

Educational and political leadership challenges: Exploring implications on security in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Fraught with insecurity in recent years, lack of political and educational leaders' adoption of sound approach to governance in the state is revealed. This manifest in serious humanitarian crises: a threat to national security and the corporate existence of the country. It is against this background that the paper within the framework of systems theory examined the relationship between leadership and security challenges in Nigeria and how it has turned Nigeria into a fragile system. The universal content analysis and qualitative research design were adopted for the study, and secondary sources of data explored to collect facts. The study unveils and traces insecurity in Nigeria to bad political and educational leadership. There is no sound execution of mutual roles by the executive, legislative and judicial arms of the government. Checks and balances as well oversight functions, including rule of law are flouted. The universities have not achieved their goal of moral and mental transformation of the graduates to desist from assisting bad political leaders as thugs. Incessant Academic Staff Union of Universities' strike action caused by bad leadership also undermines sound education. The populace and leaders alike lack knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 target 4.7 on promotion of non-violence and peace, world citizenship, and cultural differences acceptance, which explains sound governance approach. Based on this, the study recommended among others, revitalisation of roles of the three arms of government, reformation of educational governance, and reorientation of both leaders and the led on sound governance and SDGs prescriptions.

Keywords: Leadership, Public education, Security, Sound governance, Systemic failure

1. INTRODUCTION

The protracted security challenge in Nigeria that seems to have no solution in sight is a symptom of a failed political system. Although, public sectors of various countries of the world have at one time or the other faced pressure meeting up with their value creation obligations (Ndukwe et al., 2022). The issue of governance is critical to communities and countries in their endeavors to manage public sectors in periods bedeviled by corruptions and mismanagement (Ndukwe et al., 2021). The unending herdsmen and banditry attacks, kidnapping and robbery is worsening by the day (Nwangbo et al., 2022), as educational institutions are receiving a dose of it thereby calling for the need to institute a strong and pragmatic security policy reform and sound governance approach in the sector. As observed, effective policy is a function of participatory governance and implementation strategies (Ukeje & Chukwuemeka, 2021) for sustainable development (Idike et al., 2020). The people occupy critical positions to ensuring attainment of these desired ends (Genelza, 2022). Adegbami and Uche, (2016) opined that national development and peace can be attained through participation of the citizens, accountability, transparency and accountability which are evidence of good governance. However, according to them, added to hindrance to national development, poor leadership has endangered stability and peace as well. It has been proved that bad governance is not only possible in autocratic and authoritarian regimes but also in democratic systems.

Nigeria still suffers a level of paralysis in her political system caused by bad leadership with undeniable evidences in several sectors including that of education. In other words, "university education has been

bedevilled by institutional inadequacies engendered by poor governmental support” (Iyioha & Igbinedion, 2022: 63). This has not only retarded the country's political system and policy implementation, but has also reduced its effectiveness in virtually every sector of the country. Practice of democracy in Nigeria is clearly different from that of other countries that are developed. Politics in Nigeria is characterized by backward values such as tribalism, violence, intimidation, promise and fail, and corruption. Factors such as embezzlement, fraud, contract inflation, public fund misappropriation, nepotism, bribery among others, lead to poor implemented of policies. Against the background of corruption which is the remote course of bad governance in Nigeria, it has in one way or the other also contributed immensely to poor policy implementation (Ene, Arikpo & Williams, 2013). Most times, this has resulted to violence and youths restiveness which often times lead to upsurge of agitation and insurgency from different parts of Nigeria such as the Boko Haram Insurgency, Niger-Delta Militants, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), End SARs protests, and the recent resurfacing of Farmers/ Herders clashes, Terrorism, Banditry and Kidnapping.

