

# **GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: THE HARBINGER TO INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNAL DIGNITY**

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the concept of good governance as a crucial factor in ensuring national prosperity, enhancing development, and maintaining sustainable individual and communal dignity. Developmental deficiencies in Nigeria are attributed to the crisis of poor governance, which results in high unemployment rates, budget deficits, infrastructural gaps, increasing debt profiles, multidimensional poverty, and insecurity. Using secondary data and participant observation, the study reveals that poor governance perpetuates poverty, and impoverished populations contribute to poor governance through systemic disorder, ignorance, lack of democratic culture and practice, corruption, and indiscipline. Conversely, good governance is essential for the growth and sustainability of any country. The study highlights the need for effective strategies to enhance good governance and meaningful development. It emphasizes the importance of realistic action plans focusing on viable remedial interventions to drive sustainable economic growth and development. The study recommends that, to maintain competitiveness in the new economic age, the government should provide the necessary infrastructure to encourage the application of innovation and technology across all sectors of the economy. This would bolster the economy by adding value, creating a sustainable technology-based entrepreneurial culture, and generating new business opportunities, as well as incubating spin-off technologies. In conclusion, the study asserts that deliberate intervention policies, when appropriately and faithfully implemented, will stimulate and propel Nigeria's inherent potentials toward productivity and gainful engagement.

**Keywords:** Good Governance, Communal Dignity, Democracy, Public Institutions, Accountability.

## **Introduction**

In the last decade, the concept of the Next-11 countries (Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Turkey, and Vietnam) has gained attention. These countries are seen as potentially large, fast-growing economies with significant growth opportunities. Prior to this, the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) had already joined the G7 as the world's largest economies, showcasing their economic success (Nwachukwu, 2013). In Africa, several nations have recognized the need for meaningful economic development to drive a paradigm shift toward sustainable economic growth and development. Nigeria, in particular, has made notable strides in establishing economic structures that can stimulate and propel inherent potentials toward productivity and gainful engagement (Okhakume, 2013; Okoronkwo, 2020).

Nigeria is on a path toward significant change, driven by its vast untapped solid mineral deposits, growing youth creativity, and hunger for industrialization among its young population (Okhakume, 2013). Nwachukwu (2013) suggests that Nigeria stands on the threshold of what could be its greatest transformation, with young workers becoming the country's most valuable resource in the 21st century. However, transitioning from a public-sector-driven economy to a private-sector-led one requires a conducive and enabling economic environment that stimulates productivity and simplifies enterprise. The government must develop its infrastructural base and ensure that social amenities are available to add value to human existence (Afegbua, 2007).

Without these foundational elements, Nigeria faces high inflation, low purchasing power parity of the naira, unreliable power supply, high fuel prices, poverty, and unemployment. These issues result in

recurring fiscal vulnerability and declining economic conditions, threatening the nation's viability and future prosperity. Additionally, insecurity from kidnapping, terrorism, and other criminal activities, as well as the rising incidence of internally displaced persons (IDPs), place undue pressure on critical social and physical infrastructure, leading to systems failure, high youth unemployment, legal bottlenecks, corruption, and lack of accountability among officials (Nwachukwu, 2013; Agboti & Orakwe, 2020; Iroanya, 2022). Poor governance perpetuates poverty, and impoverished populations contribute to poor governance through systemic disorder, ignorance, corruption, and indiscipline (Nnamani, 2006; Iroanya, 2023).

Enhancing good governance and national development is essential for job creation, youth engagement, and empowerment by indigenous organizations executing projects in the nation. Xianbin and Oiong (2021) assert that good governance fosters gender equality, protects the environment, allows citizens to express personal freedom, and provides instruments to alleviate poverty, fear, and deprivation, creating a violence-free atmosphere. These objectives are critical for the government and all Nigerians. Despite developmental challenges, such as regional insecurity and youth restiveness, addressing these issues requires cooperation among development partners, government agencies, faith-based organizations, multinationals, host communities, and individuals with complementary ideas and activities (Oyesola, 2013).

