirations for office over the membership's revolutionary objectives.

Nigerian politicians and their governments have been severely embroiled in egregious acts of corruption and poor governance ever since the country's formal independence in 1960. Nigerian political leaders have used every tactic at their disposal to "grab" power, including overt election manipulation, census figure manipulation, violence, thuggery, arson, vandalism, gangsterism, corruption, bigotry against religion, regionalism, tribalism, ethnic sentiments, and acts of brigandage, as evidenced by statements made by certain delegates during the 2014 national conference. The only games in town are the denial of public interest, wrongdoings of all kinds, crimes of all kinds, mendacity, dishonesty, willingness to deceive, grasping, philistinism, and ethnic and sectional proclivities. Social unrest, insecurity, violence, extreme poverty, and political and socioeconomic instability have all been brought on by these. The pursuit of people's material well-being is the universal objective of progress, and while national integration has proven challenging, it is necessary to attain this goal. An intrinsically unstable society is one that is unfair and lacks justice and equality.

The Nigerian government has taken some action to address the dual problems of corruption and poor administration in the nation since the return to civil rule in 1999. These steps include reforming public procurement; establishing anti-corruption enforcement agencies like the Independent Corruption and Other Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC); and monetizing public services to cut down on waste and overworked personnel. Even while these steps have had some success, corruption and poor leadership nevertheless permeate every aspect of national life, making the situation untenable. Even more concerning is the fact that, despite widespread outrage against corruption and poor leadership that have undermined the nation's overall well-being, there is still no national agreement on how to deal with those who commit these

crimes, regardless of their gender, race, or religion. However, it seems that there haven't been any popular movements that have the power to harness the people's tangible wrath and direct it towards a range of initiatives and results that may upend the current quo.

The number of people owning private jets rises arithmetically at one extreme, while the ranks of unemployed and the poverty that goes along with it rise at the other. Horrible destitution coexists with extravagant excess. For example, Nigeria has one of the highest rates of maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity in the world, with an estimated 545 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births, according to the National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS). Every year, avoidable illnesses claim the lives of 158 out of every 1,000 children under the age of five (see *The Nigerian Tribune*, 2019; Orude, 2020). The average person in the population makes less than \$170 per day, while the average lifespan is 52 years. Nigeria has 10.5 million more out-of-school children than any other country in the world, according to the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) (see *Daily Sun*, 2020).

Igbokwe-Ibeto & Okoye (2021) concisely said that Obasanjo's civil dictatorship spent \$16 billion on making the nation dark, but they have not yet disclosed the \$20 billion that was taken out of the federation account. This regrettable situation is supported by their argument. Despite the trillions of naira being spent on security, insecurity has become the norm. The army of young people without jobs is partially to blame for the present wave of instability. Nigeria is sitting atop a gunpowder haze, as evidenced by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)'s recent alarm that 54% of the country's young are unemployed (Agboola, 2021).

Additionally, Nigeria Airways, the country's airline, has "disappeared" to make room for private airlines; Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) has "died" to support the business of power generators; Nigeria Telecommunication (NITEL) has "vanished" to make room for private ones to emerge; the railway was "incapacitated" to allow private haulage to flourish; federal and state universities are "comatose" to allow private ones to emerge; and public funds that have been embezzled are used to import weapons to bolster insecurity and repress political opponents (see, for example, Olayiwola, 2021; Abbas, 2022).

Everything appears to come down to corruption that is facilitated by a lack of leadership and a poor national government. The number of men and women with integrity who are prepared to use the nation's riches for the benefit of the general people is insufficient. Therefore, by examining the grave issues of leadership failings and the mysterious nature of corruption and poor governance, which have halted socioeconomic and political growth in Nigeria throughout time, the study aims to identify the factors that precipitate these states of affairs.

Statement of the Problem

Even though Nigeria has a lot of potential and natural resources, the country nevertheless has a lot of socioeconomic problems. Pervasive corruption, a never-ending

blame game, and a lack of effective leadership are three of the most critical problems. These tangled issues have taken root in the nation's politics, economy, and society, stifling growth and improvement. In Nigerian politics and government, assigning blame is commonplace. It is common practice for public officials and political leaders to place the blame on previous administrations, other branches of government, or outside forces when they fail to adequately address a problem. This blame culture does three things: it makes officials less accountable for their actions or inactions, it diverts attention away from solving problems by assuming responsibility for others, and it makes political parties and leaders more polarized because they prefer to point fingers rather than work together to find solutions.

