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Good Governance and Well-being

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Abstract

This study is undertaken to examine good governance and well-being of the masses with a view to ascertaining the extent to which good governance impact on the well-being of citizens of Nigeria as a case study. In order to carry out an indebt study on the topic, the researcher employed survey design, using secondary source for data collection. Structural-functionalist theory was adopted as the framework of analysis. In the course of investigation, different indices of good governance, as presented by the United Nations Public Administration and the UNDP 1997, were highlighted. The level of the effect of those indices of good governance on the well-being of the masses was also discussed. Whenever the word “democracy” is mentioned, people perceive it as a synonym to good governance and well-being of the masses. Of course, that is what it is supposed to be. Unfortunately, however, it has not always been so. It was discovered after investigations that the type of democratic governance being practiced today in Nigeria is such that the well-being of Nigeria citizens is far from being met. The major challenges to the attainment of high level of well-being are: insecurity, corruption/mismanagement of the nation’s resources by the ruling class, non-observance of the rule of law, and lack the provision of basic necessities of live to the citizens, just to mention a few. It is therefore recommended that our politicians should rise up to the challenges inhibiting good governance, as this will usher in the well-being of the masses in Nigeria, if tackled properly.

Keywords: *democracy, good governance, insecurity, public administration, well-being,*

Introduction

According to Wikipedia (2021), in international development, good governance is a way of measuring how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in a preferred way. Governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented. According to the United Nations Public Administration, good governance entails sound public sector management (efficiency, effectiveness and economy); Accountability, exchange and free flow of information (Transparency) and a legal framework for development (Justice, Respect for Human Right and Liberty).

According to the UNDP 1997, governance is “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, process and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate differences.” It went further to

state: “Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development”.

Esman (1997) argues that before governance can be considered good, government has to be effective. It must first command the respect of and allegiance of the people over whom it exercises governance and must satisfy certain basic collective needs. Marc and Byong-Joon (2007), refer to good governance as the term that symbolizes the paradigm shift of the role of governments. For Omotala (2007), good governance is also pivotal to a successful democratization and by extension, development.

On the other hand, well-being of the citizens is the target of every good governance. It is an all-round comfort of the masses and can only be achieved when governance is good.

With a closer look at the above definitions, one would conclude that the situations in the definitions exist only in a democratic setting. It could be said that most definitions of good governance are synonymous with democracy which is the most popular system of government throughout the world today.

Nigeria has been practicing presidential democracy since 1979. The presidential system of Government in Nigeria started with the 1979 Constitution which ushered in the democratically elected Government of President ShehuShagari. That Government tried as much as possible within its tenure to restore good governance for the well-being of the citizens of this country by practicing some major characteristics of good governance. The eight major characteristics of good governance which brought about well-being of the masses, according to Divyakirti (2020), are: participatory; consensus-oriented; accountable; transparent; responsive; effective and efficient; equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. Unfortunately, that Government was short-lived as the military junta overthrew it in December 1983.

There was another Constitution, the 1999 Constitution as amended, which ushered in the Fourth Republic with President Olusegun Obasanjo as the first President in the republic and that is the Constitution being used up till now, 2021. People heaved a sigh of relief at that point in time; because there was general believe that good governance had come to stay. This is so because under a democratically elected Government, it is the Constitution that normally dictates how the Government is operated and it must be according to the rule of law.

For instance, Chapter I, Part 1, Section 1 of the 1999 Constitution as amended (FRN 1999), talks about the Supremacy of the Constitution. In Chapter II, Section 1-3 of the Constitution, it

talks about the fundamental obligations of the Government (to the people). Constitution is the greatest tool the operators of the Government use in the discharge of their duties under democracy.

Statement of the Problem

In a Presidential democracy such as ours' in Nigeria, people have a say through their representatives. The 1999 Constitution, as amended, provides for three arms of government, namely, the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The purpose of having these three arms of government is to provide for equity and good governance for the promotion of well-being of the citizens. One makes laws; the second implements them while the third one interprets the laws. According to some observers, however, the situation became contrary to expectations of the masses, as those indices or major characteristics of good governance that can bring about well-being of the citizens, as pointed out by some scholars earlier, were not met. That is why the researcher has deemed it necessary to examine the level of good governance and its impact on well-being of the citizens of Nigeria during the pre and post Covid-19 era.

