

Nigeria's Leadership Deficit As Nation's Albatross

Olumuyiwa Adebayo Adetunji, PhD^{1*}

¹ Department of Political Science, School of Secondary Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria; +2348033340213/olumuyiwa_crown@yahoo.com

Abstract

Nigeria leadership prospects on the continent have come under scrutiny over leadership deficit at both the national and sub-national levels. While this leadership deficit continues to be a setback, this leadership deficit is now the greatest hindrance to the development of the country. The methodology of this paper is analytical, with case studies drawn from successive political office holders who appear unprepared for the office they occupy. This is done to spotlight the leadership deficit that the country faces with a view to finding lasting solutions to the issue. Findings revealed that the leadership deficit that the country faces today is chiefly attributable stems from the faulty leadership recruitment process in the country. The rushed transition in 1960 and 1999 ensured that persons who emerged at the national and sub-national levels for both executive and legislative positions were largely unprepared for the challenge of office, nor had the requisite knowledge and skills required to steer the ship of nationhood. The paper concludes that leadership is the greatest albatross that the nation is confronted with today, taking a toll on governance and development. This paper recommends the discontinuation of the current model of recruiting leaders. It also recommends the establishment of new institutes and as well as expansion of the scope of the existing to train prospective leaders in the art and skills of leadership in order to turn around the fortunes of the country.

Keywords: Leadership, Leadership Deficit, Nationhood, Leadership recruitment.

Introduction

When we talk about leadership deficit, it is important to have a proper grasp of the issue. This is because leadership is far more crucial than the way it is often viewed or perceived. Against the backdrop of how leadership has evolved in the nations' political landscape, situating how successive leadership have emerged is as important as what leadership means for nations. This is necessary as the country is reputed for lacking the right leadership, but having in abundance human and material resources; meanwhile, the quality of leadership makes a nation tick. Irrespective of how leadership is viewed, it is arguable that leadership dynamics in the Nigeria context is quite different from what obtains elsewhere. Right from 1960 when the nation attained independence after colonial rule and after the return to civil rule in 1999, one factor has stood out and remained constant has centered on leadership styles, leadership dynamics in Nigeria, leadership challenge and its associated implications on the nation at large. For the purpose of this analysis and study, the time frame of 1960 and 1999 shall present the scope for the study and provide the framework for analysis.

Historically, the Nation's trajectory is incomplete without the mention of the years 1960 and 1999. While these periods provided the framework for Nigerian nation, they incidentally laid the foundation for the leadership challenge confronting it. These leadership deficiencies or challenges are spotlighted by the seemingly caliber of leaders

who emerged during this current era. A huge chunk of these leaders' demonstrated acts that portray them as unprepared or unfit for public office, while others display incompetence with regards to task of governance, others ended up bastardizing the system that is responsible for the crisis of governance that the country is currently experiencing.

For instance, the journey of nationhood which started with coups and counter coups in the early years of nationhood is a case in point (Etobom, Odekunle, Aminu & Olatunji, 2020). Rightly after that, were the emergence of public officials who operated with incoherent strategies and ended up with poor execution of the developmental plans (Tonye & Obi, 2025). From 1960-1999 with the exception of the administration of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (1960-1966) and Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979-1983) respectively, these crop of leaders that occupied the political landscape including the military regimes of Aguiyi Ironsi, Yakubu Gowon and Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida, Sani Abacha and even Abdulsalami Abubakar gambled with governance and policies resulting in policy summersaults or inability to follow up on policies that impact the cross section of citizens of the country (Idehen & Oaikhena, 2021). The periods often described as the dark moments in the nation's history even more exemplified the dire situation the country found itself as these leaders did not emerge through the votes of the people, thereby not seeing the need to prioritize the people in their policies and programmes (Adams & Shuaibu, 2024). These period witnessed administering the country with impunity and destruction of state institutions by the military which incidentally laid the foundation for ineptitude and poor governance (Oche, 2012; Tonye & Obi, 2025). In addition, the nation's leadership recruitment model which has also been called to question, is against the backdrop of seeming lowering of standards when it comes to leadership recruitment in Nigeria for example educational qualifications for elective positions; all which ensured that the nation have not had the best of its citizens in public offices. What then becomes of the country when successive leaders are ill prepared and ill experienced for public office (Okereka, Oluka, & Efeosa-Temple, 2020)? In view of the debate and controversy on the quality of leaders, the leadership challenges and governance failure that has characterised governments; the following objectives shall guide the study. The objectives of the study include; examine why Nigeria's leadership deficit still subsists; highlight the importance of leadership in nation building; draw implications of leadership deficit as well as proffer solutions to Nigeria's leadership challenges. Corresponding research questions including why Nigeria's leadership deficit still subsisting? Why is leadership important in nation building? What are the implications of leadership deficit and the solutions to Nigeria's leadership challenge shall guide the study. The framework are what this study relevant and quite germane to the national discourse on ways to turn the fortunes of the nation around. Indeed, Nigeria is a nation of prospects; but how the challenge of leadership can be transformed into strengths are what this study seeks to provide answers to.