One of the biggest problems that has been holding Nigeria's progress back is corruption. Bribery, embezzlement, fraud, and nepotism are some of its manifestations. Corruption has far-reaching consequences, including the following: a reduction in public funding for healthcare, education, and infrastructure; a loss of faith in government agencies and officials; an unfair distribution of resources and opportunities; and a slowdown in economic growth due to a lack of investment and inefficiency.

One of the most pressing problems in Nigeria is ineffective leadership. Inconsistent policies and subpar execution of development plans, ineffective governance systems that do not hold leaders to account, and insufficient reactions to crises like public health emergencies, economic downturns, and insecurity are all hallmarks of this problem.

The interconnectedness of the blame game, corruption, and leadership failure is profound. Corruption is a common tactic used by corrupt leaders to evade accountability and scrutiny. Ineffective leadership fails to tackle and eradicate corruption, and the blame game makes leadership failures worse by encouraging a culture of non-responsibility. The knock-on effects of these problems are numerous and far-reaching, including prolonged poverty and inequality, crumbling public services and infrastructure, increased insecurity and violence, a decline in public trust in democratic institutions, and sluggish or declining economic growth, among other problems.

In order to put an end to the finger-pointing, corruption, and ineffective leadership in Nigeria, the country needs radical changes that foster openness, responsibility, and accountability. Some effective strategies include making anti-corruption legislation more strictly enforced, increasing funding for civic education, and encouraging a sense of personal responsibility in both government and the general public. Overcoming these obstacles and achieving sustainable development would require Nigerians to work together.

Methodology

The study will adopt the document analysis method of data collection and analysis. The methodology is an arm of the qualitative method of data collection and analysis, and it requires the review and analysis of relevant literature, media reports, academic journals, newspaper and magazine publications, and seminar presentations to gain additional insight into the blame game, corruption and leadership failures in Nigeria.

Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives of Governance, Corruption and Leadership

Certain concepts in the fields of social sciences and management sciences are challenging to define in a way that is universally accepted. As a result, the applicability of each definition may be limited to the parameters established for a specific inquiry. The notion of leadership elicits a multitude of interpretations, and scholarly investigations abound in which various aspects of it are elaborated. Leadership serves as a unifying force and catalyst, inspiring the citizens of a nation to work towards the accomplishment of individual and collective goals. Leadership, according to Bedeian (2019), is the skill of exerting influence over the actions of individuals or groups in order to accomplish the goals of an organization or society at large. Furthermore, leadership encompasses the leader's ability to inspire and motivate followers to take action in pursuit of specific objectives that reflect the leader's and followers' values, motivations, desires, needs, aspirations, and expectations (Burns, 2020).

Upon conducting an exhaustive analysis of the leadership deadlocks in Nigeria, Achebe (1983) arrives at the following conclusion: The fundamental issue plaguing Nigeria is unmistakably a deficiency in leadership. Everything about the Nigerian land, climate, oxygen, water, and water is devoid of any defects. The Nigerian issue at hand pertains to the leaders' reluctance or incapacity to assume accountability, specifically the challenge of setting an exemplary personal example that distinguishes authentic leadership.

Without a doubt, leadership is pivotal in addressing the issue of transformation in Nigeria. However, in order to maintain this momentum, leaders must possess specific qualities and characteristics that exemplify and advance this paradigm. These include: (i) The existence of practical, purposeful, visionary and missionary initiative by the individual, reflecting the objectives of held ideas, values and aspirations, (ii) (iii) The presence of a distinct collection of beliefs, values, and aspirations within an individual that mirrors those of the majority, consisting of the subject or followership. The presence of a patriotic and nationalistic ethos, as well as accountability and transparency, is an indicator of tangible accomplishments that pertain to the degree to which the leader achieves the desired results. The aforementioned principles constitute sound governance.

Governance is a related concept to leadership. The concept of "governance" lacks a definition that is universally agreed upon. This is due to the fact that the subject has become so mired in semantic ambiguity that the relevant literature is replete with numerous definitions of the term by various scholars, each of which pertains to a distinct variant and subtype. Nonetheless, we shall traverse the term's conceptual terrains in an effort to locate a compromise for its heuristic investigation. Governance is defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2019) as "the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authorities to manage the affairs of a nation at all levels." In a similar vein, governance was defined by the World Governance Survey Report as "the development and management of the formal and informal regulations that govern the public sphere, where

economic, social, and state actors convene to reach decisions" (as cited in Hyden & Court, 2022).

