

HOW POLITICAL LEADERSHIP CREATES STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The prevalence of structural violence in one country and the absence of it in another country is a choice made by the political leadership of the society. This research investigates how political leadership creates structural violence in Nigeria. The study employed the documentary research method - secondary sources of data. Over one hundred pieces of literature were downloaded via Google Scholar in searching for related literature, however, about forty (40) works of literature that are very much related to the content of the work were later used for this work. The study revealed that the Nigerian political leadership creates structural violence by engaging in primitive accumulation through mismanagement of state resources, corruption, inadequate infrastructural development, political consideration and uneven distribution of state resources to deny the majority of Nigerians human needs that impede the realization of the anticipated quality of life that individuals are invented to delight in. The study recommends that civil society, religious organizations and the mass media should work cooperatively to sensitise the masses on the need to hold members of the political leadership (Nigerian State, governmental leadership or political elite) like Local government chairmen, State Governors and the Nigerian President among others accountable to prevent them from engaging in primitive accumulation that produces structural violence for Nigerians. The suggested solution will discourage the primitive accumulation of wealth by Nigerian political leadership and ensure effective redistribution of wealth to address the challenge of structural violence.

Keywords: Nigerian state, political leadership, poverty, state, structural violence, civil society

Introduction

All over the world, the role of political leadership in enhancing economic prosperity or retarding economic prosperity has a resultant effect on whether citizens' welfare will be enhanced or structural violence will be created. This is because it is the performance of the political elite/ruling elite representing the state that is vital to the effective administration of urban growth to guarantee that population growth is matched by access to basic infrastructure (Otegbulu, 2013). The ability to create economic prosperity for the citizens lies with the political elite of every country. The above is affirmed by Muhammed and Ayeni (2018), who note that the extent of success or failure of any human society has its roots in leadership at all levels. The achievement of political leadership creates economic prosperity for the people, while the failure of political leadership creates poverty that produces structural violence as a consequence. Structural violence is the refusal to provide fundamental basic needs and opportunities necessary

for the well-being of people and the restoration of human dignity (Ayeni & Andeshi, 2024). The prevalence of structural violence in one country and the absence of it in another country is a choice made by the political elite, who are the machinery through which the will of the state is achieved. What then, is the contemporary meaning of a state?

According to Igechi (2022), a state is a basic political unit, with a population within a defined territory, and whose affairs are conducted by a government or ruling elite. In every state, there must be four features that include: 1) A state being “a basic political unit” that can conduct her affairs, without the interference of other countries; 2) A state having “a population” of the number of people that formed the inhabitants of such a state; 3) A state having ‘a defined territory’ that belongs to that state alone, of which the state has control over; and lastly 4) a state has a management that manages its affairs. The manager of the state is referred to as the ruling or political elite, that is supposed to ensure the wellbeing of the entire population that made up its geographical entity.

The assumption that a state consists of the entire population of people residing in its geographical entity has been faulted in Nigeria's context. According to Ayeni (2024), the population of the Nigerian state is made up of the people who exercise authority and power through the government, rather than all the citizens of Nigeria. The above definition sees members of the state as only those who exercise power and authority. The disagreement on the actual composition of the population of the state, that the political leadership is supposed to address their human needs rather than producing structural violence, is the motivation for this study. For this study, the government, which is the machinery through which the will of the state is achieved, is used interchangeably with political leadership, political elite, governmental leadership, dominant group, ruling elite or the Nigerian state. The need to investigate the rationale why the political leadership produces structural violence for Nigerians informs this study.

Conceptual Clarification of Terms: Political Leadership and Structural Violence

There is no unified depiction of political leadership; this is for the reason that different definitions exist among scholars of politics and state-building. According to Ogbeidi (2012, p. 4), political leadership can be defined as the ruling class that bears the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of a political entity by setting and influencing policy priorities affecting the territory through different decision-making structures and institutions created for the orderly development of the territory. The above definition implies the dominant group that exercise power and authority in a state. Thus, the above definition of political leadership is coterminous with the definition of a state by Fadakinte (2013), who states that a state is the dominant group that exercises power and authority through the government. State means the political leadership or ruling elite of a sovereign nation that maneuvers control and command via governmental leadership. Related to the above definition, Ayeni (2024) defines the Nigerian state as the dominating

group that uses the governing political entities to wield authority and power. In this study, political leadership, ruling elite, governmental leadership or the Nigerian state is used interchangeably to refer to the assembly of individuals who exercise control and command via governmental leadership.

