



## **Leadership Deficit and Corruption in Africa: A Study of the Impact on Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

**Salvation Elo Ugoso,<sup>1</sup>**  
salvationugoso@gmail.com

**Ambily Etekpe<sup>2</sup>**  
ambilyetekpe@ndu.edu.ng

and

**Philips O. Okolo<sup>3</sup>**  
philips.okolo@ndu.edu.ng

Department of Political Science,  
Faculty of Social Sciences,  
Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island,  
Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

### **Abstract**

The choice of a leader can highly impact on the growth and development of a country. Bad leadership has constantly stirred up whenever Nigeria political history is mentioned. This study is centered on leadership deficit and corruption, and the impacts on sustainable development in Nigeria. It adopted the Anomie theory as the framework and applies documentary method. It is found that leadership deficit is mainly caused by corruption manifested in different forms. This has affected the sustainable development of the country. It is thus recommended that to break the circle of corruption among the leaders, accountability and transparency in democracy be restored in the Fourth Republic.

**Key words:** Corruption, sustainable development, good governance, leadership, accountability

### **Introduction**

The concept of leadership has been in both academic and political discourse for a long time. Leadership involves interaction between leaders and followers whereby the leaders influence the followers toward the accomplishment of certain objectives and aims. Jubrin (2016) noted that leadership is the ability to influence the attitudes of the followers, or exert influences within the working group with the aim of achieving set task.

Several Africa states (Nigeria, Chad, Liberia, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)) has been faced with numerous developmental issues and conflicts since 1960's. The issue of stability, peace and progress has been a major debate in the continent and the West Africa States in particular. Though Africa stand as a cradle of human civilization, the African continent has constantly experienced poverty, conflicts, unemployment, inequality, dependency and corruption.

The level of corruption in most of the African countries resulted to the declaration of 2018 as anti-corruption year. Despite, the fight to reduce corruption by the leaders during the summit, in 2019 report, Transparency International noted a worsening report of corruption on the continent and urges leaders to addressed it.

The acquisition of personal protective equipment (PPE) during the pandemic in South Africa was characterized by corruption, this revealed how political leaders used the epidemic to satisfy their personal interests. In like manner, political leaders in Nigeria hide relief items intended for public distribution while government officials diverted monies to themselves (The Observers, 2020; Ayomoba, 2024). Also, in Somalia and Zimbabwe, government officials who were arrested for COVID-19 related issues were neither prosecuted or fired. All these cases above are barricade to sustainable development and are carried out by those in leadership.

Notably, bad leadership has constantly stirred up whenever Nigeria political history is being mentioned (Mukoro et al., 2018). From one administration to another and from one leadership to the other, the issue of bad leadership has been predominant in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria political leadership is beclouded with crisis and the signs are all visible. Genyi (2017) further noted that the eras of political rule (1999-2015) are saturated by the conduct of political officials that take the form of violence and corruption. Since the return of democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has faced serious socio-political and economic crisis (Ayomoba, 2024). These crises generated by improper management of mineral resources, human capital and prevalence of insecurity, draw our attention to the issue of bad leadership in the country.

Leadership in Africa and Nigeria in particular, has always been a tussle and surrounded with different forms of crisis as a result of incompetent leadership. In Nigeria, there is no synergy between the rules and processes. Most of the leaders direct their attentions to their selfish interest at the expense of the people.

Although there are other issues which Nigeria face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that are national as they are phenomenal like: the cases of malaria, HIV-AIDS, Economic, Social, Health and Climate Challenges, all these points to bad leadership. Solutions to these issues can be achieved through effective control and management by the Government (Leaders). Thus, this study has raised three critical research questions.

The questions are:

- 1.) What is the relationship between leadership and good governance in Nigeria's political system between 2015 and 2023?
- 2.) How does leadership behaviour influence service delivery and sustainable development in Nigeria?

3.) What is the effect of corruption on Nigeria's Political leadership?

### **Objectives of the study**

- 1.) Analyse the relationship between leadership and good governance in Nigeria political system between 2015 and 2023;
- 1.) Determine the link between leadership behaviour and service delivery on sustainable development in Nigeria; and
- 2.) Discuss the effect of corruption on sustainable development in the Nigeria Political leadership.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study was significant in several ways, particularly, it provided a deeper understanding of how leadership and good governance influences sustainable development in Nigeria. It also shows insight into the role of leadership behaviour in promoting efficient service delivery and reducing corruption within the political system.

