

The Nigeria Youths and Good Governance

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Abstract: This paper was an exploration of good governance and the Nigerian youths. By examining the extent to which Nigeria youths can ensure good governance. The research methodology was essentially exploratory and therefore, depended on secondary data for the examination of issues surrounding the Nigerian youths and good governance. The drive in good governance with the Nigerian youths arose out of the continued nature and outcry of unemployment, marginalization, hunger and corruption that have eaten deep into the veins of our leaders. Which has attracted many conferences, workshops and dialogues about the future of the Nigerian youths and generation yet to come. The paper explored good governance and found it to comprise four essential elements-free and fair election, citizen participation, accountability and transparency and security. Using system theory to analyze the problem discovered that when the youths fail in their roles, as engine of good governance, especially during election there is the tendency that Nigeria will continue to wallow in the militating situation. We recommend that the youth should stand and face these ills once and for all through massive political participation in sincerity and bear in mind that development does not just come easy but entails pains and sacrifices therefore, no to bribery and corruption, the youths should join various civil society groups, pressure groups and cultivate the values necessary for good governance.

Key words: Good governance, the youths, system theory, transparency and accountability, corruption and free and fair election.

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I. INTRODUCTION

We cannot deny the fact that Nigeria is a developing nation facing and associated with attributes of underdevelopment such as corruption, high level of unemployment, regional and ethnic marginalization, ineffective and inefficient service delivery, hunger and poverty among others. Achebe (1983:1) in his work opined that “the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership”. This implies that for good governance to take place there must be good leadership in the country. But what then constitute good leadership would be told later as the truth is not far from the sky. Continue with Achebe as cited in Izuke (2010:75) “there was nothing wrong with the Nigeria character, land, climate, air or anything else, including money. Despite the Nigerian oil booms in 1970s, Nigeria is still performing at a lower level rungs of the ladder of national development as a result of bad leadership (Nduka, 2006). Obasanjo administration “in realization of messy situation, introduced some measures and institutions aimed at achieving good governance in Nigeria. They are;

- ❖ Due process
- ❖ Fiscal responsibility Act (2007)
- ❖ The public procurement Act (2007)
- ❖ The independent corrupt practices commission (ICPC)
- ❖ Economic and financial crimes commission (EFCC).

The truth cannot be hidden under the sun, ever since these measures have been put in place, how many Nigerians who embezzled public fund have been put to jail? And stolen funds recovered towards empowering the youth? Nigeria claimed that achieving good governance is through budget process, where ministries, departments and agencies are expected to defend their budget proposals before select committees. What about the issue of padding in budget process? Has anyone been brought to court in regard to that? Therefore, good governance can be better appreciated when the Nigerian youths sincerely takeover and show full interest in the

act of governance. Good governance comprises four major but interrelated elements, free and fair election, citizen participation, security, transparency and accountability.

When the citizen participate, we can rightly say that there is evidence of accountability, and transparency is the outcome of accountability (Izueke, 2010:76). Onyishi(2010:28) asserts that “without good governance security of life and property will not be maintained. In the same line Carsten(2005:7) asserts that “without good governance, trust will belacking between a government and those whom it governs. The result will be social and political instability and environment that is less conducive for economic growth and development”.

This paper is therefore, to explore the extent to which Nigeria youths can ensure good governance in the country.

