

APPRAISAL OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP CRISIS AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF KADUNA STATE (2015-2023)

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Abstract

Political leadership crisis has remained a persistent challenge to effective governance and national development in Nigeria since the return of democratic rule in 1999. The crisis manifests in the form of godfatherism, electoral violence, corruption, lack of accountability, policy inconsistency and weak institutions all of which undermine the capacity of government to deliver democratic dividends to citizens. This study appraises the political leadership crisis and governance in Nigeria with specific focus on Kaduna State from 2015 to 2023. The study relied on both primary and secondary data. The findings reveal that political leadership crisis in Kaduna State is driven by monetization of politics, weak internal party democracy, godfatherism and the personalization of power. The study concludes that political leadership crisis remains a major impediment to good governance and sustainable development in Kaduna State. It recommends the strengthening of democratic institutions, electoral and party reforms, and promotion of accountability, transparent and political education to foster responsible leadership.

Keywords: Political Leadership, Crisis and Governance, Kaduna State

Introduction

The success or failure of any society depends largely on its leadership. Leadership and the diverse processes for the selection, election and emergence of its key actors, determines to a large extent how well a community, society or nation will fare especially in terms of the wellbeing of its citizens, including societal development, progress and infrastructural growth. Overtime, democracy has been heralded – predominantly by the West - as the best path to attaining popularly elected leadership (Wallace et al, 2021); this

notion, however, has been equally discountenanced among the comity of several nations which perceive democracy and its concept as a western engendered narrative whose potency and viability does not necessarily hold or apply globally especially if different ways of life, cultures, demographic and ethnicities are to be factored. Politics is widely projected as the vehicle or medium through which the attainment of all forms of representative and people-oriented leadership is achieved, (Wallace et al, 2021). Political parties, in turn, are a major component of democracy and are central

to the survival of the political system; they are an organized group of people who exercise their legal right to identify with a set of similar political aims and opinions, and seek to influence public policy by getting its candidates elected to public office. Functional political parties serve as the connecting link between government and society; accordingly, a political leadership should ensure good governance that positively impacts society - including the lives and properties of the people. This has remained the key selling point deployed by those who market democracy as the most viable and potent option for attaining purposeful and impact-driven leadership (Wallace et al, 2021). Good governance, on its part, is directly tied to effective leadership, leadership mentoring, however, connects both as it ensures a foundational bottom-up growth nurturing process that presents a path to effective leadership and consequently – good-governance, (Olaopa, 2018). The failure of political leadership often times has its foundation dug in poor internal democracy, ethics and practices within the political parties who sponsor these leadership candidates and, on whose platform, they are nurtured and sponsored for wider and general electoral contest, (Alhassan & Sanusi, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

It is evident that Nigeria's political leadership crisis and poor governance have been a bane to its development since independence (Onuoha & Aluko, 2021) while (Oboke & Ngwu, 2021) established that bad governance endangers peace and breeds banditry. They maintained that the pursuit of good governance is aimed at reducing the problems associated with bad governance such as insecurity, unemployment, banditry, corruption, infrastructural decay and violence. In

Kaduna State, political leadership is most visible in its governance. This study appraises the political leadership crisis and governance in Kaduna State, 2015-2023.

Research Question

- i. How has the political leadership crisis affect governance in Kaduna State, 2015-2023?

Objective of the Study

- i. To examine the political leadership crisis and governance in Kaduna State, 2015-2023

Assumption of the Study

- i. Political leadership crisis and governance failure have affect peace and security in Kaduna State, 2015-2023.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Leadership is the process of influencing people to achieve specific goals and outcomes, effective leadership is essential for a country's political and economic development, but leadership has been a major challenge in Nigeria (Okeke & Adebayo, 2022). The concept of leadership essentially embraced personality perspective which proposes, for example, that leadership is a combination of special traits or characteristics, which individuals ought to possess, so that they can persuade others to accomplish tasks through effective governance practices. Therefore, it is imperative to state that leadership is to be regarded as a relationship or a partnership between leaders and followers. Based on that, people who engage in leadership are referred to as 'leaders', whereas individuals, toward whom leadership is directed, are referred to as 'followers'. Leadership theories include trait, behavioral, attribution, characteristic,

