

Leadership Failure, Governance Deficits, and Human Security in Nigeria

Zephaniah Osuyi Edo

Department of Political Science
Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State

Okechukwu Gabriel Mowete

Department of Arts and Humanities
Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, Delta State

Modupe Adetutu Adedeji

Department of Political Science
Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State

Abstract

A nation's capacity to establish and maintain good governance is a major factor in determining its political and socioeconomic progress. Nigeria, though endowed with abundant natural and human resources, struggles with issues related to leadership and governance. One of the often cited reasons for Nigeria's struggle borders on the issue of leadership failure. The principles of good governance, which depend on devoted and disciplined leadership, have been significantly impacted by this. This paper, therefore, explored the issue of leadership, good governance, and its impact on human security. The paper used the human security theory, and a qualitative approach based on a judgmental interview method was utilised. The primary data were thus obtained through in-depth interviews (IDIs). A total of ten (10) IDIs were conducted with academic professionals from the private sector, civil servants, and private individuals. The findings showed that human insecurity, the absence of good governance and the problem of development are primarily linked to leadership failures, which can be seen in several ways, ranging from lack of accountability from the Nigerian political elite class, weak institutional framework, patronage-based leadership style, poor implementation of policies, among others. The study concluded that security can be improved through effective governance, and that good governance and quality leadership are related and that without one, the other cannot exist. Therefore, the study recommended, among other things, the need for more proactive measures towards the leadership debates in the country.

Keywords: Leadership failure, good governance, human security, development, national security.

Introduction

Nigeria is blessed with both human and material resources which, if well utilised, will place her in an enviable position among the comity of nations. Indeed, it is this abundance that has earned her the name "the giant of Africa", so much so that she is a major decision maker, not only within her sub-region, but also within Africa and beyond. However, in recent times, her inability to harness these resources has not only affected her role in global politics but has also lowered the socioeconomic standard and level of life of its people, thereby affecting the security of its citizens. No doubt, mismanagement and outright corruption by political office holders is evidently a major cause (Dike 2009). According to Dike (2009), many believe that the majority of Nigerian politicians lack the vision, zeal, and integrity necessary for political

leadership. Explaining further, he notes that many Nigerians lack access to basic health care, high-quality education, potable water, electricity, and other necessities of modern life, which has led to human insecurity. Ojo & Ojo (2012) and Sule & Ishaq (2025) argue that since independence, the country has suffered immensely from ineffective leadership, leading to bad governance, insecurity, protracted conflict and underdevelopment. According to them, the absence of patriotic leadership has significantly contributed to the current state of affairs, which further highlights citizens' low participation in political matters. People's confidence in the nation's political leadership is declining, and human and collective rights are under assault. Bad leadership has caused Nigeria to lag in many measures of global development trends and good governance today, which has a negative impact on the nation's reputation abroad (Sule & Ishaq, 2025).

After sixty-four years of independence from both military and civilian administration, one starts to interrogate the nature of Nigeria's "big brother" and "giant of Africa" status in light of this awful trend. For instance, many analysts (for example, Banwo et al., 2024; Adamaagashi, 2023) concur that ineffective leadership has played a significant role in many of the problems bedevilling her as a nation. Her inability to transcend ethnic cleavages, violent political competition, religious bigotry and inter-intra party struggles, which have negatively affected the political, social and economic development of the country, cannot therefore be totally divorced from the leadership problem facing the nation. In recent times, the violent conflicts have intensified so much so that human security has been jeopardised. In the middle belt of the country, specifically Benue and Plateau States, civilians are butchered in their hundreds as the conflict between farmers and herders pushes the country to the edge (Jannamike, 2025). The recent murder of over 100 civilians (many of whom are children and women), burnt to death, has brought the issue of good governance and human security to the consciousness of many Nigerians (Charles & Onozure, 2025). While there have been notable efforts to address the issue of human security in Nigeria and in states like Benue, Plateau and the North-eastern part of the country, it is believed that these efforts are either not adequate or are laced with politics, further exacerbating the crisis.