Good governance is crucial for the growth and sustainability of any country (OECD, 2013; Addink, 2017). To enhance good governance and national development effectively, realistic and effective strategies must be developed (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011). This study focuses on examining the trend of governance in Nigeria, sustainable individual and communal dignity, and providing a workable approach to good governance and national development. The central question is: what is the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting individual and communal dignity? Using secondary data sources and participant observation at the Zonal Advocacy Workshop on Economic Diversification in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, this study offers pathways for improvement, focusing on socio-economic and political reforms.

The research reveals that good governance positively enhances individual and communal dignity. These findings align with the ideas of Nwachukwu (2013) and Xianbin and Oiong (2021). The study emphasizes that Nigeria has a better chance of overall success with more developed and sophisticated institutional, legal, and political frameworks. Furthermore, it contends that Nigeria should diversify away from oil, using oil revenues to fund infrastructure and recurrent spending while ensuring efficient use of existing funds. This study is descriptive in nature.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Governance is often regarded as a nebulous and ambiguous concept. According to Addink (2017), the word governance is derived from the Greek verb "kubernao," meaning "to steer." This term was first used by Plato as a metaphor and later adopted by Latin (*gubernare*) and other languages. Governance can operate in organizations of any size, for any purpose, whether good or evil, for profit or not. Literature generally concludes that governance refers to the development of governing styles where boundaries between public and private sectors become blurred (Stoker, 1998). Asogwa (2008) defines governance as the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs.

Mandal and Gupta (2015) describe governance as the process of decision-making and the implementation of decisions. Addink (2017) identifies two aspects of governance: the act of governing by persons or institutions and the process of bringing about these acts. Governance encompasses all governmental actions and activities aimed at making and realizing effective economic policies. Governance can be applied in various contexts, such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance, and local governance. It includes all methods societies use to distribute power and manage public resources and problems.

This study focuses on national governance and good governance. Okoronkwo (2020) defines good governance as the ability to perform efficiently, effectively, and responsively, guided by feasible and desirable principles at all societal levels. Xianbin and Oiong (2021) describe good governance as a commitment to democratic ideals, norms, and practices, characterized by trustworthiness, just business practices, and institutions that drive political and socio-economic connections. One key characteristic of good governance is the collaborative administration of public life by both citizens and the state. The three broad categories of government stakeholders are the state, the market, and civil society. Good governance, expressed through reliability, predictability, and accountability, is increasingly seen as a key factor in ensuring national prosperity (OECD, 2013; Addink, 2017).

Ezenyili (2012) uses the concept of good governance to enhance development and address institutional failures. Developmental deficiencies in developing countries, such as Nigeria, are due to governance crises. Good governance is crucial for economic and social development, promoting the rule of law, transparency, managerial competence, participation, accountability, and public service ethics. Good governance facilitates the transition to more open and democratic societies and is fundamental to ensuring citizens' quality of life (OECD, 2013; Addink, 2017; McDonald, 2022).

Scholars agree that the features of good governance include good education, basic infrastructure development, public safety, employment opportunities, a favorable business environment, and a free market economy (Mandal & Gupta, 2015; Xianbin & Oiong, 2021; McDonald, 2022). The purpose of good governance is to minimize corruption and promote the views of minorities and marginalized populations. In decision-making, good governance considers the present and future needs of society, acting in a timely manner with forethought and awareness (Mandal & Gupta, 2015; McDonald, 2022; Kaufmann & Kraay, 2023). This study asserts that good governance is the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting individual and communal dignity.