transformational and visionary, also leadership is a combination of strategy and character, leadership is about inspiring and guiding the efforts of others by creating an environment in which they can become motivated. From this perspective, the foundation of good leadership lies in understanding what motivates people and appealing to these criteria and prerequisites. (Scholl, 2000) refers to leadership style as the pattern of behaviour use by a leader in attempting to influence group members and make decision regarding the mission strategy and operation of group activities. (Clark, 2000) perceived leadership style as the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people. (Nwankwo and Enoch, 2021) described autocratic style as a leadership style in which production is emphasized at the expense of any human consideration, and where decision are made exclusively by the leader. The leader believes that human beings are evil, weak, unwilling to work, incapable of self-determination, and have limited reasoning. Therefore, they must be directed, pushed and forced to do work. An autocratic style according to (Pagewise, 2002) is effective and should be used when new untrained employees who do not know which tasks to perform or which procedures to follow, effective supervision can be provided only through detailed orders and instruction and employees do not respond to any other leadership style. The Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisers (2024) also opined leadership is effective and should be used when time is limited.

Empirical Review

According to Olukemi (2021), leadership and governance are intertwined as they have also been recognized as imperatives for the attainment of development in any

polity. Discourses on leadership and national development cannot be over-emphasized particularly as it relates with governance.

Given its place, its impact is felt in the delivery of the objectives and citizens' expectations in any given society or organization. Be that as it may, given the several challenges bedeviling Nigeria, the quest for quality leadership and good governance are always burning issues. Thus, the need for further research on this topical issue. It is on the basis of this that this study further seeks to reexamine the place of leadership on governance in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on appraising the #EndSARS protest that took place late 2020 as an effect of absence of quality leadership and good governance over the years. In carrying out the research, literature and secondary materials were used, particularly the mass media to unravel leadership lapses in the governance process over the years and how these occasioned several unrests and protests. To Nnaji, Igbokwe-Ibeto, Ukeje, & Nwangbo (2022), 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. According to Adeiza & Mabe, (2022), leadership effectiveness is instrumental in the socioeconomic and political development of any society. In Africa, ineffective leadership has resulted in crises of varying degrees, with poor development visible in the society. To Lawal & Oriola (2023), state is essentially created to provide and sustain good governance for its citizenry. The ability of the state to fulfill this fundamental responsibility is greatly depended on the physical, social and political capacity of

the leaders entrusted with the management of the affairs of the state. Significantly, the nature and quality of leadership and governance in any state determines to a large extent how such state will be socially described, politically evaluated and economically rated among the comity of global community. Consequently, every state strives to ensure that its leadership recruitment processes is jealously guided and protected by the essential qualities capable of engendering good governance and ensuring effective service delivery system.

Constitutional Crisis

In Political Science, a constitutional crisis is a problem or conflict in the function of a government that the political constitution or other fundamental governing law is perceived to be unable to resolve. There are several variations to this definition. For instance, one describes it as the crisis that arises out of the failure, or at least a strong risk of failure, of a constitution to perform its central functions. (Yusuf, 2023) defines a constitutional crisis as a situation where the constitutional order of a country is in jeopardy due to a conflict between the different branches of government, or between the government and the opposition. The crisis may arise from a variety of possible causes. For example, a government may want to pass a law contrary to its constitution; the constitution may fail to provide a clear answer for a specific situation; the constitution may be clear but it may be politically infeasible to follow it; the government institutions themselves may falter or fail to live up to what the law prescribes them to be; or officials in the government may justify avoiding dealing with a serious problem based on narrow interpretations of the law. Nigeria has experienced several constitutional crises in recent years,

