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Sycophancy and Dearth of Integrity in Governance: Interrogating Parochial Behaviour in Nigerian Political System

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Abstract

Sycophancy in governance occurs when performance of legitimate functions of government are erroneously exaggerated to invoke unwarranted stream of praises on a public officeholder or government in power. Critical observers describe it as deceitful, misleading and highly opinionated. It beguiles the masses to believe failed government actions, which a sycophant paints in different colours and thus makes governance wane significantly in integrity. It has become a predominant feature of democratic governance in Nigeria, hence, the study seeks to: (i) examine the trends of sycophantic behaviour in political leadership, (ii) ascertain the underlying factors that influence the behaviour, (iii) explain the consequences or its influence on governance, and (iv) proffer solutions to the problem. Accordingly, the study employs secondary data and content analysis to discuss the contending issues. Additionally, it adopts the "Theory of Planned Behaviour" to explain how sycophantic behaviour is formulated, nurtured and deliberately exhibited in pursuit of target objective, i.e. what inspires the interest or encourages the intention and what incentive that sustains the practice. The findings show that sycophancy has become deep-rooted in Nigeria governance system; it inflicts serious damage on regime integrity, and exposes both failures of political class and gullibility of the masses. It thus recommends political education, reorientation, inculcating objective political behaviour and tasking those vested with political power to live by their oaths of offices.

Key Words: Dearth of integrity, Governance, Parochial behaviour, Political system, Sycophancy.

Introduction

Politics, across governmental organizations, is the passage process to assuming positions of authority in a political system. Individuals and groups play politics and participate in elections generally, in order to seek opportunities to represent cross-sections of interests or constituents and render service to the people. Both in constitution and administrative lenses, there are provisions for the responsibility or duty associated with each political office or position and it is incumbent on the position occupant to perform the function as a matter of obligation. The function is not a favour to the system, rather, it is what one swears an oath to do or resign for not doing it. However, there has been persistent distortion of this tradition with the incursion of sycophancy in the body polity and negative influence of sycophantic behaviour in governance process. In essence, constant irreconcilable opinions about the impact of sycophancy on governance and leadership pose a problem and expose political systems to value crisis.

Accordingly, the protagonists see sycophancy as dependent variable that assumes its essence and significance from the receptiveness of a political system or leader to the influence it exerts over government policies, actions and activities. For the antagonists, sycophancy

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haunts many political systems, infects governance with demeaning behaviours, and on that note has destroyed and still destroys career of many leaders, thereby leaving several of its victims in miserable condition despite their initial strength of character to offer good leadership, and thereafter lead a good life in society. The first emphasizes the constructive value but the latter shows the destructive nature. In consonance, Obaze&Fashanu, (2006), exemplify the crux, by explaining how sycophancy behaviour is a situation, which may be created by a medium that continues to praise government or individuals despite ills, which might be weakness or incompetence in office. It makes a sycophant to be commonly and explicitly regarded as someone who tries to get what they want, or earn someone's respect, by using flattery on them, (Sinha, 2016).

Therefore, a sycophant is a person who tries to win favour from wealthy or influential people by flattering them. As a result, the term sycophant has a negative connotation. The person does not attempt to achieve their goals through hard work or sincerity, but by use of any attempt to please someone in authority to get personal advantage, (Richie, 2011). The foregoing explanations pose situation that impliedly suggests that sycophancy is a universal syndrome. It is ubiquitous and permeates every political system (both developed and developing), where it is certain that praise-singing behaviour is not in black, despite some degree of distinction in their dynamics, manifestation and intensity in each political environment. The universality lay in the fact that sycophantic behaviour finds expressions in the nature of man. Aristotle underscored this perspective in an assertion that man by nature is a political animal, (Jowett, 1885). By implication and based on the nature of politics in modern states, man is intrinsically selfish and crafty, always seeking self-fulfilling ambitions that disregard the interest of other competitors in the daily struggle for political space and access to scarce resources.

Arguably, many aspirations and inordinate ambition metamorphose into sycophancy and differentiate the behaviours of those seeking variety of advantages in the system, (Henry, 2009). As common ground for rent-seeking orientation, it serves as vehicles for advancing personal interest in a game to outwit each other in vying for economic and political opportunities. Thus, politics provides the platform that generates conflicting goals, which in that trajectory, dissolves into intertwined network of disputed interests. It engenders self-centered behaviour that targets personal benefit and relegates whatever collateral damage it portends for public interests. It has become recurrent phenomenon in the political process and a virus in Nigerian leadership. Although fast developing into a subculture in Nigeria, there is disturbing assumptions that it is pervasive where there is high proclivity to acquire material things, get access to corridors of power, get favour from government and sustain close relationship with those in power. Juxtaposing this assumption with the Nigerian experience, there is apprehension that sycophancy, which is a symbol of decaying national value in a political system is becoming norms in its governance, with much negative influence on leadership and followership.

This trend deserves research endeavour to establish what measures that will avert the infamy. With the above backdrop, amplified by widening doubts about dearth of principles in Nigerian political leadership or integrity in governance, the study focuses on four key areas. It includes (i) examination of the trends in sycophantic behaviours in the political system, (ii) ascertaining the underlying factors that influence the behaviour, (iii) explaining the consequences or its influence on governance, and (iv) proffering solutions to the problem. The

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study thus employs secondary data and content analysis, which provides the premise for articulating and aggregating diverse views with the coalescing inference. The overall objective is to investigate how prevalence of parochial political behaviour in political systems, with particular reference to Nigeria, is a consequence of sycophancy and relates to dearth of integrity in governance.

Review of Related Literature

Sycophancy

Conceptually, Etim, (2017), posits that sycophancy is a way of winning or currying favour from powerful and influential people through flattery and praise singing. The cringing subservient attitude symbolizes fawning obsequiousness, which aims at diverting attention from the pulse of the people. Similarly, Oloja, (2016), contends that sycophancy is insincere flattery of people of wealth or influence, and it corroborates the perspective of Akpogena, (2013), that sycophancy is a civilized form of insincerity through which, among other things, yes-men gain upward mobility from their object of supplication. However, Jhatial, Mangi&Ghumro, (2004), extrapolate the idea further, thus stating that sycophancy is flattery, which is very obedient, or it is an indication of deference to another to gain advantage, and to an excessive or servile degree. Empirically, Oloja, (2016), used the case of sycophancy in Nigeria to exemplify the trend. According to him, “sycophancy is now worse in politics and public service in Nigeria where the scourge has become a powerful tool, an ominous culture that has evolved and permeated all spheres of our political life and it is threatening tenets and values on which the growth and welfare of the nation hinges”.