Based on the literature, this research was designed, and the following theoretical framework was developed. This research revolves around the good governance theory. According to Xianbin and Oiong (2021), good governance theory refers to the allocation and management of resources to address collective challenges, occurring when a state efficiently delivers public goods to its citizens. This requires evaluating states in terms of the quality and quantity of public goods provided. Addink (2017) posits that good governance theoretically involves all state powers: legislative, executive (administrative), judicial, and additional powers like ombudsmen and courts of audits. The key elements of the theory are accountability, efficiency, and openness.

In Nigeria, the absence of good governance principles and elements fosters anger, distrust, severe alienation, and multidimensional poverty, which are at the root of many conflicts. The lack of basic infrastructure, such as roads, water and sanitation, shelter, electricity, and employment opportunities, has given rise to terrorism, militancy, social instability, and political violence (Agboti & Orakwe, 2020; Okoronkwo, 2020; Iroanya, 2023). Consequently, theoretical work on good governance reveals that these principles and elements are often lacking in Nigeria, leading to negative consequences for the economy and environment due to poor leadership, the ruling class's activities, and multinationals' collaborations (Eteng, 2015; Agboti & Orakwe, 2020).

### **The Principles and Dimensions of Good Governance**

Addink (2017), Okoronkwo (2020), and McDonald (2022) outline the principles of good governance to include: participation, rule of law, human rights, transparency of decision-making, accountability, equity and inclusiveness, consensus orientation, predictability, effectiveness, responsiveness, and strategic vision. This study will focus on the most remarkable links to illuminate the characteristics of good governance.

At its core, good governance is participatory. Equal participation by all members of society means encouraging involvement from diverse backgrounds and various areas of expertise, either directly or through elected representatives. Equity and inclusiveness are inherently tied to participation, serving

as key components of a healthy organization or society. Diversity, equity, and inclusion must act as the foundation of all operations in good governance. Additionally, good governance implies the rule of law, maintained through the impartiality and effectiveness of the legal system, an independent judiciary, and incorruptible law enforcement agencies.

Transparency in the decision-making process ensures that information is freely available and accessible to those involved or affected by decisions. Accountability and responsibility are also crucial, with participants in the political and economic process being accountable to each other for their decisions. Integrity, transparency in practices, and adherence to the law are closely linked to accountability. One of the most motivating principles of good governance is strategic vision, which is ultimately the responsibility of leaders. To realize good governance, organizations or governments should plan strategically, define their mission and values, and foster a conducive work environment. The capacity of government to provide predictability in policy and institutional environment is key to efficiency. These principles enhance democratic institutions by ensuring frequent, free, fair, and credible elections, a representative legislature, an independent judiciary, and a free media.

### **Dimensions of Good Governance**

The dimensions of good governance, as articulated by Mandal and Gupta (2015), Okoronkwo (2020), and McDonald (2022), include the following:

1. **Political Dimension:** This dimension addresses the legitimacy of government, the accountability of political elements, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Its components include the exercise of franchise, the profile and conduct of representatives, political parties, the political executive, legislature, and political decentralization.
2. **Social and Environmental Dimension:** This dimension focuses on building, strengthening, and promoting democratic institutions and tolerance throughout society. Its components include the welfare of the poor and vulnerable, the role of civil society and media, and environmental management.
3. **Legal and Judicial Dimension:** This dimension measures whether the exercise of power is within its boundaries and its ability to effectively maintain law and order, safeguard human rights, and enable access to and delivery of goods and services. Its components include law and order and internal security, safeguarding basic rights, police administration and citizen-friendliness of the police, access to justice, and judicial accountability.
4. **Economic Dimension:** This dimension pertains to the state's ability to ensure macroeconomic stability and create a conducive climate for economic activity across different sectors. Its components include fiscal governance, the business environment, and support to the primary sector.

