
ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF ACCOUNTABILITY ON GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria, a country blessed with abundant human and natural resources, is still backward economically, politically and socially. After several years of independence and democracy, Nigeria is still struggling to attain growth and development as a result of corruption, uneven distribution of the state resources, lack of transparency, ineffective service delivery systems, lack of political determination to combat against the ills of poor governance among others. The paper is qualitative in nature and utilized secondary data to explore the impact of accountability on good governance in Nigeria. The study concludes that Nigerian has not achieve good governance as a result of corruption, abuse of due process, among others. The paper therefore recommended among others that there is the need to ensure that the basic structures of government such as the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary are made to live up to their responsibilities, the leadership must demonstrate the capacity, courage, will and sincerity of purpose in tackling the identified challenges, political leaders and public office holders must be properly educated and exhibit intellectual enormity before coming into public leadership this will enable such leaders to be able to rise above corruption and selfishness.

Keywords: Accountability, good governance, development, Nigeria

Introduction

The 1990s witnessed the emergence of poverty reduction and governance as key priorities in international development. With the failure of structural adjustments and other [classic] neo-liberal economic reform programs in reducing poverty, development theory and practice emphasized the role of a capable state for effective interaction with markets and citizens. The Asian financial crisis of 1997 further stressed the need for transparency and effective regulatory and legal frameworks for national governance. Good governance is an apparatus for development in any nation, it is the quest of nations all over the world. It is a vehicle for achieving good health, quality education, national security, consolidation of democracy, technological advancement, employment, poverty eradications among others that will bring about progress and development in a country. Nigeria, a country blessed with abundant human and natural resources, is still backward economically, politically, socially and other wise. After several years of independence and

democracy, Nigeria is still struggling with the issue of good governance. Dare, (2016) in Ogangan and Jibrin, (2019), posit that good governance secures justice, empowerment, efficient of service and empowerment, which are the focus of political change. Studies have, for instance, shown that the benefits of public health spending on child and infant mortality rates are greater in countries with better governance.

Similarly, public investments in primary education are more likely to lead to higher education attainment if governance improvements are effected (Swaroop and Rajkumar, 2002). Fagge, (2011) opined that an effective government anywhere in the globe is expected to provide justices, order, security and efficient infrastructure but Nigeria is found wanting. However, it is imperative to note that both military and civilian government has made various attempts to secure justices, empowerment, and efficient service delivery and to break loose from vicious cycle of underdevelopment. For instance operation Feed the Nation by Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1979, War Against 252 Indiscipline by Buhari's administration in 1984 and re-launched in 2016, N-Power was also launched in 2016 by Buhari's administration, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was launched in 2001 by Obasanjo's administration, Transformation Agenda 2011 by Good Luck Ebele Jonathan, Vision 20:2020, 7 Point Agenda by Musa Yaradua' and so on (Ogangan and Jibrin, 2019). World Development Report(2001) and World Bank's empowerment framework recognize accountability as an integral component of 'empowerment' and hence poverty reduction. With an increased emphasis on accountability, the concept has been defined in different ways from punishment or sanction to answerability and enforcement. A working definition of accountability describes it is a "proactive process by which public officials inform and justify their plans of action, their behavior, and results and are sanctioned accordingly" (Ackerman, 2004 in Ahmad 2008). Accountability mechanisms can broadly be classified as either 'horizontal' or 'vertical.' The former can occur internally (for example, an internal audit within a government agency) and can be among equals (for example, legislators holding each other accountable). Horizontal mechanisms occur externally and involve one party holding another accountable and therefore exercising 'superior authority' or greater power. Accountability is necessary for enhancing resourceful leadership and strengthening good governance in Nigeria. The challenges associated with achieving good governance in Nigeria will be solved when accountability is in place in the leadership space because it is a fundamental principle which serves as the foundation for good governance.

Methodology

This paper is qualitative in nature and utilized secondary sources to explore the effects of accountability on good governance in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper used articles from reputable journals, books, online articles, official reports among others.

Theoretical framework

This study adopted the “Accountability Theory” to examine the relationship between accountability and good governance in Nigeria. The theory was postulated in 1999 by Jennifer S. Lerner and Philip E. Tetlock in their endeavor to demonstrate how the perceived need to justify one's behaviors to another party causes one to consider and feel accountable for the process by which decisions and judgments have been reached. In turn, this perceived need to account for a decision-making process and outcome increases the likelihood that one will think deeply and systematically about one's procedural behaviors.