In that regard, a user of sycophancy is referred to as a sycophant or a “yes-man”, (Wikipedia, 2019). Elaborating on the contextual traits that distinguish sycophancy from other forms of behaviour pattern, Ekong and Essien, (2012), contend that a sycophant is a person or employee of sycophancy or a person who tries to win favour from wealthy or influential people by flattering them only to gain self-advantage. On same note, Jhatial, Mangi&Ghumro, (2004), hold that either sycophantic person acts towards someone powerful or strategic in position of authority in order to gain advantage in the form of promotion or good position in the industry. Generally, Lyle, (1980) and Lofberg, (2008), were in consensus that a sycophant denotes a person who fawns, deferential and groveling, abject, adulatory, bootlicking, bowing, brownnosing, compliant, cowering, crawling, cringing, flattering, humble, ingratiating, kowtowing, mealy-mouthed, obsequious, parasitic, prostrate, scraping, servile, slavish, spineless, submissive and subservient.

The foregoing catalogue of adjectives that describe or qualify sycophancy only summarized the fact that a “sycophant is a servile self-seeker who attempts to win favour by flattering influential people”, (Ekong & Essien, 2012). In the context of journalism, Okunna, (2003), notes that a sycophant reporter is a journalist who flatters political leaders, wealthy citizens and owners of the media houses who as employers have dread power over and against journalist. In the political sphere, Oseji, (2017), cites Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chieftain and Delta State gubernatorial aspirant in 2007 general election, Sunny Onuesoke, who associates the problem of Nigeria politics with the overburdening and inciting activities

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of sycophants. He notes that there is no president or governor who would say that things should not move forward in the country but the problem is the people around them, who do not advise them well, hence:

Ninety nine per cent of people who hover around our presidents and governors are sycophants and praise singers and it puts Nigerian politics in trouble because the citizens allow deception, denial, disinformation, diversion, evasion, exaggeration, indoctrination, lying, media-manipulation, mind control, propaganda, scapegoating and smear campaign which are the signs of sycophancy in our politics and governance, (Oseji, 2017; p.16).

In the views of Etim, (2017), this has been the situation because usually, a larger-than-life picture created around these leaders gives them a false impression of indispensability and infallibility, in such contemptible manners that even sincere mistakes such leaders make would be laundered to appear as the best decision ever taken by any man. In the process, such leaders make very unpopular decisions, which usually lead to their downfall. Hence, sycophants, driven by greed and selfishness are never patriotic, despite that they want to be seen as such. In addition to the fact that they are driven by convulsive rapaciousness and are egocentric boot-lickers who hide under the cloak of patriotism and nationalism to pursue a purely self-serving agenda, they are also ubiquitous and Nigeria is not in short supply of such chameleons. It is pervasive in nature, impact, and fast assuming a feature of political culture in Nigeria.

The only sad narrative is that successive leaders in Nigeria always fall victim to these too familiar tricks, notwithstanding the recurring evidence that leaders who believe every positive thing they hear about themselves soon realize how their gullibility lead to avoidable failures, (Etim, 2017; p.7).

On the other hand, Akpogena, (2013), distinguishes between evidence-backed performances from failures that sycophancy shield. According to him, whereas honest appreciation and admiration for quality work and sterling character is healthy and often necessary, as it helps to ensure morale and the continuation of top performance and conduct, it becomes a matter of concern when sycophants use praise as a smokescreen to fog truth and to hide incompetence. Sycophancy thus becomes a weapon of the weak, deployed to lower defenses to those in a position of relative strength. It subordinates principles to politicking and the key factor is the position held by the recipient of sycophancy. Hence, our political space has been crowded with the activities of these sycophants and political jobbers without shame, thereby causing decorum to be thrown to the wind. He cites an incisive and lucid example to show that,

Since the demise of the third term and just two years into the successive administration, aspirants upon aspirants from zone to zone rented crowds in the name of different interest cum pressure groups, traditional rulers, youth organizations, students, cultural and ethnic base groups to call on perceived aspirants to come forth and contest in the 2015 elections, (Akpogena, 2013; p.11).

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The reason, according to Ekong and Essien, (2012), is that sycophantic groups often feed political class with information, often distorted, garnished with lies and unfounded optimism, from the polity. This scenario poses integrity question on the credibility of governance that is replete with sycophancy. According to MacCallum, (1993), the word integrity evolved from the Latin adjective integer, meaning whole or complete. In this context, integrity is the inner sense of wholeness derived from qualities such as honesty and consistency of character, (MacCallum, 1993). As such, one may judge that others have integrity to the extent that they act according to the values, beliefs and principles they claim to hold, (Pillai, 2011). Additionally, integrity implies trustworthiness and incorruptibility to a degree that one is incapable of being false to a trust, responsibility, or pledge. Having integrity means doing the right thing in a reliable way. Integrity is a personality trait that we admire, since it means a person has a moral compass that does not waver. It literally means having wholeness of character, just as an integer is a whole number with no fractions, (Online Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2019).

Integrity

Therefore, integrity is the practice of being honest and showing consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values. Based on the foregoing attributes, Lucaites, Condit and Caudill, (1999), posit that integrity can stand in opposition to hypocrisy in that judging with the standards of integrity involves regarding internal consistency as a virtue, and suggests that parties holding within themselves apparently conflicting values should account for the discrepancy or alter their beliefs. What it means is that integrity is important for politicians because the public influence their choice, appointment and election to serve society. To be able to serve, politicians are given power to make, execute, or control policy. They have the power to influence something or someone. However, there is a risk that politicians do not use the power to serve society but always tempted to use it for personal gains. Therefore, it is important that politicians withstand this temptation, and that requires integrity. Kaptein, (2014), explains that integrity starts with the politicians who know what their position entails, because integrity tacitly relates to their position. By implication, the corollary implies that integrity also demands knowledge and compliance with both the letter and the spirit of the written and unwritten rules. Integrity is also acting consistently not only with what is generally accepted as moral, what others think, but primarily with what is ethical, what politicians should do based on reasonable arguments.

Integrity is not just, about why a politician acts in a certain way, but also about who the politician is. Questions about a person integrity cast doubt not only on their intentions but also on the source of those intentions, the person character. In that context, integrity is about having the right ethical virtues that become visible in a pattern of behaviour. Important virtues of politicians are faithfulness, humility and accountability, (Kaptein, 2014). They should be authentic and role models. These virtues expected of politicians exemplify the course of governance.

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Governance

The term governance means different thing to different peoples. Most appealing are the perspective by Rao, (2008) and Sheng, (2018), which posit that governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). In another similar perspective that expatiate the foregoing views, Naveed, (1998), describes governance as the management of resources, and organization of individuals and groups into formal and informal bodies and institutions and businesses, through social, political, administrative and economic mechanisms.

In same vein, Khan, (2002), cites the World Bank, which classified governance in two contrasted ways. The first emphasizes ‘how political power is exercised to manage a nation affairs’. The second instance sees governance as the “use of power in the management of a country economic and social resource for development”. Hence, governance is basically, government's ability to make and enforce rules and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not, (Fukuyama, 2013; Mann, 1984). In furtherance, Ali, (2016), corroborates both perspectives and asserts that governance is about performance. Thus, governance in any society, aims to ensure transparency through the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority. It strives to establish quality relationship between the rulers and the ruled. In the context, governance signifies the nature of mutual interaction among social actors as well as between social actors and public administration, and it contains the meaning of ‘ruling together’ with aim of helping individuals realize their potential for improving the quality of their lives, (UNDP, 1997, Carino, 2000; Ewalt& Ann, 2001).