Insecurity has increased and development decreased due to the craze by public office holders to steal and stock up public wealth for personal interests. This raises youth unrest, conflicts, coup de tat, social insecurity, and civil war among others (Makinde, 2015). Consequently, bad leadership in both political and educational space has turned out as the key social evils bedeviling the stability of Nigeria and major cause of security challenges in the country (Ukeje et al., 2015; Ndukwe et al., 2015). Frequently, ASUU embark on strike action due to poor leadership resolution of their demands on educational facilities, working condition and welfare (Tahir, 2013; Adamu & Nwogo, 2014). It is noteworthy that during strike, students are left in the streets falling into and getting involved in insecurity problems. Monogbe and Monogbe (2019) succinctly captured that ASUU strike is one of the reasons for the underperformance of university students. This has implication for the kind of graduates produced who lack both employability and entrepreneurial skills (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). These fall into criminal activities or thuggery for bad politicians thereby perpetuating insecurity in the state.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Nigeria is faced with myriads of security challenges virtually from all the geopolitical zones of the country, ranging from communal conflicts, herdsmen/farmers clash, Boko Haram insurgency, banditry and kidnapping, among others. These challenges manifest in serious humanitarian crises and a threat to national security to the extent of threatening the corporate existence of the country. According to a report by UNICEF (2021), the protracted conflicts in northern Nigeria has continued to ridicule the citizens' lives, resulting in crises reaching people in total of 7.7 million who needed protection and help. In twelve years of protracted crisis in the north-east, thousands of people have been killed, maimed, abducted, displaced, and have experienced multiple violations of their fundamental human rights. They noted that since the beginning of Boko Haram insurgency in the North East in 2009, more than 20,000 people have been killed, 4,000 abducted and roughly 1.7 million have lost their homes especially in Borno State of Nigeria. Many of these people caught in the conflict have experienced brutal violence, lost family, friends and homes with their communities torn apart. Many now live in internally displaced persons camps with poor and inhuman living conditions.

Nigeria has been facing many developmental challenges because of bad leadership and insecurity. According to Dunmade (2015), among 52 African countries governance performance measure statistics, Nigeria occupied 41 position in terms of rule of law, human rights and participation, opportunity of sustainable economy, and safety. This has caused some ripple effects on the economy of the nation, and the poverty situation of Nigeria has worsened drastically. Mohammed (2021) noted that the poor economic state of Nigeria is responsible for 70% of the security challenges facing the country today, from banditry to kidnapping, farmer/herder clashes, and even agitations for restructuring.

Trade in crude oil is the only major source of income in Nigeria and dwindling oil prices in the world led to a reduction in Nigeria's income and likewise Federal Reserve. Attempts by the government to diversify Nigeria's economy away from oil and gas proved a failure and the government had to resort to borrowing. Furthermore, the insecurity situation painted a bad picture to foreign investors resulting in many of them leaving the shores of Nigeria to other safer countries. Exchange rates were up, inflation rates increased and so did unemployment and poverty (Abdullahi, 2012).

Insecurity has deepened educational crises in Nigeria, and the continued insurgency in the north poses significant challenges in the educational sector. A report by UNICEF (2017) show that one in five of the world's out-of-school children is in Nigeria, and Borno State at the epicentre of the Boko Haram insurgency

had nearly 75% of its children out of school. According to Mohammed (2021), the problem of Nigeria is chronic illiteracy and bad leadership which breeds poverty; and poverty breeds insecurity and more poverty in such an endless cyclical dynamics. Education is a leading determinant of economic growth and a key to escaping poverty. However, the erosion of education in the north has brought a long-lasting challenge to the economic development of the region.

In another place, Dunmade (2015) stated that insecurity is a major consequence of bad leadership. According to him, every country should be able to secure and protect its citizens from structural violence, crime, and social insecurity because development plans will fail when there are security challenges. He noted that Nigeria has experienced insecurity, corruption, institutional problems resulting from bad leadership. This highlights the challenges that this administration is facing in reducing insecurity, tackling corruption and promoting economic development. Mbah (2013), equally observed that the practice of governance in the Nigeria political space has not been able to alter the colonial and military entrenched insecurity and imbalance through programmes and policies. According to him, the current configuration does not speak well of a democracy in anyway. Colonialism imposed a structural imbalance in Nigeria which created mutual suspicions among the various ethnic nationalities and has manifested in all areas of the country, the political, economic and social.

