

## **The Congruence Effect of Leadership and Governance at the Grassroots. A Nigerian Perspective.**

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### **Abstract**

The effective administration of any society depends largely on the capacity of the leader. Every society must as a matter of fact have a leader either elected or appointed to pilot its affairs. In Nigeria, the grassroots are important as significant percentage of population still reside in local areas. This level is regarded as the closest government to the people, which also understand their peculiar needs and problems. It is therefore expected that leadership at this level should provide good governance to improve living standard of the local people. However, leadership performance in the rural areas has fallen short of expectation, thereby making good governance a tall dream. Based on this, the paper examined the leadership crisis and the crisis of governance at the grassroots with focus on the congruence effect of the former on the latter. The paper relied on content analysis method for its data. It was noted in the paper that poor leadership at the grassroots was responsible for governance crisis. The paper concluded that availability of good and transformational leaders at the grassroots will assist in entrenching good governance at the local government level.

**Keywords:** Governance, Grassroots, Leadership, Local Government, Nigeria.

### **1. Introduction**

Governance prescribes effective ways of leadership performance and behind good governance is good leadership. Government is created to provide good governance through effective and efficient leadership. This implies that governance is directly linked with exercise of authority in government institutions and how leaders are made to be accountable. (Davis, 2011). The implication of this is that both government and good governance are driven by leadership capacity. The grassroots are regarded as the people living in local areas of Nigeria. Local government is a government at grassroots created to meet the essential needs of the local residents (Appadorai, 1975). It is an effective instrument for the development of the communities within its domain and for provision of social services for the local population (Oke, 2001). He maintained that the closeness of council to the local people makes the institution to be in a better position to provide certain services for more efficiency than other levels of government.

Based on this, various reforms had been carried out at ensuring effective service delivery at the grassroots but not much has been achieved. Governance at the grassroots has been a sort of discouragement. Local residents are disillusioned and have lost trust in local government system as a result of poor performance and its ineffective role in local development. These other challenges confronting local government are not unconnected with the crisis of leadership at the grassroots level.

Although, leadership crisis is a general phenomenon and common to all levels of government in Nigeria, but it is more peculiar and worrisome at the grassroots. Most leaders and at the local government level are transactional in nature, with unhealthy leader- follower relationship. Most grassroots governments are personal ruler ship with high tendencies of turning the entire council into a machine for his own profit and that of a few friends.

Leadership in public administration involves both the political office holders and the bureaucratic office holders. But for the purpose of this paper more attention will be given to the political office holders. This is because the paper revolves more around political leadership who are the major stakeholders at the grassroots and more pre-occupied with the business of governance. Also, important is the fact that not much studies have been carried on leadership at the grassroots, although, there have been volumes of studies on leadership, but these studies were more on state and national governments. This aptly informed the need for this paper. The paper has six sections. The first section is the introduction, capturing the problem and the objective of the paper. Section two analyses the key concepts, while section three discusses the theoretical framework. And section four explains the congruence effect of leadership and governance. Section five narrates the nature character and the challenges of leadership and its effects on governance. Section six concludes and makes viable recommendation. The study relies on data from secondary sources.

### **1.1 Objectives of The Study**

The paper examines critically the effect of leadership performance on governance at the grassroots level. It also carefully identifies leadership and governance challenges at the grassroots level with the aim of making viable recommendations capable of ensuring good and transformational leaders for grassroots development in Nigeria.

## **2. Conceptual Analysis**

### **2.1 Leadership**

Leadership is a universal concept which cuts across social, political, economical, cultural, geographical and psychological facets (Omolayo, 2006). This concept is most significant, because it borders on behavioral influence. The hallmark of leadership is influence, which is ability of the leader to influence his followers. Leadership could be found in the family, churches, mosques, socio-political associations, sports clubs and government parastatals. Leadership is a lubricator that lubricates the machinery of government (local, state and federal) working without any difficulty. Leadership is important for inspiring and motivating workers because it provides the direction towards goal attainment (Sapru, 2013). Politically, leadership separates the rulers from the ruled. Bamiboye (2002) perceived leadership as a way of exerting social influence over group members by a person. The position of Agagu is not different from Bamigboye's submission when he views leadership as a concept that deals with ability to lead or organize or influence others (2010) in his analysis, he described leadership as a paradoxical phenomenon particularly when it has to do with political leadership. In his paradoxical analysis, he explained that leadership is admired yet distrusted, respected but often ridiculed explainable but uncertain, relevant, yet considered superfluous by so many. Generally, leadership is simply the way in which leaders behave. This means that it is the process of influencing others to work willingly and to the best of their capabilities toward the goals of the leaders is described as leadership.

