


The Nexus Between Good/Bad Governance and Citizens' Participation in Nigeria's Electoral Process



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ABSTRACT

The place of the state in deciding the lives of the citizenry cannot be negotiated. This is because the first responsibility of the state is to protect the lives and properties of the citizenry. Ironically, the ability of the state to protect the lives and property of its citizenry would be measured on the level of governance impartation. When governance is good, the people will enjoy good life and smile but when the governance is poor, the masses will suffer. This study focuses on an assessment of the place of good/ bad governance in determining the nature of the electoral process in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative approach and used secondary data from other literature sources. The findings revealed that Nigeria is overtaken by bad governance and that has given fillip to electoral malpractice at all levels of the country's election process. The study further revealed that the implication of the nexus between bad governance and electoral malpractice in the country include increased mortality rate, poverty and all manners of nepotism. The study concluded that bad governance in Nigeria has undermined the citizen's participation in the electoral process. It recommends strategic steps like decentralization of the Nigerian state as well as digital elections and digital transmission of electoral results as the paths towards Nigerian national transformations. The study contributes to the wider body of literature in the area of politics, governance and policy analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Democracy in contemporary times has not been able to deliver the required good governance for the maximal number of people. This explains the increased tendency of collapsed government and wide protests against the governance culture by opposition politicians in some states in Europe, America, Kenya, and very recently in Nigeria. The point of departure in this study is that good governance is not directly related or rooted in democracy. This is because, in traditional forms of governance in Africa, great African kings like Shaka of Zulu of blessed memories did not adopt democratic culture to transform their societies. Democratic culture remains one of the globalisation and Western-driven cultures that penetrated the African environment. In Nigeria, it was introduced by the British colonial rulers as the path to societal transformation and national independence. Unfortunately, from the point of its introduction onwards, it turned out over time to threaten the traditional culture of peace amongst the hitherto more peaceful independent Nigerian nations.¹

The democratic culture and governance pattern in Nigeria from the time of our political independence has been facing some degree of challenges. The situation is complicated by the fact that

¹ Kelechi Johnmary Ani, "Globalisation And Its Impact On African Political Culture," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 17, no. 2 (2013): 44–61.

the electoral process has not fared well given the abysmal performances of political parties,² and weak governance culture. The Nigerian democracy is characterized by no party discipline. Every political party focuses primarily on the pursuit of power and its appurtenances without preparing for sustainable governance or the promotion of sustainable democracy in the Nigerian state. In Nigeria, democracy and governance history has recorded twenty-four years of uninterrupted democratic experience from 1999-2024 but the quality of governance or dividends of democracy on the standard of living for the greater majority of the citizenry has continued to depreciate. The reality of the current situation is that governance is collapsing and the government of President Tinubu is increasingly taxing the Nigerian citizenry and using palliatives to make up for their failures.

The rain of poverty is increasingly drenching the masses while the breath of fresh air from good governance culture is increasingly disappearing thereby forcing the masses, especially the civil servants into desperate search for economic life support. In situating Nigeria within the barometer of what democracy is, which is the degree of good governance released for the greater good of the citizenry, one will not hesitate to admit that sound democracy is yet to be established in Nigeria.³ This is because democratization is not a concept only applicable to a country desirous of having genuine democracy, but it applies to the Nigerian electoral situation where there is rigging, and where elections are not free and fair. It is a country where violence characterises the entire political process, and it is backed by the near absence of opposition parties and all sorts of electoral malfeasance.⁴

Today, the electoral system under INEC is largely seen or alleged by the masses as the highest marketer of electoral results, hence remains unable to conduct peaceful, free, and fair elections amidst the contending forces from the political and governing class. The lack of democratic culture is therefore responsible for all the electoral problems within Nigerian body politics. A democratic political culture developed over time creates the basis for a sustainable process of governance in democratic countries.⁵ Unfortunately, in Nigeria, it is evident that the political parties, power elite, and the larger polity lack a democratic culture that can create the foundation for good governance to triumph over the mediocrity that is prevalent in the Fourth Republic. The PDP in power has not delivered on good governance and it appears or is generally accepted by many Nigerians that the All Progressive Congress (APC) that took over power, specifically from President Buhari to Tinubu administration has worsened the governance and electoral experience of the Nigerian masses. Manifest political corruption, infrastructural decay, abounding poverty, unemployment and prevailing insecurity, over-taxation, and unimaginable levels of insecurity have become the other of the day in Nigeria under President Tinubu. Unfortunately, the presidency does not seem to have an honest evaluation of the situation of the masses, let alone be ready to confront the myriads of problems undermining the country. All these crises of nation-building attest to the failure of good governance in Nigeria.⁶