Problem Statement

The drive in good governance and the Nigerian youths is that the Nigerian youths are not participative enough in the act of governance and the system is not as well helping matter. Nigerian youths remained at the aboriginal state of being which has cut short their sight from envisaging what the current situation may bring in the future. Youths are mostly known as agents of change due to their high level of interaction with information and communication technology (ICT). Youths when allowed and given the opportunity to take over the governance can still do well and ensure good governance. Based on International practice for example in Australia, any person 18 years of age may run for election to public offices at Federal, State or Local Level. The youngest ever member of House of Representatives was 20 years old Wyatt Roy, elected in the 2010, alter the electoral act 1918 and was amended to reduce the age of Candidacy for that office from 21 to 18. In United State of America people who are younger than the minimum age requirements deliberately run for office in protest of the requirement. In 1934, Rush Holat of West Virginia was elected to the Senate of the united State at the age of 29. Since the US constitution requires Senators to be at least 30. Even though Holt was forced to wait until he is 30 (Muhammad and Ibrahim, 2018). In Malaysia, any citizen of 21 years or older can become a candidate and be elected to the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Undangan Negeri. 30 is the minimum age requirement of the Senator. Malaysia is considering lowering age of the candidacy to 18 since 2015.

However, Nigeria introduced “*Not Too Young to Rule*” what we may call change in disguise. In Nigeria the “*Not too young to rule*” towards bringing the youth in the act of governance to me has some question marks. In life one thing begets the other. Can the so called Not too young to rule be achieved when the form for contesting to these political posts are not made affordable. Where an average youth cannot afford. This posed the researchers with the question on whether “*Not Too Young to Rule*” is really made to benefit the youth or for the elites in disguise.

Against this points that the paper seeks to explore the Nigerian youths and good governance and ask the following research questions;

Research questions:

1. What is good governance and who are the youths?
2. What is the cost of contesting for political offices such as; the Presidential office, the senate, House of Representative and State House of Assembly using People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC) as examples? And
3. What role can the youths play to ensure good governance?

The aim of this paper is to provide answers to these questions by exploring the extent to which Nigeria youths can ensure good governance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Good governance

The concept of good governance has been used by some authors to mean different things. The concept is mostly used when development is a matter of concern. This posed many authors with the question of what can be justified as a good governance. Attempt is made here to clearly explain what a true good governance should look like. Before jumping inside the water to swim we have to check the depth of the river. Therefore, what then is governance? Governance is defined as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels (Izueke, 2010: 77). It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences (UNDP, 1997 as quoted by Izueke, 2010). According to Onyishi (2010), governance is conventionally associated with politics and art of statecraft at varying levels of analysis- the nation states, sub-national units, local governments etc. Onyishi continued that governance is a process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. UNESCAP (2011) encapsulated the concept to be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and

local governance. However, good governance is a process of executing a coherent governing plan for the nation based on the interests and priorities of the people. It aims at creating a just society based on the principles of inclusiveness, liberty, equality and cooperation (Dahal, et al, 2002). According to Izueke (2007), “good governance is all about government effectiveness in full-filling their part of the social contract, empowerment of the citizens through information provision and allowing for greater Citizen Participation in decision affecting them”. According to Enyinla (2000), “good governance means accountability, security of human rights and civil liberties, devolution of powers and respect for local autonomy, which constitute a challenge to democratic regimes.

Therefore, good governance is a subjective phenomenon. Murray (2011) in a demystified way listed some of the indicators of good governance such as; trust of citizens, due process of law, efficient production and programs, democratically controlled and attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Can our leaders’ today boost of their citizens trust? That is left for them to answer. Lives and properties are no more secured. People now sleep with one eye open. The emphasis on the due process is nothing to write home about. Can there be due process when our law makers have made themselves a video clip at the National Assembly? The youths should examine that properly. Good governance according to UNESCAP (2011), Cited in Onyishi (2010:9) has eight major characteristics.

1. It is participatory:

This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand. Participation by both men and women in government is a key cornerstone of good governance. In this vein the youths should come out in mass and exercise their civic rights and responsibilities bearing in mind that good governance does not come in a vacuum.

2. It is consensus oriented:

Nigeria is multi ethnic in nature and being multi ethnic, it is often difficult for decision to be reached because the interest of various people in the society vary and good governance requires that these interests in society should be harmonized and hence the government should reach a consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole Nigerians especially the youths and how this can be achieved.