Lewin, Lippit and white (1938) identified three leadership style; autocratic leadership, which depicts a leader that gives command and expects compliance without questioning.

He allows no explanation for any misdeed, is conscious of his position, stays aloof from his followers, make all decision personally without consultation, wield absolute power maintain a master – servant relationship and lead with the ability to withhold or give reward and punishment. He coerces his followers to obey his instructions. Democratic leadership describes a leader that uses consultative approach. The leader consult with his followers on proposed actions and decisions, encourages follower participation, is sympathetic and empathic to his followers and provides his followers the maximum opportunity for growth. The last style identified by Lewin, et al is the laissez-faire leadership which explains a leader that maintains a non-interference policy, giving followers a high

degree of independence in his ability, and allows anyone of his followers to make decisions that affects the whole of his followership.

At this juncture, what is most important in leadership is the inherent qualities of a leader and not necessarily the style of leadership. This is because the qualities possessed by a leader will no doubt determine his performance ability.

## **2.2 Governance**

Governance has different definitions with similar meanings. However, some of these definitions will be explored in the paper. In general term, governance is taken to be the framework for making and implementing decisions. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (I.M.F) conceive governance as a way by which officials of public institutions exercise authority in order to make public policy, provide essential goods and deliver services effectively. (World Bank and IMF, 2006). Governance includes the type of the political administration, way of exercising authority in the management of the resources of a nation, and the ability of government to come up with good policies that can ensure effective delivery of goods and services. Governance provides the avenue by which citizen and group freely carry out their responsibilities and obligation and express their interest. It gives assurances that effectiveness, transparency, and accountability in public institutions promotes development (Omilusi, 2013).

Sharma, *et al* (2011) explain the structure and process of governance to include the use of institutions to govern right and responsibilities of the governed to participate in and promote good governance, the principle of welfare state, the law which enable the well- being and progress of the citizens, decentralization, realization of basic and fundamental rights.

Adamolekun (2002) made some submissions about governance. He conceived governance as the political instrument for managing community or country's affair. According to him, governance includes rules of law, freedom of speech, and to associate, electoral acceptance, transparency and transformational leadership. In the public setting, governance can be seen as the degree of public policies enacted by public officials and the various methods adopted for the management of the affairs of the country. (Ukaegbu, 2010).

Governance can be good or bad. It is good when government is competent to make and implement good policies and desired decisions, deliver service and create conducive environment for productive activities. Bad governance professes poor performance and weak government. The need for good governance has been advocated as a pre condition for development. It is much desirable and apparently needed at the grassroots. This is because it can improve service delivery and enhances local development. The business of governance is dynamic, interactive and continuous (Davis, 2011).

## **3. Theoretical Framework.**

The theory of amoral familism is adopted as the theoretical framework for this paper. The theory was used by Banfield to explain the decadence of a stagnant society. Banfield (1958) opined that backwardness of society can be traced to the presence of selfish vision of the family which is termed (amoral familism). In his analysis, he clearly indicated that in amoral familist, every one tends to struggle for immediate benefits of the family, and to this extent, blocking others from having opportunities. This assertion defines all other relation in society, having serious effect on government worker and their voting pattern. This invariably makes positive changes impossible.

In amoral familism, self- interest officer tends to abuse their position by way of blocking other citizen from benefiting from the commonwealth resources. (Ferragina, 2009). This amoral society does not create enabling

environment for unanimousness, cooperative action and mutual trust. Amoral familism according to Banfield (1958) creates a situation where individuals show interest in politics only when such game tends to bring pecuniary benefits for selfish consumption. Amoral familism promotes and protects individual family interest over group or community interest. This implies that individual will only show interest in public affairs for the sake of selfish material gain. (Banfield, 1958).