### **Issues in Promoting Good Governance in Nigeria**

#### **1. Development of Democratic Culture**

Recent economic and social development has increased attention given to the role that good governance plays in achieving social and economic development (OECD, 2013; Okoronkwo, 2020). Public management reforms have been a key factor in improving capacities of countries to address issues such as budget deficits and external pressures on competitiveness; perceived lack of public confidence in government, growing needs for services; and increasing demands for better and more responsive services. Again, good governance and democracy have become a very comparative and embracing ideal admired by most countries and has grown rapidly to become a major in analysis of what is missing in Nigeria's struggle for economic and political development. Hence, there is a relationship between democracy and good governance (Ezenyili, 2012; Addink, 2017; Xianbin and Oiong, 2021).

Ultimately, even as universally appreciated, democracy as a vehicle of social cohesion, not coercion, ought to attain the platform for cohabitation, debate, popular participation, free enterprise, high productivity as well as change which arises from a well-placed definition of the entire dimensions of the state in preparation for the emergence of the new order. Of course, the dominant facilitator of this

is the government, which on the strength of the mandate of democracy provides the sufficient ground of law for the running of the other values of the state such as free enterprise, the infrastructure and the conduct of the substructure (Nnamani, 2006) as well as operation of private firms, strength of civil society, and welfare of communities and individuals (OECD, 2013). In fact, the relationship between the liberal social factors and the fixed institutions of the state determine the extent of actualization of the formal as well as informal sector-elements in the perpetuation of the political environment. In most cases the liberal environment provided the leverage for the various social factors including the individual players, social issues and major economic players to apply the objective values in throwing leadership for the realization of the national dream (Nnamani, 2006).

However, Nigeria's democracy has remained unstable since she returned to democracy in 1999. The political terrain and governing procedures been characterized by corruption which has undermined democracy and has had grave implications for good democratic governance in Nigeria. Corruption as a means of exclusion (deficit) is a stumbling block in the development of Nigeria's good democratic governance from a nominal to a practical one (Nnamani, 2006; Iroanya, 2023). In the same vein, Ezenyili (2012) explained that the vast discrepancy between Nigeria's nominal democracy and corrupt governance practices show that it is much easier to talk the talk, than it is to walk the walk. That is to say, good governance is easier to deliberate in theory, than to effect in practice, looking at the case of Nigeria. Admittedly, after twenty four years of uninterrupted democracy, Nigeria still suffer acute poverty of democratic culture and practices (Iroanya, 2023).

Indeed, to enhance good governance, Nigeria must deliberately promote a viable and transparent electoral process. The right to opinion and dissent must be given space in our political discussion. Internal party democracy is a sine qua non to the genuine development of democratic culture (Nwosu, 2013). As Nnamani (2006) puts it, in popular debate and dialogue, citizens are assured of the alternative viewpoint. It is on the strength of this position that this research consider it proper that all issues must be tabled and discussed; and all positions modified in the interest of the rest of Nigerians who must remain steadfast with this enterprise called Nigeria. A situation where the philosophy of winner takes all or a do-or die affair is allowed in the political process is a big deficit for democracy. More worrisome is the attitude of the opposition parties which rush to the ruling party immediately after elections just to secure political office appointments. When that happens, the nation is denied of any strong alternative to select from (Attayi-Elaigu, 2008).

More so, to foster true democratic culture, the need to provide a platform to engender accountability, probity and transparency in governance is non-negotiable. Such a forum, to a large extent, will dissuade dangerous speculations within the polity because the needed light would have been shed on cloudy aspects of governance that Nigerians have misgivings about (Ifijeh, 2013). At any point, the public should be certain of what is officially being done to fight corruption, minimize unemployment or ensure that elusive electricity is made constant, and whether the right steps are being taken to provide infrastructure. At such crucial moments, the leaders can be challenged for not leading by example. More fundamentally, Ifijeh (2013) affirms the need for Nigerians to be more apprised of steps taken to nip insecurity in the bud. Also, the leaders should exhibit uncommon diligence, inspiration, selflessness, passion, maturity and willingness to sacrifice towards the promotion and preservation of the national interest. This would contribute to the transformation of the country and to the consolidation of democratic process and national development.

