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## **GOOD GOVERNANCE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**ABSTRACT:** The quest for good governance has long been the desire of Nigerians. Without good governance, there would be no accountability and transparency, rule of law and popular participation and engagement in Nigerian democratic governance. And these are very fundamental for national development. The study examines the nexus between good governance and national development in Nigeria and it submits that good governance offers the best prospects for national development. The paper adopts qualitative methodology and utilizes content analysis in the analysis of data. The study uses common good theory and establishes that the effort for national development in Nigeria has mostly because the principles of good governance such as accountability and transparency, rule of law, popular participation and consultation have been grossly undermined and thwarted. The paper concludes that the hope and assurance for national development in Nigeria rests in promoting good governance through the principles of transparency and accountability, rule of law, popular participation and consultation.

**Keywords:** Good Governance, National Development, Common Good.

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most pernicious features of most African countries like Nigeria is distrust of many citizens in public authority. More often than not, many government officials often treat their offices as private fiefs, with little or no regard to public accountability and transparency. The neglect to the rule of law and de-emphasis on the people's participation and engagement have remained evident in Nigerian governance. All these manifestations are largely the outcome of absence of good governance and people oriented leadership. This has put the development of Nigeria in doubt. Records show as Adenugba (2013) observes, that most countries who have made significant progress and development achieved it on the basis of good governance, hence it has become so imperative that the international community and institutions have began to include it as part of the conditionalities for providing assistance in development countries such as Nigeria. In this reasoning, Belfut, Jurji and Olusegun, (2016) write that good governance is a precondition for moving the country forward and also transforming its immense potentials into reality.

The study of Nigeria shows that from 1999 till date, there has been immense optimism about the prospects for good governance. This same optimism motivated the successive governments in Nigeria to carry out some reforms and put some institutions in place to

guarantee for good governance and national development. But this has not happened. Indeed, lack of good governance has grossly undermined the efforts towards actualization of national development. Ogundiya (2010) and Omodia (2013 cited in Ezeani, 2017), remark that lack of good governance is one of the major factors that has undermined economic development and popular trust in government, as well as subverted transparency, accountability and the rule of law. This is corroborated by Ani (2009 cited in Ani, 2011) that bad governance is the bane of Nigerian development in particular and African development in general. Surely, a system that does not encourage good governance could not possibly provide for national development. Just as the former Ghanaian President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was said to have often quoted biblical injunction during the struggle for independence, “seek ye first the political kingdom and everything shall be added unto you”, Nigerians should seek good governance first and national development shall immediately follow.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A nation that is not committed to good governance will hardly record significant national development. In this token, it is axiomatic to say that good governance is a precondition for the entire development of Nigeria. However, it is often observed that lack of transparency and accountability, pervasion of the rule of law and gross neglect to the popular participation and engagement are evident in Nigerian public service; these impacts negatively in the Nigerian polity. It frustrates efforts towards national development, increase distrust in the leadership by the people as well as undermines the common good of the people. Hence, the question that agitates the minds of Nigerians is: how can Nigeria attain good governance and be able to use it for the realization of national development?

On the basis of the above, this study aims at ascertaining the nexus between good governance and national development in Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Framework**

It is pertinent to appreciate what governance entails for a thorough understanding of good governance.

**Governance** means the process of exercising power and decision making for a group of people at different levels. For Wali (cited in Oshionebo, 2004, p. 219), governance is the use of political authority and exercise of control over a society and the management of its resources. “It is the exercise of power and authority – political, economic, administrative etc to manage group’s resources and affairs” (Downer, 2002). It is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development.

One important lesson from the definitions above is that governance involves the exercise of authority, decision making and management of resources. Beyond that, the International Monetary Fund (2017, p. 1) views it as covering “the various institutions, mechanisms and established practices through which a country exercises governmental authority, discharges

its responsibilities and manages its policies”. Similarly, Saminu (2018, p.4) writes that governance includes all those activities which are connected with governing a country or a state. It relates to decision making that describes expectation of citizens, how power is being dispensed or practiced, what process the people follow for verification of performance as well as leadership process. It is based on authority, responsibility, influence and accountability.