Apparently, one finds expression of what scholars describe as good governance from the attributes of governance discussed. It refers to the management of government in a manner that is essentially free of abuse and corruption, with due regard for the rule of law and respect of people’s rights to be engaged in public affairs, (Legaspi, 2005, OECD Reports, Štefanová, 2017). The key indicators include, (i) Accountability (ii) Transparency (iii) Rule of Law (iv) Equality and Inclusiveness (v) Effectiveness and Efficiency in service delivery and (vi) Participation. When the indicators exist in any governance environment, they qualify for good governance. They reflect the core elements of democratic principles. They also constitute yardstick for measuring leadership integrity and therefore, controversial subjects where they lack, thus resulting in concocted praise singing, propaganda or diversionary innuendos. They typically metamorphose into sycophancy or diminution of the essences and integrity of governance where their ineffectual evidence and manifestation in political environment is rife.

The Synthesis of Reviewed Literature

Literature on sycophancy and sycophantic behaviour are replete with differing perspectives and diffused analytic contexts, more so when it relates to issue of demise of integrity in governance, and the accompanying question about the prevailing parochial political behaviour in many of the affected democratic political systems. Gale, (2008), cites many scholarly studies, including Benedict, (1946), Mead, (1953), Gorer, (1955), Fromm, (1941), and Klineberg, (1950), to demonstrate the relationship between sycophancy and national political behaviour. It posits that the studies of national character and the psycho-cultural

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analyses date back to the 1930s and 1940s, and consciousness and interests in the roots of national differences in politics emanate from the writing of Herodotus, which espoused the bases for understanding national temperament similar to those by Tocqueville, Bryce, and Emerson, (Gale, 2008).

Impliedly, all the aforementioned studies have sought to utilize the findings of psychoanalysis and cultural anthropology to provide deeper understanding of national political behaviour but differences in value system have always been a yearning gap. In contemporary researches, attention of scholars tends to focus more on national political behaviour or culture and less on the complex web of disarticulated stereotype in political orientation that lacks in uniformity in political practice across national boundaries. Aside the fact that each country exhibits its own peculiar attributes that distinguish its politics and governance from others, many studies have frequently failed to recognize that the political sphere constitutes a distinct subculture with its own rules of conduct and its distinct processes of socialization. Such neglect has always given rise to misconception of the nature of differences in the common trend across the systems, where praise singing solely aims at eulogizing public officeholders to benefit the actors and sacrifice public interest.

Theoretical Framework

Although scholars reveal that studies on human behaviour have resulted in a multitude of theories and assumptions, some of them making sense, others already made enough impact to still remain valid today, and others already generally accepted as fact, (Martin, 2017), psychologists and researchers have differently been the major actors in the enquiry. Borrowing a leaf from psychological perspective, this study discusses the act of sycophancy in a political system with the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Since the inception, various fields and industries, in varied applications have used the theory, especially in the field of behavioural and psychological research and evaluation studies, (Martin, 2017). The theory examines how behaviours become consistent with predetermined goals and therefore, shares much in common with the nature and goal of behaviours that epitomize sycophancy, (i.e. reasoned action, chosen for a predetermined goal, in preference for other contending options of behaviours in a political system).

Fundamentally, the Theory of Planned Behaviour is a variant of the Theory of Reasoned Action. The peculiarity lies in its description of situations that account for a planned behaviour and strategies adopted in pursuit of the target intentions. The theory critically appraises the factors that encourage, motivate and sustain the perpetuity of an action, which in its form looks like a political subculture that springs up a newly or emerging anti-thesis political behaviour in the system. According to LaMorte, (2019), the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) started as the theory of reasoned action in 1980, to predict an individual's intention to engage in behaviour at a specific time and place. The theory intended to explain all behaviours over which people have the ability to exert self-control, with the key component focusing on behavioural intent, which specifically states that behavioural intentions are influenced by the attitude about the likelihood that the behaviour will have the expected outcome and the subjective evaluation of the risks and benefits of that outcome, (LaMorte, 2019).

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The theory further states that behavioural achievement depends on both motivation (intention) and ability (behavioural control). It distinguishes between three types of beliefs - behavioural, normative, and control. According to Martin, (2017), the theory of planned behaviour is comprised of six constructs that emphasize a person's actual control over the behaviour, which is relevant for explanation of the thesis of this study.

- Attitudes - This refers to the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour of interest. It entails a consideration of the outcomes of performing the behaviour.
- Behavioural intention - This refers to the motivational factors that influence a given behaviour where the stronger the intention to perform the behaviour, the more likely the behaviour will be performed.
- Subjective norms - This refers to the belief about whether most people approve or disapprove of the behaviour. It relates to a person's beliefs about whether peers and people of importance to the person think he or she should engage in the behaviour.
- Social norms - This refers to the customary codes of behaviour in a group of people or larger cultural context. Social norms are considered normative, or standard, in a group of people.
- Perceived power - This refers to the perceived presence of factors that may facilitate or impede performance of behaviour. Perceived power contributes to a person's perceived behavioural control over each of those factors.
- Perceived behavioural control - This refers to a person's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour of interest. Perceived behavioural control varies across situations and actions, which results in a person having varying perceptions of behavioural control depending on the situation.

In same vein, there are many dimensions from which the theory explains some behaviour that typify sycophancy in a political system with circumstances that occasionally obfuscate the arena and present it as though it is normal and an acceptable political culture. Each phase shades light on the multifarious nature of behaviour; how it metamorphoses into a cult-like system, influenced or constrained and how societies approve or disapprove their use in governance process. Nonetheless, sycophants seek opportunities to penetrate a system with praise singing without considering the disincentive to the failing performance of the system. Commonly applicable to or associated with this action reaction interface is the fact that planned behaviour implies full control of the situation and calculation of the results, hence:

- It requires opportunities and resources to perform sycophantic behaviour and the ultimate goal is to create more opportunities and resources once the concerned authorities recognize, welcome and appreciate the impact.
- It absorbs the limiting factors, such as fear, threat, mood, or experience. The driving force is the anticipated reward, which is self-centred and not considerate about public interests.

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- It harnesses environmental or economic factors that may influence a person's intention to perform sycophantic behaviour.

However, sycophantic behaviour is not the result of a linear decision-making process, but can change overtime when the person for whom it targets does not recognize or reward the act. An individual behavioural belief serves as the link between his behaviour and the outcome that the behaviour is expected to produce or bring about. It is a person behavioural belief that will have a direct influence on his attitude towards behaviour. If the expected outcome is something favourable, then there is no doubt that the person will also have a positive attitude towards the behaviour, increasing the likelihood of actual performance. Essentially, the behavioural beliefs of the person will focus on issues bordering on evaluation or assessment of whether the intended behaviour has potential of being favourable or unfavourable. Where it is predominantly favourable, recurrence of the behaviour is increasingly encouraged; hence, this type is the bane of sycophancy featuring in almost around every corridors of governance in the present day world.