There are various scholarly definitions of structural violence in the literature of peace, security and strategic studies, however, few definitions are considered for clarification. According to Galtung (1969), structural violence is the thoughtful hurt of fundamental human needs by actors of governance. The ruling elites are the actors of governance. Structural violence means the denial of certain human needs that the political elites are supposed to provide to enhance opportunities for people to meet their survival needs. The above definition is corroborated by Ayeni and Andeshi (2024), who define structural violence as the various limitations and obstacles impeding the realisation of the anticipated quality of life that people are supposed to enjoy. The above definition is in line with the previous definition because both definitions believe that structural violence is the thing that the government ought to have done to enhance the quality of life of its citizens, but it does not do it.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

The research adopted the theory of the post-colonial state. The theory holds that a free market state like Nigeria functions as an instrument for amassing wealth by the governmental leadership. Membership in the “state” is based on the exercise of power and authority through the instrumentality of government (Ayeni & Andeshi, 2024). Decisions by the political leadership or ruling elites are influenced by their greed to gather, not necessarily the interest of the citizens. Thus, poor states exist because their governmental authorities make a decision that produces poverty. They get it wrong not by mistake or ignorance but on purpose (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013).

The political elites who are in control of the governance structure engage in primitive accumulation through corruption, mismanagement of state resources, and diversion of state resources, among others. Rosselmann, Klaus, Engel, Ron, Taylor, and Prue (2008) affirmed the above position by observing that the role of governance is to solve the global and local challenges of our time. The challenges are noticeable in the areas of dearth road structure, dearth of security, and potable water, among others. The political leadership or ruling elites deliberately make themselves overnight billionaires by embezzling funds for infrastructural development and other empowerment programmes of government, while creating poverty and mortality rates through a dearth of infrastructure that disempowers people. This is even though the political leadership know too well that sufficient infrastructural development is the bedrock of sustainable long-term economic growth (Akanbi, 2013). Sufficient infrastructural development that helps to redistribute wealth and create economic prosperity for all can be achieved only in the absence of primitive accumulation by the ruling elite or political leadership in a post-colonial state like Nigeria.

The theory is germane to the subject matter “How political leadership creates structural violence in Nigeria” because it is a development paradigm that explains the causes of poverty that mostly lead to structural violence. The above is validated by Jantzi and Jantzi (2012), who argued that development practitioners utilise development paradigms as glasses through which to deduce the characteristics of society, the root causes of poverty, and the suggested remedy.

Methodology

The study employed documentary research method - secondary sources of data. Over one hundred pieces of literature were downloaded via Google Scholar in searching for related literature, however, about forty (40) works of literature that are very much related to the content of the work were later used for this work. Content analysis was the technique of data analysis engaged for the research. The research location for this study is Nigeria. The political leadership and the structural violence that constitute our variables all take place in Nigeria. Another element that exists in Nigeria is civil society. Civil society is an aggregate of non-governmental organisations that epitomise the welfare and aspiration of citizens (Downey, White & Chapel, 2023). Civil society is germane for this study because it represents the voice of the voiceless in every society.

Political Leadership and Structural Violence

Mismanagement of State Resources

The differences between rich states and poor states are the effective management of resources in the former and the poor management of resources in the latter. States with good leadership to enforce effective management of state resources produce great prosperity for the greatest number of their citizens, while states without good leadership produce great poverty and structural violence for the greatest number of their citizens. The above is affirmed by scholars who argue that in every nation on the planet, effective leadership is the cornerstone of progress (Ayeni, 2018). The disposition of the political elites of every country to serve their personal interest or public interest is relevant to wealth redistribution. In explaining one of the reasons why there is structural violence in Nigeria, scholars contended that the growth of Nigeria's public infrastructure has been impacted by the country's inability to effectively manage its resources (Nwogwugwu, Ajayi, & Iyanda, 2015). The delivery of sufficient infrastructural development to redistribute wealth and create prosperity is what effective management of resources is all about, while the non-provision of sufficient infrastructure is what mismanagement of state resources is all about.

The mismanagement of state resources was noted to have been exhibited by a member of the political leadership in one of the Northeastern states of Nigeria. For instance, a study carried out by Ayeni and Ezirim (2023), found that the state government under the control of Arch. Darius Ishaku has claimed to have diverted funds meant for infrastructural development to the payment of salaries and humanitarian needs

because the state is a civil servants' state. The abandonment of dilapidated infrastructure that ought to have been fixed causes structural violence, as many people whose basic needs depend on such infrastructure development have had their hopes dashed. To validate the above, it has also been noted that suicide rates rise as a result of institutional or structural violence (Lee, 2019). It is safe to say that this mismanagement of state resources leads to poverty, while poverty produces structural violence that subsequently leads to higher suicides for people who are finding it difficult to meet their survival needs. Mismanagement of public resources creates structural violence because it impedes the achievement of the anticipated wellbeing the individuals are invented to delight in.