This paper, in light of the above, interrogates the nexus between human security, good governance and the role bad leadership plays. While it uses secondary data to address the concerns of the paper, it also made use of interviews. The aim of the paper is to determine the causes of poor leadership, the lack of effective government, and the ways in which these elements exacerbate human insecurity in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This essay is guided by the human security theory, which was introduced into policy discourse by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994. According to the UNDP (1994), human security, as a theoretical framework that is more people-oriented and distinct from the traditional views of security which is state-centric, emphasises "safety from chronic threats and protection from sudden hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life". It is anchored on the belief that the human environment will be free from activities that cause insecurity if the government focuses much attention on safeguarding human lives. This was certainly a shift away from the dominant thinking at the time that spending more on military weapons and safeguarding states national interest against external and internal aggressors is the surest way to safeguard human lives. King & Murray (2002) in showing the futility of the traditional view of security note that it has led to massive funds being expended with little or nothing to show for the sustainable preservation of the human race, even though these funds may have bolster, relatively speaking, the security of individual states and may have also reduced global conflicts by entrenching the Mutually Assured Destruction or mutual deterrence principle (Hartley, 2012). Ironically, in the bid to strengthen the capacity of state security, the

number of people who have lost their lives, especially since the end of the Cold War, has risen exponentially. Human security theory, therefore, calls on governments to focus more on the preservation of the human race by fulfilling the social contract they entered with the people through the effective pursuit of activities that will enhance their overall well-being. This will mean that failure in governance can result in insecurity and threats to human lives, and as such should be checkmated in every way possible.

Literature Review

Understanding Good Governance

Kaufmann, Kraay & Zoido-Lobaton (2000) define good governance as “the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored, and replaced; the capacity of governments to manage resources efficiently and formulate, implement, and enforce sound policies and regulations; the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them” (p. 10).

From the above definition, it is evident that the concept captures not only the means and processes of exercising power within the ambit of the law, but also in managing a state's resources in order to achieve economic and social development. As a roadmap to development, good governance may also refer to the structures, principles and processes that guide relationships, whether economic, social, environmental or political. A state that allows its policies to be guided by the concept of good governance will ensure that enduring concepts like responsibility, transparency, accountability, the rule of law, inclusiveness, equity and sound environmental practices, amongst others, would not be absent from its decision-making processes. The significance of good governance to effective leadership cannot be overly emphasised, and as empirically shown by several scholarly works (for example, Baciú, 2023; Adebayo et al., 2025), the pursuit of sustainable development will be elusive if policy-makers fail to factor good governance into their everyday programmes. Without good governance, there cannot be peace and stability, and these are needed for economic development to thrive.

Good governance is influenced by a number of factors, one of which is the government's perceived legitimacy. It can be threatened when the people view their leadership as not only corrupt but also lacking widespread support. Therefore, the legitimacy of government authorities is a vital ingredient for the advancement of good governance. Other influencing factors that can decisively contribute to good governance are commitment towards advancing the public welfare, responsiveness to citizen needs, ability to uphold law and order and provide public services, ability to create an environment that encourages productive activity, and equity in its behaviour.

According to Al-Rodhan (2009), effective governance is the process by which public institutions appropriately take into account the rule of law, manage public resources, conduct public affairs, and guarantee the realisation of human rights in a manner that is primarily free from corruption and abuse. The true litmus test is how effectively it adheres to the commitments made on human, civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights. Former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, defined good governance as ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law, strengthening democracy, and promoting competence and transparency in public administration (UNDP Report, 1997). To Sharma et al. (2012), good governance is a phenomenon that depends on the effective operation of the government's organs in ways that guarantee administration. It is effective when it is people-friendly, decentralised, transparent, responsible, and responsive (citizen-centric).

Adamolekun's (2002) understanding of governance as the process of using political authority to run a country's affairs led him to enumerate the following as the fundamental components of good governance: accountability and transparency, freedom of expression and association, electoral legitimacy, rule of law, and leadership-focused development. Also,

making and implementing public policy, organising people, and directing subordinates to use their abilities and dedication to complete a specified set of tasks to the best of their abilities are all considered forms of good governance. While there is a universal consensus that the features of good governance are primacy to the efficient working of government machinery in every aspect, several governments still lag in imbibing its tenets. For instance, in Nigeria, the insecurity problem, economic hardship, poverty, corruption, insurgencies, banditry, farmer-herder conflict, etc., have all been touted as evidence of the lack of good governance in the country.