The environment of sycophancy in Nigeria operates in the same frequency. Regardless of political and economic status, educational background, and hierarchy in leadership, those who engage in sycophancy behaviours in Nigeria share a common objective (to curry favour). Hence, sycophancy and sycophantic behaviour emanates from reasoned calculation of the receptive nature of the conduct in a political environment. It is nevertheless conscious of the anticipated benefits from fallible government officials, and not deterred by the implications on social norms. Many people view those who engage in sycophantic behaviours in governance and politics as selfish, shameless, deceptive and gambler with decayed conscience. Others view sycophancy as an emerging way of survival in a competitive political environment, the purpose of which is to curry favour from those in power. Thus, sycophancy is not an action taken unconsciously but a planned behaviour with predetermined reward that motivates the action taken.

Trends in Sycophantic Behaviours in Nigeria Political System

The root of sycophancy lies in antiquity and it has remained a feature of human life. It transcends modern political practices and encompasses traditional political orientations. However, from the inception of colonial administration in Nigeria, crop of colonial subjects used sycophancy to curry favour from the colonial governors. The traditional leaders for example, used the ploy to displace educated elements in attempts to preserve their powers and influence, and it led many Europeans to view nationalist struggle as not supported by the locals. Even among the educated class, some engaged in sycophancy to secure opportunities in colonial administration and thereby added to the numbers that posed hindrance to rising opposition to colonialism. Gradually, sycophancy became a potent means of extolling government for the ulterior motive of seeking favour from the powers-that-be, regardless of public perception and opinion.

When Nigeria attained independence in 1960, sycophancy accelerated unhealthy diversion from steering the wheel of governance towards national unity and development and

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without moderation or necessary checks to nip the effects in the bud, promoted egotism among the class that inherited political leadership. Praise singing in support of each leader by people seeking personal favour assumed threatening dimension. It infected governing and non-governing elites, and reversed public trusts in civil governance. It became common knowledge that sycophancy made the government operated in falsehood, relegated national interest and allowed personal ambitions to displace facts about the poor nature of governance in the country. The collapse of first republic and consequent military intervention drew much inspiration from sycophancy. Expectedly, empty heroic praises have continued to lure government into taking despicable actions with defensive ploys to blindfold the public with basket of lies. As toxic substance, it pollutes the integrity of governance and exemplifies the bane of politics and leadership in post-colonial Nigeria.

The Experience of Sycophancy during Military Era

The military as an organization has its values and norms, which has made it a unique organization. These values and norms are transferred to the larger society during military governance. The universalistic character of achievement orientation in the award of honors and promotion is said to be endemic in the military. Thus, the values of Puritanism, discipline, rationality and achievement orientation of the military are assumed to be much more directly relevant to change and development, (Etim&Ukpere, 2012). In a democratic system, especially in Africa, these values are deemed to be eroded. Elections are organized frequently, but they do not usually lead to the installation of popular candidates in power. The electorate is often convinced that elections do not offer real political choices. At the same time, the struggle for free and fair elections has become the fulcrum of the struggle for democratic transition, (Ibrahim, 2003).

Amid the turbulent political happenings in Nigeria, sycophancy was very critical in attracting the military class into civil politics. Displaced politicians usually eulogize the virtues of military and escalate whatever leadership imbroglio in the country, to curry favour when any military group eventually takes over the government through coup. It characterized the various coups that sacked both civilian and military administrations in Nigeria. Prelude to this development were rain of empty praises on the civilian leaders or the succeeding military regimes, without predicating it on performance but sheer parochialism. Aside sycophantic obsessions during AguiyiIronsi, Gowon and Murtala/Obasanjo era, it was from the regimes of Buhari-Idiagbon to the twilight of military exit from civil politics in May 1999, that sycophancy began to assert its influence in manipulating national leaderships for personal gains. It became lucrative business with specialty in applauding every policy introduced and projects implemented by leaders (regardless of however good or bad) as cure to Nigerian problems and very quick to lampoon critics despite the veil of selfish ambition shrouding the deceptions.

For example, those who made Buhari to believe that “War-Against-Indiscipline”, and “Austerity Policy” were the best in reviving culture of decency, reinventing the economy and instilling consumption discipline in Nigerians were quick to discredit the policy after his overthrow in a coup by General Ibrahim Babangida. The “War-Against-Indiscipline” rapidly became unpopular, at least among the elites and it helped set the stage for Ibrahim Babangida’s successful coup against the Buhari government in 1985, (Campbell, 2016).The reason for the

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hurried change was to demonstrate loyalty to the new administration and shift the focus of their sycophantic behaviours to new concerns of the emergent administration. Hence, in spite of the fact that General Ibrahim Babangida was manipulating the transition to civil rule politics and refreshing sit-tight mentality in power, sycophants swiftly blew the sordid policies and activities to canonical status. The Association for Better Nigeria (ABN) formed by Arthur Nzeribe after the Ibrahim Babangida regime abolished all political parties and created the two national parties, the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1991, played similar roles. It showed determination to achieve its objective by putting up billboards in the Nigerian capital Abuja that carried the message 'Four More Years', thus preaching that the military government should stay in power for another four years. Its primary objective was to keep Ibrahim Babangida in power and maintain the military administration that had governed Nigeria for so long, (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1994).

The group, in its tenacity to endorse continuous military rule, employed many strategies to pursue the objective. First, it went to court to prevent the holding of the June 1993 presidential election but lost the case. The reason for demanding the injunction was that the leaders of the NRC and SDP were "corrupt politicians". Aside the fact that ABN usurped the prerogative of court to pronounce a person corrupt, it could not distinguish between corrupt leaders of party and the inviolability of candidates already screened and certified eligible to contest election, which the court action had sought to affect most. However, after the elections, the ABN again went to court to prevent the release of the election results, (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1994). The intensity of the ABN's pro-government campaigns led many observers to conclude that the Federal Military Government was behind the activities of the association and that the current political impasse in Nigeria began at this point, when the government annulled the results, (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1994). Even when domestic and international pressures came heavily against the regime of Babangida, the persuasion of sycophants blinded the leader from leaving the stage when the ovation had depleted.

Similarly, except for the sudden death of Abacha, the unashamed and depraved roles of sycophancy in plunging the country into a state of irreversible doom had already characterized the administration. For instance, disguised sycophancy began at the inception, when Nigerian political opposition and civil society groups had accepted Abacha as a necessary evil who would eventually cleanse Nigeria of its festering rot, (Amuwo, 2001). The consequent euphoria heralding the tale of increased foreign reserves under his watch and the Failed Banks Tribunal set up to investigate thieving bank chieftains, provided sycophants fertile grounds to unleash deafening drumbeats that doubted any iota of integrity in the country's political landscape. In one instance, in January 1997, the Minister of Information, Walter Ofonagoro, denied the existence of any political opposition against Abacha's regime, despite many agitations and pro-democracy protests against the administration. Such an averment became an irritant to national concerns, especially by echoing that,

Some characters calling themselves pro-democracy groups have been sponsored by the Western world to make noise here and cause trouble, but they are being ignored because they only have nuisance value. Hence, there is no opposition;

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every Nigerian is with us. This is the achievement of Abacha's administration, (Tell, 20 March 1995, p:7).