Research Questions

1. Has the President of Nigeria since 2015 been administering this country with fairness, equity, rule of law and other indices of good governance as pointed out earlier in "Introduction" that can bring about well-being of citizens?
2. Does the conflictual relationship between the executive and the legislature impact negatively on good governance and well-being of the citizens within the pre and post Covid-19 period?
3. Does the executive unduly interfere with the legislative and judicial processes in such a way that their contributions to good governance that engenders well-being of the citizens within the pre and post Covid-19 period can be jeopardized?

Objectives of the study

The major objective of this study is to investigate the level of good governance and its impact on well-being of the masses of Nigeria within the pre and post Covid-19 period. From the broad objective, we have developed some specific objectives such as:

1. To critically examine the administration of the President of Nigeria since 2015 in areas of fairness, equity, rule of law and other indices of good governance that can bring about well-being of the citizens;
2. To examine whether the conflictual relationship between the executive and the legislature impacted negatively on good governance and well-being of the citizens within pre and post Covid-19 period.
3. To examine whether the executive unduly interferes with the legislative and judicial processes in such a way that their contributions to good governance that can engender well-being of the citizens within the pre and post Covid-19 period is jeopardized.

Conceptual and Theoretical Discourse:

Whenever the word “governance” is mentioned in a presidential democracy such as ours in Nigeria, the three arms of government – the legislature, the executive and the judiciary – come to mind. This is so because they are the governing body in a presidential democracy provided for by the constitution. That is why (Kopecky, 2004) states that the relationship between the Executive and the Legislature is one of the key defining characteristics of the functioning of any political system. These relationships are multi-dimensional, depending on a range of formal and informal practices. The constitutional prerogatives vested in the Legislature, Executive and the Judiciary are, of course, most important because of the structure of the interactions between the three powers (National Democratic Institute (NDI), 2000).

We can now look into the role of the three arms of government in the provision of good governance and well-being of the citizens of Nigeria.

The National Assembly is made up of the Upper Chamber, which is called “Senate” and Lower Chamber, which is the “House of Representatives”. At the State level, it is called “House of Assembly”. The legislative arm is constituted through the election of candidates from different constituencies. For the Senate; three Senators are elected from each of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Hon Members of the House of Representatives are 360 in number and are elected from different Federal Constituencies in Nigeria.

Part II sect 4, sub sect. 2 of the 1999 Constitution stipulates that the National Assembly shall have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Federal or any part thereof with respect to any matter.

The National Assembly, through its various functions could bring about good governance and well-being of the citizens of the country. Such functions are namely; initiating and passage of

bills capable of bringing about good life to the masses, especially, appropriation bills, effective representation of their constituencies and oversight functions, among others.

In practicing oversight function, Johnson (2005), for instance, opines that Parliaments look back on government spending and activities to determine whether money was spent appropriately, and to ask “value for money” questions.

On the other hand, the Executive is the main institution charged with the responsibility of delivering good governance to the citizens through the formulation and implementation of policies that would enhance the efficient management of the States resources. Most of the Presidential Constitutions, if not all, confer the power and the responsibility on the executive to manage the collective wealth of the nation for the well-being of all citizens.

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, as amended, in its sections 16 (1) a, b, c, and d, (FRN) 1999) for instance stipulates that:

“The State shall within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this constitution ÷

(a). Harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy

(b) Control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity.

(c) Without prejudice to the right to operate or participate in areas of the economy, other than the major sectors of the economy; manage and operate major sectors of the economy.

(d) Without prejudice to the right of any person to participate in areas of the economy within the major sector of the economy, protect the right of every citizen to engage in any economic activities outside the major sector of the economy”.

The Civil service, which is the organ of the executive, is charged with formulating and implementing development programmes as Ademolokun(1983), observed that the Nigeria civil services play much active role both in formulation and implementation of development policies and programmes.

The Constitution went further in its section 16 (2) a – d to stipulate thus “the State shall direct its policy towards ensuring:

(a) The promotion of a planned and balanced economic development;

(b) That the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good;

- (c) That the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or of a group; and
- (d) The suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens.