Leadership and Leadership Failure in Nigeria

One reason often cited for political crisis and insecurity in Nigeria is leadership failure. Indeed, political commentators and social scientists believe that the significance of this factor in explaining the governance crisis in the country cannot be undermined. The lack of patriotism associated with Nigerian leaders, primordial sentiments in political gamesmanship and the advancement of personal gains or interest over national goals have been fingered as a major drawback to Nigeria's effective leadership roles in the global arena or her capacity to manage her huge human, material and institutional resources efficiently and effectively.

Effective leadership is crucial to governance because it is concerned with the ability to not just inspire others to attain greater heights in their pursuit of the good life, but even more importantly, the ability of a leader to unite different groups and to instil that sense of responsibility and accountability in them. This is because, since leadership occurs in a social context, it cannot exist in the absence of followership. Anyone who can motivate others to go above and beyond their call of duty is considered a leader. Because every society is structured, leadership is inevitable, as not everybody can lead (Ujo, 2001). Leadership is therefore the activity of directing, influencing, or controlling the ideas, emotions, or actions of others (Ojukwu et al., 2016). Hence, Omolayo (2005) sees leadership as a vital oil that keeps the government's machinery turning smoothly. He asserts that a nation's ability to lead determines whether it succeeds or fails. It entails guiding the people who are the vital resources of the country, the citizens. In order to guide their citizens and/or followers towards significant and constructive societal transformations, people in positions of power must possess a variety of qualities, including knowledge, vision, courage, inventiveness, determination, transparency, decisiveness, motivation, patriotism, and nationalism. Extraordinary leadership demonstrated via transformative policies and deeds is necessary for significant societal transformations (Ukaegbu, 2010). It is in this vein that Othman & Rahman (2014) assert that leadership is fundamental to successful governance and that efficiency, probity, responsibility, transparency, and accountability are some of the several ways in which governance and leadership are related. In a similar vein, Nnablife (2010) asserts that effective leadership establishes the norm and baseline for governance.

Mcguire et al. (2020) and Voina (2023) note how effective leadership can turn a worrying problem into a success story in their study of New Zealand leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through a communicative governance strategy, the New Zealand leadership was able to foster a sense of responsibility and security among the citizenry that enabled the rapid economic recovery experienced in New Zealand. This remarkable feat by New Zealand was corroborated by a report of the World Health Organisation (2020), when it observed that effective leadership was the difference between the COVID-19 results in New Zealand and other countries during the pandemic years.

The above analysis shows the importance of good and effective leadership, the absence of which can lead to leadership failure. Udo (2022), in defining leadership failure as the inability of an organisation to control, teach or coordinate those under its oversight, notes how it has led to insecurity in Nigeria, using the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South

East as a case study. According to him, the rise of this separatist movement is the direct result of government failure on multiple fronts. These failures are related to corruption, lack of security provision for the citizens and the inability of the Nigerian government to provide for the economic needs of its people. For example, IPOB has consistently stated that the Eastern Security Network (ESN) was established because of the failure of the Imo and Abia State governments to provide security for their people.

Okolie & Igbini (2020) in their studies using a cross-sectional design, linked leadership failure to the increasing youth unemployment in Nigeria, positing that “the root of this problem originated in the visionless, selfish, mediocre, tribalistic and opportunistic ‘small money-minded’ people masquerading as leaders who have continued to regenerate Nigerian political landscape since 1960” (p. 255). Their study, which surveyed 300 youths from Nigeria South-South geopolitical zone thus found a strong relationship between leadership failure and poverty and youth employment in the country.

The impact of leadership failure on inequality in Nigeria was the focus of Yusufu et al. (2025). According to them, despite Nigeria's vast oil wealth, its distribution has been carried out disproportionately, benefiting only the governing elite while becoming a curse to the majority of the citizens, thereby “exacerbating poverty and income disparity among the wider population” (p. 92). No doubt, leadership failure has resulted in youth unemployment, mismanagement, inequalities and the rise of armed non-state actors vying for political relevance with elected authorities. This has led to human insecurity in the country

The Concept of Human Security

Individual safety is the main goal of human security. As an evolving concept in contemporary times, it differs markedly from national security because, unlike the latter, human security strives to bridge the gap that exists between state security, economic developments and human rights concerns. Its emergence in security discourse stems from the belief that the state-centric focus of security is limited in that it fails to address the concerns of individuals in the state. Freedom from dread and want are two aspects of human security that are important to human safety; therefore, they have a close relationship to public safety. An understanding of inequalities caused by hunger, poverty, and a lack of basic social amenities across multiple sectors forms the foundation of the concept of human security, leading academics to propose gentle, long-term solutions for human security and fraud prevention (Tavanti & Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2013).