including the military coups of the 1960s and 1970s, the annulment of the 1993 presidential election, and the current situation of political instability (Okoro, 2023). Nigeria is currently experiencing a constitutional crisis, as the various branches of government are in conflict and the constitution is not being respected and the country is facing a crisis of legitimacy, as many Nigerians feel that the government is not responsive to their needs and concerns (Yusuf, 2023). According to (Okoro, 2023) constitutional crisis is a situation where the constitutional order of a country is violated by the actions of one or more branches of government, or by a group of citizens. (Ezenwa, 2023) defines a constitutional crisis as a situation where the normal functioning of government is disrupted due to a conflict between the branches of government, between the government and the people, or between different factions within the society. Constitutional crises may arise from conflicts between different branches of government, conflicts between central and local governments, or simply conflicts among various factions within society. (Okoro, 2023) constitutional crises can arise when the constitution is not respected by the government, when there is a conflict between the branches of government, or when there is a crisis of legitimacy. In the course of government, the crisis results when one or more of the parties to a political dispute willfully chooses to violate a law of the constitution; or to flout an unwritten constitutional convention; or to dispute the correct, legal interpretation of the violated constitutional law or of the flouted political custom. Constitutional crises often arise when there is a lack of consensus about the legitimacy of the government, when there are competing visions of what the constitution should be,

or when there is a breakdown in communication between the different branches of government (Ezenwa, 2023).

Political Leadership Crisis in Kaduna State

i. Issues and Perspectives

Political Leadership crisis in Kaduna State from 2015-2023, covering the administration of Governor Nasir El-Rufai, is a reflection of Nigeria broader governance failure since the return to civil rule in 1999. (Tanimu, 2023) observed that violence, crimes and other security issues have been on the increase since the return of civil rule in 1999, a position corroborated by the evidence that Nigeria's transition from military to civilian rule witnessed increased violent crimes (Aborisade & Obileye, 2022) and that the security situation has been going from bad to worse on daily basis (Olayinka, 2029).

ii. Issues of Political Leadership Crisis

a. Ethno-Religious Polarization: constitutes a central issue in Kaduna State, with over sixty ethnic groups, has historically been divided along Muslim dominated northern zone and Christian dominated southern Kaduna (Daily Trust, 2024). Between 2015 and 2023, this division deepened. The introduction of Muslim-Muslim ticket in Kaduna in 2019 alienated sections of the State especially the south (ABN TV, 2025), while the State witnessed some of its most painful episodes of communal violence in Zangon Kataf, Kaura, Kauru, Jema'a, Kajuru and Kachia Local Government Areas. The Minister of Defence, Gen. Christopher Musa (rtd), recently accused El-Rufai of dividing the State into two suggesting that people from south could not go to the North to live.

b. Labour and Human Rights Crisis:

This emerged from the mass retrenchment and demolitions. The administration sacked 21, 780 primary school teachers in 2017 and 4, 042 Local Government workers in 2021 without adequate compensation, leading to a five-day warning strike by Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) (Punch, 2021). The government was also noted for displacement of communities and continuous demolition of properties and community market shops (Daily Trust, 2024), one of his first demolitions was the demolition of the house of retired judge of Code of Conduct Bureau, Late Justice Sambo Nasir in Zaria.

c. Godfatherism and Centralization of Power;

Weekend democratic governance from 199, Kaduna State experienced patronage politics, weak public financial management, ineffective democratic oversight including a subservient state House of Assembly and disempowerment of Local Government (Policy Practice, 2015). This persisted 2015 with local governments run by Sole Administrators and later handpicked Chairmen without financial autonomy.

iii. Governance Failure Perspectives

Governance failure manifests in fiscal opaqueness, heavy debt, and low budget performance. Kaduna State increased education funding significantly between 2015 and 2019, even above UNESCO benchmark, allocating 16.0% in 2015, 20.0% in 2016, 22.0% in 2017 and 26% in 2018 (IISTE, 2021). However, budget performance remained low. Kaduna State Government spent N158.1 billion out of N225.1 billion budgeted for education between 2017 and 2021, representing 70.2% performance, with only 22.4% in 2017 (N14.6bn of N64.6bn) and 45.5% in 2018 (N23.5 billion of N51.7 billion)