Nonetheless, many sycophantic pontifications reflected in several propaganda campaigns to market the regime but ended up blindfolding the leadership from understanding the temperament of the public towards its policies and activities. Kayode, (1999), and specifically Abiodun, (1997), poignantly note that, like others before him, (Abacha) promised fiscal discipline and he appeared to be delivering on the promise. He kept very tight control of government funds, going through major extra-budgetary expenditures with a fine tooth comb before approving them. The same type of propaganda gave impetus to the formation of 'Youth Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA) in 1997', led by Daniel Kanu and primarily committed to urging General Sani Abacha to run for Nigeria's presidency, (Refworld.org. 1998). It placed billboards around the country, publicized advertisements in the media, sponsored editorials to encourage support for Abacha, and in consonance, coordinated the two million-man-match, (Sherrod, 2006).

It also drummed support for Abacha to transmute from military head of state to civilian president. Sycophancy became infectious when political parties that had organized themselves to field candidates and participate in the proposed transition elections unanimously adopted Abacha as sole consensus presidential candidate, thus defied democratic electoral norms and tended to ridicule the agitations by pro-democracy groups that military must hand over power to the civilian class. In other words, the assertion that Nigeria would cease to exist without Abacha in the presidency showed how sycophancy could mislead those in power. The sycophantic eulogies only attested to the fact that what the Abacha 'state' offered willing politicians was, 'a moral contract of material benefits in return for political quiescence, (Berman, 1998).

It spurred many persons who were prone to inordinate ambition and scheming for dubious enrichments to constitute themselves into sycophants. A cursory look at the gamut of sycophancy in the political system reveals that the general impressions of praise singing portrayed in the sycophantic behaviour does not summarily mean that the system which every sycophant promotes its cause is a repository of solution to problems in the country. In contradistinction, the themes around which sycophancy find solace usually mismatch several proofs of looting, high profile corruption, abysmal failures in policy implementation and complete collapse of integrity in governance that appear commonplace across the regimes we have had in Nigeria. It significantly represents deceptions and misleading praises or advises which the results for the leader has always been mindboggling and regrettable, with irreversible consequences.

The Experience of Sycophancy upon Return to Democratic Rule (1999 – Date)

Since the return to civil rule in Nigeria in 1999, each president and governor has had to cope with the increasing gale of sycophancy in the system. Political jobbers easily penetrate the ranks of influential political officeholders to mislead government where there is public mistrust on its policies and programme. Across different administrations in the fourth republic, sycophancy has made several policies and programmes mentioned below to veer off abruptly, lose focus and most times, stalled.

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- Ajaokuta steel company repair plans to commence operation
- Maintenance of refineries for effective functioning and local supply stabilization
- Power sector reforms to end persistent darkness all over Nigeria
- Privatization saga and Transcorp propaganda, with local content, ownership and initiative
- Critical Infrastructure – Roads, Railway and Airport rehabilitation to boost transport system
- Dredging of River Niger and siting of Seaports at Onitsha, Lokoja to boost commerce
- Poverty eradication or alleviation programmes to end poverty and hunger among Nigerians
- Economic diversification and self-sufficiency to encourage production for import substitution
- Security and anti-corruption to ensure safety and protect public resources from abuse, etc.

Each of the policies had all its impacts exemplified in the propaganda of sycophants at the expense of critical evaluation of the prospects and constraints associated with the implementation and advising government accordingly for proper guidance. Instead, there are frequent unsubstantiated claims about the achievements that government has made with nothing tangible for a proof. For example, government or its sycophantic agents always publicly and without fear of contradiction announced that:

- It has refurbished refineries to start operating on full capacity though without supply proof.
- Ajaokuta steel company has resumed production, and importation of steel products foreclosed.
- Second Niger Bridge was at the verge of completion, having done over 75% of the work.
- Power supply would henceforth become 24hours affair because it has transformed the sector.
- Poverty has been wiped from Nigeria based on GDP growth and economic diversification.

There were and there still are many such exaggerations about government activities in Nigeria. Sycophants trumpet government policies in the media and other channels of public discourse with ceaseless encomia even before their actual implementation. Presidents, governors and other classes of appointees of government are targets of the praise singers, some of which they instigate and sponsor in order to sway public perception on its often-ridiculously rated activities. They use the services of hire and pay praise singers, either within the government circle or outside the corridors of power, especially people that resort to parochial behaviour in pursuit of their goals and not concerned about public interests. It was part of the reason that towards the end of Chief OlusegunObasanjo's administration in 2007, a third term was mooted and pursued for the extension of his tenure beyond the two terms allowed by the constitution under the guise of a constitutional amendment, (Etim, 2017). This conformed to

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patronizing the ambivalent character of African leaders and reinventing their peculiar aversion for relinquishing power.

Again, the last administration of the then President Goodluck Jonathan witnessed groups that were hurriedly formed to persuade him to re-contest that election, even though he had earlier intended to serve only one term in office, prior to the 2011 general election. The most vociferous voice in those days was from Transformation Ambassadors of Nigeria (TAN). This group purportedly claimed to have collected up to 17 million signatures across the country in support of the president's second term bid, (Etim, 2017). Sycophancy was also among the reasons that weak presidential bureaucracy characterized the first term of President Buhari (2015-2019); including embarrassing parochial appointments; a cabinet of mediocrities; and lifeless economic team, etc, (Oloja, 2016). Most of the appointments that President Buhari made during the first term of the administration concentrated around his family members, cronies, ethnic and religious inclination. It was the same with the appointment of Security Chiefs, dominated by Hausa-Fulani Moslems, which respectively aroused public outcry, condemnation and demand for compliance with federal character or spread in appointments. In Nigeria, nepotism occurs and persists when leaders tolerate and reward it, despite its negation of constitutional provisions, relegation of equity, justice and fairness.

Sycophants usually adorn national dailies with the portrait of leaders and goodwill or congratulatory messages for achieving feats or proposing projects that the fate has usually hung in the air. Oftentimes, radio announcements, jingles, billboards, posters, social media platforms and adverts are media for communicating praise-singing messages. It creates integrity problems for the government and in addition makes observers to look at leadership as people that play hoax as a ploy to bamboozle unsuspecting public.

Factors that Influence Sycophancy and Parochial Behaviour

As already indicated, the subject matter of sycophancy is to influence leaders in the corridor of power in order to get rewards through praise singing. It is deceitful, distorted, misleading and delusional. Many factors ranging from systemic, economic and psychological considerations are among the common triggers that influence sycophancy and sycophantic behaviours around political leaderships and governance.