In contemporary development literature, the phrases "governance" and "good governance" are being employed more frequently. In our societies, poor governance is increasingly recognized as one of the fundamental causes of all evil. An increasing number of major donors and international financial institutions are obligating loans and aid on the condition that "good governance" reforms are implemented. Good governance is distinguished by the following qualities: It adheres to the rule of law and is participatory, consensus-driven, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive. It ensures the mitigation of corruption, the consideration of minority perspectives, and the inclusion of the most marginalized members of society in the decision-making process (Akhakpe, 2019). Furthermore, it demonstrates adaptability to the current and forthcoming requirements of the community (Downer, 2020).

From a political standpoint, good governance necessitates the formation of a representative and answerable system of government; it further demands a robust and diverse civil society characterized by freedom of speech and association; it necessitates sound institutions—sets of regulations that govern the conduct of organizations and individuals, as well as the process of resolving disputes among them; and it ultimately demands the supremacy of the rule of law, upheld by means of an effective judicial system.

Good governance necessitates social policies that reduce destitution and foster a dynamic private sector, as well as policies that encourage broad-based economic growth. The optimal environment for economic growth is one that is open, efficient, and market-oriented. Priority is given to investing in people through institutions and policies that expand access to high-quality health care, education, and other services that comprise a nation's human resource base. Good corporate governance and efficient institutions are required to foster the growth of a competitive private sector. Contract and property rights-respecting social norms are essential for the operation of markets.

However, meticulous administration of the domestic economy is crucial for optimizing both economic and social progress. Governance encompasses the institutions, processes, and mechanisms by which individuals and groups express their concerns, exercise their legal entitlements, fulfill their responsibilities, and resolve disputes. Good governance is the competent administration of a nation's affairs and resources in a manner that is accountable, transparent, democratic, open, and responsive to the requirements of the people. Collectively, these elements, according to Akhakpe (2019), establish the degree of progress in a particular society.

Thus, the contentious issues of development are presented. Over the years, conceptual and methodological shifts have occurred in relation to the term "development." During the 1970s, the concept of development was closely linked to concerns regarding economic expansion, per capita income growth, and gross domestic product (GDP) escalation. Nevertheless, Todaro (2019) offers a framework through which one can analyze the complexities of development. According to him, development objectives should include the

capacity to provide for fundamental necessities such as food, shelter, health, and protection, as well as the attainment of self-respect and human liberty. Todaro further contended that human freedom should be granted to society in the form of liberation from oppressive material circumstances and liberty from the social servitude of individuals as well as ignorance regarding nature, distress, institutional structures, and dogmatic beliefs.

In support of the aforementioned viewpoint, Eberlee (2021) contends that the contemporary understanding of development has shifted from an obsession with growth and progress to the capacity of a society to reclaim its resources and employ them in accordance with its cultural values in order to address both personal and communal challenges, thereby establishing a new paradigm in which each phase represents an advancement over the previous one. In Africa, the lack of progress towards the advancement of human welfare and well-being is at stake as a result of ineffective governance and leadership, which have spawned monstrous levels of corruption.

Corruption is a contentious concept that social and political analysts endeavour to investigate in order to determine its multifaceted nature and significance. The term "corruption" has its etymological origin in the Greek word "*corruptus*," which signifies an anomaly or a falsehood. In contemporary Nigeria, however, corruption has become such a prevalent term that its definition is self-evident to the average citizen. As cited by the United Nations Global Programme against Corruption (GPAC), Waziri (2020) defines corruption as "the misuse of authority to advance personal interests." A precise and unambiguous definition of the term has been selected by Transparency International (2021): "the misuse of entrusted authority for personal benefit." It can also be defined simply as an act of deviating from generally accepted rules or laws for personal benefit or perversion.