3. Emphasis on accountability:

Accountability according to Abubakar(2010), is the responsibility to account for stewardship to an authority or the people. Accountability is very important be it in private or public organization. Accountability may imply that the regularity and the efficiency of the use of public funds, including their own actions and activities are in line with the constitution and the civil service rules. Patton (1992) argued that, accountability implies the need to report both financial and non-financial information. Financial information is in the form of existing financial statements and non-financial information could be reported using exploratory narratives. The United States Government Accounting Standard Board (GASB) Concept Statement No. 1 states that, government financial reports should be able to assist users in assessing accountability and making economic, social and political decisions (Patton, 1992). It is important to state here that every person who controls public/private fund or properties must be able to account for the use of such fund or properties entrusted on his care for continuity in governance to be ensured. This posed me with the question of, how many of our political leaders can account for their stewardship? What are the youths doing to that effect? It is high time the youths stood and say no to unaccountability for a better generation to come.

4. Emphasis on transparency

We refer to good governance as practice that has to do with decisions taken and enforced in accordance with stipulated rules and regulations. Onyishi stated that “transparency is seen when information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. In a similar line Abubakar (2010), stated that “transparency is openness, and adherence to due process. He further stated that transparency ensures that information is readily available which can be used to measure the authority’s performance, and guide against any possible misuse of power. Transparency is not left for the government alone. The youths must also be transparent by the way and manner they are used to carry out some societal but political ills.

5. It is responsive

Good governance should ensure that public institutions and processes serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe. When the youths do not feel the impact of the government we can rightly say that the public institutions are not responsive.

6. It is effective and efficient

Good governance here implies that institutions make the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance covers the sustainable use of natural resources.

7. It ensures equitability and inclusiveness

Good governance requires that all equal people should be treated equally and unequal unequally. Again, all members of the society must be made to feel that they have a stake in governance and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires the inclusiveness of all groups, particularly, the minority groups in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria.

8. It follows the rule of law:

For law enforcement to be impartial there should be judicial independent, full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities and an impartial and incorruptible police force should be protected. Other indicators of good governance are;

1. Free and fair election

Election can be free and fair when political crises such as war, electoral rigging and other electoral malpractices are absent during and after election. That is to say that there is peaceful atmosphere during and after election.

2. Security

Security of life and property of every nation is a very paramount issue that cannot be overemphasized. That is why the security issue is one of the exclusive functions of the federal government in some nations. Efforts have been made by successive regimes to secure life and property. Notwithstanding, income disparities, high level of unemployment, increasing poverty, and other social vices caused by massive rural-urban drift leading to business fraud, drug abuse, ritual killing cultism, and inter-ethnic and religious unrest call for growing concern about the level of uncertainty and insecurity in many parts of Nigeria (Onyishi, 2010:28). In effort to ameliorate the insecurity, government has taken enormous efforts to check the insecurity question in Nigeria. The following but not limited to these, are the agencies; ICPC, EFCC, NAFDAC, police and other para-military agencies. More need to be done to ensure sustainable good government.

Nigerian youths and good governance

A lot of definitions have been given about who a youth is. Youth is defined as “the passage from a dependent childhood to independent adulthood” when young people are in transition between a world of rather secure development to a world of choice and risk (Eurostat 2009: p. 17). The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. The meaning of the term ‘youth’ varies in different societies around the world. When the General Assembly, by its resolution 50/81 in 1995, adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond, it reiterated that the United Nations defined youth as the age cohort of 15-24. The Commonwealth defines youth as 15-29 years of age. The African Youth Charter defines youth as “any individual between 15-35 years of age and seeks to resolve longstanding debates about defining youth within the African context and based on Africa’s development realities. “The Nigerian National Youth Policy defines youth as anyone between the age of 18 and 35. This is contrary to the global trend as it excludes those between 15- 17.