Methodology

This study adopts the descriptive and analytical design in examining Nigeria's leadership deficit. The temporal scope covered is the emergence of leaders after independence in 1960 and after 1999 following the return to democratic rule. This is done with a view to spotlighting the foundational issues responsible for the Nigeria's deficit and challenges experienced today. Similarly, the scope also covers leadership recruitment after 1999 as compounding the already bad situation in the country. The poor practice of politics and the weak institutions have even made it more dire for the country as successive set of leaders appear to be above the nations' laws. For the study, secondary data including books, journals, publications, internet sources among others were used. The underlisted periods are the parameters for this research and it is from this that conclusions were drawn.

Leadership and Nationhood

In many countries especially in sub-saharan Africa, it is common practice to downplay or trivialize what leadership actually means or connotes. This is because of the consistent and sustained assault on who a leader is and how to determine performance. Consequently, this dichotomy has led to lowering of standards when it comes to measuring performance. Ogbu (2012) as cited by (Poncian & Mgaya, 2015) contends that leadership constitutes part of the problem in Africa as most of them place their ego above the interests of the state. While this practice has become a major feature of democratic governments especially in Nigeria, the end result are poor performance, underdevelopment and instability. The Nigerian nation presents a unique model over the inability of the system to task leaders on performance or even ask them to give an account of their stewardship in office. The uniqueness of the system makes these crop of leadership adopt wrong disposition to leadership responsibilities at the detriment of building the nation. Is it not a contradiction or outright disservice to the people that Governors and Presidents abandon governance and focus on politics two years after they were elected on re-election in office for another term? At the end, so much attention is given to politics and very little accorded governance and development. How can the nation develop when the priorities of nation is subdued for personal or group interests? How can development take place when leadership no longer symbolize nationhood? As opposed to what is obtainable in the Nigerian political landscape, this study reiterates the onerous roles of leadership in nationhood and submit that leadership and nationhood are two inseparable entities.

More often than not, leadership is synonymous with nationhood which acts as a tool for development and good governance (Okereka, Oluka & Efeosa-Temple, 2020). Because of what leadership means for nations, this study highlights the roles of leaders in nation building as such, the term leadership without any ambiguity is a sine-qua-non for

growth, development and transformation (Adefarasin, 2020). Considering the role leaders play in nation building, this paper stresses the need to mainstream the roles of leadership in nationhood or nation building, instead of downplaying it as insignificant. A nation without the right leadership cannot witness any meaningful growth, development or advancement.

The nexus between leadership and nationhood cannot be over emphasized. The interrelatedness of the concepts are what shapes nations and determines their outlook. That is why the quest to get the right leadership must be a prioritized and codified (Poncian & Mgaya, 2015). This framework invariably shapes leaders on their duties, responsibilities, and the need to take the tough decisions when it really matters. For countries in Africa where the ship of state is taken as a personal estate, the concomitant effects of not prioritizing leadership are the apparent poor performance, dearth of good governance and poor delivery of democratic good (Ogunmilade, Nwoko & Akhigbe, 2017). In other words, putting in place the right leadership is a good omen for any country as this will ensure that the ship of nationhood is not derailed by anyone or group.