The Commission on Human Security (2003) conceptualised human security as “to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment” (p. 4). Guarding fundamental liberties, which are essential to existence, is what human security entails. It refers to safeguarding individuals from events and risks that are both crucial (severe) and widespread (pervasive). It entails putting people's goals and skills to use through procedures.

Human security is defined as ensuring people's physical safety, economic and social well-being, respect for their inherent worth and dignity as human beings, and protection of their fundamental freedoms and human rights (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) (2001). The main goal is to free people from real and made-up obstacles that impede their ability to make free decisions and carry them out, such as political oppression, poverty, and war. Global vulnerabilities are understood by this rising pattern of poverty consideration. These obviously contradict the long-held belief in national security achieved through a militaristic strategy. A hungry man would never prioritise national security. Former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon linked corruption to security crises and stated that corruption threatens democracy and the rule of law. According to him, “Corruption undermines democracy and the rule of law. It leads to violations of human rights. It erodes public trust in

government. It can even kill - for example, when corrupt officials allow medicines to be tampered with, or when they accept bribes that enable terrorist acts to take place” (United Nations Development Programme, 2008). It adversely affects the provision of essential social services, as the impoverished are especially impacted by it. It also poses a significant challenge to reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Human security is divided into seven dimensions to address the variety of security issues that arise from insecurity. These include economic security, which includes issues like hunger and famine; food security, which includes difficulties like hunger and famine; health security, which comprises concerns like dangerous foods, malnutrition, and lack of access to basic healthcare; environmental security, which embraces complications like resource depletion, pollution, and ecological degradation; personal security, which includes issues like domestic violence, terrorism, and physical violence; community security, which provides for questions based on identity, ethnicity, and other tensions; and political security, which take account of political repression and violations of human rights (Koundouri & Dellis, 2023).

The first attempt to define the idea of human security was made in the 1994 UNDP Report, and it elucidates that human security is about protecting human life and dignity rather than using weapons. Consequently, freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment are the interrelated building blocks of human and national security. Although there have been fewer civil wars and other types of armed conflicts worldwide since the early 1990s, Oluka et al. (2025) highlight how the persisting failure of the social contract between the people and governments has become a new normal in post-colonial African society, leading to conflicts of all kinds. The main point is that despite national and international attempts to lessen insecurity, there are still a lot of impoverished and vulnerable people. According to Osah & Ogu (2020), there is a rise in the number of internally displaced persons and poverty. This is despite the fact that the Nigerian constitution lays the groundwork for human protection and security.

Methodology

The collection of data for the paper was through secondary sources and interviews. The secondary sources relied on the use of relevant academic articles, books, internet materials and grey literature. Using a judgmental sampling technique, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants who have the requisite knowledge of the topic under review. These include academics, middle and high-level civil servants, and professionals in the private sector, among others. The number of persons who participated in the interview was ten (10). The data was analysed through content analysis.

Discussion Of Findings

Factors Responsible for Leadership and Governance Failure in Nigeria

This section of the paper draws from interviews conducted with the study participants and relevant literature, which corroborate the findings from the field. Accordingly, various reasons have been given for leadership and governance failure in the country, ranging from a weak institutional framework to a poor leadership recruitment process and a patronage-based leadership style.

Weak Institutional Framework: The lack of accountability among the political leadership in Nigeria has been seen as a major reason for leadership failure in the country. This is further driven by the absence of an enduring and strong institution that rises beyond the personal whims of political office-holders. According to an interviewee,

The pervasive presence of weak institutions in many developing countries, and Nigeria in particular, accounts for the reasons why politics is not only a do-or-die affair but is also seen by aspiring politicians as a means to enrich themselves. The state is therefore considered a business empire that satisfies the personal desires of the privileged elites. Those in leadership positions lack not only the vision but also the commitment to advance the interests of the people. Thus, given the lack of a strong institution, politics is thus driven by primordial interests like tribalism, mediocrity and godfatherism (KII, 2024).

Another respondent observed that the focus of politics, which is the aggregation of collective interest, has been truncated by the personal desires of Nigerian leaders. This has further bred corruption and mismanagement of the people's commonwealth, corroborating the findings of Sufyan, & Dauda (2025). More so, the near absence of an effective sanction for these brazen acts of corruption has further led to a situation where corruption is normalised among the population.