Moreover, Euginia, (2013) opined that the diverse nature of ethnic groups in Nigeria and her inability to evolve firm nation and common identity lead to religious, ethnicity and related elements assuming greater importance in the state. This has resulted in various methods of governance in order to ensure unity, stability and development. The lack of ethnic, religious and regional balance in Nigeria's composition and upturning of the identities highlight the crisis that have been ongoing in the country among Ife-Modakeke, Zangon-Kataf in Kaduna, Jos Crisis, Jukun/Tiv, Boko Haram insurgency in Borno, Adamawa, among others.

The struggle for government position and unlimited access to material resources has made the insecurity problem worse in the Nigeria. The tendency that political position is an avenue for wealth accumulation has paved way for balkanisation of the state. This shows crisis in politics as opposed to harmonious political competition and practice. The pledge on power is extraordinarily high and the polity do not have institutional organization to order competition in politics and conciliate between categories hence, opening wide door to lack of security in the society (Kolawale, 2017).

The democratic leadership of the time has continued to bastardize public positions and powers perpetuating corruption in the state highlighting the persistence of corruption. With so much wealth from resources such as oil and other economic activities, political and social strength, Nigeria has not been able to achieve development. Several of the results are the repeated unending crises of religion and ethnocentrism, secession agitations, gross political, economic and social instability and separatist movements, gross social, economic and political instability, broadening crisis of legitimacy and unending attacks and bombing by terrorist and Boko Haram Sect. This has led to challenges in leadership and all segments of the state is receiving the complete dose of impact of challenges of security. It is against this background that the researchers tried to examine the effects of leadership on security challenges in Nigeria.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted qualitative research design and universal content analysis as similar works have done. It draws a lot of insight from extant literature on national security, educational leadership and management, history of crisis in Nigeria and political leadership failure. In other words, the paper leverages on rich secondary data sources such as documentaries, journal papers, online and archival materials. The secondary data were content analysed to flesh out contending issues. It followed currency of events in the state and assembled relevant data that helped the authors to suggest implications of the intercourse of events in the study area. The thorough examination of events and literature contents helped the authors infer soluble paths to national political cum educational emancipation as original scholarly insights and contributions. To drive the study home, it was entirely anchored on the systems theory propounded by a biologist showing its interdisciplinary relevance and applicability.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was leveraged on the Systems Theory as propounded by a biologist, Ludwig Von Bertalanffy

(1940). The researcher saw the general systems theory as a means to solve the rising complex problems in the world. According to Bertalanffy (1968), to understand an entire whole, we need to have knowledge of parts and relationship among them. Mayrhofer (2004) stated that the systems theory is part of the theories human resource management can utilize to better understand itself and at the same time, contribute to in a better way practice, because it gives a unified structure for the explanation of realities of the social world at a highly aggregated level. He also noted that “a system is a set of interdependent parts that together form a whole or perform some functions, and the parts must be interdependent and/or interactive.” According to him, Easton (1953) saw the political system as joining together all activities through which social policy is formulated and executed. Systems theory analyses structures, interactions, processes, and institutions pertaining to politics. Sub-systems sum up the general social systems which are embedded in the society. The researcher stated that a political system performs two types of functions such as input and output functions. Whatever decisions and policies taken by the political system in the form of outputs are the results of their fulfilled campaign promises.