Leadership and Development

Just like it has been highlighted and discussed, leadership is a sine-qua-non for growth and development (Poncian & Mgaya, 2015) and a guarantee that all parameters of development including health, education, living standards, and good governance will be delivered (Otive, 2023). It is important to stress the need for nations to pay attention to their leadership recruitment process as this have far reaching implications on governance, national priorities and development as a whole (Okereka, Oluka & Efeosa-Temple, 2020; Tonye & Obi, 2025). Considering the state of infrastructural development in sub-saharan Africa, this study is quick to our draw attention to what aids development. This is because development does not happen by happenstance or wishful thinking; rather it is a product of consistent and sustained growth of parameters and indicators of development (Quayyum, Spatafora, Mukherjee & Mighri, 2024). Generally speaking, development is denoted by strong institutions, character of the political class, life expectancy, macro and micro economic indicators, increased revenue, increased allocation to capital votes, cutting down on the cost of governance and reduction of the gap between the poor and rich among others (Anekwe, 2020). But there is one central factor in all of this and that is leadership. The presence of all the above listed indicators cannot expressly guarantee development except with the right leadership who can effectively deploy state resources and apparatus to transform these indicators for the growth and development of the country.

Inspite of this, there are challenges that stand in the way of utilization of these indicators. First are the political actors and the political class that bandy the term development making it look like an abstract concept. Development is tangible and visible.

It is a process with stipulated rules which lead transforming of the entire social and economic system to create an improvement in the quality of lives of citizens including income and consumption, levels of food, medical services, and education (Anekwe 2020; Babawale, 2025). It is a multidimensional process that involves changes in the entire social system (UNDP, 1990). It covers changes in the material indicators such as individual income and wealth, local and foreign investments as well as measures to reduce poverty, inequality and guarantee dignity, happiness, democracy and freedom (Semasinghe, 2020). As a concept, development can only take place through a deliberate course of action put in place by the right leadership.

In Nigeria where there has been some progress in some facets of national life, the country still lags behind over the failure of some critical sectors to actualize its full potentials. The challenges faced in infrastructure, security, health, and technology etc. can be attributable to lack of vision or short sightedness of successive leaders that have emerged over time, thereby short-changing the country and making it loose its placement among its peers.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts both the Patron-Clientelism and social contact theories as developed by (Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1984) and Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau as frameworks for leadership deficits in Nigeria and what leadership means for the larger society. The Patron-Client theory specifically lays significant emphasis on how political dealings is often associated with actors wielding asymmetrical influence, status or power based on loyalty (Lemarchand, 1972:69). This invariably affects governance because public office holders who are beneficiaries of such arrangement can do very little to better the lots of the electorate without the express permission of the God-father. The theory highlights how the high-status patron uses their influence and resources to provide benefits and protection to a lower-status client (Scott, 1972). The relationship focuses on the enthronement of the principles and values of democracy and governance (Osumah, 2010). The theory was introduced as an interesting aspect of interrogating the dynamics of governance as it relates to the nations' beleaguered political landscape.

In a similar fashion, the social contact theory as enunciated by Rosseau stresses that governments derive their legitimacy from the consent of the governed and that there exist some contract between the governed and the leadership. It is this contract that will give the leadership the legitimacy to deliver on mandates and ensure that their part of the contract is fulfilled (Heater 1967; Muiyiwa & Anthony, 2016). The theories brings to bear on the roles of leadership in nation building and development (Ibrahim & Nurudeen, 2022). The nexus between the two theories is to the effect that where a patron-client relationship exist, it alters any contract between the leaders and followers. When a leader emerges from a corrupt system, he surrenders the sovereignty of the state to the patron or

system and the ends results would be corruption, conversion of state property to private property, or what Richard Joseph refers to as politics of prebendalism (Joseph, 1987). The relevance of these theories to this study is to the effect that; for political office holders to be held accountable, they must be produced by systems that are devoid of patron-client arrangement. This is very germane and quite instructive for electorates to be aware of the kind of system or structures that produced public officials. When there is adequate knowledge of these systems, then electorates can refrain from partaking in the continuation of the system otherwise, the social contract between the leaders and the followers would have been undone by the same structure that produced them. For the country to overcome the challenges of leadership, then we must come up with new and tested structures and systems in our leadership recruitment process.

X-raying Nigeria's Leadership Deficit: Case Studies from 1999 till date

If the popular dictum that 'No nation can rise above the quality of its leaders' is anything to go by, then it should be seen that we no longer take chances when it comes to leadership as this is the greatest catalyst for development or retrogression. Now that the results of leadership ineptitude is quite apparent, the need to come up with a new framework for growth and prosperity cannot be over stressed.