As we have seen above, the relationship between the Executive and the Legislature holds the key to good governance and well-being of the masses of this country. This is why the mutual suspicions between the two arms of Government cannot be neglected.

Perhaps, that is why Anyaegbunam (2010) observes that legislature in most democracies particularly Nigeria is often perceived by the executive as overstepping her Constitutional boundaries in the performance of her oversight duties. This, the Executive often sees as hindering the government from speedily meeting the needs of the public. He notes further that the legislature on the other hand, being the constitutionally ordained watchdog of the people, views the frustration of her investigative role, as a direct affront to the people's mandate. Thus, the legislature sees the Executive's uncooperative attitude as a denial of the citizens' right to be acquainted with the executives' activities. This cycle of mutual suspicion usually degenerates into a frosty relationship between both arms of government.

According to Anyaegbunam (2010), this experience in most countries has established three patterns of relationship. The first pattern of Legislative-Executive relations according to him is the polarized relationship which is a kind of worrisome antagonistic relationship between the Executive and the Legislature. The second nature of Legislative-Executive relations is the cordial relationship.

In this type of relation, according to Anyaegbunam (2010), Executive-Legislative disagreements over policies are resolved through healthy and mutual understanding. This mostly occurs when Legislative Assemblies lost their Constitutional oversight role to the overwhelming influence of the Executive, thereby hampering the necessary checks and balances which should aid the social, economic and political well-being of the masses. The third pattern of Executive-Legislative relations is the mild hostility. This is a kind of mild and inconsistent hostility short of outright antagonism between the Executive and the legislature.

Using the present regime at the Federal level as a case study, the policy direction of the Executive; it is alleged, have mostly been directed towards act of nepotism, especially in the area of appointment of senior officials like Service Chiefs, Heads of Government Agencies and parastatals; mis-management of economic resources, leading to alarming inflations and poverty

level; insecurity here and there, which makes it very difficult for farmers to go to their farms for cropping to feed their families and a host of others. How then can the well-being of the masses be achieved?

The Judiciary

Although, the Judiciary as the third arm of government, is in existence both during democracy and military era, its functions at the two different periods vary. In the era of democracy, the Judiciary operates with the provisions of the Constitution whereas it operates with Decrees under the military regime.

Section 6 sub- sections 1-3; of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (F.R.N) stipulates some powers of the Judiciary as follows:

- a. The judicial powers of the Federal shall be vested in the courts to which the section relates, being courts established for the federation.
- b. The judicial powers of a State shall be vested in the courts to which this section relates, being courts established, subjects as provided by this Constitution, for a State.
- c. The courts to which this section relates, established by this Constitution for the Federation and for the States, specified in subsection (5) (a) to (i) of this section shall be the only superior courts of record in Nigeria; and save as otherwise prescribed by the National Assembly or by the House of Assembly of a State, each court shall have all the powers of a superior court of record.

Judiciary is the hope of the common man in the society in the time of Democracy. It can correct both the Legislature and the Executive if any of them goes contrary to the provisions of the constitution or existing laws. This is some of the ways the judiciary can bring about good governance that can in turn engender well-being of the citizens.

However, this can only be found in a government that observes the rule of law. A situation where an accused is granted bail and government insists that he or she should not be released; a situation where an accused is granted bail and the security agencies re-arrest him in the premises of the court, how can one explain that?

If all the provisions of the constitution in terms of the role of the three arms of government in bringing about good governance are implemented effectively, the well-being of the citizens would have been adequately taken care of, but the question is whether what we are seeing on ground now is up to 30% success of what is prescribed above by the Constitution that will engender citizen's well-being.

It should be pointed out that Nigeria, being a Federation, anything we have at the Federal level is also there at the State level except those that are under exclusive legislative list and except

that the National Assembly is Bi-cameral -- the Senate and House of Representatives - while that of the State is Uni-cameral -- the House of Assembly. While we have the President as the head of the Federal Executive, we have Governors as the heads of the State Executives, and while we have the Chief Judge of the Federation as the Head of the Federal Judiciary, the State Chief Judge is the Head of the State Judiciary.

