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Leadership Deficiencies and Nigeria's Infrastructure Development: An Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study aimed to assess the influence of leadership deficit on Nigeria's public sector governance and infrastructure development, focusing on the slow pace of development in key sectors, particularly in the infrastructure sector, due to poor leadership and bureaucratic corruption. The study used transformational leadership theory and transformation and transition in governance as the most suitable conceptual framework. This qualitative case study explores the demographic and leadership deficits of Nigeria's post-independence presidents from 1960 to 2023, focusing on infrastructural development. The analysis identifies periods of economic expansion, stagnation, or contraction, and investigates if these traits influenced Nigeria's economic downturn and failure to become a developed nation. The study suggests that democratic governance can improve infrastructure governance by establishing and fortifying the right institutions. The National Development Plan has benefited infrastructure development, but implementation has been hampered by political unrest and the civil war. The research also examines governance and leadership theories, evaluating their impact on infrastructure growth. Nigeria has undergone several reforms since its independence, focusing on administrative, societal, and economic aspects. Economic reforms have been significant, but corruption remains a challenge. Political leadership is crucial for good governance, which is essential for infrastructure development. However, empirical studies have failed to establish a relationship between leadership, good governance, and infrastructure development.

INTRODUCTION

This qualitative case study examines the demographic and leadership deficit characteristics of Nigeria's post-independence presidents from 1960 to 2023 on infrastructural development. The analysis identifies periods of economic expansion, stagnation, or contraction and explores if these characteristics contributed to Nigeria's economic decline and its inability to attain developed country status. Nigeria, once a promising African country, has faced significant social and political transformations due to political instability and social disorder. The country is classified as a developing country by the World Bank for over 20 years, with poverty being a significant issue. Ineffective leadership is a critical issue in developing countries, such as Nigeria, which has been linked to corruption and military rule. Low productivity and apathy in the Nigerian workforce are attributed to ineffective leadership. The lack of strong leadership in Nigeria has led to a systematic deterioration of infrastructural sectors, causing economic volatility and slow growth. The study aims to examine the demographic and leadership characteristics of post-independence Nigerian presidents from 1960 to 2023 and their respective impacts on economic growth or decline. Whether specific demographic and leadership characteristics have been present continuously throughout economic expansion, stagnation, or contraction since 1960, as well as whether there is no meaningful correlation between leadership deficiencies and infrastructure development, are among

the research concerns. Demographic characteristics included age, education, ethnicity, religion, gender, length of stay in office, and mode of accession to and exit from power. Leadership characteristics included measures from Godwin's leadership model for developing countries and Locke's keys to successful leadership. The study is justified because it investigates the impact of leadership deficit on Nigeria's infrastructure development governance. The research was purposefully limited to examining Nigeria as a geographical unit and how leadership affects the governance of infrastructure development. The findings served as a literature review for future studies, contributing significantly to academic knowledge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research focuses on the theories of governance and leadership, evaluating their components in terms of their impact on infrastructure growth.

Leadership is defined as the process by which a single person persuades a group to pursue a common objective, while leadership is the process by which an individual exerts influence to facilitate the achievement or fulfillment of specific goals (Northhouse, 2013). There are eight leadership theories identified: "great man" theories, trait theories, contingency theories, situational theories, behavioral theories, participatory theories, management theories, and relationship theories (Riggio & Murphy, 2003). These theories form the basis of various perspectives on leadership, including traits, skills,

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situational analysis, contingency planning, path-goal analysis, transformational analysis, transactional analysis, and servant leadership (Okafor-Dike, 2008).

Trait theory suggests that individuals are either born or not born with qualities that make them better suited to leadership roles (Stogdill, 1974). Early studies focused on identifying traits that distinguished leaders from non-leaders, such as intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Effective leadership depends on the interaction between the leader and group members and how the group members perceive the leader's behavior as supportive of their well-being (Wright, 1996).

Situational theory emphasizes that leaders choose the best course of action based on observed behavior, influenced by changes in leaders, followers, and the environment (Kendra, 2012). Leadership behaviors are influenced by four relationships: high task and low relationship, high relationship and low task, and low relationship and low task. Effectiveness depends on the leader's leadership style and the situation's control over followers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; Gardner, 1990).

Contingency theory suggests that leadership styles are based on specific situations and that the performance of a leader depends on circumstances (Fiedler, 1969). Relationship-oriented leaders tend to perform best in moderately favorable situations, while task-oriented leaders are more effective in unfavorable situations (Bass & Bass, 2008). In contemporary society, attraction power can be used to build strong leader-follower relationships for improved job performance in favorable situations.

The transactional theory of leadership focuses on the exchange of relationships between a leader and followers, driven by self-interest. It suggests that leaders mobilize resources to satisfy followers' motives, leading to mutual goals (Bass, 1985). This model is most efficient when leaders create a mutually reinforcing environment, based on contingent reward and management by exception.