As a tall and prominent figure in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria have had the opportunity of providing leadership at several times including resolving the civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Salami, 2015) or even seeing to the dismantling of apartheid structures in South Africa in 1994 (Adebajo, 2006; Akinboye, 2005; Zabadi & Onuoha, 2012). However, Nigeria's leadership influence in Africa has continued to dip overtime. How can Nigeria provide the much needed leadership in sub-Saharan Africa when she suffers leadership deficit domestically? Historically, the foundations of this leadership deficit was laid at independence, and sustained after the restoration of civilian rule in 1999. The foundations of the current leadership deficit started in the twilight of military rule precisely between 1998 and 1999 when the military junta led by Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar indicated interest in restoring democracy in Nigeria (Hoffman & Wallace, 2022). This opportunity gave many Nigerians who had either gone on exile or even went into hiding from the hostile military regimes to come into the political space. The rushed transition made sure that persons who sought for elective positions in 1999 were relatively known by the people nor prepared for the task of governance. A good example is former President Olusegun Obasanjo who had just left prison in 1998 only to be drafted into the race in order to assuage the Southwest over the death of the winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola (Babangida, 2025).

For former President Olusegun Obasanjo, not only was he unprepared to lead the country at the time after narrowly escaping death by the Gen. Sani Abacha junta, but also

psychologically not ready for the challenge of governing the country. As time progressed, that wrong and faulty foundation led to more and more errors committed with regard to recruiting political leaders (Tonye & Obi, 2025). After Chief Olusegun Obasanjo left office, the seeming unpreparedness of leadership played out once again with the emergence of late Umar Musa Yar'adua as President of the country in 2007. Though, the administration came up with lofty programmes aimed at the development of the country, his health was a great challenge to the administration (Smith, 2010). The health challenge which made him travel abroad ceaselessly to attend to his health needs left the country on auto pilot for the period of his absence (Smith, 2010). In March 2010, his demise paved way for his erstwhile deputy to be sworn in as President of the country (Nwosu, 2022). The Presidency of Goodluck Jonathan was equally tumultuous with opposition groups and parties tagging him as clueless, weak, inept, confused and unprepared for the office of the President of the country (The Nation, 2014).

To further x-ray the unpreparedness of political leaders is former Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai who referenced the issues of leadership deficit in his book titled "The Accidental Public Servant" where he described the larger chunk of public servants in Nigeria as not only accidental, but also largely unprepared for public office (El-Rufai, 2021). In this book, he enunciated the enormous challenges faced by the country and further posited that most of public servants in Nigeria lacked the training, technical know-how, expertise and knowledge required to hold public office and do that which is required for the office (El-Rufai, 2021). Because they lacked the knowledge, skill, technical know-how required of the office, the end result was the seemingly woeful tenure of office and poor performance that has often characterised many public officials in Nigeria (Tonye & Obi, 2025). More than often, these crop of leaders display crass incompetence, ineptitude, lacking result driven initiatives to deliver on the mandate of the office they occupied.

Evidence on Nigeria's Leadership Deficit

Nigeria's leadership deficit is not only the nations' greatest malaise today, but also the greatest hindrance to socio-economic development. Nigeria's leadership deficit is denoted by the numerous cases of corruption involving public officials-political office holders, civil servants and even business executives. Today, corruption which has become a way of life and the greatest threat to the nation, is at the heart of Nigeria's leadership challenge. Notable cases of corruption including the widely celebrated cases involving former Governors Jolly Nyame of Taraba, former Minister for Petroleum,

Allison Maduekwe, former Accountant General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris, former Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Godwin Emefiele who stashed billions of public resources. The issue with corruption is not new. Several if not all public officials have been called to come and account by the Economic and Financial Crimes commission. While some cases have been tried with a few convictions secured, the seeming inability of the EFCC to secure convictions of politically exposed persons is a pointer to the fact that the war against corruption is far from been won.

While corruption continues to undermine economic growth, it continually erodes public trust in the nation's institutions. With Nigeria ranking high among the most corrupt countries globally (Hoffman & Hilton, 2025); it continues to be a defining feature of governance responsible for approximately 54% of Nigerians who live in poverty (NBS, 2022). In 2012, the nation was estimated to have lost over 40 million USD since independence (Okoye, 2012). The multiplier effects of corruption include socio-economic stagnation, poverty, inequality, hunger and other maladies. It represents a huge behemoth on Nigeria's leadership failure.