4.1. Application of the systems theory

Security crisis is systemic, and using the systems theory, it is easy to explain the problems of Nigerian State as a failed system. Most of the security challenges in Nigeria could be traced to the Politicians who try to destabilize the system in a quest to satisfy their selfish political ambitions. The Nigerian State has leaders and people in most subsystems who do not understand that human sociological relationship is guided by certain rules. The three arms of government; the executive, the legislature and the judiciary are all subsystems of the Nigerian State, working with synergy to achieve the overall objective of the government. In a democratic setting, the executive is in charge of the administrative functions. The National Assembly, which is the legislative arm of the government, oversees the executive functions with the intent of ensuring that they do not indulge in abuse of political power given to them. The judiciary interprets the law and ensures that the executive follow the constitution. The fourth estate of the realm, being the press (media) gives the people, executive, judiciary and the legislature a feedback from the people who are being ruled. As long as the country understands this and allows the subsystems play their role, the country will function well and democracy will thrive. Any move to subvert this arrangement will create confusion in the system. The subsystems, while pursuing their goals collaborate synergistically, to achieve the entire system’s goals. On the other hand if the subsystems work in diverse ways the systems will show signs of failure which is typical of the Nigerian state. In order words, if the National Assembly does its oversight functions, the Executive will not dare to breach the constitutional provisions provided by the law. Ignoring court orders and arbitrary decisions are breaches of the political subsystems of the judicial controls. Allegiance/patriotism by all should be to the system and the system fails when loyalty is to an individual (the head of state). A political tyrant emerges when allegiance is owed to an individual to the exclusion of the state. A system fails if the subsystems are not functioning as designed. The feedback usually provided by the fourth estate of the realm is suppressed by authoritarian leadership tendencies. The solution of a failed system is for it to be allowed to function as was designed with no manipulations. Consequently, the executive, legislature and the judiciary should be allowed to function without interference.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

The results and effects of security challenges around the country are over-whelming. The impact of Boko Haram insurgency in the north east for the past twelve years left about 496 schools completely razed by fire, and about 1,392 schools damaged and awaiting repairs (UNICEF 2017). The eventuality of violent conflicts that at all times led to insecurity of lives and properties for so many years leaves behind so much to be admired in Nigeria. The killing of innocent lives and burning of churches and people’s houses in the north east has caused so much hardship for citizens of this country especially the defenceless poor. For so many years the Boko Haram insurgency has ravaged the people in northern Nigeria with many of them living in Internally Displaced Persons Camps (IDPCs) without any means of livelihood. Insecurity in Nigeria could be attributed to not only bad political governance but also failure of education. Majority of Boko Haram of subjects utilised by the insurgent groups are poor and unlearned populace who do not have value for lives.

This lives lost has implications on the economy of the nation as the killings have effects on the energetic workforce. Able bodied men who constitute the major workforce were captured and killed or maimed. As if

the problem of Boko Haram insurgency was not enough, the spate of Banditry, Kidnapping, and Fulani Herders/Farmers clashes have taken a worse dimension. Mass kidnapping of students has hindered Nigeria's education system. Boko Haram and Bandits have forced children out of schools. Today, many schools in the North are closed down because of kidnapping by Bandits, and this has posed a serious challenge to the government of the day. A report by Iwara (2021) noted that, a total of 2,371 persons were kidnapped across the 36 States of Nigeria within the first six months of 2021. Instances include: the students of Zamfara State College of Agriculture; the Bethel Baptist High School Kaduna; the Federal School of Forestry Kaduna, Greenfield University Students in Kaduna, Salihu Tanko Islamic School Pupils in Niger State, among others. The security forces appear to be incapacitated and unable to arrest even a single Bandit/Herdsman and Terrorist for prosecution. Prominent religious leaders, instead play the role of negotiators between the government and the Bandits. The negotiation includes payment of ransoms by individuals and government to the Bandits. This approach has so emboldened the Bandits that they shot Nigerian Air-force fighter jet and attacked the Nigerian Defence Academy Kaduna, killing two army officers and abducting one, recently. The federal government of Nigeria appears set to give amnesty to about one thousand repentant Boko Haram insurgents instead of charging them to court.