Corruption

The common belief that political office is for the primitive accumulation of wealth in a post-colonial state like Nigeria reinforces vote-buying during electioneering campaigns. Bratton (2008) corroborated the prevalence of vote-buying during an election when he opined that almost one out of five Nigerians is personally exposed to vote-buying. An average Nigerian politician is involved in vote-buying simply because they believe that political positions are avenues to engage in the primitive accumulation of wealth. This is because political power has been used to create enormous riches for those who hold it, and it has been highly concentrated (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013). The use of political power to engage in the primitive accumulation of wealth produces structural violence in the form of non-payment of salaries by members of the Nigerian political leadership, like the governors. The above is validated by Lee (2019), who posited that underpayment and withholding of wages and salaries, particularly to workers from low-income countries, constitute contemporary slavery, an extreme form of systemic (structural) violence. Non-payment of salaries as at when due is a recurring decimal perpetrated by members of the Nigerian political leadership that produces structural violence.

Corruption is a prevalent phenomenon that has created both relative and absolute poverty in countries of the world. For instance, it has been noted that corruption increases the cost of infrastructure, diminishes the quality of infrastructure and also diminishes the return on investment (Kenny, 2007). Corruption makes the political elite accidental billionaires while undermining the wellbeing the citizens are expected to delight in. The political reform that most political leadership embarked on is primarily for the money they are going to embezzle, and not necessarily to redistribute wealth for the citizens to be better off (Fosu, 2019). Even though the corrupt nature of the political leadership made them wealthy overnight, but produced great poverty that led to structural violence for the masses. The Nigerian masses also have the nature of corruption, except that they do not have the opportunity to engage in primitive accumulation.

The above is further corroborated by Ugwuanyi and Chukwemeka (2013), who posit that the obstacles to effective policy and budget implementation in Nigeria are the pervasive and deep-rooted corruption within the public bureaucracy and influence of

primordial demands which negatively affect budget implementation processes. The above is affirmed by Muhammed and Ayeni (2018), who argued that the high level of corruption by the Nigerian political leadership is so high that scholars have argued that the ruling class is more interested in plundering Nigeria's resources than in the country's development. Corruption hampers the redistribution of wealth by making the citizens poorer while making the political elite wealthier. Thus, Ezeibe (2016) noted that the political market consists of citizens who demand a certain type of public policies and the ruling class who fund them. The Nigerian political leadership has control over the governance structure that enables it to wield authority and power to share state resources, which most often create poverty and produce structural violence as a consequence.

Corruption has been employed as an instrument to produce structural violence. For instance, it has been noted that due to the widespread impact of distributional politics in the Nigerian federation, the political elite regularly use the state's authority to massively distribute resources to themselves (Ayogu, 2000). For instance, the Taraba Integrity and Accountability Group, Jalingo (TIAGJ), in a petition written to the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) said that Governor Ishaku's younger sister, Mrs Gladys Kande Mamman, who is a member of the Taraba State Primary Board launders 39 billion for the governor by using fictitious businesses connected to her BVN 222284422299 (PRNigeria, May 10, 2021, para.4). The 39 billionaire that was said to have been embezzled by the above member of the Nigerian political leadership and transfer to her sister account can effortlessly produce thirty-nine thousand (39,000) millionaires and pull them out of poverty, a development that would have address structural violence of the said number of people. To say that the corrupt acts of some members of the Nigerian political leadership, like state governors, are responsible for a high level of poverty in Nigeria to produce structural violence that is killing people little by little without them knowing is not out of place (Ayeni & Andeshi, 2024). The above is corroborated by Lee (2019), who noted that in addition to causing structural violence, poverty subtly erodes human dignity and eventually results in death, sometimes without anyone noticing. Corrupt practices by political leadership create structural violence because they deny the people certain human needs.

Inadequate infrastructural development

The decision made by the political leadership to build the right infrastructure or not to build the right infrastructure answers the question of whether there is going to be sufficient infrastructure to create prosperity and redistribute wealth among citizens, or to hamper their capacity to create wealth and produce structural violence. For instance, scholars have posited that the challenges facing economic prosperity in Nigeria are characterised by inadequate infrastructural facilities that have negative implications for the well-being of Nigerians (Ayeni & Sani, 2021). Inadequate infrastructure anywhere in the world hampers economic progress and the quality of life due to structural violence. To corroborate the above, Akintoye, Onajide and Oluwatoyin (2016) have argued that the level of implementation of the public-financed infrastructure in Nigeria is below average. The prevalence of inadequate infrastructure in Nigeria is caused by the political elite's refusal to embark on sufficient infrastructural development.

To address the challenges of structural violence, Sultana, Rahman, and Chowdhury (2013) submitted that political leadership must provide a robust road infrastructure system for empowerment as a precondition for upholding a sustainable socio-economic arrangement. In consequence, not investing in sufficient infrastructure is a calculated attempt to create hardship and structural violence, since people who might directly or indirectly benefit from such infrastructure might find it difficult to provide for their basic needs or enhance their quality of life. The above is validated by Bello-Schunemann and Porter (2017), who opined that Nigeria's basic physical infrastructure deficit harshly weakened the country's vision for economic growth and development.