Similarly, other examples of leadership deficit is also seen in the failure of successive governments to meet their first role of guaranteeing the security of lives and property of citizens. According to Musa (2023), no less than 100,000 citizens were killed between 2015 and 2023. How else do we describe leadership ineptitude in the face of mindless killings and the general state of insecurity and apprehension that pervades the nation? Insecurity in the form of terrorism, banditry, farmer-herders clashes, kidnapping (which has been described as an epidemic) and other forms of violence has now become a daily feature of the Nigerian state, with government appearing to lack the wherewithal to deal with it (Uthman, 2024). According to a report by the National Bureau of Statistics, over 2.3 million kidnapping cases have been reported nationwide (NBS, 2024). This incidences which come at a huge cost to the victims and nation at large suggests a weak national security architecture and inability to deal with the nation's security challenges by the security agencies and government (Nextier SPD, 2025). When governments cannot deal with insecurity and protect lives and property of citizens, it is safe to conclude that governance and leadership has failed.

Other instances of leadership deficit is also seen in the policy mismanagement and maladministration in the country. For instance, at the onset of administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari, a whistle blower policy was introduced. The policy is an anti-corruption programme that encourages citizens to voluntarily disclose information about fraud, bribery, looted government funds, financial misconduct or any other financial crime against the Nigerian state (Tukur, 2016; FGN 2016) has since gone into extinction. That policy has since become obsolete due to the absence of comprehensive

whistle blowing legislation. This development then throws up the debate about why launch a national whistle blowing policy when there are no legislative frameworks for its operationalization. Other examples of policy mismanagement include the introduction of electronic voting in 2015 election when no law backed it up (Adesina & Ojo, 2017). These instances of policy mismanagement, policy inconsistency, and governance failure mirror the persistent socio-economic challenges facing the country and shows the lacuna in leadership, occasioned by the nations' huge leadership challenge (Anekwe, 2020).

Factors Responsible for Leadership Deficit in Nigeria

Lack of clear-cut ideology on governance and leadership: From independence, a huge chunk of Nigeria's political class have displayed poor knowledge of the economy and governance or driven by any ideology required to tackle the nations' development. The lack of ideology or clear-cut strategy about governance has resulted occasioned by poor knowledge of governance or systems have led to achieving very little in terms metrics for growth and development. The lack of ideology or strategic plan for development has result in gambling with policies or governance model that are not in tandem with domestic realities.

Placing personal interests over above that of state: In Nigeria, it is common practice to see the subjugation of state or national interests for personal interests. This is often displayed with the citing of projects in communities where public officials come from or naming national projects after self, a development that mirrors how the political class views governance. This practice which has now given a new interpretation of serving in public office is detrimental to the nation.

Hostile succession at the national and sub-national levels: This strange but true practice plays out when successive administrations abandon policies and programmes of previous administrations, thereby resulting in abandonment of uncompleted or ongoing projects. Hostile succession is symptomatic of poor knowledge about governance and service. The resultant effects are sheer waste of public resources or tax payers' money is a common practice in this dispensation. The implication of hostile successions include the discontinuation of programmes and policies of previous administrations, abandonment of projects, retrogression of development strides of the state and waste or misapplication of public funds.

Lack of Transparency and Accountability: The lack of transparency and accountability in governance processes has resulted in the misapplication of public funds without recourse to the principles which guide public office. Many atimes, these public officials carry on with public office as if it were their personal estate or business enterprise, disregarding the importance of transparency and accountability in all their dealings. This is a major factor in what accounts for leadership challenges. Any public

official not transparent or accountable in all their dealings will likely mis-apply public funds and that is the bane of leadership in Nigeria.

Defection at will without any cogent reason: This act of decamping to other political parties without any cogent reason, a though a common feature of Nigeria's political landscape is a dis-service to the electorates and citizens alike. The act of decamping to a new political party after securing electoral victory runs contrary to the dictates of loyalty patriotism which resides in public office. It is the foundation of placing personal interests above party and electorates. Lack of patriotism and disloyalty is one of the many factors responsible for leadership deficit in Nigeria.