It can be seen that there is no clear-cut definition of who exactly young person is, since youth presents a very heterogeneous category with various social, economic, cultural and educational backgrounds, interests, challenges and needs. Thus, finding a commonly accepted definition of youth is quite a challenging task. Age could be a useful, but insufficient indication to characterize the transition to adulthood. So far, age distinction has been mostly considered as prevailing approach in defining youth, but we should not undermine the fact that social status and life situations may also play a role.

Nigeria’s total population in 2016 was projected to be 193,392,517 (NpopC July 2017, cited in Jega, 2017). Youth population was estimated at 61,306,413 or 31.7% of the total population. This is one of the highest percentages of youth in any country. In 2012, using National Population Commission’s (NpopC) projections, Nigeria was said to have a population of 167 million. Half of 50% of these were said to be youth in the age category of 15 - 34 years (Akande, 2014). Nigeria is said to have the largest youth population in the world within the framework of this definition, with a figure of 33.652 million. Also, 2012 statistics suggest that 11 million youth were unemployed (Jega, 2017).

From the above data we can rightly see that good governance can be achieved when the youths show full political participation especially during election process in sincerity and honesty and bad governance respectively because they constitute highest population in the country.

Nevertheless, Jega (2017) in his paper presentation at the department of political science Bayero University Kano, posited that “there is a disjuncture between the old, the middle aged and the youth, in the sense of lack of appropriate and serious platforms for solidarity, engagement and dialogue. It hasn’t always been this bad. In the First Republic, the founding fathers ensured unity of purpose, empowered the youth, mentored them, carried them along and involved them appropriately. For example, the Enahoros, the MaitamaSules, all became prominent politicians, Federal/Regional Ministers, etc., as youth”. Furthermore, it is very important that we are reminded of our past leaders who lived a life of impact. Among them are the likes of Mt Mbu who became Foreign Affairs Minister at 23 and the first Nigeria chief Representative in USA, Washington Dc between 1959-1960. Also, Pat Utomi became a Federal Adviser at 27. Let us think on how to make the future better than killing our future by ourselves. The table below shows some Africans who were leaders at their youthful age.

Youngest Presidents in Africa

SN	Names of the Leaders	Age	Country
1.	Joseph Kabila	44	D.R Congo
2.	Mswatti iii	47	Swaziland
3.	Faire Gnassingbe	49	Togo
4.	Adam Barrow	50	Gambia
5.	Pierre Nkurunziza	51	Burundi
6.	MackySall	54	Senegal
7.	Uhurukenyata	54	Kenya
8.	ALI BangoOndimba	56	Gabon
9.	John Dramanimahama	57	Ghana

Source: www.nigerianbulletin.com December 18, 2015
 www.aljazeera.com/news/2017 January 26, 201

Youngest Leaders in the World

SN	Names of the Leaders	Age	Year of Declaration	Country
1.	Emmanuel Macron	39	2017	France
2.	Saleh Ali Al-Samad	38	2016	Yemen
3.	ErilDimitriev	38	2016	Macedonia
4.	JigmeKhesarNamgyel	37	2006	Kingdom of Bhutan
5.	Tamim Bin HamadAlthani	36	2013	Qatar
6.	Kim Jing Un	34	2011	D.P of Korea
7.	VanessDambrosio	29	2017	San Marino, Europe

Source:(Muhammad and Ibrahim, 2018).

But, why has the system changed today? The next heading will provide an answer to that.

Youth and corruption

Many studies indicated that the 18-30 year age group accounts for most crimes in almost all societies in Nigeria (Igbo, 2007:73). This is the youthful age when young men and women are full of energy and always on the look-out for excitement and trouble. At this stage, the psychology of the youths are understood by the politicians coupled with the level of unemployment in the country, so material gifts become a weapon for some politicians.

Also, the Nigeria state is characterized by prebendalism. This is a situation where public office is held first, for the interest of the officer and second for the interest of the public (Izueke, 2010:85). Some political leaders now use government funds to sponsor the hungry youths just for their political ambitions to be achieved. This is mostly seen during election period. Aluko (2003) observed that collusion is a powerful tool of corruption. Aluko identified the following forms of collusion that are common in Nigeria.