### **Scope and limitation**

The study focused on the relationship between leadership, good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria. It covers some selected administrative and political institutions namely service delivery, leadership behaviour and corruption were assessed in relation to their impact on sustainable development for the periods of 2015 and 2023. The main limitation was that the study relied on secondary sources of data. Despite this limitation they were used to draw meaningful conclusions about leadership, good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria.

## **2.1 Conceptual Review**

### **(a) Leadership**

The concepts of leadership in this study is the ability to influence others in a transparent manner to achieve common goals and sustainable development. Several studies (Gberevbie *et al.*, 2017; Aleyomi & Abu Bakar, 2018; Arogbofa, 2022; and Ayomoba, 2024) have pointed out the important role of leadership in improving the welfare and standard of living of citizens in a country. According to Gberevbie *et al.* (2017) leadership "is the process of influencing the actions of an organised group toward goal setting attainment".

During the 20th century, leadership was not basically viewed as a set of fixed attributes or traits peculiar to some persons, but as a function that meets common expectations of leaders and followers (Unya *et al.*, 2020, p. 6).

In this study, we have identified six variables for effective leadership to engender sustainable development in Nigeria (Table 1) along with the outcomes.

**Table 1: Leadership and its outcome in Nigeria**

| S/NO | VARIABLES                           | EXPECTED OUTCOME   |
|------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1    | Provision of social infrastructure  | Water, housing, electricity, rural development programmes/projects, etc.   |
| 2    | Sustainable development             | Feeder/rural road; primary health care facilities; quality and quantity of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions; reduction of mortality rates. |
| 3    | Food and human security             | Affordable food items; good quality of live; dignity of human life; unimpeded economic activities, etc.  |
| 4    | Peace, safety and general security  | Peaceful co-existence; safety of lives and property; free movement of goods and people, etc.   |
| 5    | Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) | Regular interactive town hall meetings for feedback; community involvement in planning, budgetary and implementation of policies, etc.                 |
| 6    | Feedback mechanism                  | Political will power to implement components of participatory rural appraisal (PRA).   |

Source: Barisuka et al. (2024).

### **(b) Corruption**

Etymologically, the word “corruption” originates from the Greek word “corruptus” meaning an aberration or a misnomer. However, in Nigeria, corruption has become so common a word in the public sector that its actual meaning no longer needs scientific explanation. Waziri (2010), defines corruption as “abuse of public power for private gain”. Transparency International (2013) further defines it as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain”. For Aleyomi (2018), “corruption is any decision, act or conduct that subverts the integrity of people in authority or institutions charged with promoting, defending or sustaining the democratization process, thereby undermining its effectiveness in performing assigned roles to engender good governance in a country like Nigeria”.

These forms and types flourish in Nigeria because accountability is generally weak, laws and principles of ethics in government are poorly developed and the legal instruments charged, such as EFCC, ICPC, etc with enforcing them are ill- prepared (Barisuka et al., 2024). In

view of this, corruption has become the principal means of primitive accumulation of wealth. This has widened the gap between the rich and poor people as the leaders could not pursue attainment of the variables in Table 1. The Table 2 presents a record of notable corruption incidents in Nigeria. The Table 2 is not exhaustive.

**Table 2: Selected Corruption Case Diary in Nigeria 2015-2020**

| S/N | Date       | Name/Institution   | Nature   | Remark   |
|-----|------------|--|--|--|
| 1   | 04/2015    | Godswill Akpabio (fmr, Governor of Akwa-Ibom state), President 10th Senate)  | - Abuse of office, bribery and corruption  | - PEPs and abandoned   |
| 2   | 25/02/2016 | Olise Metu Investment  | - Fraudulently received N400 Million from office of National Security Adviser (ONSA), Sambo Dasuki   | - Justice Abang, Federal High court (FHC), Abuja found him guilty and was sentenced to 7years imprisonment.<br>- EFCC App<br>- Status of case not clear.   |
| 3   | 12/04/2017 | Ikoyi Gat Wife of fmr Director General (DG), National Intelligent Agency (NIA), Mrs Ayo Oke Folashade, Choba Venture Ltd Vanguard (2019) | - US \$43,449,947, 27, 800 and N23,218,000 kept in iron cabinet and jute basin in an apartment in Flat 7B, Osborn Towers, Ikoyi.<br>- Earlier made payment of US\$1.658 Million between 25/08 and 03/09/2015.<br>- Money converted to N360 Million and paid to fine and country for purchase of the property at Ikoyi. | - Whistle blower reported the case<br>- FHC, Ikoyi, Lagos ordered forfeiture of the property of Flat 7B, Osborn Towers, Ikoyi, Lagos.<br>- Fmr Governor Ezebunwo Nyesom Wike later stated that the said money belonged to Rivers State Government (RSG) as the apartment was owned by Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi (fmr Governor, RSG and Minister of Transportation) from the state. |
| 4   | 06/2018    | Senator Abdullahi Adamu  | - Fmr Chairman, Northern Senators forum (NSF) couldn't account for the N7 Million of the 7th Assembly.<br>- Financial Mismanagement  | - He was removed<br>- Senator Dino Melaye (then spokesman stated that it was investigated and found to be true)<br>- Abandoned as PEP  |