The phenomenon of Accidental or Ill-prepared Leaders: Part of the points to note under factors responsible for leadership deficits in Nigeria is the emergence of accidental leaders or ill-prepared leaders who found themselves occupying public offices. Examples of such persons include former presidents; Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Umar Musa Yar'adua, Goodluck Jonathan; former Governors Yahayo Bello, Chief Adebayo Alao-Akala and the incumbent Governor of Ondo State, Lucky Ayedatiwa. These crop of public officials were not only accidental, but also ill-prepared for public office hence, their lackluster performance in office.

Implications of Nigeria's Leadership Deficit on Governance

There is no gainsaying in the fact that there are far reaching implications of Nigeria's leadership deficit on governance. This is because no nation can grow and develop without having the right type of leadership. When the wrong persons are elected into public office, there will be dire consequences and implications, some of which are presented below:

One of the foremost implications of Nigeria's leadership deficit is the emergence of ill prepared persons for public office. The examples of Governors who emerged through their god-fathers are clear cases in this instance. What then happens when a major chunk of leaders who emerge who are unprepared for public office? The immediate implications of electing persons who are not prepared for public office include maladministration, poor implementation of policies and absence of result-oriented initiatives that can improve the quality of lives of citizens amongst others.

Another implication of Nigeria's leadership deficit is the constant abuse and misuse of public office as well as democratic institutions. These category of leaders rather than dignify public office, or democratic institutions carry on with so much impunity and engage in acts that are in contrast with what public office entails. How then can one describe a situation where those who are supposed to strengthen democratic institutions are the same people bastardizing it? When persons who are not fit for public

office eventually find themselves there, they end up abusing the office and undermining sacred democratic ethos.

On the whole, it can be seen the leadership is synonymous with nation building. Considering the impact that leadership can bring to bear in the life of a nation, it must be stressed that Nigeria cannot continue to gamble with the choice of its leaders at the national and sub-national levels. Even with the abundance of natural and human resources, this may not count except the right leadership are recruited to turn challenges to prospects. The import here is that resources alone do not make a nation rather, leadership play a bigger role hence, the need to pay more attention to our leadership recruitment process in order to address the nations' numerous challenges. The earlier it is viewed from this prism, the better for the country in order to ensure that we no longer compromise on leadership recruitment and ensure that the process is better organized to guarantee peace, progress and prosperity.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is quite apparent that Nigeria has a leadership challenge. While the year 1960 can be said to have laid the foundation, the needs for the country to overcome this cannot be over stressed. The wrong foundations of leadership laid in 1960 and sustained thereafter cannot continue to hold the nation back. Having identified the issues, this paper concludes that the current form of recruiting leaders is not the best for the country as such, there is the need to come up with a better framework that would ensure that persons who emerge are ready for the task ahead. Conclusively, the paper hereby concludes that Nigeria's leadership deficit still subsists largely because of the faulty leadership recruitment currently in place. While acknowledging that the leadership deficit is arguably is the nations' biggest albatross today, there is the need to come up with another framework that will serve the larger interests of the country and citizens alike.

Recommendations

This following recommends are put forward to get the nation out of the woods:

1. This paper advocates for a new grooming process/framework for the recruitment of public officials in Nigeria. The existing system has failed in this respect as such, the need to come up with a new framework that will streamline the process for better efficiency and better results.

2. Similarly, this paper recommends the establishment of more leadership and governance institutes in the country to cater to the needs of prospective public officials in Nigeria. Similarly, it calls for the expansion of the mandates of existing leadership institutes-NIIA, NIPSS, etc, to ensure they do more to assist in this regard. The expansion of the operations of the existing leadership training institutes should include other categories of individuals, including career public servants, technocrats, and business executives.
3. This paper equally calls on political parties that serve as vehicles for elective offices to key into this new framework and objective in the interests of the nation. By implication, this study recommends the amendment of the electoral act in this regard by stipulating that persons or political parties ensure that aspirants have some level of certification and competence from accredited leadership institutes. Political parties must ensure that the size of the pockets should not necessarily guarantee candidacy but, adequate knowledge about governance and leadership are major prerequisites. The country can no longer gamble with leadership recruitment or governance.
4. This paper equally calls on leaders of thought and opinion moulders in the country to lead an advocacy campaign to address Nigeria's leadership deficit. Acknowledging this challenge will provide the leeway to change course of action. After 26 years of democratic practice, the time to ensure that only those prepared for public office and governance get the nod from these persons. For this reason, our resolve to change the narrative must be loud, clear and unambiguous.
5. Finally, this paper calls for more diligence by security and intelligence agencies who are saddled with the responsibility of screening and clearing prospective candidates before they are presented to the public. This call has become important against the backdrop of discovery of persons with forged certificate, or with questionable records after they had secured electoral victory. The deployment of more resources by these security agencies and the screening out of these individuals of questionable character or records is very germane to addressing the nations' leadership challenges. As we go on in our democratic experience, we must all resolve that the nation puts its best hands forward for elective positions. This is important in our path and journey to peace, progress and prosperity for all.