In support of the concerns regarding the elevated level of corruption within the political sphere, Igbokwe-Ibeto and Okoye (2021) contend that the majority of Nigerian leaders have failed to manifest an authentic commitment to national progress since the country's independence in 1960. They further contended that the majority of African leaders amass, defraud, embezzle, and mismanage the natural and human resources of their nations with complete impunity. Their administration and management of common and collective wealth is devoid of transparency and accountability due to their possessive, egoistic, egotistical, individualistic, callous, greedy, and clandestine nature (Igbokwe-Ibeto & Okoye, 2021). The Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) recently released official figures that exemplify and emphasize the paradoxical nature of the Nigerian situation. The data illustrate the substantial influx of hydrocarbon revenues and the stark contrast between the resources at hand and the standard of living of the populace. The report by the Bureau, similar to numerous others, has captured the public's interest in highlighting the abhorrent and hydra-headed virus of leadership and mismanagement (The Nigerian Tribune, 2019).

In accordance with this line of reasoning, Adebajo (2020) concluded that its post-independence leaders pilfered an estimated \$380 billion of the nation's collective wealth, which is equivalent to approximately two-thirds of all economic aid provided to Africa during this time period. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the administration led by Ibrahim Babangida failed to recover \$12.4 billion in oil revenues that were a windfall result

of the 1991 Gulf War (Apter, 2021). Corruption impedes societal progress and affects all individuals, constituting a malevolent atmosphere. Although numerous theories attempt to account for its pervasiveness in society, it is crucial to underscore the fact that it has become an integral aspect of existence in Nigeria. This explains why combating its increasing visibility has proven to be challenging.

The paper's subject matter may be grounded in various theoretical frameworks, particularly within the social and management sciences, where viewpoints frequently diverge according to the worldview and orientation of the scholar. As a result of the aforementioned, we are motivated to commence this undertaking. Contemporary discussions on leadership, corruption, and governance elicit the theories of the nature of society, elite theory, political culture, and the theory of two publics. Although there may be other pertinent theories, the paper is primarily grounded in the theory of two publics and the essence of society approach. Indeed, the significance of the state's role is practically underscored in every subject that is examined in Africa (Osaghae, 2019). This is the case in Africa, where the state not only exercises leadership but also embodies society. It is imperative to acknowledge from the outset that the Nigerian state, similar to the majority of African states and countries in the Third World, emerged as an outcome of colonialism.

The Connecting Link between Leadership, Corruption and Governance

The decadence of colonialism has been linked by numerous scholars of African descent and politics, including Osaghae (2019) and Ekeh (2020), to the issue of leadership and corruption in Africa. The Theory of Two Publics is a credible framework that not only offers insights into the state and its challenges in Africa, but also offers significant explanations for the leadership deficit, corruption, and poor governance that are prevalent in African nations during the pandemic. Ekeh (2020) posits that a notable consequence of colonialism was the formation of two distinct public spheres—the civic and primordial public spheres—which had distinct moral relationships with the private sphere. Ekeh argued that exclusive rights (i.e. benefits) are anticipated from the state by its citizens, who have obligations (responsibilities) to a native sector, with regard to Nigeria in particular and Africa at large. The former is a "moral primordial public realm", and the latter is the foundation of a "amoral civic public realm." Consequently, the civic public sphere was linked to exploitative and illegitimate colonial governance and lacked any ethical connections to the private sphere. Amorality pervaded the public sphere to the extent that deceiving the system was regarded as a patriotic obligation (Ifidon, 2021).

As a consequence of the fact that the same actors operate in both domains, the state apparatus is utilized to enrich the primordial public, thereby endowing the civic public with, among other things, corruption, nepotism, impunity, and ethnicity (Osaghae, 2019). A decent citizen of the primordial public, according to Ekeh (2020), gives without expecting anything in return; a fortunate citizen of the civic public, on the other hand, gains from the civic but relishes the opportunity to avoid giving anything in return. However, such a fortunate individual would not be virtuous if he spent his entire fortune in his personal purse. In order to maintain his integrity as an individual, he must allocate a portion of the

surplus from the general populace to the primordial populace. Such is the dialectics' logical framework. As per the dialectics' unwritten law, robbing the civic public to bolster the primordial public is permissible.