To further affirm the inadequate infrastructure that produces structural violence, GTI Research (2019) says that the present infrastructure delivery does not meet the requirements of Nigeria's fast-increasing population and economy. Hence, it has put enormous tension on the country's available infrastructure in fast-developing urban areas. The study finds that sufficient infrastructural activities are a country's success and a boost to development by spreading production, managing population growth, decreasing poverty, and improving the environmental situation, among others. Political leadership creates structural violence when it engages in the mismanagement of public resources because it impedes the achievement of the anticipated enhanced wellbeing that citizens are expected to benefit. .

Political consideration and uneven sharing of state resources

Politics of political consideration rather than need assessments enriches the political leadership and produces structural violence. For example, Ajulor (2013) finds that there have been limitations in policy and budget implementation in Nigeria owing to a lack of consideration of the social-political environment and a lack of participation of target beneficiaries in policy decisions. This is because some public spending decisions are made based on political considerations rather than to foster the interests of the population (Ayogu, 2000). It is a political consideration to embark on the building of numerous airport infrastructure by members of the Nigerian political leadership rather than land infrastructure. This is because about 95% of both passenger and cargo travel is by road (land) in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Work, 2013). The political leadership, with control over the structure of government, failed to perform their expected role of building passenger and cargo travel infrastructure that is in high demand; rather, they are interested in building airport infrastructure that is not in high demand for personal interest. It is a negative consequence of political consideration that produces structural violence for Nigerians but creates great wealth for the political leadership. This is why it has been argued that policies are not made to meet the necessities of the target beneficiary (Ajulor, 2013). Economic prosperity for all becomes an uphill task when policies are made by the Nigerian political leadership to enrich themselves, a development that produces structural violence that goes with pain, suffering and degrading of human values.

However, it has been further noted that even when policies are made to benefit the citizens, the implementation is manipulated to create wealth for the political elite

while creating structural violence as a consequence. The above is affirmed by Sumaila (2013), who observed that the policy initiatives on transport infrastructure could be said to be adequate and comprehensive in terms of their context and contents; the major problem is the budget implementation. The Nigerian political leadership engage in primitive accumulation to the point that they divert state resources to only things that create wealth for them. The above is corroborated by Christie (1997), who noted that structural violence happens when there are systematic imbalances in the distribution of state resources. Structural violence features prominently in a society where there is injustice, poverty, unemployment, inequality, starvation and lack of reward for hard work (Ayeni & Andeshi, 2024). Political leadership creates structural violence and impede the achievement of the anticipated wellbeing that the individuals are invented to delight in, when it engages in political consideration and uneven distribution of state resources.

Discussion of Finding

The research work exposed that the Nigerian governmental leadership creates structural violence by engaging in primitive accumulation through mismanagement of state resources, corruption, inadequate infrastructural development, political consideration and uneven distribution of state resources to deny the majority of Nigerians human needs that impede the realization of the anticipated wellbeing that the citizens are invented to delight in. The findings of this study are corroborated by Ubi and Udah (2019), who opined that the nature of governance in Nigerian society has created a business environment that makes entrepreneurship development difficult. The foregoing shows that the governmental leadership in Nigeria exhibited the nature of poor governance that has resulted in structural violence for the majority, instead of exhibiting the nature of governance that enhances wellbeing. The finding of this research is further corroborated by the MO Ibrahim Index of African Governance (2024), which sees governance to mean the delivery of public goods and services—political, social, and economic—that every person has a right to demand from the state and that it must provide. The position of the above non-governmental organisation is germane to the current findings of this study since it explains what the political leadership (Nigerian state) ought to be doing in order not to produce structural violence that denies people the basic human needs and impedes the quality of life.

Conclusion

The study has been able to examine “How Political Leadership Creates Structural Violence in Nigeria. The research concludes that the political leadership in most post-colonial like Nigeria use their positions of authority and power to engage in primitive accumulation by engaging in mismanagement of state resources, corruption, inadequate infrastructural development, political consideration and uneven sharing of state resources to create structural violence where the essentials and anticipated quality of lives are denied. In summary, the primitive accumulation that the members of state in Nigeria

engaged in resulted in the prevalence of poverty and a low quality of life that led to structural violence.

Recommendation

The study recommends that civil society, religious groups and the mass media should work cooperatively to sensitise the masses on the need to hold members of the Nigerian political leadership (like Local Governments Chairmen, State Governors and the Nigerian President among others) accountable to prevent them from engaging in primitive accumulation among others things that produces structural violence for Nigerians. The suggested solution will discourage the primitive accumulation of wealth by Nigerian political leadership and ensure effective redistribution of wealth to address the challenge of structural violence.

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