References

- Adams, W.J. & Shuaibu, U.Y. (2024). The Impact of Militarization on Governance and Democracy in African Countries. *Journal of Political Discourse* 2(1), 148-155

- Adebajo, A. (2006). Prophets of African Renaissance: Nigeria and South Africa as Regional hegemon. Nigeria Institute of International Affairs, Occasional paper No.3
- Adefarasin, V.O. (2020). Good Leadership: A Catalyst for Nigeria's Quest for Development. *Philosophy International Journal* 3(3) 1-10
- Adesina, S.A. & Ojo, A. (2017). Factors for E-Voting Adoption-analysis of General Elections in Nigeria. *Government Information Quarterly* 37.
- Akinboye, S.O. (2005). From Confrontation to Strategic Partnership: Nigeria's Relations with South Africa, 1960-2000. In. U.J. Ugwu (Ed.) *New Horizons for Nigeria in World Affairs*. Lagos: Nigeria Institute of International Affairs
- Anekwe, R. (2020). Leadership Challenges and Nigeria Development: The Issues and Imperatives. *International Journal of Academic Accounting, Finance and Management Research* 4(1), 1-5
- Babangida, I.B. (2025). *A Journey in Service: An Autobiography of Ibrahim Babandiga*. Abuja: Roving Heights
- Babawale, T. (2025). History and Culture as Springboards for Sustainable National Development. Being a paper presented at a public Lecture organized by the Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Sept. 2nd 2025.
- Eisenstadt, S.N. & Roniger, L. (1980). Patron-Client Relations as a model of Structuring Social Exchange. *Comparative Studies in Society & History*. 22(1); Cambridge: Cambridge University press
- El-Rufai, N.A. (2023). *The Accidental Public Servant*. Abuja: Safari Books Ltd
- Etebom, J.M., Odekunle, J.A., Aminu, A.R., & Olatunji, M.A. (2020). The Nigerian leadership Question and the Quest for National Development: The Elitist Perspective. *Journal of Public Admin and Governance* 10(1), 200-210
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2016), Federal Ministry of Finance. Whistle Blowing. Retrieved from whistle.finance.gov.ng

Heater, D.B. *Political Ideas in the Modern World*, 2nd Edition, London: George G & Harrop & co

Hoffman, L.K. & Hilton, T. (2025). Corruption in Nigeria. Retrieved from www.chathamhouse.org on Sept. 22, 2025

Hoffmann, L.K. & Wallace, J. (2022). Democracy in Nigeria. Retrieved from www.chathamhouse.org

Ibrahim, Y.I. & Nurudeen, S.L. (2022). Social Contract Theory: A Model for Nation Building in Nigeria. *Journal of Administrative Science*. 19(1), 136-154

Idehen, R.O. & Oaikhena, I.M. (2021). Policy Summersaults: A Recurring Nightmare in Developmental process in Africa; The Case of Nigeria and Zimbabwe. *Sapientia Foundation Journal of Education, Sciences and Gender Studies* 3 (2) 295-304

Joseph, R.A. (1987). *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The rise and fall of the Second Republic*. African Studies Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

Lemarchand, R. (1972). Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation Building, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. VI, 68-90

Musa, S.R. (2023). Leadership Deficits as Nigeria's Greatest Malaise. Retrieved from www.leadership.ng on Sept. 22, 2025

Muyiwa, F.A. & Anthony, O. (2016). Social Contract theories and Governance in Contemporary Nigeria in O. Olatunji & O. Frances (Eds) *Ethics, Governance and Social Order in Africa*. Zenith, Brookhouse ltd