Dudley (as cited in Akhakpe, 2019) attempted in one of the more elaborate ways to explain the nature of societies and their political behavioural and institutional patterns through the lens of Weberian hypotheses regarding culture-ingrained collective values and individuals. The primary focus of Dudley's viewpoint pertains to the political ramifications of the preeminent value that is ascribed to prosperity and prestige on a national scale. In Nigeria, for instance, political office is utilized as a means of personal gain. Insofar as the individual involved is perceived to be contributing such ill-gotten wealth to the well-being and advancement of his or her community, this is not considered corruption (Osaghae, 2020). Furthermore, Osaghae (2021) emphasizes that the political elite's pursuit of power has been motivated primarily by a desire to enrich themselves and faction members, as a result of the materialistic perception of the state. The motivation behind individuals' pursuit of power is not to advance the collective interests of the people and community, but rather to benefit themselves.

In providing a framework for comprehending the vast chasm between the (leaders') civic public and the (followers') primordial public, the theories are pertinent to this paper. It is evident that there is a divergence between the authorities and the citizens. Because of the influence of political parties and patron saints, the leaders were not elected from within the populace. Due to the lack of public accountability, elected officials partake in corrupt practices and poor governance without consequence for the welfare of ordinary citizens. Conversely, as a result of societal dynamics, a corrupt official can still be considered virtuous so long as a portion of the pilfered funds is diverted towards fulfilling fleeting desires of a select few, while abandoning initiatives and undertakings that aim to better the welfare of the general populace.

Corruption, Leadership, and Obstacles of Governance in Nigeria

In a developing nation like Nigeria, bureaucratic leadership faces a number of normative and empirical challenges when attempting to advance good governance and combat corruption. We will discuss these issues in detail in the sections that follow in an effort to offer a roadmap for reducing, if not eliminating, them. The accomplishment of political freedom in Nigeria and throughout Africa appears to have coincided with a decline in the spirit of nationalism and patriotism. Since then, African leaders have tended to prioritize their own personal and sectional interests over the objectives of the state. A quote attributed to former President Goodluck Jonathan that claims the hated Islamic extremist organization "Boko Haram" has penetrated his administration serves as an example of this. This confusing remark suggests that certain cabinet members are there to further interests that are at odds with the interests of the country. As a result, under these conditions, the concept of good governance and leadership is still a pipe dream. This is attested to by the misguided remarks and stance of several delegates during the 2014 National Conference.

Africa's materialistic thesis and view of the state, together with its institutions, are a vicious cycle that has drained society of its essential elements of governance and leadership. In Africa, the state is viewed as a means of accumulating primordial riches. Unfortunately, this idea and virus have infected government operations and spread across the whole community. According to Banfield (in Osaghae, 2021), persons in this type of society only run for public office in order to further their own financial interests at the expense of the general welfare and interest of the public. For instance, in an attempt to explain to a confused populace that "it is not a crime to steal government money, only when you steal, steal small-small, and invest it in the country but you become an enemy of the state when you steal and invest outside the country" (see Akhakpe, 2019), Mobutu Saisasiko, the former president of Zaire, is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nigeria and the majority of African nations, however, are diverse societies made up of several ethnic and religious groups. This raises yet another issue with representation in local, state, and federal government. The federal character concept is one strategy proposed to address these diversities in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the question of whether the idea has held up throughout time is unrelated. However, it is sufficient to state that the implementation of federal character in the face of strained ethnic relations has corrupted the concept of merit, leading to subpar work and service delivery in the public sector (Akhakpe, 2019).

A typical occurrence and the bane of effective leadership and good governance in Africa includes policy inconsistencies, unstable governments, and an excessive dependence on foreign ideas to solve domestic issues. Leaders seldom uphold the ideas and initiatives of their predecessors; a reorganization of the cabinet is frequently anticipated, as government is supposed to serve the interests of all citizens. African leaders enact policies that are not indigenous, sometimes without fully understanding the ramifications and execution of such policies.

While corrupt behaviour by public officials and leaders carries the death sentence in emerging nations eager to advance, in Nigeria and throughout Africa, the concept of a "plea-bargain" has lessened the penalty for corruption rather than toughening it. For example, this legal loophole allows certain previous governors who were charged with theft and misappropriation of state finances to avoid consequences. While the current laws should be put into effect, the legal frameworks addressing issues of corruption and poor governance should be redesigned to show no respect for anybody, regardless of position.