Unending violent conflicts and crises in Nigeria have also decreased foreign investment in growth and flow. Foreign investors would be disencouraged to invest in Nigeria due to economic instability. The current situation where commercial and economic activities are shut down in the whole of south-eastern Nigeria by compulsory sit-at-home declared by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) every Monday, contributed to economic woes in the country. Moreover, insecurity has worsened the food crises in the country because a lot of farmers across the length and breadth of all the agricultural zones in the country could no longer go to their farms because of the marauding Fulani herdsmen, who attack them, rape the women and slaughter the men like animals. Again, displaced people and refugees' influx are caused by religious, political conflicts, sectionalism in the country. The Inhabitants of the crisis are on flight off to nearby countries, states or communities. Aside the economic outcome to the nation, the internally displaced persons and refugees constitute those not expected in their new locations of residence with the challenge of upward pressure on security and amenities in the location.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The solutions to the security challenges in the country are multidimensional in nature and involve both kinetic means which includes but not limited to strategic leadership and sustainable development framework. Consequently, recommendations which have implications for practice were made in this study.

First, our leaders should take up the responsibilities of tackling these security challenges that is threatening the corporate existence of the country, and stop fanning the embers of disunity by favouring some regions in political appointments, infrastructural development, policy implementation and rule of law to the detriment of other regions.

Secondly, the Herders/Farmers clashes could easily be resolved by adhering to the modern methods of ranching instead of taking the country many years backward by re-introduction of grazing routes in this 21st century.

Thirdly, The Executive arm should limit its powers to the roles and functions stipulated by the constitution and allow the legislative arm and the Judiciary to function independently.

Also, the National Assembly should focus on their oversight functions and act as checks and balances to the excesses of the Executive, and not just be a rubber stamp Legislature.

The Judiciary which is seen as the common man's last hope should do their work diligently without fear or favour and with no strings attached.

Politicians have to understand politics as a call to serve and not to acquire and amass wealth to the detriment of the citizens that voted for them. They should create employment opportunities in their constituencies to avoid youth restiveness.

The government institutions in the country should draw out an enduring strategy for management of crises and resolutions. A committee at the presidency as well as should be set up for managing conflict situations.

The States should be allowed to form their own State police to tackle the problems of insurgency, banditry and kidnapping since they know the problems of their areas.

Finally, as diverse religious, ethnic, and political groups, Nigeria should learn to embrace a culture of

dialogue in dealing with the endemic conflicts that pervade the country. Else, the country has to be restructured and reconfigured regions permitted to organise their political leadership.

7. CONCLUSION

The current security challenges in the country have reached an alarming stage and are threatening the corporate existence of the nation. The researchers attributed these to the leadership problems of Nigeria's political leaders who seem to be lopsided in implementation of policies and rule of law. The authors suggest inclusive governance (Idike et al., 2019) as well as political cum bureaucratic reforms (Ukeje et al., 2019; Ukeje et al., 2020). It is further suggested that security governance should be collaborative among different members of the society (Nwangbo et al., 2022). The role of education is paramount in reorienting both leaders and the led on need for cultural diversity appreciation as well as promotion of peace and nonviolence (UN, 2015). The leadership has to take with all seriousness the issues of ASUU strike which has become incessant in Nigeria because it is caused by poor governance. The three arms of government which is made up of the executive, legislature and judiciary are not working in tandem, hence the deepening of the security challenges facing the country. The executive arm has grown too powerful politically to the extent that court orders are flouted and people are kept in detention as long as they want without being charged to court in deference to the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The press is being gagged by law enforcement officers who carry out orders without questioning, and Journalists are arrested for publishing the facts. Allegiance is to the executive arm of the government rather than to the country. The Legislative arm of government established to carry out checks on the executive is not doing their oversight functions as stipulated in the constitution; while the Judiciary seems not to be independent anymore, and wastes a lot of time in adjudicating cases in the courts of law. When people at all levels of the society despite class and status are able to feel the impact of equity, justice and fairness in every aspect of their lives, a considerable level of peace and security will then be guaranteed in Nigeria.

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