National Bureau of Statistics (2022, Nov. 17). Nigeria launches its most Expensive National Measure of Multidimensional poverty. Retrieved from www.Nigeriastat.gov.ng on Sept. 22, 2025

National Bureau of Statistics (2024, Dec. 18) Kidnapping Incidence Estimated at 2.2m Cases. Retrieved from <https://nanews.ng> on Sept. 22, 2025

Nextier SPD (2025, July, 2) Nigeria Kidnapping Epidemic: A Nation on Edge. Retrieved from www.thenextier.com

- Nwosu, P.F. (2022). The Death of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua and the Doctrine of Necessity in Nigeria 2007-2010. *Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of Philosophy* 13(1), 80-97
- Oche, O. (2015). Nigeria-UK Relations: Forging a New Partnership in T.A. Imobighe & W.O. Alli (Eds) *Perspectives on Nigeria's National Politics and External Relations: Essays in Honour of Professor A. Bolaji Akinyemi*. Ibadan: University Press Plc
- Ogbu A. (2012, May 11). Underdevelopment: Jonathan Chides African leaders. Retrieved from Aug. 2014 from This day Live: <https://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/underdevelopment-jonathan-chides-african-leaders/115585>
- Ogunmilade, A., Nwoke, G.C., & Akhigbe, O.J. (2017). The Challenges of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria. *Research in Humanities and Social Sciences*. www.iiste.org
- Okereka, O.P., Oluka, N.L., & Efeosa, Temple, C. (2020). Leadership recruitment process and Dearth of Good Governance in Nigeria: A Perspective of Flag bearers' selection among Political parties. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)* 4(7) 295-303
- Okoye, R. (2012, Aug. 13). Nigeria has lost \$400 bn oil revenue to corruption since independence.
- Osumah, O. (2010). Patron-Client Politics, Democracy and Governance in Nigeria, 1999-2007. *A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 7(2), 276-289
- Otive, I. (2023). Leadership Recruitment process and National Development in Nigeria. Keynote address at the annual leadership lecture/graduation and 7th matriculation ceremony of Value Rebirth Centre, LSD Leadership School, Efurun, Warri, Delta State, 12th Aug. 2023.
- Poncian, J. & Mgya, E.S. (2015). Africa's Leadership Challenges in the 21st Century: What can leaders learn from Africa's Pre-colonial leadership and Governance? *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(3), 106-115
- Quayyum, S., Spatafora, N., Mukherjee, S. & Mighri, H. (2024). Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is overgoing. Retrieved from www.inf.org on July 10, 2025

- Salami, B.O. (2015). The Nigerian Factor in Liberian Peace process 1990-1993. *European Scientific Journal* 11(4) 185-197
- Scott, J.C. (1972). Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia. *The American Political Science Review*, 66(1), 91-113
- Semasinghe, W.M. (2020). Development; What does it really mean? Retrieved from www.wnus.edu.pl/ap on July 10, 2025
- Smith, D. (2010). Crisis in Nigeria as President drops out of view. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com
- The Nation (2014).,,,And they say Jonathan is clueless; really. Retrieved from www.thenationonlineng.net
- Tonye, Z., & Obi, A.I. (2025). Faulty Leadership Recruitment in Nigeria; Trust Deficit and the Decline in Social Values: the Imperative for Education in Nation Building. *International Journal of African Sustainable Development Research* 7(2); 15-28
- Tukur, S. (2016, Dec. 21). Expose Corruption and Make Money as Nigeria government adopts new Whistle Blowing policy. Retrieved from www.premiumtimes.ng on 19th Aug. 2018
- United Nations Development Programme (1990). *Human Development Report*-New York: Oxford University press.
- Uthman, I. (2024, Aug. 24). Kidnapping Epidemic: Security Agencies Stranded as abductors reign supreme, terrorize Nigerians. Retrieved from www.punchng.com
- Zabadi, I.S., & Onuoha, F.C. (2012). Nigeria and South Africa: Competition or Cooperation, In.T.A. Imobighe & W.O. Alli (Eds.) *Perspectives on Nigeria's National Politics and External Relations; Essays in honour of Professor A. Akinyemi* Ibadan: University press ltd