In Nigeria, corruption has spread so widely that young people do not understand the value of doing the right thing or attending school because they witness on a daily basis how illiterate and only partially educated people control billions of naira, while highly educated people who conduct research that advances society and knowledge are derided. The populace finds it difficult to respect and believe in its leaders in this situation. In fact, the commercialization of religion has become an enduring aspect of Nigerian religion. With some degree of confidence, it can be stated that the majority of Christians and Muslims who claim to be religious are, in reality, irreligious. The Bible and Qur'an both state that the beginning of knowledge is the fear of God. Followers are asked to make donations without

considering the source of the funds. While institutions bestow honorary doctorates on leaders without scrutinizing their moral qualifications, religious titles are given to the highest bidders.

In Nigeria, the professional associations and mass media are not making things better. Many of them, it seems, are well-off from their corruption and consequently see no problem with embezzling public funds. Instead of addressing the issue of public officials publicly living over their rightful salary, the majority of professional groups in Nigeria are more concerned with how their members could profit from political developments. The mainstream media and trade associations act as watchdogs and whistleblowers against corruption and poor governance on behalf of other clients. It is imperative that we look into the financial sources of the owners of private radio, television, and print outlets across the nation.

From the aforementioned considerations, it is evident why Nigerians would continue to argue about leadership, corruption, and governance for a very long time. The requirements of transformative leadership are found here. Thus, the country's development problems are perceived as both a cause and a consequence of government leadership. It seems that once public positions are individualized, leaders tend to pull away from the constituents they are supposed to represent. In this situation, accountability, transparency, and service delivery are prioritized over the fundamentals of government. To benefit themselves, people take part in dishonest business dealings and other immoral activities. In Nigeria, how do we break the cycle? We will discuss these in the section that follows.

Dissecting Corruption, Leadership and Governance in the Nigerian Context

Difficulties that Nigeria encounters in its endeavours to foster effective leadership, good governance, and anti-corruption have been identified. At first glance, these challenges might seem enormous and intricate. They are, however, not insurmountable. A seemingly dire situation in Nigeria can be salvaged for the benefit of all through concerted efforts, meticulous planning, and unwavering commitment to the country's development trajectory. Within this segment of the discussion, we shall analyze a number of measures that could be implemented to foster good governance by means of proficient leadership, thereby preventing board malfeasance.

Leadership is pivotal in addressing several of the most significant challenges that Nigeria and Africa as a whole are currently facing. State corporate interests ought to be harmonized with those of its executives. Leaders are severely limited in their ability to utilize their positions, creative talents, and abilities for the greater welfare of society. According to Olugbemi (2021), to the extent that the interests of the leaders of Nigeria can be differentiated from the collective and sectional interests of the state, Nigerian leaders will utilize their positions to advance and safeguard their corporate interests. Leaders have the ability to bring about positive change on a global scale. They instigate societal transformation across all facets of existence. They must, among other qualities, be receptive to feedback, visionary and missionary, patriotic and nationalistic, and willing to serve rather than be served.

At this juncture in the nation's history, it is impossible to overstate the importance of servant or compassionate leadership styles in addition to transformational or transforming leadership. Burns's (2020) theory of transforming or transformational leadership is founded upon a collection of presumptions concerning the dynamic between leaders and followers. According to Burns (2020) and Ciulla (2021), leaders must function within elevated need and value systems and have the responsibility of enlightening individuals. Leaders who are transformative are renowned for their unwavering moral principles and strong values, which they do not dilute through consensus but rather elevate through the use of conflict to engage followers and assist them in reasserting their own needs and values. These types of leaders prioritize freedom, equality, and justice, and they transform their adherents through the stages of moral development and necessity. They, like servant leaders, transform their adherents into leaders and transform the leader into an agent of morality (Olayiwola, 2021).

As an anti-corruption measure, the establishment of a democratic government is undertaken. At the very least, the distribution of authority among the entities and procedures of a democratic government ought to restrict opportunities for venality. The concurrent safeguarding of human rights and civil liberties ought to promote a government that is open and transparent, serving as a mechanism to prevent the misuse of authority (Odinkalu, 2021). A system of political competition supported by regular elections for the continuation of the authority to govern ought to incentivize candidates who have established a trustworthy track record of safeguarding public resources and interests. As an anti-corruption strategy, these three phenomena—distribution of power, government-accountable institutions, and competitive electoral politics for the periodic renewal of the government's mandate—are integral components of democratic government. In the current era, where governance, service delivery, transparency, and accountability are paramount, all individuals must participate. Good governance, however desirable it may be, cannot be imposed on leaders through the use of a mere slogan. They should internalize the qualities of effective leadership and good governance and incorporate them into their daily lives within society.