Governance as Graham, Amos and Plumptre (2003) put it entails the traditions, institutions and process that determine how power is exercised, how citizens are given a voice and how decisions are made on issues of public concern. It is therefore important to note from the foregoing definitions that governance connotes the processes and activities which include the governing of a state and the exercise of power and authority and decision making. It also entails management of economic resources, the role of leadership and the institutions of the state and service delivery.

With the knowledge of the above, good governance is a system of governance based on good leadership, respect for the rule of law and due process, accountability of the political leadership to the electorate as well as transparency in operations of government” (Odock, 2006, p. 3). For Nnoli (cited in Okoroafor, 2013, p. 28), it is: “one in which the rulers exercise power according to the principles of transparency and accountability, justice and equity and respect for the dignity of man .... It entails respect to the rule of law, ensuring the security of the people, protecting their rights and securing their welfare”.

It is implied from the above that the bedrock of good governance are rule of law, accountability and transparency, rule of law and the welfare of the people. Kwaghga and Echikwuonye (2018, p. 135) summarizes that the ultimate aim of good governance is to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to select groups in society. What this suggests is that good governance is driven by common interest and good of the people. As acknowledged by Aristotle states as Okoroji (2011, p. 65) records that, “a good governance focuses on the interest of the community at large, and a bad governance is one which seeks out private interest rather than that of the whole society. When a government is functioning right, it governs for the common good of all the people. Good governance is good leadership. It is people oriented and inspired. It is driven by the common good and seeks the people’s welfare and wellbeing” (Okere & Okoroafor, 2018, p. 126).

It is important to note that good governance is not about forms of government, but the result of governance. It is neither the process nor course of a political rule nor a mode of polity or a procedural arrangement but about effective and productive government which must have substantial impact in the lives of the people (Ayatse, Onaga & Ogoh, 2013). Put differently, good governance is concerned with the realization of common good and welfare of the people.

Besides, the universal components of good governance were summarized by the UNDP (2002, p. 2) as participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus oriented,

equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability. The meanings of these components are expanded below:

**Table 1: Features of good governance and their meanings**

1	Participation	Citizen's participation and consultation, collective decision making process.
2	Rule of law	Legal domination, legitimate authority and constitutionalization
3	Transparency	Openness, observance of rules and regulation
4	Responsiveness	Serving and yielding to the needs and welfare of the stakeholders.
5	Consensus oriented	Agreement of opinion, reconciliation of various interests.
6	Equity and inclusiveness	Fairness, justice, opportunities to all
7	Effectiveness and efficiency	Quality service delivery, sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection.
8	Accountability	Answerability, responsibility, scrutiny and probity.

Source: Okere and Okoroafor (2018).

### **National Development**

The literature on what constitutes development and national development is robust. Todaro (1982, p. 406-407), writing as a development scholar, sees development as the process of improving the quality of all human lives. He explained that the process of development is believed to be taken place when it satisfies the following important aspects of life:

- Raising peoples living level – i.e. their incomes and consumption levels of food, medical services, education etc through relevant economic growth process.
- Creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions which promote human dignity and respect, and
- Increasing people's freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables.

Similarly, the meaning of development was elaborated by The Report of the South Commission (1993 cited in Ezeanyika, 2006, p. 58) in this way:

*Development is a process of self reliant growth achieved through the participation of the people under their own interest as they see them and must be to end poverty, provide productive employment, and satisfy the basic needs of all the people, any surplus being fairly shared. This implies that the basic goods and services such as food and shelter, basic education and health facilities and clean water must be accessible to all. In addition, development*



*presupposes a democratic structure of government, together with its supporting individual freedoms of speech, organization and publication, as well as a system of justice, which protects all the people from actions inconsistent with just laws, that are known and publicly accepted.*

From the above, national development encompasses social, economic and political growth or development (Unanka, 2001). Social development deals with the presence of basic needs of life (food, clothing, education, medical services, shelter and water), elimination or reduction of poverty and unemployment. Political development focuses on increasing the people's choice, voice and participation in governance and maintaining the rule of law. The economic development on the other hand deals with raising the incomes and consumption levels of the people and equitable distribution of resources. When social, political and economic development are growing at a high level and beyond doubt, national development can therefore said to have taken place. But when the reverse is the case, it would be wrong to call the result national development.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is discussed within the framework of common good theory. Common good theory occupies space in political and social philosophy (common good)). It ultimately concerns with the welfare and interest of the people. Aristotle was considered by many as the father of common good theory and its development came through the works of political theorists and moral philosophers such as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau etc (common good).