- I. Collusion between supervisory ministries and local government chairmen
- II. Collusion with citizens especially the youths who benefit from the thieving public officers
- III. Collusion with contractors to inflate prices or quotations.

The practice of sharing 5000 naira per a youth and multiple registration cards during election by some party groups have deteriorated the system from ensuring good governance. Votes are now bought instead of exercised. Some youths have turned themselves to thugs and assassins because the bathing water is dirty therefore, the baby should be thrown away with it. That will not solve the problem. We cannot keep living in a future that does not recognize humanity. Now that preparation for the 2019 general elections is gathering

momentum, are we still going to sell our votes for naira? The theoretical perspective of this paper can explain more on this issue.

Theoretical Perspective

The framework of analysis adopted for this study is the **Systems theory**. The Society for General Systems Research specifically catalyzed systems theory as an area of study, which developed following the World Wars from the work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Anatol Rapoport, Kenneth E. Boulding, William Ross Ashby, Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, C. West Churchman and others in the 1950s (Beven, 2006). **System theory** is the interdisciplinary study of systems. A system is a cohesive conglomeration of interrelated and interdependent parts that is either natural or man-made. Every system is delineated by its spatial and temporal boundaries, surrounded and influenced by its environment, described by its structure and purpose or nature and expressed in its functioning. In terms of its effects, a system can be more than the sum of its parts if it expresses synergy or emergent behavior.

Changing one part of the system usually affects other parts and the whole system, with predictable patterns of behavior. For systems that are self-learning and self-adapting, the positive growth and adaptation depend upon how well the system is adjusted with its environment. Some systems function mainly to support other systems by aiding in the maintenance of the other system to prevent failure. The goal of systems theory is systematically discovering a system's dynamics, constraints, and conditions and elucidating principles (purpose, measure, methods, tools, etc.) that can be discerned and applied to systems at every level of nesting. It distinguishes dynamic or active systems from static or passive systems (Paolo, 2000).

The system here becomes active when the youths use their constitutional rights to make the whole work well and passive when the youths abandoned their roles in the society such as social roles, physical roles, psychological, political, economic and even existential roles towards a better tomorrow to arm robbery, gambling, fraud, drunkenness, embezzlement, vandalism, destruction of property such as throwing stones at car windscreens and glasshouses, destruction of personal and public property etc. The future of Nigeria is totally dependent on what we do or don't do as youths. A part in the system is faulty because adequate provision for youth to participate is lacking. Saraki supported that in his speech "**Youth Inclusiveness a key to good governance development**" is a panacea to achieving peaceful societies, however, where injustice, poverty and lack of political will for reform are paramount, political engagement and inclusiveness of youth will achieve very little or none at all. Statistics have it that youths in Nigeria constitute more than 60 percent of the voting population and they deserve to be properly represented in the government, both at the local, state and federal levels. Unfortunately, it is not so because when you look at those appointed by President Muhammadu Buhari into the cabinet, almost all of them are old men. It was also disappointing in the board appointments announced by President Buhari in which the younger generations were not properly represented in the appointments. Let us also look at some of our political party's nomination form like APC and PDP to see how accommodating they are. As nothing will be far from the truth.

A Look at Some Parties Participation Form (Election)

The APC fixed its presidential nomination form at N40 million and expression of interest form at N5 million. For governorship, the nomination form is N20 million and expression of interest is N2.5 million. For the Senate, the nomination form costs N7 million while the expression of interest costs N1 million. Cost of form for House of Representatives aspirants is N3.5 million and the expression of interest form, N350, 000. House of Assembly is N750, 000 for nomination form and N100, 000 for expression of interest.