Importantly, a useful way to understand accountability is to distinguish between its two most prevalent uses: (1) as a virtue and (2) as a mechanism. As a virtue, accountability is seen as a quality in which a person displays a willingness to accept responsibility, a desirable trait in public officials, government agencies, or firms; hence, in this use, accountability is a positive feature of an entity. As a mechanism, accountability is seen as a process in which a person has a potential obligation to explain his or her actions to another party who has the right to pass judgment on the actions as well as to subject the person to potential consequences for his or her actions (Vance, Lowry, and Eggett 2013).

Accountability theory proposes several mechanisms that increase accountability perceptions. For example, “even the simplest accountability manipulation necessarily implicates several empirically distinguishable sub manipulations” (Lerner and Tetlock 1999), including the presence of another person, identifiability, and expectation of evaluation. Recent research has shown that IT design artifacts of systems can manipulate the four core components of accountability theory and thus improve employees' felt accountability toward organizational system security without disruptive interventions or training (Vance et al. 2013; 2015): (1) identifiability, (2) expectation of evaluation, (3) awareness of monitoring, and (4) social presence.

Identifiability is a person's “knowledge that his outputs could be linked to him” and thus reveal his/her true identity (Williams, Harkins and Latane 1981, p. 309)

Expectation of evaluation is the belief that one's “performance will be assessed by another [party] according to some normative ground rules and with some implied consequences” (Lerner and Tetlock 1999, p. 255).

Awareness of monitoring is a user's state of active cognition that his/her system-related work is monitored (Vance, Lowry, and Eggett 2015).

Social presence is the awareness of other users in the system (Vance, Lowry, and Eggett 2015). The theory is relevant to this study as it explains factors or mechanisms for accountability (identifiability, expectation of evaluation, awareness of monitoring, and social presence) which will in turn bring about good governance.

Conceptual Discourse

Concept of Accountability

The concept of accountability has been applied in a variety of ways. Accountability as a virtue is used as a set of standards for the evaluation of the behaviour of public actors and forms one of the key principles of modern public governance. Accountability is so crucial to development even at the group level and in the life of any nation to the extent that without it, society would perpetually remain underdeveloped. According to the public administration dictionary, accountability is a condition in which individuals who exercise power are constrained by external means and by internal norms (Chandler and Plano, 1988). The constraints engendered by these external means and internal norms could be seen as a watchdog and protective device, which helps to guide and modify the behaviour of those saddled with the responsibilities to manage governmental agencies for the good of the people in a society. Odugbemi (2008) sees accountability as the ability of citizens, civil society and the private sector to scrutinize public institutions and governments to hold them accountable. The above implies that where the opportunity to scrutinize the activities of public institutions – agencies and government is not available to the people, transparency or openness is more likely to be affected negatively and the citizens are bound to suffer from the inactions of such agencies of government. Therefore accountability and transparency on the part of public officials could be seen as catalyst for the realization of enhanced performance of governmental agencies for development in a society.

In implementing accountability within government agencies, it is necessary to consider the following principles: should ensure that the commitment and leadership of all staff of government agencies need to manage the implementation of mission to be accountable, should be a system that can ensure the use of resources consistently with applicable laws and regulations, must be able to show the level of achievement of goals and objectives that have been set. should be honest, objective, transparent and active as a catalyst for change of management of government agencies in the form of updating methods and techniques of performance measurement and accountability reporting and must be oriented towards achieving the vision and mission and the results and benefits obtained. In the course of bureaucracy, the accountability of a government agency is the embodiment of the obligation of government agencies to account for success or failure of the mission implementation of the relevant institution. (Khotomi, 2017).

Good Governance and Accountability

Good governance, as a concept is a problematic one. For one, it is value loaded and therefore subjective. The meaning attached to it may largely be a function of the intents and purposes of the analyst. Nevertheless, it remains a useful concept for

obvious reasons. The concept of good governance could be used to invite judgment about how the country concerned was being governed: it enables the raising of evaluative question about proper procedures, transparency, the quality and process of decision making, and other such matters. In fact, it helps to differentiate the professed or actual self- understanding of the ruling groups from their real causal contribution to the prosperity or misery of their subjects (Simbine, 2000). Similarly, Good governance also means accountability, security of human rights and civil liberties, devolution of powers and respect for local autonomy which all constitute a challenge to democratic regimes. More so, good governance has been closely linked to 'the extent to which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens, competent to assure law and order and deliver public services, able to create an enabling policy environment for productive activities; and equitable in its conduct (Landell-Mill and Seragelden, in Simbine, 2000).The World Bank has offered a more comprehensive explanation of good governance. It defines 'governance' as "the means by which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" and 'good governance' as synonymous with "sound development management" (Potter, 2000). It encompasses a broad sphere of public sector management; accountability; legal framework for development (reforms); information and technology; the legitimacy of government; the competence of governments to formulate appropriate policies, make timely decisions; implement them effectively and deliver services (Potter 2000). The concept of governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. Government is one of the actors in governance. Other actors may include landlords, corporations, NGOs, research institutions, religious leaders, financial institutions, political parties, the military etc. Other actors other than government and the military are grouped together as part of the civil society (UN ESCAP, Undated).