Systemic Factors

- **Parochial Political Culture and Orientation:** Political culture encompasses the laid down political norms, orientations, attitudes, behaviours, perceptions, values, preferences and institutional frameworks which are aimed at developing, sustaining and consolidating the unique political attributes of a particular system. The culture influences perceptions and behaviours towards political activities and programmes, including governance. In Nigeria, this culture and orientation majorly focuses on ethnicity, religion and struggle for leadership. It occasions the incidences of sycophancy among those that cling on to these factors to promote feuds.

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- **Colonial Virus:** As a colonial state, Nigeria formed its political behaviour on a wrong foundation, which tilts predominantly towards parochial culture, thrives in shallow knowledge of the political process, loss of interest in fact-finding and passion for sideline praise singing that are not only baseless but rent seeking adventure. Since colonial administration traded on fantasy in the administration of its foreign territories, it was convenient for post-colonial leaderships and subjects to embrace the attitude and play by the gallery.
- **System of Rewards and Sharing of Resources/Positions:** The system of allocation of resources or positions in most political system is based on support and not merit derived from capacity to perform, (Chahal&Poonam, 2015). It plays alluring role especially where government rewards sycophants to stop exposing the shortcomings of the system or challenging the credibility of the leadership through constructive or destructive criticism. Because the system emphasizes positive support as condition for rewards and/or allocation of resources/positions, many people usually toe the line of camouflaged support, using all manner of strategies, including sycophancy to be outstanding where rivalry among supporters is competitive and overbearing in magnitude. The essence is to pave way for recognition and there-from, curry favour.
- **Defence Mechanism:** Performance is the measure of compliance by leadership with promises made during campaigns. Among several cases that attest to this assertion, mention can be made of few as examples. First, at the verge of 2015 general elections, army of sycophants worked for the re-election of President Goodluck Jonathan and publicized his scorecards even when some sections of the public openly and unambiguously alleged that his party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and governors performed poorly, in every ramification. Similarly, during the 2019 presidential election, Buhari's poor performance came to the fore. Oloja, (2019), reported that there should not be any illusion that the president did not run the 2019 election campaigns on his performance in the last four years. The president's performance was not significant enough, but in order to cover up the mess, sycophants used questionable scorecards to assuage public judgments on the government.
- **Unpopularity of Leadership:** When a leader is unpopular, the concomitant consequence is engagement of sycophants for some rebranding jobs. Etim, (2016), illustrates this with the case of Abacha. The assumption was that sycophancy made the craze to support extension of his power become pervasive and knew no bound as both the young and the old were falling over themselves in this frenzy. Even the five political parties of that time adopted him as their sole candidate and it might not be that the late General was such a good man to have enjoyed such massive support. Instead, it was most evidently the work of sycophants; otherwise, there would not have been massive celebration across the nation when the news of his death broke out.
- **Culture of Betrayal:** In politics, leaders treasure betrayal of their predecessors or rival as an advantage in the game of wits. Politicians switch parties to serve the purpose of

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giving classified information about their party or their abandoned master or mentor. It recycles sycophancy and the values attached to the notorious practice. Coincidentally, the same set of people, which praised one leader or administration also infect other emergent leaders with a bag of evil communications, and keep vigil to export their own evil when time beckons for them. For example, those who celebrated and extolled President Olusegun Obasanjo for turning around Nigerian image, relieving the country of debt burden and privatization, later turned against it to praise President Goodluck Jonathan for resuscitating power sector that it paid lip service and wasted national resources. Additionally, some displaced persons who had previously extolled the leadership virtues of President Goodluck Jonathan swiftly turned to describe him as incompetent and ethno-religious begot that warehoused most corrupt set of political appointees. It was same case with Buhari during the 2019 election.

- **Politics of Gangsterism:** During political campaign, people align with parties and candidates; in pretence that they want to help to achieve their electoral victories. In that context, they employ all tact including sycophancy to defraud the party or candidate of money and other valuables. A typical example is the sharing of campaign funds by the National Security Adviser (Colonel Sambo Dasuki) and diversion of it by gangsters, who fronted as arrowheads for electoral victory of the President Jonathan and Peoples Democratic Party. Smaller parties and candidates, who in desperate efforts to unseat a ruling party or candidate, find themselves encircled oftentimes, by gangsters.
- **Unfulfilled Promises:** The essence of canvassing for vote during elections is to arouse public attention to, and interest in existing problems that it promises to solve. Accountability demands that the leadership tells how far it has gone in solving those problems with public funds under its control, in conformity with the terms of social contract with the people. Poor performance in office, sometimes, results in alternative approach to laundering government image and thwarting public opinion about its scorecards. By so doing, sycophants create fictitious performance profile that markets the net value of the government or leadership to unsuspecting spectators and gullible public. This has been responsible for classified propaganda and sycophancy, sponsored by government and or by their garrison squad, to rewrite public notion about its poorly rated activities.
- **Politics of Winner-Takes-All Syndrome:** The electoral system in Nigeria provides for winner-takes-all syndrome, which excludes challengers from benefiting from the largesse. It concentrates authoritative allocation of values and the power to decide who gets what, when and how, on the chief executive and thus alluring to some losers in the electoral process to switch over to the ruling party through sycophancy for juicy positions or contracts. The experience in Nigeria evidently shows that it is usually during the build-up to elections that the political sycophants are in full flight, singing the praises of otherwise political failures and prophesying more time in public offices. These political sycophants care for everything but the truth and they would do anything

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to keep open the stream of pittances flowing from their political patronage, (Obiezu, 2019).

- **Executive Absolutism in Governance:** Presidential system encourages executive absolutism in governance. The end of each election season and declaration of results, (winners and losers), create atmospheres for most politicians to resort to congratulatory messages in the media. As Oloja, (2019), observes, they want to be noticed, as they want such a gift (sycophancy) to make a way for them when it comes to value allocation. They bury truth in a grave and praise even misguided leaders until crisis hits the fan. It serves as first pedestal for foisting false vision on the winners and misleading them to waste public funds on frivolous projects and turning around to seek measures of covering up incidences of power abuse through the instrumentality of propaganda and sycophancy.
- **Ethnicity, Sectionalism and Class Solidarity:** In a diverse society like Nigeria, individuals express their drive for materialism around ethno-religious considerations and it encourages crop of ethnically conscious population to impart to their forebears and cronies, the orientation of supporting positions of leadership that bolster easy access to limited opportunities. In several instances, various cultural unions, political associations and groups begin to emerge and moribund ones resurrect once a particular ethno-religious section or class win election into positions of authority. They suddenly turn to advisory body and begin to offer barefooted solutions to problems, many of which are full of deceits, misinformation and actions that aim at avenging past wrongs. It midwife praise singing even at failing point in governance, and ignites class mobilisation to scavenge for scarce resources and positions in public institutions. It makes sycophancy to become a pathway for patronizing falsehood and ostensibly sanctioning politics of defense mechanism.
- **Unethical Media Practice:** Media outfits serve as outlet for sycophancy when the issues they report rarely pass through thorough verification for accuracy. They easily publicize fake news about government activities with fanfare and the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) appears silent when it favours government and decisive when it is targeted to demean it. The concept of 'Brown Envelop', (Ayodele, 1988), which is a material offer to influence a journalist to play by the gallery, constitutes a major source of inspiration in patronizing sycophancy in the media. In Nigeria, every election season or national events, even personal programmes, are harvest period for media houses. They allow all kinds of ridiculous goodwill and congratulatory messages to fly, for as long as author of the scripts and or sponsors pay for it. Despite the overwhelming evidence that these messages convey false impression about a leader, and the media houses are privy to some of the truths, economic instincts and sycophancy on their own part too, keep this trend unchecked. It is worse in government owned and controlled media houses where they market their failures in governance as though they are successes that deserve encomium.