More importantly, Nigerians will have to find a way to do away with the present system of godfatherism - an archaic, corrupt practice in which individuals with lots of money and time to spare sponsor their chosen candidates and push them right through to the desired political position, bribing, threatening, and on occasion, murdering any opposition in the process (Nnamani, 2006). Nigeria will have to make sure that the electoral body overseeing elections is run by widely respected and competent officials chosen by a nonpartisan group, free of governmental influence or interference (Achebe, 2012). In addition, the irrepressible literary icon called on Nigeria to develop a version of election and finance reform, so that the country can transform its political system from the grassroots

level right through to the national party structures at the federal level. In this regard, the nation's democratic institutions should be strengthened in order to bring about a lasting culture.

## **2. Promotion of Ethical Values**

The poor socio-economic condition in Nigeria and the inability of the leaders to create conditions necessary for higher national development should be a concern to any person who cares about Nigeria. The decline of Nigeria cannot be arrested through economic revival alone, but a fundamental change in attitudes and through the rebirth of a new nation. How to reinvent the attributes of this new nation established as self-reliant and self-sufficient; and how to contain the corrupting influence and abuse of power in the new nation of our dream should occupy our mind. The basic assumption is that all Nigerians are committed to the rule of law and respect for the individual, with his rights and obligations to the nation, as well as respect for human dignity (Iroanya, 2016). Ideally, for a society to be truly free, it should be an elective democracy. But from Nigeria's experience, Thompson (2012) observed this is not always the case where freedom from poverty and disease may, sometimes, be more critical than freedom to choose and elect the national leadership.

Consequently, without firm and founding principles a nation may never know peace, order and prosperity. But just as there are obstinate people, there are also obtusely obstinate nations that can only learn the hard way. This has consigned many formerly powerful people to political irrelevance and a few self-important actors to figures of national scorn and derision (Alamu, 2013). Expectedly, those who cling to power in the name of privilege are destined to lose both power and privilege. The recrudescence of military takeover in some African countries should serve as a wake-up call to poor leadership in the continent (Ojo, 2023). As a matter of necessity, Nigeria should establish and enshrine a level playing ground for all ethnic groups as well as establish a level playing ground for all Nigerians irrespective of race, region or religion, creed or class. These foundational principles has to be establish now that all Nigerians irrespective of race, region or religion have a right to aspire to rule and preside over the affairs of Nigeria provided the electorate relinquish their sovereign authority by endorsing the aspiration. Nigeria cannot be said to be truly and fully democratic until those principles has been established and the transition of power to the citizens has taken place (Alamu, 2013).

Furthermore, Lickona (2008) in Dike (2008) noted that respect and responsibility are the two foundational moral values that a society should teach its citizens. Other values are honesty, fairness, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation, courage and democratic values. However, rule of law, equality of opportunity, due process, representative government, checks and balances are procedural values that define democracy. This study punctiliously states that freedom, fairness, equality, independence, participation and dignity be linked to the values of good governance in the administration of affairs in Nigeria. This will enhance integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality in the administration of its affairs. All these would enable the people to create a viable humane society and to act respectfully and responsibly. The increasing moral problems in Nigeria such as systemic disorder, corruption, greed, dishonesty, violent crime, politically motivated killings, drug abuse and other destructive behaviors, calls for the promotion of ethical values in the society (Nwankwo, 2022). Presently, corruption drives and shapes social values in Nigeria, and for some individuals, the quest for 'easy money' is the justification for breaking the laws of the land and distorting policies directed toward national development. Consequently, unnecessary display of ill-acquired wealth threatens Nigeria and its democratic political process. When the leaders and the followers think of public service in instrumental way, accountability declines, and national development is adversely affected (Dike, 2008).