Good governance is therefore generally seen as the use of state power and resources in transforming and optimally managing the human and material resources of the globe while responding actively to the changing needs of the citizenry within a sovereign state. In Nigeria, there is a deep-rooted tyranny of the state that tends to have been worsened under democratic governance, where the political elite has become more desperate to exploit and promote personal interest against the interest of the masses. The implication becomes that the quest to promote the interest of the ruling elite as well as the oligarchy of those powerful few politicians that ensured the electoral victory of the ruling elite, tends to rob the greater population of the masses the needed opportunity to enjoy the fresh breath from good governance.⁷ In the Nigerian state, one can argue that there is a dearth of good governance. This is because the citizenry is largely not enjoying the necessary indices of sustainable good governance. Thus, this study through a qualitative research approach assesses how the lack of good governance undermines the Nigerian electoral process.

² Gilbert Chukwu Aro, Kelechi Johnmary Ani, and Ugochukwu Osisioma, "Political Parties and the Reinforcement of Ethnic Chauvinism in Nigerian Electoral History," *Renaissance University Journal of Management and Social Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2014): 57–69.

³ Aro, Ani, and Osisioma, "Political Parties and the Reinforcement of Ethnic Chauvinism in Nigerian Electoral History."

⁴ Aro, Ani, and Osisioma, "Political Parties and the Reinforcement of Ethnic Chauvinism in Nigerian Electoral History."

⁵ Aro, Ani, and Osisioma, "Political Parties and the Reinforcement of Ethnic Chauvinism in Nigerian Electoral History."

⁶ Aro, Ani, and Osisioma, "Political Parties and the Reinforcement of Ethnic Chauvinism in Nigerian Electoral History."

⁷ Kelechi Johnmary Ani and Dominique I. Uwizeyimana, "Introducing Elections and Electoral Violence in Africa," in *Elections and Electoral Violence in Nigeria*, ed. Johnmary Ani Kelechi and Victor Ojajorotu (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2022), 1–10.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using secondary journal and book chapter materials, hence it adopted the qualitative research methodology. There are extensive materials on electoral violence in Nigeria but the link between governance and elections within the country is yet to be deeply investigated by scholars. These secondary academic literature were randomly selected from book chapters and journals. The evidence and data collected were thematically interpreted and presented in the adequate parts of the study. Consequently, the ambiguous nature of the study requires that specific strategies were adopted in conceptualizing the idea of good governance before its operation dynamics in Nigeria will be captured or refuted.

DISCUSSION

LITERATURE REVIEW

Good Governance Characteristics and Its Mirage

Considering that there are a number of conceptual approaches to good governance, this study has therefore adopted the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) as the framework for the interpretation and analysis of good governance. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific outlined a number of principles that promote good governance. It is on the strength of these principles or otherwise that the characteristics of good governance will be analysed. They include:

1. **Participation:** This generally refers to the ability of both the leaders and the led to contribute actively and not passively to the development of the sovereign state that they inhabit. The idea of leadership and followership participation creates a robust form of interaction within the state. Thus, the absolute state of participation creates a framework for the non-literate members of the society that inhabit a rural village to voice his or her opinion on governance through the closest instrument of leadership and representation. The implication becomes that the active participation of the masses will create an environment for perfect freedom of association and expression, without receiving media bullying or coercion through the instrument of the state at both the local and national levels.
2. **The rule of law:** The rule of law is fundamental for a country to have a sustainable democracy, development, and good governance. The rule of law is said to exist in a country where the constitution (like the Nigerian 1999 As Amended) is first, a product of popular participation (often expressed in the idea that ‘we the people of a country, hereby give ourselves this constitution’). There is a renewed demand championed by legal and constitutional authorities that the Nigerian constitution was imposed by the military in a bid to achieve and protect the interest of the military oligarch and that a new constitution is needed. This is because the continuous amendments of a torn cloth would increase the strain on the cloth and enhance how it tears progressively. This is because it is only when the legal instrument is people-oriented that the idea of the impartiality of the law becomes sovereign. Unfortunately, in the Nigerian state, cases are largely won or lost at different levels of judicial review through the manipulation of legal technicalities, which weakens the real intent of the law. Furthermore, the rule of law globally is aimed at promoting fundamental human rights and enhancing life for the ultimate number of the masses. Unfortunately, while the right to life (Section 33) is threatened by multi-dimensional forms of insecurity as well as the nature of statecraft or bad governance and policies in addition to legal provisions that the rights will be deprived for a criminal offence, dies in the quest to effect a lawful arrest or suppress riot, insurrection or mutiny. The place of terrorism in undermining the right to life in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasised.⁸

The right to dignity of the human person (Section 34) is seriously undermined by the antipeople’s policies where billions will be progressively allocated to the elite in power while the

⁸ Kelechi Johnmary Ani and Jude O Chukwu, “Counterterrorism Operations In Nigeria,” *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 18, no. 1 (2014): 124–45.

citizenry is rewarded with increased tax, increased prices of fuel, electricity, etc by the state remains problematic. This is in addition to coercive torture culture by the security agency as well as the payment of minimum wage that can no longer take workers home due to widespread inflation thereby ensuring the perpetual frustration of private and public workers in the Nigerian state. Similarly, the right to personal liberty (Section 35) except for court judgement, and for minors, as well as health treatment undermines this liberty. Even Nigerian civil servants currently lack the liberty to do their work freely and diligently without experiencing the undue influence and interference of the state (especially media workers and managerial staff of institutions like the Permanent Secretaries, Vice Chancellors, Registrars, Bursars of state universities, etc).

Again, the right to a fair hearing (Section 36) allows people to present their cases formally in a court of law. Again, the right to a fair hearing creates a situation in which every person charged with a criminal offence is assumed to be innocent until he or she is found guilty. Unfortunately, the combination of the harsh culture of media trial as well as the state-created use of the Directorate of Security Services, the military, and CRACK as well as SWAT units of the Nigerian police, which ensures one's arrest and detention for a long time without judicial trials makes a mess of this provision to a fair hearing.

The most frustrating part of the fundamental human rights in the Nigerian state is the right to privacy and family life (Section 37). It gives people privacy not just to run communication but to have a sustainable family life. Unfortunately, the high cost of family life prevents young men from raising the needed economic status to marry in Nigeria and makes pastors pray endlessly and in some cases swindle young ladies, who are under threat by menopausal visitations to marry. Noteworthy is that Nigerian professors and other scholarly audiences have become too poor to manage their family responsibilities due to the poverty-coated salary from the Nigerian state, hence the reality of widespread infirmity, frustrations and short life span in the country. The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Section 38) has been undermined by the disposition of parents, peer groups, marriage partners, private religious employers, and secret cults, who directly and indirectly engage religion as a determining tool for relationships. Even in some parts of Nigeria, a particular religion is subtly used to influence or determine job qualifications. This has remained the lamentation of a number of Christian applicants in parts of Northern Nigeria. Even in Christian-dominated parts of the country, there will still be consideration of the particular religious denominations for one to secure a faith-based job and a number of jobs that are determined subtly by religion.