Theoretical Framework

Structural Functional Theory

This study is guided by structural functional theory as its framework of analysis. According to Lucas (2007), structural functional theory, otherwise known as functionalism, holds that the society is best understood as a complex system with various interdependent parts that work together to increase stability. Although, the label, structural functional, according to same scholars, has subsumed multiple perspectives, there are a few basic elements that generally hold for all functionalists approaches in sociology: social system are composed of interconnected parts; the parts of a system can be understood in terms of how each contributes to meeting the needs of the whole.

The National and State Assemblies, the Executive as well as the Judiciary should all work together to ensure that good governance is enthroned for the well-being of the citizens of Nigeria.

Hypotheses:

- The President of Nigeria since 2015 has not been administering this country with fairness, equity, rule of law and other indices of good governance as pointed out earlier in “Introduction” that could bring about well-being of the citizens.
- The conflictual relationship between the executive and legislature impacts negatively on good governance and well-being of the citizens within the pre and post Covid-19 period.
- The executive unduly interferes with the legislative and judicial processes in such a way that their contributions to good governance that could engender well-being of the citizens within the pre and post Covid-19 Period is jeopardized.

Research Design

Research design, according to Nworgu (2006) is a plan or blueprint which specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analyzed. A study that explains or describes events will use survey method and that which will establish cause effect relationship will use experimental design. In the opinion of Nwanna (1974) and Anikpo (1986), research design specifies a number of decisions which need to be taken regarding the collection of data before the data are collected; it is a plan or structure of any aspect of the research procedure. According to Akuezilo (1990), research design is a blueprint which determines the nature and scope of study carried out or proposed and it is the structuring of the investigation aimed at identifying variables and their relationship to one another. It is used for the purpose of obtaining data to enable the researcher test hypotheses or answer research questions. The researcher employed survey design in order to carry out investigation on the issues raised in the hypotheses and analyze the data accordingly.

Method of Data Collection

Documentary method otherwise referred to as secondary source of data collection was used in collecting data for this study. According to Bailey cited by Mogalakwe (2006), the use of documentary method refers to analysis of documents that contain information about the phenomenon we wish.

Discussion

After the content analysis of the data collected through secondary source, it was discovered that although Nigeria is running a democratic government yet the good governance that can engender the well-being of the masses within the pre and post Covid-19 period is still at its low ebb. This is because:

1. The executive which is supposed to rule the country with the provisions of the Constitution and laws made by the National Assembly for well-being of the citizens, it was alleged, is not being fair in the distribution of the common wealth of the nation; appointments, especially those of Service Chiefs, and heads of parastatals and agencies; corruption /mismanagement of economic resources; thereby causing inflation and poverty in the land; insecurity in almost every part of the country.
2. The conflictual relationship between the executive and the legislature in most cases is one of the major challenges to the good governance and well-being of the citizens.

3. Executive interferences in the legislative and judicial processes thereby making the two arms 'rubber stamp' impact negatively on good governance and well-being of the citizens. A situation where the Chief Justice of the Federation was removed in office by the executive with impunity is a clear example of none observance of the rule of law.

Conclusion

Good governance is what everybody expects to witness in a presidential democracy and well-being of the citizens is the hallmark of every democracy. That is why some scholars define democracy as "government of the people by the people and for the people" Unfortunately, the well-being of the citizens is far from being met within the pre and post Covid-19 period because from the content analysis of data collected, there is no good governance in Nigeria as from 2015 till date as expected by the people.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as the means of bringing about good governance and ultimately engender well-being of the citizens of Nigeria:

1. The executive which is responsible for the governance of the country should rule with fairness and equity in distributing appointments of Service Chiefs and Heads of Federal Government Agencies and Parastatals; fight corruption genuinely and ensure prudent management of the financial resources to reduce inflation and poverty for the well-being of every Nigerian; fight insecurity in every part of the country.
2. There should be harmonious relation between the executive and the legislature when necessary in order to keep the machinery of government moving and provide good governance that can bring about the well-being of the masses of this country.
3. The executive in particular should desist from undue interferences in legislative and judicial processes so that they can play their constitutional role freely in contributing to good governance that will engender well-being of the citizens.

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