| S/N | Date       | Name/Institution                  | Nature   | Remark   |
|-----|------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| 5.  | 25/11/2019 | Seimens AG and Halliburton (SAGH) | - Kellog Brown Root (KBR) inc entered into a guilty plea bargain US \$579bMillion fine for payment of bribes to secure Nigeria Liquified Gas (NLG) contracts in Nigeria. | - While company was prosecuted expediently, investigation of Nigeria senior Government Officials that received the bribe of US \$18 Million was abandoned. |
| 6.  | 03/2020    | Ibrahim Magu, fmr Chairman EFCC   | - Unable to account for N550 billion interest generated from banks of recovered monies deposited in 2015-2020  | - Investigated and prosecuted.   |

Sources: Etekpe et al. (2015) and Barisuka et al. (2024)

### (c) Sustainable Development (SD)

Sustainable development is the pattern of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. It lays strong emphasis on the judicious use and equitable management of resources in the bid to reduce poverty (Emas, 2015).

This enable people to achieve their full potentials, fulfillment, self-confidence and dignity. It should help in saving people from the ills of want, deprivation, exploitation, ignorance and existing imbalances and injustices in the society (Etekpe, 2012).

Without delving into the complexity of the concept of SD, it is important to state that its emphasis (i.e. SD) has basically moved from the realm of gross domestic product (GDP), production-centred, etc to people-centred development (Okafor, 1981). the focus is on human capital development (HCD) in form of capacity building, promoting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial skills, etc, anchored on information communication technology (ICT).

The National Conference (NC) report (NC, 2014, 48-50) list political challenges militating against national development, to include:

- 1) Absence of people-centred federal constitution, instead of further alteration or amendment of the 1999 constitution;
- 2) Abnormal fiscal federalism-revenue sharing, resource management/control, and sharing formula;
- 3) Corruption
- 4) Lack of accountability and transparency;
- 5) Under-development of the real sector (manufacturing/industrialization) of the economy;

### (d) Relationship between Leadership and Sustainable Development.

Leadership is a major attribute that determines development in any given society. It entails influence on group members toward accomplishment of set goals. It, also, ensures the overall functioning of a given society as a channel of sustainable development (Dahiru & Modibbo, 2019).



Gbervbie *et al.* (2017, p. 1) note that nature has provided man with natural resources, such as land, air and water, which need to be utilised, developed and sustained for purposeful living in the society. In order to actualise sustainable development in any setting, strategies are put in place to achieve the development goals of the government. In a situation where these strategies are not properly implemented, may be reason of weak governmental institutions, corruption, inadequate funds to execute projects, poor maintenance culture.

The role and relationship between leadership and sustainable development is very essential for the success of any society. The leaders play the key role that brings about sustainable development. However, Nigerians are yet to see such leaders with “soft consciousness, who use bountiful resources and convert them into opportunities for sustainability” (Onichakwe, 2018, p.80).

## **2.2 Gap in Literature**

Although similar studies have addressed leadership and governance in Nigeria, majority of the studies focused on early political period without given much attention to the periods, leadership styles, impacts etc between 2015 and 2023. Going forward, the studies basically focused on policy failure covering Jonathan and Buhari's administration and how they have impacted on sustainable development outcome. Therefore, this study filled that gap by examining how leadership patterns from 2015-2023 affected sustainable development in Nigeria.

## **2.3 Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

The study adopted the “Anomie Theory” propounded by Emile Durkhiem (1893). The theory posits that Individuals with high levels of anomie are most likely to have challenges in working with especially leading others in social structural setting (Bond, 2015). Notably, the Nigeria society setting tends to over-emphasize the attainment of individual goals at the expense of the legitimate means of attaining these set goals.

The study adopted descriptive research design in other to gain maximum insight into the leadership deficit and its impact and perception on sustainable development in Nigeria. The documentary observation method is adopted and data so generated are analyzed using descriptive analysis. Due to the theoretical nature of the paper, the paper generates its arguments mainly from secondary sources.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **1. The Effect of Leadership in Nigeria**

It is pertinent to note that the 2015 and 2023 administration in Nigeria has not brought much improvement in the development and economic situation of the country. During this period the country experienced leadership deficits in several areas (economic mismanagement, poor governance quality, poor security performance, poor infrastructural delivery, low human capital development and lack of trust from the citizens) these have affected the growth of the country.