The right to freedom of expression and press (Section 39) encourages the citizenry in a working state to express their opinion. However, it is first limited by widespread government-planted goal-keepers as well as communication control institutions and other servants of the state (top security and political office holders) who want to maintain the status quo. The right to peaceful assembly (Section 40) has been undermined by suicide bombers and other forms of insecurity as well threats of the state against Academic Staff Union of Universities branches in some state universities and the case of IPOB it declared a terrorist association as well as the numerous injunctions that stop official associations/ assemblies from meeting to deliberate on strike actions or protests in Nigeria. The right to freedom of movement (Section 41) is undermined not just by imprisonment and pandemic but largely by the culture of kidnapping and banditry that have taken over the whole of the Nigerian state. The last fundamental human right is the right to freedom from discrimination. Unfortunately, people are discriminated against both from communal relations in which one group fights and undermines their brothers. The place of religious discrimination between Christianity and Islam in Northern Nigeria as well as the place of the same discrimination between Christianity and African Traditional Religion in the southern part of Nigeria remains widespread. The deep-rooted ethnicity and discrimination in Nigeria cannot be neglected. The last presidential election in Nigeria saw the emergence of President Tinubu and the increased Igbo-Yoruba inter-group relation crisis characterized by *Igbophobia* in Lagos. The Igbo-Hausa relations in Northern Nigeria are filled with multiple historic challenges. Thus, from the above, it could be clearly maintained that fundamental human rights are not only largely limited in the Nigerian state but increasingly undermined by the state that should provide

sustainable development and integration but rather promote the culture of bad governance. The next point relates to transparency and other drivers of good governance.

3. **Transparency:** Transparency involves the act of governance through existing legislation that is accessible to the citizenry. Transparency ensures that policy postures of the state and its implementation strategy by the institutions of the state are accessible to all members of the masses. Hence, the process of implementation of policies and their real cost implications would be easily known in a transparent environment. Unfortunately, nobody knows the true figures paid to Nigerian lawmakers, oil and central bank workers, etc. These workers enjoy unlimited access to the resources of the state. The cost of implementation of different government programs is shrouded in secrecy. In Nigeria, money is spent frivolously and in many cases by civil servants using all manner of accounting principles while in reality, the money has been siphoned into private bank accounts as well as into individual underground 'money banks'.
4. **Responsiveness:** The government of every state needs to respond to the needs of the masses within the state irrespective of their geographical location. From security to social amenities, down to educational, scientific, climatic and other changing needs of the society are meant to be attended to or provided by the state. Unfortunately, when the Nigerian federal government under the current Tinubu administration sends trucks of rice as palliative or a governor builds a road, it will be hyperbolically exaggerated. The main duty of the state and government is to respond to the needs of the masses but in Nigeria, the state focuses on the interest of the ruling elite. Unfortunately, the immediate past administration of President Buhari will always take the 'I do not remember leadership position' and the current President Tinubu adopts a palliative-driven administrative style while enjoying the largess of national resources.
5. **Consensus oriented:** At the basic level of governance, the decision of the state is not meant to harm the citizenry or attack the lives and properties of majority of the citizenry. However, when the decision-making process cannot accommodate the interest of all the citizenry of a country, it should at least attend to the interest of majority or a reasonable members of the populace. Unfortunately, the Buhari administration empowered Fulani politics and hegemony in the country to the level that the current president Tinubu adopted a near-dead-man campaign strategy to lure the North to support him thinking he would die for the Vice Presidential candidate to take over the leadership of the country. Unfortunately, the inability to protect the North from the ravaging hunger of the current administration in Nigeria, made the Northern region, a frontline location for the end of bad governance protest in 2024 as against their passive posture during the end SARS protest in the country.
6. **Equity and Inclusiveness:** The take-off ground for good governance is that the citizenry should be fairly attended to irrespective of class and orientation. The implication is that the citizens of any country whether male or female will all be treated equally before the eyes of the law. But in the Nigerian state, some people are more equal than others, especially the elite and their relatives. The interest of the elites and their ruling friends often supersedes the interest of majority of the masses that those elected into leadership positions should serve.
7. **Effectiveness and efficiency:** The role of the state is to ensure that it mobilises human and material resources as well as institutions in order to make effective and efficient policy decisions. Unfortunately, in the Nigerian state, there have been continuous decisions of devaluation of the currency, which makes Nigerian monetary policy and its weight very uncompetitive in the game nations play in the international political economy. Ani and Onu documented the effect of monetary policy on economic growth in Nigeria's post Structural Adjustment Programme.⁹ The