Patronage-based Leadership Style: Nigeria's Fourth Republic, which started in 1999 and ushered in democratic governance, has endured for over 25 years. However, it has also been fraught with problems as the dividends that should normally go with democracy are yet to be felt by the citizenry. Inter- and intra-party struggle, carpet crossing, the absence of viable opposition, intense elite competition, which sees politics as a do-or-die affair, patron-client politics and many other anomalies have sidelined a people-oriented approach to an inclusive governmental structure, leading to a development deficit (Edet & Ifeanyi, 2017). No doubt, this has affected human security as much as focus is placed on the acquisition of power as on the protection of the people's security. According to a respondent,

Human security has been politicised by the Nigerian elites so much so that they seem to be united in the collective abandonment of their core responsibilities, which is the protection of the lives and properties of the people. Despite the huge amount of security votes given to state governors, which runs into billions of naira, many of them continue to grapple with insecurity, kidnapping, herdsman-farmers conflicts and banditry. The reality is that they have used this money for their personal interests and to advance their political interests (KII, 2024)

Poor Leadership Recruitment Process: Resolving Nigeria's terrible leadership, poor governance, and development processes will depend on how well the country handles the problem of leadership recruitment at all levels of government. According to a respondent, a flawed election-based hiring procedure is one of the causes of Nigeria's lacklustre approach to political leadership. From the 1923 election until the 2023 election, there have been numerous difficulties in conducting elections in Nigeria. Elections in Nigeria are known to be characterised by incidents of violence, fraud, and animosity (Agbakoba et al., 2004). Credible candidates can never be crowned by a bad election; only those with dubious morals may rise to forward an agenda hostile to the interests of the people. Bad governance is thus an unavoidable result of a poor leadership recruiting process since the people in power are only

concerned with enriching themselves, their insane godfathers, and a few gullible party members, and not improving the lives of the people. As observed by a respondent,

Election-related cases take a long time to be decided by the judiciary, which has not done a good job of guaranteeing a fair hiring process. Occasionally, the wrong person would serve virtually the whole term, causing the electorate great suffering before the outcome. There are instances where the higher bidder corrupts the judges, resulting in injustice. The monetisation of elections in Nigeria prevents men and women with sincere intentions of serving others without self-interest from running for office due to the high fees associated with nomination forms, campaigns, and other administrative expenses. As "godfathers" freely admit to doing shady deals, funding or supporting elections for "godsons," and buying electoral victories, it is well-documented that money not only controls who participates in electoral politics in Nigeria but also drowns votes and voices in the country (KII, 2024).

The consequence of the above challenges is that the public's votes are invalidated (Awopeju 2020). Because of this significant obstacle to Nigeria's development, it continues to be the continent's creeping giant. Jega (2022) posits that ineffective leadership recruiting has been a gap in the country's development efforts. He claims that the problem of hiring leaders at all levels of government in the nation is crucial to the country's development processes and in addressing the current state of affairs, as this will effectively solve the problem of bad leadership and poor governance.

Corruption: All the respondents believed that corruption is a major problem militating against effective and responsible government and that, unless it is addressed, insecurity will continue to affect Nigeria's sustainable development drive. A person who is given authority and engages in dishonest or immoral behaviour with the intention of accumulating personal wealth is said to be corrupt. This implies that the degree of human, financial, or material resources lost, as well as the industry in which it occurred, can determine whether corruption is grand, petty, or political (Abegunde & Ogunlade, 2020). In 2024, based on data collected from 177 countries, Nigeria's score in the global corruption index was 26/100, where the 100 score marks very clean (Transparency International, 2025). Though this was an increase from the previous year, the indicator shows that corruption continues to define government activities.

The Nigerian government's developmental drive has been hampered by corruption, which has brought the economy to a near halt. Corruption is a devourer that eats away at lives, cuts off a country's vision, and makes it poorer. In recent times, Nigeria has emerged as the global epicentre of poverty, which is not beyond reason, as poverty is facilitated by corruption. Nigeria is an oil-rich country, but very little of the riches go to the people. Rather, host oil communities have been at the receiving end of ecological disaster even as their occupation of hunting, farming and fishing is drastically affected (Edo, 2012). Corrupt practices also involve the transfer of resources from the community's benefit to the personal gain of a few elite class at the expense of the rest of society, as well as the act of using authority and power to obtain quick money.