Fear of God is essential, as it serves as the foundation of wisdom. In contrast, the correlation between the number of places of worship (e.g., mosques and churches) and the prevalence of poor governance, corruption, and leadership is inverse in Nigeria. A careful examination of the operations of Christian and Muslim pilgrim welfare boards and commissions will demonstrate that corruption is indifferent to religion and belief systems. The religious organizations promote various forms of corruption. Certain individuals advocate for prosperity without assuming responsibility.

An existential crisis confronts Nigeria at the intersection of governance and corruption. In order to resolve this issue, it is crucial to conduct a thorough diagnosis and subsequently address it collectively. In 2014, Nigeria commemorated its centenary, which marked one hundred years of integrating Northern and Southern Nigeria. Both inside and outside Nigeria were prompted to inquire as to how a nation endowed with such resources could have so spectacularly squandered opportunities for itself and future generations that remain unborn. By drawing inspiration from Cassius in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, one could

readily contend that the responsibility for the current crisis involving leadership, corruption, and poor governance does not lie with our heroes, but rather with ourselves. The good news is that we owe it to ourselves to find a way out of this quagmire, given that we have arrived as a people. The unfortunate reality is that it will not be simple, and there is no silver lining or fast remedy to the situation. Before we can embark on the path to mending our nation, we must first confront certain unsettling realities within ourselves.

It is imperative that both leaders and adherents engage in ongoing reorientation and orientation. Globally renowned values and practices ought to be assimilated into Nigeria and the African continent as a whole. It seems that the issue has frequently been the disparity between rhetoric and implementation. The actions of Nigerian leaders should mirror their rhetoric. Maintain consistency and stability in its policies and programmes. Subsequently, the populace will place their trust in the government and its leaders, motivating them to carry out their mandatory and discretionary obligations and responsibilities.

The cultural fabric of a society can either promote or impede its progress. The notion that corruption is an immoral act originates from the fact that an excessive number of Nigerians continue to regard the state as a mere construct designed to inflict harm rather than address the socioeconomic and political welfare of its populace. This concept can solely be dispelled by means of competent leadership and sound governance.

In and beyond Nigeria, corruption has generated substantial concern, discontent, and disquietude. International and public advocacy organizations of international renown, such as Transparency International, are at work to combat it, while the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) operate domestically. We make no purported special knowledge regarding this matter. We intend to resolve the matter of corruption by incorporating our individual perspectives and experiences as Nigerian citizens. The persistent issue of corruption in Nigeria can be attributed to two factors: the low cost of corruption and the lack of political determination to enforce anti-corruption legislation (Igbokwe-Ibeto & Okoye, 2021). In addition, they contended that a substantial portion of the opportunism that has pervaded the Nigerian state since its independence can be attributed to inadequate and unsuitable institutional frameworks. "Institutions are the human-made limitations that influence incentives in human exchange, be it political, social, or economic," according to North (2019). The manner in which societies develop over time is influenced by institutional change; therefore, it is essential to comprehend historical change.

Confronting the challenges of leadership, corruption, and poor governance in Nigeria while isolating the country from the rest of Africa will be extremely difficult. In fact, leadership failure, corruption, and poor governance are not unique to Nigeria; they plague the development of all African nations to the extent that an estimated 25 percent of GDP, or \$148 billion, is lost annually. Nigeria serves as a bare example to illustrate the magnitude of the challenge faced by every developing nation in Africa.

However, Nigeria's weak economy must be taken into account. Undoubtedly, Nigeria is confronted with a significant prevalence of destitution. Numerous factors contribute to this destitution, including unemployment, underemployment, and so forth. It is widely acknowledged that the labour market in Nigeria has been significantly impacted by the global economic collapse, which has had a severe negative impact on the country's economy. This has significantly contributed to widespread layoffs in the public and private sectors of the economy. Therefore, in order to ensure his or her survival, the average Nigerian must seek fulfillment of his or her obligations elsewhere. Therefore, he or she seizes with both hands any opportunity to embezzle public or private treasury, depending on the circumstances.