⁹ Kelechi Johnmay Ani and Onu Chigozie, "Effect of Monetary Policy on Economic Growth in Nigeria Post Structural Adjustment Programme," *Independent Journal of Management & Production* 12, no. 8 (2021): 2364–79.

inability of the Nigerian currency to compete regionally in Africa and globally has frustrated international businesses in the country and they have continued to close down as the monetary policy of the country remains weak and a poor driver of development. Secondly, the ‘Tinubunomics’ (economics of Tinubu) which found expression in his inaugural statement ‘subsidy is gone’ on the day of his swearing-in as the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, has created and will continue to create mass poverty, undermine the standard of living and place more Nigerians on the path to speedy death as well as uncelebrated burial.

8. **Accountability:** All individuals and institutions responsible for the running of the state have the responsibility to be accountable to the state and the masses in the bid to enthrone good governance. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, ‘snakes swallow money’ in the Federal Capital Territory. Nigeria has become a place where offices suddenly get burnt down while those known to be guilty of widespread financial misappropriation faint in court in a bid to perpetually cover their diehard criminal and embezzlement disposition.

The above is the reality of governance in the Nigerian state where bad governance has become highly institutionalized. A quest to connect it with citizens’ participation in the electoral process will require a detailed analysis of the Nigerian electoral process. The electoral process will involve but is not limited to campaigns, money, elections, and grassroots mobilization. Thus the next part of the study will present a discussion on the dynamics of the electoral process.

Analyzing the Dynamics of the Electoral Process

It should be noted that in Nigeria and in many democratic settings, the party convention to select their flagbearer are largely constrained by multiple forms of undemocratic manipulations from vote buying, to thuggery, down to ensuring that many candidates who had no sustainable interest in the party elections were bought forms for; so that they can step down on the election day and create a consensus candidate. The implication becomes the collapse of intra-party election and governance culture, which will throw up candidates whose position as party flag bearers would become matters of legal adjudication. Hence, in every election year in Nigeria, there exist strong push and pull effects between the candidates/ parties on one hand and the realities of election contests due to the existing culture of bad good governance by the government in power. Again, during elections, public support for campaigns/ candidates and elections in Nigeria depends on the culture of governance by candidates/ parties on one hand and the interests of the state actors in that election. The state actors use the electoral umpire (the Independent Electoral Commission) to control the voting culture and voting choice of the masses directly. Similarly, the magnitude of bad governance or ungoverned spaces in Nigeria creates disparities and election realities (like postponement of elections, late elections, manipulation of results, etc) that give candidates that were running behind in electoral popularity the leverage to win elections, especially when the governance and election results influencers are perfectly standing firm to defend their interest through the instrument of the Nigerian judiciary that has been stated to be overtly corrupt or prone to corruption. Therefore, in the quest to discuss the dynamics of elections in the Nigerian state, the study asks a number of questions. The first is does campaign really matter in the Nigerian state?

- A. **Does the campaign matter?** The debate on the importance of campaigns towards the attainment of political office and its sustenance has continued to rage among scholarly and non-scholarly minds.¹⁰
- B. The 2023 General election in Nigeria witnessed massive campaigns and electoral turnout in the quest to create strong push and pull politics between the Labour Party (LP), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and the All Progressive Congress (APC) candidates. It witnessed unimaginable voter

¹⁰ T. M. Holbrook, “Do Campaigns Really Matter?,” in *The Electoral Challenge: Theory Meets Practice*, ed. Stephen C. Craig and David B. Hill (Washington DC: Press Sage Division, 2011), 1–25.

participation, especially by the youth groups. This was largely driven by the role of the digital media in harnessing the interest of the youth.

However, while citizens' active participation is important in an electoral process,¹¹ the role of indirect influence constitutes both minimal versus non-minimal effects in both the electoral outcome and governance culture.