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- **Eroding Value System:** When a political system loses the track of entrenching positive value system in its national political behaviour, the tendency is that the mismatch foists demeaning and repulsive images on the nation. In Nigeria, no institution is isolated in the rush to upturn the virtues of decency in leadership and followership. Even religious institution that supposed to serve as cleansing house promotes sycophancy and falsehood in a bid to lure their targets for a favour. They organize religious worships where they praise a leader whose record is a misnomer. Traditional Chiefs confer undeserving titles with provoking names that query the roots of its rational. Corporate bodies give award of distinctions to leaders, even those that designate them as “Best in this and Best in that” when there is nothing to show for them. These instruments of sycophancy and very dangerous weapon in every ramification, threaten leadership in Nigeria.

Economic Factors

- **Greed:** It is among the major factors that induce sycophancy. Many people have no need playing politics in Nigeria and venturing into politics for them means coming to amass wealth. The consequent unrestrained quest for materialism usually results in any manner of actions aimed at attaining the set goals. Considering that politics is the most assured means of economic wealth in Nigeria, those who eventually find their ways into the corridors of powers do everything possible to retain the position and the accruing perquisites of power; thus fuelling incidences of sycophancy.
- **The type of Political Economy:** The political economy of Nigeria emphasizes patronage politics, which is built around moneybags, godfathers and stakeholders, who mastermind the money sharing machinery of the country common patrimony. It breeds corruption and nepotism in political leadership and management of national resources, thereby producing crop of leaders that freely divert public funds in fraudulent ways to empower sycophants and encourage praise-singing jobs.

Psychological Factors

- **Pride and Ego:** Pride thrives in ego massaging hue and in many instances, serves as symbol of recognition and relevance. It cherishes eye service, obeisance and eulogy, and denies any reward to those who are in defiance to performing the ritual. Singh, cited in Oloja, (2019), alludes to this when he notes that, “all people like to be praised as it boosts self esteem, keeps them motivated and happy but it also pushes them into the abyss of sham, which is propelled by hypocrisy and sycophancy”. It is a serious infection and bedevils politics and governance in Nigeria.
- **Inordinate Ambition:** It could take the forms of politics of blackmail, character assassination, and pull-him-down syndrome, thereby seeking the elimination and or

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substitution of some persons in power, or persistent attacks on those that are opposed to the government, as ploys to attract attention from the powers-that-be, with envisaged reward. It influenced many parochial appointments made by President MuhammaduBuhari during his first term in office.

- **Subordinated Survival Instinct:** It occurs when people who are not qualified for political office or leadership position but attached to powerful persons for survival, clinch political position or public office through propaganda or praise singing. For instance, to cover-up inevitable lapses in the responsibilities of offices they occupy, they recycle praise-singing practice among those in their hire and oftentimes surrender to the whims and caprices of sycophancy and dictates of sycophants.
- **Urge for Belongingness:** Those who nurse the desire for belongingness are easy prey for sycophantic club. Many of them have ‘complexes’ and poor perception of social norms and attach much meaning to what appeals to their instincts, regardless of however bad and unapproved their parochial behaviour may be in the system. They regard it as a hobby and feel a sense of self-esteem by breaking through the class barriers erected on the path to leadership and economic opportunities, to take on a new status and identity pattern.

Generally, sycophants concern themselves with attempts to upturn facts about governance at all levels. Just as examples and case studies made with situations at the national political life suggest, there is no limit to the expanse of sycophancy. Each level of leadership and system has its own peculiarity but what they share in common is the reversal of previous praise songs about the ousted leaders and resorts to avalanche of vituperation in condemnation of their once rated best policies and actions formulated and executed by the same government. At the national, state and local levels, the cause of parochial orientation and sycophantic behaviour varies. It could draw from its intention or objective but end up serving similar bad purpose.

The Consequences or Influence of Sycophancy on Governance

The consequences of sycophancy on governance cannot be overemphasized. It results in feeding the public with wrong information about government activities, thereby misleading the leadership with false impressions about the feelings of the governed. The concomitant is lack of trust in governance/leadership, promotion of national shame, boosting mediocrity in the polity and stereotyping the system as hub of hoax. Party politics, electioneering process and leadership or governance, if you like, have nurtured and fanned the embers of sycophancy to a proportion that questions the essence of government in Nigeria. These armies of sycophants unleash undeserving treatment on innocent Nigerians by saturating the system with unfounded information, and supporting government to derail from its social contract with the citizens. Obiezu, (2019), lucidly captures their adversarial inclinations when he noted that if their

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betrayal is not brutal enough, verbal daggers weaponised to eviscerate any and every divergent opinion are sent out in full force. Ultimately, critical questions are suppressed even before they are completed. In the murky theatre of Nigeria's politics, the drums of sycophancy beat loudly and grave issues are buried by the gale of noise.

The sad note about sycophancy is that even the legislature whose statutory function is to make law for good governance and conduct oversight on executive activities shift energies to singing the praises of the executive. While it rarely commends itself, individual legislators dwell on licking executive boots as precondition for remaining relevant in the system. There are frequent radio announcements sponsored by the members, congratulating the President, Governor, and Minister, Commissioner or other categories of appointees from whom they look forward to getting rewards. For similar reasons and many other instances, these sycophants waste no time in becoming dangerous where their interests are assailed. They will do anything to keep their source of livelihood open, including verbally and physically harming perceived political opponents, (Obiezu, 2019).

In some instances, leaders treat it as mark of loyalty and the practice is prevalent and becoming worse at the state and local government levels of administration where people could borrow to put congratulatory messages to show solidarity with officeholder even when some of them are not easily recognized or identified by their intended target or political symbol. The commercialization of democracy dividend has made every business of government to flourish around the precinct of sycophancy and it is fast turning into obnoxious subculture in the system. It influences government decisions about where to situate public institutions or site projects, in award of contracts, acts of nepotism in employment and appointment in every juicy position in government. They usually pretend that government is doing well and persuade their bosses to buy into such deception, although critics are quick to unravel the hollowness of the propaganda. The conflicting perspective shapes how the public perceives the system, the nature of their relationship with government and how they treat the officials occupying various positions of authority in the system.