A respondent noted that,

Corruption comes in different forms; for example, the government at the centre, because of its corruption, tends to neglect what happens to the people at the local level. The centralisation of decision-making, which has totally bypassed the inputs of local stakeholders, has led to the emergence of vulnerable communities exposed to the rampaging bandits and kidnappers that have sacked many communities in states like Zamfara. Political survival has been the main focus of many leaders, leading to the neglect of human security (KII, 2024)

Lack of Rule of Law: The law's supremacy is lacking in certain ways. The fact that political players have complete control over the court, an arm that protects the rule of law, is an indication of the lax nature of Nigeria's legal system. According to a respondent,

The Nigerian authorities are less democratic because they disregard the rule of law, particularly when it comes to court rulings. Examples of this include the cases of Ibrahim Zakzaky and Nnamdi Kanu, who were both kept in custody by the Buhari government despite court orders to be released. This hampered the court's ability to carry out its functions efficiently. In Nigeria, the judiciary is not predictable, political leaders continue to erode the judiciary's independence through favouritism in appointment decisions, and the administration of the courts is typified by a feeble ability to enforce laws (K11, 2024)

According to Nwekeaku (2014), Nigeria is not plagued by a lack of strong laws but rather by poor governance that tries to bend the country's laws to suit its own needs. The Constitution guarantees individuals' fundamental rights and assigns roles to all governmental levels. Lawal & Owolabi (2012) highlight this further when they maintain that Nigeria's judiciary's lack of independence threatens the country's rule of law. The legal system in Nigeria is poor in its ability to uphold the law and judicial rulings, and this is demonstrated by the direct influence that the country's political leaders have over the judiciary through appointments, promotions, threats, and gifts.

Lack of Accountability and Transparency: There is a dearth of accountable or transparent leadership in Nigeria. When the elected and appointed officials in a government respond to the requests of the people, such a government is considered responsible, with adherence to the law and regard for the governed. An independent court and adherence to the law are essential components of accountability enforcement. Nigeria has not fared well in this regard, either, with widespread corruption at the federal, state, and municipal levels. Furthermore, a widespread indicator of lax accountability and opaqueness is related to this malfeasance. Leaders' abuse of public office for personal gain is one reason Nigerian leadership fails.

Effects of Governance and Leadership Failure on Human Security in Nigeria

For the majority of Nigerians, democracy has done the exact opposite of making them smile. From the lowest to the highest positions of authority, political cabals that have acted as

roadblocks to Nigeria's progress have limited the country's ability to grow. Nigeria's leadership and governance styles have always resulted from cabals driven by avarice, self-interest, and primitive desires to amass money. The potential for Nigeria to be great has been trampled upon (Arowolo & Aluko, 2012). Imhonopi & Ugochukwu (2018) posit that:

The result of poor leadership in Nigeria is embodied as poor governance manifested in consistent political crisis and insecurity, poverty of the extreme order among the citizens, debilitating miasma of corruption and rising unemployment indices. The leadership from 1960 has criminally managed the country's affairs and resources and thrown the people over the precipice where they now wallow in absolute poverty, illiteracy, hunger, rising unemployment, avoidable health crisis and insecurity (p.23)

According to Imhonopi & Ugochukwu (2013), the numerous attacks by ethnic militias, bandits, and insurgents in Nigeria support the idea that a lack of accountability and transparency has undermined the legitimacy of the country's successive governments and led to the emergence of organisations that support violence and oppose the authority of the state. Political malpractice in Nigeria has grown to be a significant issue and a well-known occurrence. A typical Nigerian feels that elections cannot be won unless they are rigged. This is how bad things have gotten in Nigeria's electoral system. The phenomenon of electoral misconduct is not new; it has persisted since independence and has even become more sophisticated. Elections are a crucial aspect of a country's political life that has an impact on all areas of society; however, with rampant electoral fraud, a country's developmental trajectory can be halted as those without integrity and a moral compass find themselves in power. For example, during the First Republic, several political party leaders were charged with manipulating the results of the election. In the second republic, something similar occurred. The Fourth Republic has not been an exception.