In Nigeria, the indirect influencers on both elections and governance include ethnicity, religion, elite alliance, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), judiciary, etc. These groups influence the dynamics of elections at one stage or another. Unfortunately, the active influencers in the Nigerian governance cycle in many cases cripple good governance or sustainable governance and create the necessary conditions for elite conspiracy or the glorification of the elite interest in the election and governance process. At the election process, they ensure that the candidates that suit their interests emerge as the party flag bearers against the other popular candidates by ensuring that they manipulate the party election process. When these candidates win the primary elections of their party, the active political elite in power ensures that they manipulate the electoral body and the judiciary into the confirmation of their candidates as the election winners using all available instruments of the state that are available for them to manipulate, like buying a private jet for a president at the time youths in the country are mobilizing for the end-bad governance protest.

Burton, Shea and Miller maintain that campaign flyers, political events and news stories have scant effects on election outcomes. They went on to argue that campaigns and elections are this way in America. According to them, what you are looking for influences what you find.¹² A political scientist in Nigeria who is interested in hard original data from polling units in Nigeria as well as scholars who have been involved in the collation of Nigerian electoral results will find out that just as found in America "most of the time, campaigns just do not matter very much."¹³ This is because elections are not "a question of who is right and who is wrong and it is not simply a matter of partial information (for example, the blind scientists who make differing generalizations about the elephant because each has examined a different part of the animal). Rather, it is a matter of approaching with dissimilar purposes. We learn about the things we look for and we all look for different things".¹⁴ "But do campaigns determine election outcomes? This is a tricky and unfair question. In a given election, any number of factors influence the outcome."¹⁵

The position of this presentation is that in a society where good governance does not matter, like the Nigerian experience, where the security of lives and properties have been perpetually imprisoned by the powerful influence of kidnapping, Boko Haram, banditry etc, campaigns do not matter in such societal electoral culture. This is because campaign and voter behavior is directly influenced by many factors which are not limited by the influencers listed above but also include the changing nature of the partisan disposition, the co-efficiency between the electorates and the political economy of the election outcome, which speedily sways the loyalty of the civil servants to fix records for electoral winners in order to keep their dependent jobs and monthly salary as well as the readiness of the judiciary to feast on the bad electoral culture in the country and confirm the unexpected candidate as the winner of the election.

THE NEXUS BETWEEN GOOD/ BAD GOVERNANCE AND ELECTORAL PROCESS

The nexus between good or bad governance and the electoral process is strong and directly connected. This implies that a country with good governance will receive a promotional level of good electoral but when the country is characterized by bad governance it will immediately suffer and have a stunted electoral process. Unfortunately, the governance culture of the Nigerian state has been moving from bad to worse. Hence the implication is that the nexus between the bad governance culture and the quest to

¹¹ Holbrook, "Do Campaigns Really Matter?"

¹² M. J. Burton, D. M. Shea, and Miller W. J., " Campaign Strategy," in *The Electoral Challenge: Theory Meets Practice*, ed. Stephen C. Craig and David B. Hill (Washington DC: Press Sage Division, 2011), 26–61.

¹³ Burton, Shea, and Miller W. J., " Campaign Strategy."

¹⁴ Burton, Shea, and Miller W. J., " Campaign Strategy."

¹⁵ Holbrook, "Do Campaigns Really Matter?" 18.

institutionalize favoured candidates leads to the death of party agents and other actors that try to stop the election riggers from achieving their goals. Similarly, those who do not want to stake their neck in the electoral process or ensure that the right candidates win are often forced to turn back or not to vote on election day. This group of people includes those who are scared that their lives and future will be at stake as well as those who will not be happy to have their business or family members attacked due to the election crisis.