Transformational theory of leadership is a process where leaders and followers engage in a mutual process of raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation (Bass, 1985). It is more effective than transactional leadership because it appeals to social values, encouraging collaboration rather than individual work. Transformational leaders employ good visioning, impression-management, and rhetorical skills to evoke strong emotions in followers and motivate them to perform beyond expectations (Onolememen, 2015).

Leadership Styles

Leadership styles have evolved over time, with three main styles identified: authoritarian, participative, and delegative. Good governance is essential for sustainable human development, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, and is effective, equitable, and promotes the rule of law and transparency of institutions, officials, and transactions. Key economic principles of

good governance include public sector management, organizational accountability, the rule of law, transparency, and access to information (Zerva & Lassiter, 2005). The theories of reflexivity, deliberation, argumentation, and networks are essential in understanding the processes of governance (Goleman, 2000). Transactional leadership theory and the theories of transition and transformation offer an essential instrument for elucidating the decision-making and project implementation process between democratic civilian administrations and authoritarian military regimes (Dereli, 2010). Understanding the issues that arose during Nigeria's transition from one political leadership era to the next is crucial for ascertaining their influence on infrastructure development from 1960 to 2010 (Onolememen, 2015).

Nigeria's Political History

This study explores Nigeria's political history from 1960 to 2023, focusing on the impact of leadership on infrastructure development. Nigeria gained independence from Great Britain in 1960 and underwent various political leadership and governments. The first democratic civilian government was formed between the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and the Northern People's Congress (NPC). Nigeria became a Republic in 1963, and political leadership shifted between the NPC and the NNDP. The first military government took over in 1966, followed by another military government in 1975 and 1976. The democratic civilian administration returned in 1979, with Alhaji Shehu Shagari and the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) holding power. In 1983, Muhammadu Buhari held power, and between 1985 and 1993, Ibrahim Babangida, Sani Abacha, Abdulsalami Abubakar, and Olusegun Obasanjo re-assigned power. In 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo was put in charge of a civilian government, followed by Musa Yar'dua in 2007 and Goodluck Ebele Jonathan in 2015. Between May 29, 2023, and 2015, President Muhammad Buhari was re-elected under the Alliance People Congress (APC), and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is currently the party's leader. Between 1960 and 2010, Nigeria underwent several reforms initiated by various political leaderships. These changes fall under three categories: administrative, societal, and economic (Olaopa, 2010; Onolememen, 2015).

Economic Reforms

Economic reforms have been significant since Nigeria's independence in 1960, with the first republic focusing on agricultural production. The government has privatized enterprises in industries such as aluminum, telecommunications, petrochemical, insurance, and hospitality. The energy sector has also been improved, with the discovery of oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) in abundance. The Poverty Alleviation Program (PAP) was launched during Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, which developed into the national economic empowerment and development strategy

(NEEDS). Financial sector reforms have also been significant, with notable reforms including the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) and the establishment of the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC). Telecommunication reform is another significant economic reform program in Nigeria, with different political administrations taking measures to improve the sector (Olaopa, 2010; World Bank Group, 2011).

Administrative reforms have been implemented by several commissions, including the Margan Commission of 1963, the Adebayo commission of 1971, and the Udoji Commission of 1972-1974. Successful governments have implemented measures to reform the civil service, including demilitarization, reintroduction of the pooling system, restoration of the office of the Head of Civil Service, centralization of training, and comprehensive restructuring. However, major problems still exist in the NCS, including poor pay, favoritism, and inadequate training, particularly in technology (Olaopa, 2010).

Socio-political reforms have been challenging in Nigeria, with corruption being rated as one of the most corrupt nations in the world. Factors such as inequality in wealth distribution, political office as the primary means of gaining access to wealth, conflict between changing moral codes, weaknesses of social and governmental enforcement mechanisms, and the absence of a strong sense of national community contribute to corruption (Ploch, 2010).

Economic reform strategies for tackling corruption include embedding anticorruption measures in a comprehensive reform program and conducting diagnostic studies to identify specific areas where corruption has a high negative impact on public welfare. Nigeria faces a significant challenge in infrastructure development, which is crucial for economic growth and quality of life. Traditional infrastructure, such as roads, railways, ports, and healthcare, has been significantly developed over the years. However, Nigeria still faces issues such as irregular electricity supply, fuel scarcity, unreliable healthcare services, unstable educational institutions, bad roads, malfunctioning ports, and erratic telecommunication services. The public-private partnership (PPP) initiative has raised hope for improved infrastructure development and better public sector governance in Nigeria (Transparency International, 2001; 2010).