In Nigeria, the recruiting process for leadership positions and human security is seriously undermined by electoral violence. Politicians hire and arm thugs to terrorise opponents they believe to be formidable and to threaten opponents' supporters in their strongholds. Politics has become a "do or die" endeavour (Odisu 2015). Political life in Nigeria is devoid of morality as tension continues to exist between the primordial and civic public (Ekeh 1975).

Gun ownership by unauthorised individuals is a major problem in Nigeria, which has increased the country's level of human insecurity. The consequences of inadequate leadership and governance is evident in every facets of Nigeria, such as the vast amounts of dilapidated and impoverished infrastructure, the troubled healthcare system with a high death rate, urban degradation, the rise in slums and substandard living conditions, the high cost of living, the widening of the wealth gap between the rich and the poor, and the public employees' lack of desire to perform their jobs effectively and passionately because they believe it is a waste of time, high unemployment and rising youth unrest; increasing insecurity, terrorism, and interfaith conflict; breakdown of law and order, lawlessness, and incompetence; assassinations; the "man-know-man" syndrome, which undermines meritocracy and encourages mediocrity in public life and administration; pockets of corruption at all societal levels; wastage of labour, capital, and mineral resources; diminished faith in and confidence in the government; reduced interest in political engagement; and economic instability brought on by frequent strikes, which halt economic activity (Arowolo & Aluko, 2012; Ene et al., 2013).

According to Ihonvbere (2009), the problem with poor governance can take the following forms: low industrialization, nepotism, ethnic mistrust, religious violence, deteriorating infrastructure, illiteracy, low worker pay, low social security, unstable power supplies, poor public transport system, malnutrition, high rates of maternal and child mortality, inadequate health services, political instability, and rascality. Growing resentment in certain areas may also eventually blow up into large-scale uprisings and revolutions that could endanger the nation's very existence.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Every citizen has a responsibility to play in bringing about accountable and responsive leadership and effective democratic governance through an honest election process after analysing and discussing leadership, governance, and human security in Nigeria. To install excellent leaders, everyone must make an effort to treat this duty seriously and support the integrity of the elections that take place. Nigeria's progress has been hampered by a poor leadership recruiting process, which has resulted in individuals holding public office who lack the skills and motivation to serve the people. Enlightened, patriotic, and well-meaning Nigerians from various communities, including religious leaders, community leaders, civil society organisations, and community-based associations, should participate in political and electoral processes to enhance the nation's leadership recruitment process and promote better socioeconomic development and democratic governance in the long run.

There is an urgent need to figure out how to apply pertinent standards to the process of choosing leaders. Measures should be put in place to figure out how to develop people's competence, character, and leadership abilities. Many of Nigeria's national concerns, like fulfilling the needs and ambitions of citizens, repositioning the economy, and dealing with human insecurity, would be a lot easier to resolve if and when the country is replete with decent individuals in leadership. The electorate needs to awaken from its slumber and begin questioning the procedures that lead to the emergence of candidates. The electoral system and process should allow citizens of all social classes the opportunity to ask questions about candidates regarding their goals, policies, and particular tactics, as well as the timelines for carrying them out. That way, criminals without weapons would be discouraged from considering running for office.

Since it is obvious that the existing procedure for recruiting leaders cannot produce dynamic, visionary, and strategic leaders, it is advised that the leadership recruitment processes be altered in order to establish good governance and effective leadership in Nigeria. The cost of purchasing nomination forms at the party levels should be lowered in order to de-monetise politics and attract competent and credible citizens to leadership. Additionally, remuneration of the ruling political class should be revised downward to encourage only those who are eager to serve to run for public office.

Effective public engagement in politics is another remedy for the existing flawed process of selecting leaders. Many people, some educated, are gullible and uninformed about politics and its significance in society. Election administration and party politics will function better with the inclusion of electoral enlightenment in political education. According to Plato, inferiors will rule if the majority abstain from politics (Oda & Tvedt, 2021). Similarly, Burke posits that the only way evil can win is if decent men do nothing (Bromwich, 2014). Those who are capable, intelligent, professional, religious, and, most importantly, patriots must get involved in politics with a view to making informed decisions and voting on intelligent principles rather than on ethnic or religious affiliations. The electorates should be given thorough political education to guide them in electing reputable leaders to public office.

It is suggested that the death penalty be applied to anyone found guilty of electoral corruption and violence to sanitise Nigeria's electoral processes

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