Good governance is about the distribution of political power and means. It means inclusion of women and other marginalized groups. Good governance may also require shifts in power (Anna, 2004). In the views of Igbuzor (2009), good governance entails the respect for the rule of law, ensuring effective delivery of public goods and services, participation of all men and women in decision making process, institutional effectiveness and accountability. Good governance has also been defined by Ilufoye (2010), as the process of allocating resources through the instrumentalities of the state, for the attainment of public good. Thus, good governance includes institutional and structural arrangements, decision making processes, policy formulation and implementation capacity, development of personnel, information flows and the nature and style of leadership within a political system. Hence, governance is largely about problem identification and solving. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001), good governance has eight major characteristics. It is participatory; consensus

oriented; accountable; transparent; responsive; effective and efficient; equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in the society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of the society (OECD, 2001). These characteristics are further discussed as follows:

Participation: Participation is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand.

Rule of law: Good governance requires fair legal framework that is enforced impartially. It also requires full protections of human right, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary, an impartial and incorruptible police force, as well as patriotic Armed Forces.

Transparency: This means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media.

Responsiveness: good governance requires that institutions and processes serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame

Consensus oriented: there are several actors and as such, many view points in a given society. Good governance requires mediations of different interests in society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole community and how this can be achieved. It also requires a broad and long-term perspective on what is needed for sustainable human development and how to achieve the goals of such development. This can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural and social context of a given society or community. **Equity and inclusiveness:** A society's well-being depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable to have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

Effectiveness and efficiency: Good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.

Accountability: Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only

governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. Who is accountable to who varies depending on whether decisions or action taken are internal or external to an organization or institution. In general, an organization or an institution is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law. In many countries, the decline in public confidence in government is fueled by high profile ethical failure in the public and private sectors. However, trust cannot be asserted, demanded or legislated. It must be earned through demonstrated accountability (CAPAM, 2010). Accountability is one of the cornerstones of good governance. In *Accountability in Governance*, the view is held that, accountability exists when there is a relationship such that an individual or body, and the performance of tasks or functions by that body or individual are subject to another's oversight, direction or request that they provide information or justification for their action. It is further stated that the concept of accountability involves two different stages; Answerability and Enforcement.

Answerability refers to the obligation of the government, its agencies and public officials to provide information about their decisions and actions and to justify them to the public and those institutions of accountability tasked with providing oversight.

Enforcement suggests that the public or the institutions responsible for accountability can sanction the offending party or remedy the contravening behavior. Different institutions of accountability might be responsible for either or both of these stages. Accountability is important for evaluating the effectiveness of public officials or public bodies in order to ensure that they are performing to their full potentials in instilling confidence in government and that government will be responsible to the community they are meant to be serve (Gyong, 2010).

Relationship between Accountability and Good Governance

There is an unarguable connection between accountability, and good governance. Accountability is an obligation to ensure transparency and disclosure. Public accountability has been defined as an external control device by which public office holders and institutions are made to give a documentary explanation for their actions and decisions. The public office holders are accountable for substantives issues such as those on policy, decision makings, resources allocation, custody, use and deployment. While they are also accountable for procedural issues such as those resulting in abuse of office, abuse of power, unfairness, bias and other grievances. Accountability provide the basis for good policies formulation and implementation and enhance efficient management of resources for the nation's sustenance and general development (Duncan et al 2018). The concept of good governance explains the relationship between those who occupy public offices and the governed, in which good governance depends on the morality of public service. Similarly, accountability

is always related to good governance in that managing public trust and national resources require it to be free from abuse and corruption, as well as those that obey the rule of law. Good governance provides an emphasis on achieving integrity because its practice in the public sector is crucial in enhancing accountability in a public sector organization and a country. The existence of effective accountability is one of the elements of good governance, though not isolated from other elements of good governance. Any relationship that involves social interaction and exchange calls for being accountable (Matsiliza and Nyaniso 2017).