Political leadership is crucial for good governance, which is essential for the development of infrastructure in a country. Nigeria has experienced three types of political leadership: colonial administration, military administration, and democratic administration. These administrations have impacted the quality of the Nigerian civil service and the efficiency of the bureaucracy. Transformational leadership theory can bring about positive change, but empirical studies have failed to establish a relationship between leadership, good governance, and infrastructure development (Okonjo-Iweala, 2012; Transparency International, 2013).

Various theoretical frameworks, such as the theory of

rational individualism and relevant leadership theories, offer helpful conceptual frameworks for analyzing the connection between economic development and leadership. Nigerian society engages with the environment through a dynamic combination of leadership, structure, and culture. The ability to lead seems to be correlated with the most difficult situations, and leadership possessing a clear sense of purpose, a strategic vision, and the ability to strive for and cultivate excellence is essential for overcoming these challenges ((Okonjo-Iweala, 2012; Transparency International, 2013).

Transformational leadership is a reciprocal process where leaders raise their subordinates' consciousness to influence their behaviors. It involves motivating followers to do more than expected and integrating creative insight, persistence, and energy. Transactional leadership involves the exchange of material, social, and psychological benefits, with leaders and followers reinforcing each other's behavior with either reward or punishment. Service leadership emphasizes the needs and desires of followers, while transformational leaders build on people's aspiration for meaning, are concerned with objectives and values, principles, morals, and ethics, and strive for long-term goals without compromising moral standards and ethics. Transactional leaders focus on politics, power, position, and daily affairs, relying on human relations to influence interaction and pursue anticipated responsibilities. This exploratory, qualitative, historical single case study aimed to determine if more extensive studies on the relationship between leadership and economic development are warranted, particularly in other African countries.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology, data gathering, and analysis of a qualitative case study on the impact of leadership deficiencies on Nigerian infrastructure development from 1960 to 2023 are covered in this section. An exploratory case study was used as the research design, utilizing a variety of information sources to collect comprehensive, in-depth data throughout time. Using 13 participants' in-person interviews and pre-existing secondary data, the study employed a qualitative case study methodology. Drawing conclusions from the data gathered from many sources, including archive documents, pre-existing secondary data, and in-depth in-person interviews, was the researcher's responsibility. To create a chain of evidence and guarantee construct validity, data triangulation was used. Inferences were made using logic models. The study analyzed data spanning 60 years using the constant comparative approach and primary data from interviews with infrastructure experts and bureaucrats from the past and today. In order to find emergent themes associated with each research topic, the study coded and examined the data that was gathered. However, the study contains limitations due to human factors, time and money limits, and a qualitative approach. Prior to data analysis, participants received background information,

confidentiality, and validation opportunities. Additionally, descriptive data analysis was not an inferential statistical technique, which restricts the findings' generalizability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined the impact of leadership deficit on infrastructure development in Nigeria from 1960 to 2023 through interviews with past and present top bureaucrats under former Heads of States, Heads of Service and Directors, former Cabinet Ministers, and private sector infrastructure experts. The data was transcribed and analyzed using QRS Nvivo 10, and all participants were Africans of Nigerian origin. The study found that the leadership deficit affected the governance of infrastructure development in Nigeria. The results were categorized into 12 themes and sub-themes, with descriptive narratives presented using data tables to create meaning from the collected data.

Group A: Bureaucrats under Former Heads of State discussed the concept of rural infrastructure, including roads and other measures to aid rural farmers. They emphasized the importance of leadership in enhancing the capabilities of both people and the country. However, they also mentioned the military's involvement in the second coup in Nigeria, which led to the upsetting of the democratic civilian government.

Group B: Bureaucrats under Retired Head of Service, Permanent Secretaries, and Directors discussed the positive impact of previous military administrations on Nigeria's infrastructure development between 1960 and 1993. These policies were primarily obtained through five-year national development plans, but continuity became a problem due to policy somersaults, leading to truncated policies and stalled development.

The state of Nigeria's infrastructure, particularly in the telecommunication sector. It highlights that Nigeria is far behind in mobile telecommunications, with 450,000 landlines in a country of over 140 million people. President Obasanjo liberalized the sector in 2001 and 2002, leading to a rapidly growing telecommunications sector. However, power infrastructure decayed significantly, taking five to 10 years to recover. Planning was also a critical factor, as it was not enough to solve the problem without proper plans and technical capacity. During General Gowon's administration, the focus was on roads and public buildings, with a policy of developing five North South roads and three East West roads. Infrastructure is crucial for a country's economic growth and development.

The main hindrances to Nigerian infrastructure development during the studied period include the political environment, lack of political will among those in government, and an enabling institutional framework across all infrastructure sectors. The Nigerian civil war was a significant obstacle to the development of infrastructure, and its effects are still felt today. The main obstacle to government policies on infrastructure development's implementation is finance, as the country's diverse ethnic groups require widespread development. Funds often

fall short of plans, leading to extended project durations. Political intervention, particularly from National Assembly members, is often seen as a solution to the problem. Funding is another significant issue, as most development plans reliant on oil, making them unachievable during oil shocks. Despite these challenges, the government remains committed to addressing these issues.