It is important to note that the works of Aristotle, "the politics", Thomas Aquinas' "Treatise on Law" and even Plato's "Republic" pointed to the fact that the creation of the state and the objective of government was to ensure good and betterment of man (Ani, 2011, p. 57). Thus, good and betterment of man is found in the common good. Based on this premise, Aristotle distinguished the right and wrong constitutions. Aristotle averred that the right constitutions pursue common interest, while wrong constitutions are in the interest of the rulers. Still further, he argued that there is greater good in the common good than in the individual good even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state that of the state seems at all levels something greater and more complete (common good).

This theory is most germane to our study. This is because, perhaps undoubtedly, good governance pursues the common good. It is a good proper to, and attainable only by the community, yet individually shared and benefited by its members. It focuses on the benefits of the community and not of any group or individual. By this token, good governance through transparency and accountability, rules of law and citizens participation and rule of law, interplay to preserve the interest of the people which in other words referred as common good. In this light, good governance is found in common good and this is the foundation of national development.

### **Empirical Study**

Idada and Uhunmwangbo (2012) focused on the problems of democratic governance in Nigeria. The paper posited that the major challenges facing Nigeria democratic governance are lack of transparency and accountability, poor electoral system and fission of democratic powers by the executive arm of government. The paper discovered that Nigerian democracy has been wobbling and has remained a mere civilian government and not a true democratic government due to poor governance. The paper recommended among others independent electoral committee and credible electoral process, strengthening the anti-corruption agencies, separation of powers and enduring and implementation of measures and mechanisms for transparency and accountability.

Adesine (2012) argued that good governance is a panacea to Nigeria's problem. The paper further maintained that this is largely attributed to corruption, lack of people's oriented programmes and policies, corruption and disrespect to the fundamental human rights. The paper called for the promotion of people-oriented programmes, accountable leadership and preserving the human dignity.

Adenugba (2013) examined the need of good governance towards ensuring accountability in Nigeria's development dilemma. The paper argues that development can hardly take place without good governance in Nigeria. This according to the paper is because good governance makes for public accountability, rule of law and protection of fundamental human rights. The findings of the paper indicated that Nigerian leaders have not kept faith with their obligation under a democratic structure in view of the high level of corruption in leadership which is yet to be addressed. The paper recommended among others strong political and economic institutions, efficient accountable mechanisms and prudent management of natural resources.

Ibeogu and Nkwede (2016) focused on identifying the efficacy of accountability, transparency and moral ethical conduct towards ensuring good governance in Nigeria's public service in general and local government in particular. The paper maintained that accountability, transparency and sound moral ethical conducts are parts of the instruments required of public servants or officers to promote good governance in public affairs especially at the local government administration. The paper established that greed, bureaucratic corruption, financial corruption, low moral ethics and lack of transparency and public accountability are militating against effective local government and public service development in Ebonyi State. The paper concluded that a reduction in the level of financial corruption, bureaucratic corruption and improved ethical morals and values, will lead to a corresponding increase and improvement in local government administration and public service. The paper recommended reorientation in value system and adequate punishment to the corrupt public officers.

- **Good Governance and National Development**

In determining the nexus between good governance and national development, it is very pertinent to note that both are not the same. But good governance is not only essential for national development but offers the best prospects of national development in terms of ensuring transparency and accountability, rule of law as well as popular participation and engagement. Therefore, the promotion of good governance has become a pillar of development policy.