Since the return of democracy in 1999, the democratization process has not been used to foster good governance and development in the country rather the poor leadership situations

have succeeded in placing Nigeria and its population in abject poverty. In most parts of the country, majority of its inhabitants (humans) cannot boast of good water supply as the available waters are infested with virus and bacteria (Ogunjimi & Ogundeji, 2020).

The deficit of leadership in Nigeria is also evidential in the area of unimplemented policy. In most cases, policies are not allowed to mature and they counter change them easily. The Nigerian leader will set up a vision and leave office without achieving such goals. This becomes a pattern for succeeding leaders. This pattern of leadership does not encourage development.

The findings from this study shows that effective leadership and governance in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023 has a mixed influence on the achievement of sustainable development. Results from secondary data shows that while political leaders embarked on anti-corruption campaign and several programmes, their implementations were constantly weakened by inconsistent policy continuity, lack of transparency and accountability and poor institutional capacity.

The study shows that leadership pattern during this period (2015 - 2023) was politically driven, which affected citizens trust and participation in political activities. Transparency international reports during this period shows high percentage in Nigeria corruption perception ranking indicating that anti-corruption policies had limited practical effects on the system.

Generally, the findings indicated that sustainable development in Nigeria greatly depends on transparent and accountable leadership, constant practice of good principles in governance and institutional reforms rather than policy formulation alone.

## **2. Implication of Corruption on National Development in Nigeria**

The implication of corruption on national development in Nigeria is hugely visible in all facets of the country. The economic sector, the security, the education and wellbeing of the citizens have suffered setbacks, particularly in view of enormous funds made from the petroleum-based economy (Okolo & Etekpe, 2015). According to Genyi (2017), in 2014, about 44% of Nigeria student were not able to read a complete sentence despite the fact that they have completed their primary education. This practically represents the breakdown of public basic education.

Notably over 70% of candidates who wrote the West African School Certificate Examination in 2014 failed in basic subjects like English and Mathematics at the credit level. It was noted that between 2007 and 2016, the total number of students in Nigeria that applied to foreign universities rose by 71% (Genyi, 2017). This displays the ugly state of the country's education level. This situation has continued to linger in the present-day education and has affected the national development of the country, particular the post 2015 development agenda (Okolo, 2016).

Another implication of corruption on national development can be seen in the insecurity level of the country. The leadership of the country has failed to lead by example in public issues and have succeeded in recruiting youths to partake in their shared criminality act. This has taking another turn in the society as armed robbery, militancy and kidnapping. The case of the Niger Delta militancy and the Boko Haram insurgency in the north are clear examples of the situations Nigerians face as a result of corruption.



One of the major challenges of SD in Nigeria is endemic corruption. Nigeria has all the necessary natural and human resources needed for the development and enhancement of the life of its masses. Nonetheless, the advantages of the available resources are not in any way helping the poor masses due to the effect of corruption in the country.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Specifically, this study is centered on leadership deficit and corruption in Africa, the impact and perception on sustainable development in Nigeria. Leaders in Nigeria have displayed high level of corruption in handling the affairs of the country. Although it happens to be a universal phenomenon, its effects and magnitude are severe in Nigeria. It has eaten into the fabric of the Nigerian economy and hampered sustainable development in the country.

This study shows that corruption is manifested in different forms- embezzlement, bribery, election rigging, frauds, etc- are all noticeable among most Nigeria leaders. The conditions necessary for sustainable growth and development in the country have been squandered by corruption of the Nigeria leaders. To break this cycle of corruption among the leaders, the basis of accountability in democracy should be restored. The citizens should be given their due power to make their choices and determine who governs them. In conclusion, the country needs transformational leadership in encouragement, focus, inspiration, motivation and mindset shift to grow and shape the growth and development of the nation. This study recommended the followings:

- i. There should be a law that is independent from the different organs of government, leaders that lead should pass through a free and fair election.
- ii. The Nigeria Legislative and Judiciary arms should be strengthened.
- iii. A strong measure of accountability and transparency should be enthroned in the country.

In all, the study has contributed to knowledge in several ways, particularly:

- a. It provided an insight into how leadership and governance affected sustainable development in Nigeria between 2015 and 2024;
- b. It advocated the need for transparency and accountability in leadership for the attainment of sustainable development in Nigeria; and
- c. The study established a strong relationship between leadership style, policy implementations and sustainable development.

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