Ogundiya (2010) listed the manifestation of amoral familism as follows;

- Only paid officials will have the mind of participating in community or society affairs. Also, corruption and abuse of power are not likely to be checked by ordinary citizen.
- Officials view their position as means of wealth acquisition and instrument of deprivation over others.
- Enforcement of law is usually difficult because the official and the common people rarely obey the law.
- Bribery becomes institutionalized and a tradition, even when it is not perpetrated, it will be assumed to have taken place because of its rampant nature.
- The common people normally support a government that will be active and strong enough to maintain order.
- The common people do not believe in the ability and integrity of the political office holders, therefore, sell their votes for money. This is because they believe the politicians seek position for the sole purpose of enriching themselves and their family.

However, the theory of amoral familism has been criticised for lack of universal applicability based on its limited temporal and spatial validity and characteristics (Ferragina, 2009). But despite this shortcoming, the strength of the theory still lies in its relevance to the subject matter of discussion. The characteristics and manifestations of the theory as listed above captures the situation at the grassroots in Nigeria in relation to leadership and governance. Most local government if not all in Nigeria exhibit the characters and behavior of amoral familism as leaders at the grassroots are majorly concerned about their personal welfare and that of their families, friends and cronies, with high level of impunity and recklessness. Therefore, the theory is suitable for the analysis of the leadership and governance at the grassroots in Nigeria.

#### **4. Leadership and Governance: The Congruence**

Leadership and Governance are symbiotic in nature. The success of one determines the progress of the other and vice versa. Based on this diction, the duo is inseparable and both command linkage relevance.

Agagu (2010) posited that leadership is so important in governance process, because it determines the ebbs and flow of institutions. He submitted that when considering the relationship between leadership and governance, it is obvious that the nature of leadership in office determines the success level of governance. As a matter of fact, good and effective leader constitutes the hub, pivot, engine and the fulcrum of governance in any organization or country. Ensuring good governance depends on the nature and character of the leadership assigned to manage the available resources. This depends on the leader's ability to innovate and mobilize the workers. Leadership is one element that can make or mar governance.

In advance countries, the process of development is not linked or traceable to availability of mineral resources alone but also the quality of leadership and enabling environment that permits individuals to participate actively in productive activities. (Raman, 2005). This aptly demonstrates the relevant role of leadership in governance process.

According to Ngethe and Owiti (2002), the world-wide quality of leaders is recognized as an essential element for the effective performance in joint human endeavors of kinds and scales. Generally, a number of attributes of leaders are identified as; integrity, honesty, accountability, transparency, service, dignity of labor, commitment, selflessness, etc. the significant point here is that the identified attributes of leaders are also the germane elements of governance. This accurately implies that good leadership will produce good governance and vice versa. Importantly, effective governance is dependent on patriotic, committed, sincere, transparent and disciplined leadership. (Lawal and Owolabi, 2012).

### **5. Nature and Character of Leadership in Nigeria**

In every clime, the elected leaders are to represent the interest of the citizens that voted for them, and to fill the promises already made to the citizens. Thus, citizens elect their own leaders in a democratic setting. The onus lies on the leaders to fulfill their own part of the political contract by making life more meaningful to the citizens through provision of social and infrastructural facilities, creating employment opportunities and all that could lead to improvement in quality of life.

Unfortunately, Nigerian leaders even in a democratic setting have failed to perform creditably well. This has made Onigbinde (2007) to observe that in spite of long years of democracy and the various complaints emanating from the citizen concerning leadership style at the grassroots, good and transformational leadership remained unachievable in the local government system. Virtually, every facet of Nigeria's life suffers from bad leadership. Regrettably, leadership assumptions in Nigeria is cyclical in nature, it revolves around the same clique and set of people, who could otherwise be labeled as ruling class or elites who also act and think in the same direction. Anan-Ndu (1998) lamented that the commonest diagnosis of the Nigerian sickness is bad leadership. He listed some of the characteristics of leadership as ineffectiveness, tendency to stay put in office, otherwise called sit tight syndrome, absence of moral code, absence of public philosophy, selfishness and corruption. The most dreaded character is corruption. Most leaders in Nigeria, particularly those in political position, for instance, president and its vice, governors and their Deputies are indirectly encouraged to steal public fund while in office through immunity clause. Immunity clause is a section of the constitution in Nigeria that exempts the categories of leaders mentioned above from arrest and prosecution, even when they commit criminal offence. This clause systematically put the aforementioned leaders above the law and further give them confidence to steal and embezzle while in office, with the evil intention of blocking all the possible loopholes, while in office, that could warrant arrest after leaving office. The leaders prefer to build personal and family estates than to entrench good governance. It is this same nature of leadership that is exhibited by national, state and local leaders in Nigeria.