Secondly, the nexus between bad governance in Nigeria and the electoral process is the promotion of poverty amongst the populace and the vote-buying culture. When there is bad governance, the dividends of democracy that is naturally meant to emancipate the people would be strangled by those who embezzle the resources of the state and the implication is that the poverty level of the masses will be intensified. This is because in a state where there is a lack of good governance, resource waste and embezzlement becomes the norm. When waste of resources and embezzlement become the norm, nepotism and all manners of sub-standard as well as uncompleted and over-priced projects take the order of the day. The wave of poverty in the society would then create an army of citizenry that would naturally be ready to collect peanuts and sell their votes before the low altar of electoral malpractice. It is when the electorates become very hungry that they are ready to sacrifice their votes at the low culture of receiving peanuts that vote buying becomes the order of the day and that ensures that the most qualified candidates are denied necessary leadership.¹⁶

When the country becomes overtaken by electoral manipulation due to bad governance, it will have a direct implication on the standard of living and mortality rate of the people in that country. The welfare of the citizenry will be neglected as currently experienced in Nigeria and many of the citizenry will become impoverished and struck by deadly infirmities and sicknesses. Furthermore, when the country is completely slaughtered on the low altar of electoral manipulation, the public opinion poll of the sitting government will collapse and protests against bad governance will be the order of the day. This was experienced in 2024 as Nigerians of different classes came together to process. The masses increasingly lose interest in the electoral process due to the inability of the political elite to enthrone good governance. The electorates gradually become impossible to convince of why they must contribute their energy, time, and resources to developing the electoral and democratic culture of their geospatial environment.

Lack of legitimacy in the electoral process is often the reward of bad governance and manipulation of the electoral process. The legitimacy of the electoral process will diminish as the population of informed voters, who know and are willing to support the overall best candidate for the position will lose interest in the electoral process both as voters and as contestants. These quality candidates were meant to naturally turn the direction of governance from its state of comatose to a strategic future that would be driven away from the corridors of power. Lack of legitimacy in the electoral process will in turn reward the retrospective voters, who place the governance culture on the wrong path by ensuring that the worst candidates would be brought into office. Unfortunately, when they bring terrible candidates to office, Nigeria would continue to move from frying pan to fire as currently experienced by the economic and governance crisis faced by the masses from President Buhari to the President Tinubu administration. The last group of voters that will be affected by the pocket-book voters, who are simply interested in the money and wealth that they would gather from the electoral system. These groups of voters will make money during the election but the economic crisis that will follow due to bad governance will drain the gains and impoverish them more.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need for the national and state assemblies to enact laws for life imprisonment as a reward to those who embezzle Nigerian national resources. This is necessary as a forceful strategy for mitigating the widespread culture of corruption and embezzlement in governance that have become the order of the day in the Nigerian state. There should be a law enthrone life imprisonment for those electoral umpires who rig elections and defend their actions when found guilty. The internal party elections and electoral

¹⁶ Richard Nwali and Ijeoma Genevieve Anikelechi, "Voter Education and Political Participation in Nigerian Presidential Election," in *Elections and Electoral Violence in Nigeria*, ed. Kelechi Johnmary and Victor Ojaborotu (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 195–208.

campaigns should run in a way and manner that makes it easier for voters to make genuine decisions on whom to vote for without necessary financial inducement. That will give the electorates the opportunity for easy and fast decision-making on the best candidate for a given political office without necessarily being under the heavy moral burden of being coercively or unwillingly influenced by money.

Consequently, Nigeria needs to consciously make efforts toward national transformation, and the following paths to development are recommended; firstly, there is the need for the centralization of the state to be quasi-state-centric. This will be a form of centralization where each state will be relatively surviving through the development of resources within its environment. Consequently, the non-viable states would use their state electoral commission and vote to join another viable state nearest to it thereby producing a federal system where resource control and use is completely decentralized. This will prevent the culture of politicians running to Abuja to share oil money and depend on such money thereby forcing them to look inwards on how to develop their home states from resources available to them.

Finally, the place of digital elections and digital presentation of results in real-time cannot be neglected if Nigeria moves forward in her democratic culture. This will abort the bottlenecks of electoral malpractices and changes in the result of elections by the returning officers and the political elite that writes the malpractice scripts for them behind the scenes.

CONCLUSION

This study presents a clear picture of how the governance culture of the Nigerian state has collapsed from good to bad. It revealed that the nexus between governance and electoral culture is that when there is good governance, the masses will rejoice because the electoral process will be transparent and that will produce the best of candidates. On the other hand, when the country becomes dangerously overtaken by bad governance, it will produce a horrible electoral process that is characterized by all manners of violent electoral behaviors.

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