The People's Democratic Party, PDP, too was reported to have also fixed a fee of N2 million for expression of interest form for the presidential aspirants, while the nomination forms costs N10 million for its presidential aspirants. For PDP governorship, the nomination form and expression of interest is N6 million. This is a sharp contrast to that of APC. The PDP House of Representatives and the state House of Assembly cost N2.5 million and N600, 000 respectively (<http://saharareporters.com/2018/06/17>).

We can see clearly how exorbitant the forms are and an average youth cannot afford to contest for these posts. Thereby, leaving the system to continue with the tradition we met it. The fact about the whole issues is that the old people are the one who have the money to use the hungry youths in the street to manipulate and cause certain societal crises to the detriment of the youths. Until, these political party's form is regulated and made affordable and the youths realize the need to ensure good governance for a better tomorrow that the country will embrace sustainable development and good governance at large.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This conceptual paper is based solely on a review and analysis of research and data from the literature. Therefore, was essentially exploratory research and depended on secondary data from Google search engine,

newspapers, and documentaries for the examination of issues surrounding the Nigerian youths and good governance. The researcher uses system theory to underpin the study. Terms such as accountability, good governance, transparency and free and fair election were used, and enormous amount of information was found. Information on good governance by, Onyishi (2010) proved promising. Literature from Izueke (2010) and Abubakar (2010) on accountability was used to add value to the research. The most helpful piece of literature was Jaga (2017) which said that “there is a disjuncture between the old, the middle aged and the youth, in the sense of lack of appropriate and serious platforms for solidarity, engagement and dialogue.

The way forward

Based on our discussion so far on the issues surrounding the youths and good governance. The following are therefore, deemed fit to ensure good governance by both the youths and the government.

1. Appointment of the youth into government positions as commissioners, Advisers and even as ministers from age 27-35. Contemporary, youths are digitalized. This will greatly add value and ensure good governance.
2. Contest for an elective post: youths should be empowered to contest for elective post since the Nigerian youth policy reads age from 18-35 years. Supports here may be in form of finance, advice from the government, other non-governmental agencies and even among the fellow youths other supports can be by vote since the youth has the highest population. This was supported by Senate President Abubakar Bukola Saraki, on 27th September (2017), when he said “that giving young persons the opportunity to partake in leadership was crucial to good governance and economic development”.
3. Civil groups like civil society, anti-corrupt club, Young African leadership Initiative (YALI) and others. This will help to speed up the change and bring back sustainable good governance.
4. The age qualification which was reduced by National Assembly for running Public offices to as low as 25 years should not just end as agreed but be incorporated in the constitution.
5. Youths should hold their leaders accountable for whatsoever action they portray only when they have sincerely done their part during election and after.
6. Every fight must always go with weapons therefore, the youth should ensure that they have their voters’ card ready and sound for every election.
7. The various civil groups in Nigeria should ensure that the Federal government strive hard to implement all AU resolutions / decisions for youth engagement, empowerment and employment, which it is a signatory to. In particular, the Resolution of the AU Summit of heads of States, which required member states to endeavor to reduce youth unemployment by 2% per year from 2009 - 2018, should be resolutely implemented, through vigorous schemes of employment generation.
8. The youths should massively join the party with affordable nomination fees, this will greatly give them room for emerging as leaders.

IV. CONCLUSION

We have explored the tenets of good governance in Nigeria and cited government efforts to ensure good governance. We have also stated where the youths have faulted in the governance. We now state that the Nigerian youth have a challenge in their hands for the future of our country. They should not sit down and fold their hands and be lamenting over bad leadership. Bad governance is not only caused by the leaders the youths also have a big hands to that. “Enough of a political system that accepts the votes of young Nigerians every election year, pay them peanuts as political thugs and consultants during elections, discard them after elections and keep them in the waiting rooms and corridors of government offices for the next four years, is not acceptable. Good governance in this country can and will be ensured only when the youths are sincere and participate faithfully especially during election and this requires individual sacrifices. As nothing good comes easy so as development comes with pains and sacrifices.

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