By implementing effective leadership, minimizing or eliminating corruption to an absolute minimum, and practicing good governance, the Nigerian government can restore its operations to those of a normal state. Within this particular framework, we are alluding to fundamental aspects of modern human existence, including but not limited to housing, healthcare, security, sustenance, peace, employment, universal education, and public transportation. Furthermore, we support the following measures: confiscation of the assets of public officials convicted of wrongful corruption; imposition of capital punishment for embezzlement and overseas diversion of state funds; imposition of life sentences without the possibility of parole for those convicted of corrupt practices and poor governance; nullification of election outcomes influenced by rigging and fraudulent activities; disqualification of public officers implicated in election and related misconduct; and public disgrace and life imprisonment for those found guilty of such offences.

Furthermore, there is a need for civil society in Nigeria to be interconnected in both theory and action. As things stand, civil society organizations' operations are extremely individualistic. In order to enhance their influence and scope for the better, "civil society organizations operating in diverse sectors including health, reproductive rights and health, the environment, human rights, youth affairs, and more" should be incentivized to collaborate and establish a unified platform for policy-making and intervention. There is no doubt that Nigeria is home to a multitude of civil society organizations, some of which purport to be anti-corruption organizations. A number of these civil society organizations, however, appear to have been compromised by corrupt officials. In numerous civil society organizations, internal strife and competition for resources, commonly referred to as "stomach infrastructure," are conspicuous.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have sought to untangle the logical "cobweb" around the categorical imperatives by delving deeply into the topics of leadership, corruption, and governance in Nigeria as seen through the eyes of scholars and social critics. To further illuminate the topics being probed, the theoretical framework was also illuminated. As a result, researchers have proposed several ideas on leadership, corruption, and government. Leadership, good governance, and development in Nigeria have all been explored in an effort to find their connection. The growth and survival of the Nigerian state and Africa as a

whole have been impacted by the pervasive diseases of poor leadership, corruption, and ineffective governance. A whopping 64.7% of Nigerians are considered to be living below the poverty line, according to the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI, 2019).

The report argues that poor leadership, unbridled corruption, and incompetent administration pose the greatest threats to Nigeria's and Africa's efforts at development. Our ideas are based on them, and if religious leaders in Nigeria really implemented them, they might put an end to the country's tangled web of poor leadership, corruption, and terrible governance.

The study concluded by pointing out a variety of obstacles that pose different problems in Nigeria's pursuit of an answer to the transformation issue. The quest for good governance and effective leadership that could fight corruption and engender sustainable socio-economic and political development will remain a mirage for as long as Nigerian leaders continue to think of Nigeria and "plant trees" whose shades they know they will never sit on.

Recommendations

Reforms to policies, accountability systems, and citizen participation are all necessary to solve Nigeria's problems with leadership failures, corruption, and the blame game. We have the following suggestions:

1. **Boost Anti-Corruption Organizations:** The ICPC and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) should be given more autonomy and funding to better combat corruption. Part of this is making sure that politicians don't meddle with their leadership.
2. **Reforms to the court:** expedite cases involving corruption and guarantee an effective and impartial court. There should be specialized courts that hear cases of corruption in order to speed up the legal procedure.
3. **Whistleblower Protection:** Enact stronger legislation and establish systems to reward and shield those who blow the whistle on wrongdoing in leadership.
4. **Make sure that public officials are held to stringent asset reporting regulations** and that these declarations are audited often to catch any inconsistencies.
5. **Public Awareness:** Teach people about government accountability and transparency, as well as their rights. Institutions such as educational institutions, news outlets, and civic groups can play a role in this.
6. **Protect the press's right to report on and investigate allegations of wrongdoing** by government officials. Show your support for fact-checking and independent news outlets.
7. **Appointments in the public sector should be based on merit, not political favouritism**, as stated in point seven. As a result, public administration is more efficient, and corruption is less likely to occur.
8. **Conduct frequent assessments to identify the efficacy and areas for improvement** of anti-corruption and governance programmes.

9. Diversify the Economy: Corruption is typically associated with an over-reliance on oil; thus, diversifying the economy is a good first step. A more equitable distribution of wealth and fewer opportunities for corruption can be achieved by investments in agricultural, technological, and industrial areas.
10. Involve Stakeholders: Let the government, commercial sector, civil society, and foreign partners all have a say in how anti-corruption programmes are developed and carried out.
11. Ongoing Enhancement: Set up a system of feedback to enhance policies and programmes in response to new information, past experiences, and changing obstacles.

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