- **Good Governance and Accountability**

One of the ways through which national development could take place is through public accountability and transparency. Transparency means openness. It entails that the public office holders should be open to public inspection, investigation and scrutiny. In other words, there is no secrecy in public office as it belongs to the people and people should know from time to time what the officials and officers in public office are doing (Ogunna, 2015, p. 6). On the other hand, accountability connotes “the obligation of the administrators to give a satisfactory account of their performance and the manner in which they have exercised powers conferred on them. Its main aim is to check wrong and arbitrary administrative actions and increase efficiency and effectiveness of administrative process” (Laxinikanth, 2002, p. 193). Through the process of transparency and accountability, social, economic and national development become realistic as the public office holders are compelled to act in the best interest of the people. It is therefore this means that common good is achieved and national development is realized.

Beside, the Nigerian political scenario shows that there is poor public transparency and accountability in view of the high level of corruption in governance which is a strong indicator of bad governance (Joseph, 1990; Nnaeto & Okoroafor, 2016; Uwhejive-Togbolo, Egwara & Eze, 2016). The presence of accountability and transparency will increase government activities that can be felt particularly in the area of economic growth and development. This will in turn help to deliver social and economic goods and services to the people.

- **Good Governance and Rule of Law**

Good governance ensures the preservation of rule of law. Right from Dicey to Appadorai, rule of law implies simply the supremacy of regular law as opposed to the influence of arbitrary power, equality before the law and protection of the fundamental human rights (Appadorai, 1974). It requires that public institutions comply with laid down rules and regulations guiding their conduct, and also sees that policies and laws are made, interpreted and enforced by fair legal frameworks that are impartially as well as the protection of the fundamental human rights particularly the minority (Okoko, 2019). It is however important to note that without independent and incorruptible judiciary, the rule of law would be thwarted. The need for the rule of law in Nigeria lies on the fact that it will strengthen the adoption of constitution for enhancement of good governance.



Since 1999, Nigeria has witnessed various administrations. The preponderance of the instances of the rule of law by these different administrations has been worrisome. There are many instances of violation of the constitutional provisions and human rights. The more worrisome is the fragility of the judiciary in upholding the sanctity of the rule of law.

Rule of law therefore is the cornerstone of democratic governance and constitutes part of national development. It ensures the supremacy of law as acknowledged by John Adam, the second American President; it makes for “a government of laws, and not men” (Okoroafor, 2010). This is very indispensable as the existence of rules to guide the collective for the common good.

- **Good Governance Popular Participation and Engagement**

Good governance is a road map to democratic development as it serves as a springboard for citizen’s engagement and participation in governance. Without popular participation and engagement, democracy is void. This is because it helps to build the spirit of patriotism, solidarity and understanding among the large ethnic groups that make up Nigeria (Adekanye cited in Omoriji, 2005). However, it is morally and lawfully dangerous and subversive of the worthy objectives or goal of the social contract entered into by Nigerians where right of citizens participation and engagement is denied. Our political system was based on the proposition that government is people centred and inspired but the attitude of most public office holders show otherwise.

Unfortunately, Nigeria’s democracy works contrary to the principles of popular participation and engagement. It subverts the wishes of the people as their preferred choice of leadership is not respected. This is often expressed through rigged elections which impose candidates and leadership on the people which negates peoples participation leading to the problem of legitimacy of leadership.

Not to be forgotten is institutional participation and engagement. Good governance has the capacity of strengthening the institutions of the state (such as legislature, civil service, executive, judiciary, press, political parties etc) in a manner that they can discharge their responsibilities constitutionally without compromise (Iheanacho, 2013). In other words, it is only when the institutions of the state are stable, strong and functional that common good can be realized and national development achieved. This therefore calls for the strengthening of the institutions of government.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Nigeria is one of the most endangered and embattled nations in Africa. Since its independence in 1960, it has been struggling for good governance which is a pre-condition for national development. Nigeria’s democratic governance is driven by individuals who are self interested as opposed to common good. This is largely the reason why transparency and accountability, rule of law as well as popular participation have remained an outcry. This is the bane of national development. However, to ensure that national development and

common good of the people are realized, Nigeria needs a kind of governance that emphasizes public transparency and accountability, rule of law and popular participation and engagement.

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