Against the background of the above, parents should give their children good home training and made to imbibe principles of simplicity, selflessness, humility, hard work and sincerity. A society may not develop if the leaders and followers do not possess the appropriate character to enable them get committed to democratic values and to work for socio-economic development. This is why the founding fathers of American democracy had noted that moral education is essential for the success of a democratic society. This is because the people must possess the appropriate character to build a free

and just society and the moral foundations to make democracy thrive in the society. These virtues must be instilled in the people at an early age. These virtues are necessary for leading a moral life of the individuals and for the health of the nation (Garrod and Bramble, 1977 in Iroanya, 2015). Therefore, strong personal character should manifest itself in service to organizations and communities. Accordingly, moral development promotes critical thinking and moral reasoning which positively impacts individual and communal dignity.

### **3. Promotion of Functional and Qualitative Education**

Education is the basic foundation of any progressive nation and whatever money spent on it is a resource well spent. There is no alternative to free, functional and qualitative education in Nigeria. The efforts being made by the government to develop the nation would come to naught if functional and qualitative education is not made accessible to all (Jakande, 2009). The crucial role of the education sector as the hub on which a meaningful and rapid socio-economic development of the nation rests should lead the government across board to see the development of the sector as one of its cardinal points. Thus, Oji (2009) opined that no investment on education could be said to be too much. Education is the key that unlocks the shackles of ignorance. Education is the light. It is the way. In this wise, functional and qualitative education in this study means the intellectual, emotional, cultural, social, spiritual and physical development of a person. One cannot develop a person who is only good in counting numbers but does not know how to be a good neighbor. Education is all about all round development of personality and not academics.

Again, it would turn out products who think about giving to the society, who love all people irrespective of whom they are or where they are from and inculcate in the students love for the country and for people. It should recognize the affective domain of education as well as the cognitive which is a demonstration of the value the nation places on good behavior. Also, it rewards excellence, especially in behavior not only in academics. It does not forge an illegitimate accommodation between the best and the worst, between the intelligent and the certified dullard. Suffice it to note that Nigeria would not achieve national development when she has enshrined the practices of treating her students unequally by punishing the best and brightest so as to appease the worst and unserious. In the guise of promoting federal character, Raymond (2013) declared an intelligent and hardworking student from, say, Anambra state who scores 130 in the entrance exam will be advertently denied admission into a federal unity school just to ensure that his counterpart from Sokoto state who scores 2 is accommodated under a federal arrangement. This is nothing but a template for glorifying mediocrity.

Hence, the problem in the education sector needs special attention to salvage it in the country. Such obstacles as poor quality graduates, examination malpractices, cultism, certificate forgery, inadequate commitment to duty by stakeholders; and inadequate funding are problems especially peculiar to education, and therefore require special attention. Another issue is the decline in teacher education. There is the need to overhaul the quality of education which the teachers themselves need in order to deliver quality education to pupils and students in schools and institutions of learning and to check the outrageous decline in the qualities of education which the teachers themselves have had in the recent past (Nwachukwu, 2008). It is so ironic that the Nigerian education system has a major problem of attracting and keeping qualified and committed teachers because the system is rotten (Agina, 2007). This is why the percentage of graduates who are able to secure employment is incredibly low, when compared with the rate at which the universities and colleges spurn them out yearly. Worse still, most of the graduates are not trained in areas that are related to the economic and developmental plans of the country, and so, they are not academically or vocationally aligned with the demands of the businesses or organizations they may like to work for (Idehen, 2007).

Since it has become almost consensual in the court of public opinion that the standard of education has fallen in the country, nothing can be timelier and appropriate than a re-examination of the quality of education of the teachers themselves (Nwachukwu, 2008). Other measures should include, better funding of the universities, such that you have more classrooms, bigger well-stocked libraries and

improved accommodation. The cafeteria system should be introduced in the universities for good but affordable food because you need good food to be able to read. Also, the government should continue to provide interventions through the UBE program in order to enhance UBE delivery and fast track attainment of notable protocols to which it is a signatory. Government intervention in this regard should primarily witness the injection of funds for addressing target needs in the areas of infrastructural development, provision of instructional materials; and teachers' capacity building towards addressing challenges that have hindered the actualization of the full potential of basic education sub-sector (Akinyemi, 2009 in Iroanya, 2015). In addition, all stakeholders in education sector should step up the education standard by evolving such development models that give further impetus to education as a necessary tool for change and societal growth.