The larger-than-life picture painted of leaders is intoxicating and misleading, with capacity to cause colossal damage on the integrity of the leadership. From a general perspective, political campaign or rallies in Nigeria represent unusual voyage in promoting sycophancy. It has always served as occasion to pour praises on government even at points of self-betrayal and destruction. This study identifies two forms of sycophancy, vertical and horizontal. It occurs in vertical form when the hierarchies in leadership (ward, local, state and national) invoke the practice in extolling their superiors and shielding their collective failure. Horizontally, sycophancy crisscrosses various layers of the socio-cultural, economic and religious class, which though not directly involved in political leadership, apply the tact to seek favour from those in political leadership. Both types have contributed in derailing governance and leadership in Nigeria by singing praises of government and leadership that judgmentally, is not doing well from all indications.

For example, in virtually every government or party rally, sycophancy dominates the speeches, which most times turn afflictions to blessing and devils suddenly become saints. They create all manner of songs, sang them in admiration of their would-be benefactor or paymaster and paint their effigies in make-belief colours; mount captivating billboards and distribute handbills which inscriptions depict nothing but vanity in purpose. It carves a niche

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for political wharf rats and mediocre who garb the hegemony class in fantasy, and ascend positions of authority through fraudulent ways, to perpetuate the liquidation of the nation collective treasury and agony of the masses. It compromises the operation of many institutions in Nigeria, including the executive, legislature, judiciary, the election management bodies, law enforcement agencies and corporate organizations. The functions of these offices are predisposed to conflicting tunes of praise singing and criticism, noticeable in every sphere of governance and leadership with dreaded consequences. In each case, sycophancy beclouds their sense of neutrality, impartiality, incorruptibility and infects them with intemperance psyche that deceives them into playing to the gallery in satisfaction of certain instincts.

Retrospectively, sycophancy played a part in flaming military intervention in civil politics, the Nigeria-Biafra civil war, and in pushing the perennial conflicts thereafter, including fanning the embers of disunity and hate speech. It afflicted military with unfathomable delusion and loss of professionalism, discipline and public respects. The few cases previously cited but reiterated buttress this assertion. Sycophants influenced General Buhari to continue with austerity policy even when Nigerians visibly protested the deadly hardship it inflicted on them. The antics of ABN to achieve tenure elongation for Ibrahim Babangida blindfolded him, desecrated the integrity of his leadership through sit-tight and resulted in abuse of human rights. The euphoria of two million-man-match for Abacha and the Youth Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA) campaign entrapped the leadership and made nonsense of the punctured but ongoing transition to civil rule programme.

Sycophants instigated third term agenda that reduced the leadership of President Obasanjo to sham; more so, sycophants caused the avoidable infamy that characterized the twilight of Musa YarAdua Presidency, just as the dangerous peal that the Transformation Ambassadors of Nigeria (TAN) put on the path treaded by President Jonathan, contributed in collapsing his re-election ambition. Each regime and the persona seemed bewitched by the sweet tongues of those around them and the praise singing cacophony of those outside the system, which led them into miscalculating on the appropriate action to take and evade challenges of governance and purposeful leadership confronting them.

Importantly, the exponents of privatization during President Obasanjo's tenure were the major critics against the programme when it ended. It is in black and white how they had mounted unwarranted propaganda machine that eclipsed the rationale for the exercise and emasculated dissenting viewpoints, which tended to show that despite widespread privatization efforts, empirical evidence indicated that its anticipated benefits are yet to be felt in African countries. As expected, their lip-service swayed government to neglect the fact that only limited efforts has been made to identify the causes and determinants of the uniquely unsatisfactory performance of public enterprises reform in Africa relative to other environments, (Adekola&Kazeem, 2016). Thus, sycophancy does not allow the truths to guide government decision-making and action plans. Illustrating this perspective, Al-Ghazali, (2010), cites a famous injunction by Harry Truman: "I want people around me who will tell me the truth, who will tell me the truth as they see it. You cannot operate and manage effectively if you have people around you who put you on the pedestal and tell you everything you do is right because that, in practice, can't be possible".

Presently, sycophancy has almost become an institutionalized political behaviour in Nigeria that each administration relies upon it in publicizing its policies, programmes and in

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relating with the public. Disgruntled politicians use sycophancy to canvass the virtues of their preferred leader in civil governance and present them as ultimate for propelling Nigeria out of the threshold of disintegration and economic suffocation. The dangerous trend promotes deceits and misinformation and transmits exponential adverse effects on the leadership and sometimes on the led. Many projects and policies promoted through sycophancy end up as fallacy. Sycophants transform deceitful policies that affect national interest into feats and no single Nigerian leader has ever shunned the practice or made categorical statement to disapprove of it but always receptive to its influence and eager to drift national goals and integrity of its leadership. Sycophancy has consigned political leadership to theatre of falsehood with the ineluctable vile servitude posture of its adherents. The general epidemic affects integrity of leadership and governance in Nigeria.

For instance, it is not news that heads of government establishments like Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) or institutions like Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education employ praise singing tact to sway the temperament of concerned political leaders to approve financial releases to them, or consider doing projects or increasing staff welfare packages through improved subvention. It has imposed strange behavioural tendencies on some persons that would ordinarily criticize government for not delivering on its mandate. It makes sycophancy look like a pervasive phenomenon, permeating every segment of human society, not limited to political sphere but inclusive of other areas in human endeavour.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has tried to illustrate or exemplify the efficacy of sycophancy in eroding the course of governance in Nigeria. In other words, case studies and citations made to buttress this trend have significantly shown the impact of sycophancy on the dearth of integrity in governance, and they found expressions in parochial behaviour that afflicts Nigeria political system. This resolved relationship, therefore, demands plausible remedies to redirecting governance value system, with the sanctioned behavioural tendency, recruitment procedure, guiding principles for followership and reorientation of leadership for restoration of integrity and credibility to the position and services they render to the system. Adopting this premise and recognizing the importance of a new order, the paper recommends as follow:

- Reorganization of the political system to emphasize competence, capacity and personal discipline as essential qualities expected of a potential leader to possess before aspiring for the position.
- Appointment of public officeholders based on merit, capacity and penchant for service delivery, which discourage predisposition to sycophancy to disguise failures in performance of office tasks.
- De-emphasizing ethnicity, religion, class solidarity and sectionalism as the basis for association with leadership position, and thereby, meddling in governance with sycophantic infections.

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- Developing institutional capacity to ensure the discharge of its functions according to laid down procedures other than having strong leaders that conduct business of government with vulgarism.
- Criminalizing sycophancy in governance, to stop misleading information and inciting claim about implemented policies/projects that have no verifiable proof or shielding the ineptitude of leadership or intentional false claim to reverse poor performance in office in order to give a leader credit.
- Prohibition of conferment of chieftaincy titles or awards and organizing any ceremony or events in honour of any leader whose tenure has not expired.
- Curtail media publicity on leader performance of statutory duties associated with the office.

These are sure ways of changing the ugly narratives and negative influence of sycophancy in Nigeria governance and leadership, while also restoring its integrity, credibility, legitimacy, respect and sovereignty.

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