The importance of addressing executive capacity, lack of resources, and a coordinated approach to implementing priorities in Nigeria's infrastructure development. Three main obstacles identified are lack of proper policies, insufficient investment, and vested interests. Executive capacity is crucial for successful development plans, and developing indigenous contractors can help speed up implementation. However, the lack of resources and a coordinated approach to priorities hinder progress. Insufficient investment and inadequate budgetary provisions further exacerbate these challenges. The main barriers facing the industry include depreciating currency, antagonistic local populations, inflation, insufficient security, and inadequate budgetary provisions. The combination of a provisional government and a civil service that supports corruption further exacerbates these challenges.

The government policies that promote infrastructure development and are both effective and favorable. Bureaucrats under former Military Administration highlighted the importance of organizing and adhering to plans for development, such as the National Working Plan, the Public Procurement Act, and the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development. Privatization and commercialization policies are crucial government policy efforts, with the procurement office needing expansion to replicate expertise in agencies. A stable economic environment is beneficial for infrastructure repair, and strategic communications are needed to link all geopolitical zones and tailor transportation networks and infrastructure development. Infrastructural experts under private sectors mentioned topics such as privatization and commercialization of industries and the entire procurement system. The rationalization of large government institutions was also brought up by one participant.

The study also explores the perceived relationship between performance and public trust in infrastructure development. Leaders must be both verbal and actionable to gain public trust and increase faith in government. Power is a topic of discussion, with citizens unhappy with current investments and outcomes. The study concludes that the blame for inadequacies in Nigeria's political system lies more at the doors of the present than the past. The impact of bureaucratic corruption on Nigeria's infrastructure sector development. Participants from different groups discussed their concerns about the government's ability to provide good roads and electricity for the masses, but also the low trust in the government due to issues like capacity and corruption. To rebuild trust, investing in infrastructure is crucial. One participant argued that comprehensive planning and project approval

can help build trust among communities and improve the country's reputation. Infrastructural experts under private sectors also highlighted the importance of meeting the basic needs of Nigerians, such as roads, transportation, housing, energy, and education. However, public dissatisfaction with low performance in the infrastructure sector results in total mistrust. The detrimental effects of bureaucrats losing position, authority, respect, and access to decision-makers, as well as the decline in quality of projects. The participants emphasized the need for honesty and transparency in dealing with corruption, as it is still a possibility despite overseeing projects worth over N100 billion.

The study collected data from semi-structured interviews and archival data on infrastructure development in Nigeria between 1960 and 2023, covering various military and civilian administrations. During the military era (1981-1990), significant infrastructure development was recorded, while post-colonial civilian administrations aggressively implemented infrastructure development programs. Vested interests, such as politicians' agendas and lack of courage to do what is right, contributed to corruption in infrastructure development. Overall, the study highlights the need for improved infrastructure development and transparency in Nigeria's infrastructure sector.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how Nigerian infrastructure development was impacted by a lack of leadership between 1960 and 2023. Among the participants were retired officials, cabinet ministers, bureaucrats who had previously served under heads of state, and professionals from the business sector. According to the study, the strategies of earlier military governments were advantageous in sectors including transportation, power generation, highways, airports, and seaports. But the development of rural infrastructure was overlooked.

The best instruments for carrying out government infrastructure development initiatives were found to be the National Development Plans. Political unrest and the civil war in Nigeria were significant barriers to the development of infrastructure. Lack of resources and funding limitations were noted as the main challenges. Because of the government's subpar performance, public trust was low. The development of infrastructure was adversely affected by bureaucratic corruption. Infrastructure development generally benefited from economic reforms, with the National Development Plan serving as the primary reform initiative. For upcoming plans for infrastructure development, the pragmatic-visionary leadership style was judged to be the most effective. Funding limitations, a lack of consistency and planning, and corruption were all barriers to good governance. Future infrastructure development will focus on transit, power, railroads, and roads.

Between 1960 and 2010, Nigeria's infrastructure development, particularly under military administrations,

improved the nation's needs. However, political instability, religious intolerance, terrorism, and poor governance hinder progress. To achieve reasonable milestones, Nigeria needs sufficient funds, manpower, and resources. Addressing bureaucratic corruption and intensifying Public Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives is crucial. Encouraging private sector participation and targeting foreign investors is essential. Nigeria needs visionary and pragmatic leadership for future infrastructure development, focusing on roads, railways, power, and transportation. The government should prioritize the production of adequate electrical power and transportation, collaborate with the private sector, and build public trust in good governance.

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