#### **4. Investment in Public Infrastructure**

Infrastructure investments are crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including halving global poverty by 2030. Infrastructure significantly impacts poverty reduction, health, education, and social cohesion (Sachs, 2005; Addink, 2017). For instance, roads lower transaction costs, boost girls' school attendance, improve access to healthcare, and enhance international connectivity (Jerome, 2011). John Keynes' economic strategies during the Great Depression highlighted the importance of injecting funds into public works to combat unemployment (Adeleye, 2013).

Infrastructure, categorized into hard, soft, economic, and social, is essential for economic functionality (Jerome, 2011). Research underscores the critical role of infrastructure in sustainable growth and individual and communal dignity (Addink, 2017; Xianbin and Oiong, 2021; Kaufmann and Kraay, 2023). The World Bank's 1994 report and subsequent studies emphasize infrastructure's vital role in development, especially in Africa (Ndulu, 2006; Jerome, 2011). Infrastructure development and economic growth create a virtuous cycle, enhancing human capital and economic returns (Sachs, 2005; Jerome, 2011).

Investment in infrastructure reduces transaction costs, facilitates trade, lowers input costs for businesses, creates employment, enhances human capacity, and improves environmental conditions, contributing to sustainable growth (Sachs, 2005; Jerome, 2011). Nigeria must develop world-class infrastructure, diversify its economy beyond oil, and focus on sectors that improve youth employment and remove growth obstacles (Nwachukwu, 2013). The government should boost investment in education and health, funded by oil revenues, and ensure efficient fund utilization.

Youth and women empowerment programs should be launched to help them discover their talents and contribute to community development. Supporting SMEs, which drive future markets, is vital. Policies should facilitate SMEs' access to finance and profitability, recognizing them as key drivers of wealth and job creation (Iche, 2013). Investment in the informal sector can reduce oil dependence and promote quality, competitive products and services. These initiatives align with Nigeria's Vision 20: 2020 and the National Development Plan 2021-2025 (Zaku, 2009).

#### **Good Governance in Nigeria: A Mirage**

In spite of series of development strategies put in place by successive governments, and sometimes with good intentions, all attempts to generate meaningful development proved futile (Iroanya, 2015). A lot of factors have combined together to fetter Nigeria's development.

One significant issue is that some programs are heavily influenced by what Omoifo (2006) called "the Washington Consensus". Although such a consensus may be partly relevant, it does not coincide with the internal coherence of our economic or developmental strategies. Rather than adopt the World Bank and International Monetary Fund economic templates wholesale, Nigeria should design creative and astute mobilization engagements and activities. This approach will open a floodgate of linkages and contacts with a broad spectrum of progressive politicians, social workers, opinion leaders, faith-based organizations, market leaders, professional organizations, and other social movements within



and without. Overtly, governments that involve the public are in a better position to make good decisions. These decisions will enjoy more support once taken, while accountability, transparency, and participation are reinforced (OECD, 2013). Otherwise, it would lead to incessant stealing and vandalization of government installations.