### **6. Challenges of Leadership at The Grassroots and The Effects on Governance.**

One of the problems confronting leadership at the grassroots is the excessive external control and influence. This problem can be further categorized as follows;

- (a) Excessive control from the state government. The state government controls local government administratively and financially. The leaders at the grassroots are not allowed to use their initiative in the running of the council's affairs. Most projects and policies are imposed from the state government. In terms of finance, the council relies on state government for survival because the monthly subvention to local government from federal government is directly paid into Joint Account of state and local

governments. The state only release money for the payment of salaries to local government, while project initiation and implementation are to be determined, designed, approved implemented and supervised by the state government. This portends great danger to governance at the grassroots as those who genuinely understand the grassroots problems are deliberately push aside and rendered irrelevant and inactive. The political leaders at grassroots exist at the mercy of state government and therefore ready to protect the interest of the state government rather than that of the people at the grassroots.

- (b) Excessive control from the party. The party chieftains and other influential members of the ruling party also exercise high level of control over the leadership at the grassroots. They make difficult and unnecessary demands from the council chairman without considering the effect of such demands on governance. The chairman, who also wants to protect and sustain his position, is put under duress to meet the unnecessary demands from the party stalwarts. This has future implication for governance as the leader (Chairman) will not be given opportunity to adequately serve the people.
- (c) Excessive control from the traditional rulers within the local government areas. The traditional rulers are not left out in the habit of making difficult and unnecessary demands from the leadership of the local government. Most traditional rulers dictate to their local government chairman and most often decide the type of projects to be executed, where, when and how such projects will be implemented. The Chairman is also willing to obey and respect the views and opinions of the traditional rulers just for the purpose of sustaining his position as chairman of the local government. This practice is a sharp contradiction to bottom-up approach to development. The residents who are supposed to be participants in development programs are indirectly alienated. Such alienation debars good governance as transparency, openness and accountability becomes difficult if not impossible.

Another major challenge of leadership at the grassroots is the mode of Appointment of leaders. The appointment of the leaders at the grassroots is done by the state government and it is often based on selection rather than election. The appointment of chairman (Chief Executive) and the councilors (Lawmakers) are solely done by the governor of a state based on approval of the House of Assembly of that state. The appointees are branded as caretaker committee. Rather than to allow people choose them through election, the governors prefer and are found of imposing caretaker committee on them. And this committee is always prepared to serve the interest of the Governor other than that of the masses.

It is interesting to also note at this juncture that where election is allowed, the candidates are forcefully imposed on the party in particular and people in general. Some of these elections are conducted and won unopposed by the ruling party as currently exhibited in some states.

In reaction to this ugly trend, Oyekachi (2016) posits that the appointment and handpicking of the executives of local government with no formal education is erroneous. According to him, this practice has questioned the existence of people's power, (political sovereignty) at the grassroots, and further complicate the problems of local government as the nearest government to the people.

Also, important to note is the appointment of grassroots executives which is based on nepotism favouritism other than merit. It is further based on the discretion of the Governor of the state. Those who are perceived to be loyal and ready to work for the interest of the Governor are recommended for selection and or election at the grassroots. The inherent danger in this is that some of the appointed, elected, or selected leaders are not local residents but urban dwellers, who do not understand the problem of the rural people, and still, live in and govern from the urban centres and cities. Unfortunately, they do not have the required capacity to manage resources at

that level of governance. Leadership quests are rare in most of the leaders because they are normally imposed by the state Governor. This has a great consequence on rural governance, as one cannot give what he does not have.