Challenges of Accountability and Good Governance in Nigeria

Accountability and Good governance in Nigeria has many challenges, among which are; corruption, godfatherism, weak manifestoes of political parties, insecurity, religious bigotry, poverty etc. Odo, (2015) sees the challenges of good governance as failure of leadership, corruption, Boko haram insurgency, Insincerity of purpose, lack of political will, lack of proper vision by political leadership and lack of accountability in governance. Some of these challenges are discussed below:

Corruption: This simply means the perversion of integrity on state affairs through bribery, favouritism or moral depravity (Yamah, 2012). According to the 2018 corruption perception index reported by Transparency international, Nigeria is the 144 least corrupt nations out of 175 countries. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) have been fighting corruption with little result. Corruption has disrupted a lot of programmes and sectors in Nigeria which includes Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Family Support Programmes (FSP), power sector, oil sector among others. The nature of the economy and the way it has been managed is the major cause of corruption in Nigeria. The causes of corruption in Nigeria are poverty, cultural foundations, inability of government to sanction corruption, weak institution of government and lack of exemplary leaders (Jacob, 2013)

Insecurity: The activities of Boko Haram insurgency, Kidnapping, Fulani Herdsmen etc, have resulted to the loss of lives and properties, underdevelopment in Nigeria. President Muhammadu Buhari led administration spent over \$ 2.6 billion to address the humanitarian challenges caused by Boko Haram terrorist (Ogbeche, 2017 in Ogangan and Jibrin, 2019). According to the chief of Defense Staff, Gen. Abayomi Olonisakin, Nigeria is gradually being negatively transformed into Afghanistan and other deadly terrorist's countries of the world where people wake up every day to witness and hear news of terrorist attacks in the face of unprecedented loss, social and economic life, religious obligations and other socio-cultural activities of the people in the affected area are practically non-existent (Mamman, Ojo and Masara 2017 in Ogangan and Jibrin, 2019). From the foregoing it is glaring that insecurity is a great challenge to good governance, it is a distraction and a problem that will make the government not to concentrate on employment, poverty reduction, health, quality

education, rather they invest more on insecurity.

Weak Manifestoes of Political Parties: Political parties come up with their manifestoes for every election. They make all manner of promise to the masses at the end they are unable to fulfill their promises. Braji, (2014 in Ogangan and Jibrin 2019) stated that “the parties are subordinated to the interests of their leaders and do not respect the electorate while more parties are being registered they are indistinguishable from one another in terms of their programmes, policies and positions on national issues”. According to Jega, (2015 in Ogangan and Jibrin, 2019) there is poor organization and mobilization very clearly. It is no longer important to go out and sweet in terms of selling party programmes, no serious thinking goes into preparation of party manifestations and certainly little action goes into selling to the public what is regarded as the manifestoes. Politicians decamp from one political party to the other especially the ruling party at will and they are accepted without reservations.

Immunity Clause: Immunity has done more harm than good in the politics of Nigeria, politicians are not willing to serve the people they are just there to enjoy protection. As a result of political position they occupy they cannot be arrested and prosecuted if they commit any offence while still on seat that is the more reason while governors who have completed their tenure still contest for senatorial seat or lobby for ministerial appointment to hide under the umbrella of immunity (Ogangan and Jibrin, 2019). This is a great challenge to good governance because with this mind set they cannot deliver the dividend of democracy.

Apathy of some Citizens: Some citizens of Nigeria lack interest in the political, economical, technological and socio- cultural development of the country. This apathy can be in form of not paying their taxes, not voting during elections, not patronizing Nigeria made goods and lot more. Some citizens believe that Nigeria cannot get better because the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. They don't vote during elections because they believe that their votes does not count, this constitute a problem to good governance in Nigeria.

Electoral Malpractice: This is an act that hinders free and fair election, it manifest in the form of bribery and corruption, selling and buying of votes, underage voting, intimidation of voters, INEC officials and media crew, stealing of electoral materials, rigging, impersonation among others. This is a serious challenge of good governance because the wrong leaders are elected into power that are selfish, visionless and lack interest to serve the people.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Good governance is an apparatus for development in any nation, it is the quest of nations all over the world. It is a vehicle for achieving good health, quality education, national security, consolidation of democracy, technological advancement,

employment, poverty eradications among others that will bring about progress and development in a country. Failure to give country good governance can result to widespread corruption, poverty of the vast majority and abuse of due process. The study revealed that accountability aids the realization of enhanced performance of governmental agencies which leads to development and good governance in a society.

To promote good governance and accountability in Nigeria, the paper recommend that there is the need to ensure that the basic structures of government such as the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary are made to live up to their responsibilities, the leadership must demonstrate the capacity, courage, will and sincerity of purpose in tackling the identified challenges, political leaders and public office holders must be properly educated and exhibit intellectual enormity before coming into public leadership this will enable such leaders to be able to rise above corruption and selfishness, the political and administrative machinery that bring up political leaders and public office holders in Nigeria must have passed the necessary integrity checks and must be completely overhauled to produce accountable leaders, there should be an effective and accessible reward system for good workers. This will serve as an incentive for leaders to act with every sense of responsibility and upholding the public trust. This study has methodological and scope challenges as it generate data through content analysis-literature which might be insufficient to make generalization. Therefore, future study on the subject matter should adopt mixed method for sufficient information.

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