(KADBEAM, 2021; Daily Nigerian , 2021). Despite this allocation, the sector was still faced with infrastructural decay and limited qualified teachers (KADBEAM, 2021). By 2023, debt reached N354 billion (domestic debt), making Kaduna the second most indebted State after Lagos. Governance failure also manifests in insecurity. During 2015-2023, the gradual entrenchment of banditry and kidnapping occurred in Birnin Gwari, Chikun, Giwa and Igabi Local Government Areas (Intercontinental News 247, 2025). Corruption at LGAs level thrives in project costing, ghost workers syndrome, contract awards and subsequent abandonment, embezzlement and misappropriation (Oasis Reporters, 2018).

Governance and Security in Kaduna State

The level at which Kaduna State is confronted with security challenges is alarming and it is becoming a ghost of itself. There is a need to understand that poor leadership leads to security challenges that metamorphose into insecurity.

The quality of good governance is central to any state's ability to maintain order and bring peace to its territory. The challenges faced by the state (Kaduna) are traced to the accumulation of failed policies and programs, poor leadership style, and short-sightedness by leaders over the years (Aluko, 2021). The security situation in Kaduna state has worsened with lives lost on daily bases, kidnapping has become the order of the day and now a lucrative business, to mention just but a few. Regrettably, aspiring leaders every after four years makes promises but situations keep deteriorating with the masses at the receiving end (Daily Trust, 2023).

In Nigeria's history, the nation has experienced both military and civilian rule at different stages of its national development, each of these governments has its unique way of maintaining security and Kaduna State is not an exception. Whatever forms of government a state adopts, governance and security cannot be shied away from, hence; there is always a meeting point between governance and security. The leadership of a state is expected to exhibit some elements of good governance for the security system to be effective and fully operational. In the world today, good governance is a hallmark of responsible and credible government/leadership, the practice of democracy in a state as a system of government is to ensure that the people of the state enjoy good governance and effective representation.

Methodology

The study relied on both primary and secondary data. For the primary data, interview was adopted while secondary data were sourced from journals, books, internet sources, newspapers and magazines.

Sampling Technique

For this study, the researcher used convenience sampling. It is a non-probability sampling method where units are selected for inclusion in the sample because they are the easiest for the researcher to access. This can be due to geographical proximity, availability at a given time or willingness to participate in the research.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Examination of Political Leadership Crisis and Governance in Kaduna State, 2015-2023

In an interview with informants, they mentioned that the challenges of governance and developmental issues include; disengagement of government staff without compensation, poverty, inequality, exclusion, corruption, youth militancy, and environmental issues form some of the common problems associated with governance and development. While kidnapping, insurgency, communal violence, rural banditry, land disputes, chieftaincy tussle, extrajudicial killings, political violence, and others, are some of the common security challenges in the state. They stated that the state government has alienated itself from the people at all levels (limited access to governance), providing little or no room for accountability. Another respondent also posited that, in the state government decisions are hardly questioned no matter the level of impunity and unpopular the policy is. This situation has compounded the deepening poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and exclusion, thereby increasing the security challenges the state is already confronted with.

Findings

The findings reveal that political leadership crisis in Kaduna State is driven by monetization of politics, weak internal party democracy, godfatherism and the personalization of power. The study further discovered that the state experienced patronage politics, weak public financial management, ineffective democratic oversight including a subservient State House of Assembly and disempowerment of Local Government

Conclusion

In conclusion, the challenges of leadership and governance in Kaduna State today are enormous. Good governance is possible and achievable but rests on how prepared

the leaders are by embracing the principles of fairness, justice and equality. Public resources must be well utilized for the masses putting their interest first in state building process. This way, the interest of all would be captured making it the state's objective. The indigenes have an essential duty to play in order to guarantee that the necessary good governance through quality leadership is attained through conscious and deliberate concerted efforts and not looking for short-cuts.

Recommendations

- i. The study recommends the strengthening of democratic institutions, electoral and party reforms, and promotion of accountability, transparent and political education to foster responsible leadership.
- ii. The State Government should improve in its financial management and improved it democratic oversight.

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