High levels of corruption and indiscipline present another barrier to good governance, individual, and communal dignity. Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) and Achebe (2012) acknowledged that the Nigerian state is corrupt, managed by corrupt leaders who have made the state an instrument of capital accumulation rather than using it to project the interest of the citizenry. Consequently, accountability declines, and national development is adversely affected (Dike, 2008). Okoro (2012) disclosed that Nigeria loses more to corruption than it loses on oil subsidy. The federal government alone lost over N450 billion to corruption from January to November 2011. The 2023 NEITI report on Ministries, Departments and Agencies has further exposed the impact and cost of the hydra-headed monster in Nigeria. This amount could have been enough to fix the dilapidated federal roads in the country. Additionally, Nigeria's slow implementation of structural economic reforms limits its investment upgrade. This is further hindered by corruption, weak institutions, and vulnerability to oil price drops.

More importantly, Nigeria is challenged by the alarming degree of waste in the industrial manufacturing sector in the form of expensive industrial production machinery and equipment standing idle for years/decades. Some have been and are still in the crates since the 1970s when they were imported (Nnadi, 2013). The author discovered that the degree of under-utilization is in excess of 85%, as confirmed by a National Technical Survey exercise in the 1990s. Worse still, insecurity in Nigeria has had a devastating impact on the general well-being of the people and to a larger extent the mercantile configuration of the entire landscape. The pervasive insecurity in Nigeria portrays not only the socio-economic, security, and mental attitudes of the nation but also the prevalence of misery and inhuman living conditions. Hence, insecurity in the country remains a thorny issue which the political leadership has failed to grapple with due to policy predilections and deliberate failure to face the reality of the situation.

### **Fundamental Remedial Imperatives**

In line with the objectives of the study, the following viable options for mainstreaming Nigeria's national development aspirations towards individual and communal dignity are identified.

To prepare for life in a modern society, citizens should be exposed to free, functional, and qualitative education and acquire good moral values to enable them to create a humane society and to function effectively in a democratic political environment. The challenge for the political, religious, and traditional leaders is to confront Nigeria's problems with innovative ideas and values in the nation's school curricula for good character development and sustainable individual and communal dignity.

The education curriculum must be tailored to the needs of contemporary society and global expectations. The curriculum should be made fuller, better, and more penetrating in all fields, thereby preparing students better for the future. Also, there should be changes in the training and orientation of teachers to make them more like the teachers of old, who were interested in their pupils' future and the adequacy of their training for life challenges.

All tiers of government should strengthen their legal, regulatory, and institutional frameworks and provide the enabling environment to attract local and foreign investors to promote economic diversification and enhanced internal revenue generation. Regulatory agencies should be allowed to operate independently and be adapted to fit the nation's peculiarities.

The role of leadership in development cannot be overemphasized. Leaders should at all times demonstrate zeal and commitment to the tenets of leadership, which must be buoyed by competence, character, trust, skill, building capacity, and integrity. They should pursue reform or attitudinal change

anchored on the principles of integrity, honesty, objectivity, impartiality, and broadening governance through transparent legislation.

Appropriate linkages and collaboration should be established between policymakers, financial institutions, research institutions, farmers, and other stakeholders, particularly the industrial sector, to promote agricultural development to reduce high levels of unemployment, poverty, food insecurity, and other socio-economic challenges facing the nation.

Finally, it is high time Nigeria resolved to holistically apply the federal character principle and allow it to color every aspect of her national life or, better still, discard it altogether. Nigeria cannot use the logic of federal character to arrest the educational advancement of forward-looking and progress-minded students from certain regions just to compensate for the backwardness of students from other regions whose indigenous leadership has deliberately underdeveloped.

## Conclusion

This study has examined Nigeria's failure to achieve the desired effect of good governance and sustainable individual and communal dignity. It observed that the absence of the principles, elements, and features of good governance in Nigeria is responsible for the high rate of unemployment, budget deficit, infrastructural gaps, increasing debt profile, multidimensional poverty, and insecurity. Therefore, this study emphasized that a realistic action plan focusing on viable remedial interventions is necessary and imperative for meaningful economic development, driving a paradigm shift, and actualizing sustainable growth and communal dignity. It is hoped that the recommendations in this study will stimulate and propel Nigeria's inherent potential toward production and gainful engagement.

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