In addition to the problems of leadership at the grassroots is the undefined and unstable tenure of office for the political office holders. This discourages effective performance and erodes commitment to service, because the tenure of office is not clearly defined, there is attendant palpable fear of being removed from office abruptly in the psyche of the political office holders. Although, the State House of Assembly has the power to determine the tenure of the political office holders at the grassroots as expressed in the 1999 Nigerian constitution, but such is done when there are democratically elected officials at the local government level as stipulated in the constitution. But in the contrary, the appointment is subject to review every six months by the state legislature. This review may terminate or retain the appointment of the appointed officials depending on the disposition or mindset of the Governor and the state law makers. The consequence of this is that the appointed leaders might not be encouraged to concentrate or focus on governance issues but may rather prefer to work for their own self interest and personal enrichment within the shortest period in office than improving living condition of citizens, because of the perceived insecurity of tenure involved. To further confirm this position, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April, 2018, Ondo State House of Assembly dissolved 18 local government caretaker committees after the expiration of six months in office in Ondo State (Akinrilola, 2018).

Another critical obstacle to leadership and governance at the grassroots is greed and selfish interest of the leaders. The leaders think more of their personal and family interest than public interest. They are pre occupied with activities that promote and serve the needs of family, friends and political godfathers. Most contracts and development projects are given to these categories of people without recourse to the rules of contracts. Consequently, the contracts are poorly executed or not executed at all as a result of diversion of funds meant for the contract for private and personal use. This trend is inimical to good governance particularly, at the grassroots.

Last but not the least problem of grassroots leadership is corruption. Although, corruption is an endemic phenomenon in Nigeria, particularly among leaders at all levels of governments but more pronounced and rampant at the grassroots. It not only debars effective performance but also distorts good governance. Where there are corrupt leaders, governance steadily becomes a socio-political paradox.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper looked at leadership and governance at the grassroots. It dwelt on the congruent relationship between leadership and governance, particularly in the local government system. It also examined the nature, character and challenges of leadership in Nigeria and their effects on local governance. The paper argued that good leadership is essential to good governance and that where there is good leadership, good governance becomes inevitable. It was observed in the paper that poor leadership occasioned by excessive control, imposition, insecurity of tenure and corruption were responsible for bad governance at the grassroots.

The paper concluded that there was leadership and governance crisis in the local government system emanating from corrupt practices evidenced by conspiratorial relationship among the politicians and the so-called political leaders. Based on the foregoing, the paper makes the following recommendations.

The leadership at the grassroots must be insulated from unnecessary external control. This can be done by making local government system autonomous and independent. It should be truly made the third tier of government. This will enable the leaders to concentrate and focus on business of governance. Through this, self initiative and local contents will be encouraged and promoted via participation and involvement. This can be achieved through constitutional review. Those contents of the 1999 Nigerian constitution that miserably put third tier level of government under the control of the state government should be expunged to allow the former have sense of



belonging in the federal arrangement. Also, the Joint Account Committee being operated by the state and local governments need to be jettisoned to enable local governments have direct access to their funds.

Imposition of leaders should be discouraged at the grassroots level. Leaders, particularly, political leadership should emerge through a credible process. This can be made possible through credible election. Credible election is a necessity to leadership recruitment. This will pave way for competent political leadership that governs effectively. Essentially, the residents of the rural local government areas must also be given opportunity to have input in the process of leadership recruitment so as to consider those who actually understand and familiar with the predicaments of the rural people and can meaningfully provide solutions.

Also, the House of Assembly should as a matter of political exigency extend through legislation, the tenure of caretaker committee beyond six months to enable them concentrate on governance rather than personal aggrandizement. Elongation of tenure will give caretaker members more confidence and time to plan for meaningful and sustainable developmental projects.

Corruption must also be severely tackled at the grassroots. To achieve this, there is urgent need to strengthen the weak capacity of the institutions established to fight against corruption in Nigeria for better performance and extend their operation to local governments. The activities of the Agencies over the years have been more pronounced and concentrated at the federal and state levels. The local government also needs to be regularly checked and monitored by these agencies to ensure corruption-free administration at the grassroots.

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