

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA: LABOUR UNIONS IN 21ST CENTURY AS A FOCAL POINT

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Abstract

In Nigeria sovereign nation, more than anything else, the greatest obstacle to the nascent democracy is the neglect of effective governance and democratic consolidation with Labour Unions participation in 21st century for nation building, as evidenced by the current spate of armed robbery attacks and political assassination. Nigeria's abundant wealth is sufficient to make it one of the effective states in the African continent. However, the excess resources, like the sugar in the blood stream of a diabetic patient, serve no positive purpose for the teeming population. Poverty and hunger are the principal characters of the Nigerian State with attenuated crises affecting the socio-economic well – being of the people. While Nigeria ranks among the highest producers of crude oil in the world market, it also leads in the classification of countries in distress. Corruption and mismanagement of the abundant resources, coupled with the insatiable appetite of the leaders to pillage the country of its potentials for rapid political and economic growth. We are in the days of debate. The somehow chaotic Nigerian political terrain has thrown up several challenges, has thrown up issues, many issues that are subjects of debate. Since the emergence of the nascent democracy in 1999, this nation has not sufficiently delivered dividends of democracy to the masses. The focus of this paper is to appraise the Effect of Good Governance and Democratic Consolidation with Labour Unions participation in 21st Century which were brought to the fore while the objectives of the study were well spelt out. Hypotheses were postulated and the Group Theory was used to explicate the works. Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. From the primary sources, the survey method, that is, the use of questionnaire were designed and adopted. Data obtained from this method were analyzed with the simple percentage. The paper concludes by advocating the need for the Labour Unions to have wider spread and to participate more actively in the democratic process, among others, as ways of being more relevant in democratic process. This paper discovered that this malaise was responsible for the failing status of the Nigerian State.

Keywords: Effective Governance, Democratic Consolidation, Labour Unions, Contemporary Issues, Nigeria.

Introduction:

In Nigeria sovereign nation, more than anything else, the greatest obstacle to the nascent democracy is the neglect of effective governance and democratic consolidation with Labour Unions participation in 21st century for nation building, as evidenced by the current spate of armed robbery attacks and political assassination. Nigeria's abundant wealth is sufficient to make it one of the effective states in the African continent. However, the excess resources, like the sugar in the blood stream of a diabetic patient, serve no positive purpose for the teeming population (Ezeanochie and Uhumwuangho, 2023).

The term pressure group is interchangeably used with such terms as interest group or organized interest. Henry (2022) defines pressure groups as voluntary associations of individual who band together for the defense of a particular interest. Interest in this sense is a conscious desire to have public policy or the authoritative allocation of values, move in a particular general or specific direction. The term pressure group is however loosely used here to include trade or industrial unions, professional associations and other associations whose focus extend beyond the realization of parochial interest of their members. Barber (2019) categorized pressure groups generally into two groups, which are defensive and promotional pressure groups. While defensive pressure groups are basically concerned with the protection of their members' interest and have a defined membership, promotional pressure groups are concerned with promoting some general public interest as opposed to their own self-interest.

Trade or industrial unions as well as professional associations and human rights associations therefore fall into the category of promotional pressure groups otherwise referred to as functional pressure groups here. According to Barber (2019), interest groups or pressure groups are many and vary. Some are formally organized others are not. However the more formally organized groups tend to be more durable, whereas those informally organized usually dissolve after the crisis that originated them is resolved (Barber, 2019).. The longevity or durability of these groups, their consistency as well as their high sense of commitment to the realization of set goals, all contributes to making them functional. Functional pressure groups can therefore be defined as those pressure or interest groups whose activities are not limited or restricted to the promotion and protection of parochial interest but which are vocal and determined in pursuing policies and goals that have relevance to citizens in the society.

Viewed within the context of political participation, such groups often criticize unpopular or unfavourable government policies, organized conferences, seminars, rallies and even demonstrations or protest marches to express their displeasure and in some cases, suggest alternatives to programs or policies which they consider as being unfavourable. Functional groups work towards sensitizing and mobilizing the populace against unpopular acts of government. In this respect, mention could be made of such groups as the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), human rights organizations like the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, (CDHR) as well as Pro-democracy groups like the Campaign for Democracy (CD), Academic Staff Union of Universities, (ASUU), National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) and the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) or Press (Barber, 2019).

However, Democracy as a concept has been defined in various ways and given various interpretations. The generalized or loose nature of the concept must have accounted for this. According to (Barber, 2019) certain basic features of democracy which serve as a consensus among the contending perspectives on what democratic system ought to entail or manifest are the right to elections, representative form of governance and freedom of choice, respect for the rule of law and equality before the law, accountability, guarantee of the rights of individuals, an independent judiciary as well as decentralization or delegation of power and authority between all tiers of government, among others.

Obviously, functional pressure groups have contributed to democratic process in Nigeria just as some might have contributed to the problem of democratization in Nigeria, either overtly or covertly. In the words of Obasanjo and Mabogunje (2022), pressure groups are to a very large extent necessary and healthy for a thriving democratic culture to evolve. They are however of the opinion that such groups must not be seen to be operating under influence from foreign bodies. Moreover, the leadership under which these groups operate some of the time, the prevailing situation in the country, the organizational structure of these groups as well as the general mood of the society determine to a very large extent, the effectiveness of these groups and influence profoundly their contributions to democratic process (Barber (2019)..

Problems

The functional pressure groups faced a number of problems, as a result of their belief in and in the process of pursuing democratic ideals. One of such obstacles was the interference of government in the affairs of these groups. This has contributed tremendously towards weakening the groups. Besides, this meddlesomeness in the groups' activities has created specific problems for the different groups in the society. For instance, it led to the emergence of Pascal Bafyau, a military apologist as the leader of NLC. It also resulted in the inability of NBA to constitute its central leadership from 1992 to 1995, while the NMA was almost polarized into groups or camps on different occasions. Furthermore at a time in the history of NANS, two national presidents with different executive committee members existed. Consequently it has been difficult for most of the groups to focus wholly on the pursuance of democratic principles, bogged down as they were by internal problems (Barber (2019).

In some extreme cases, the government has wielded the big stick by outright proscription of some of these groups. The purpose was to keep them out of circulation for as long as possible so that they would not pose any threat to undemocratic government. It was in an effort to achieve this aim that the NLC, ASUU and NANS were proscribed at different times (Barber (2019).. Similarly, unfavourable legislations were imposed on these groups to incapacitate them and in the process render them useless or at best ineffective. Such unfavourable legislations are many among which are the National Economic Emergency Power Decree 22 of 1985, the Trade Union (Miscellaneous Provisions) Decree 17 of 1986, Decree 12 and 16 of 1986 as well as Decree 47 of 1987 among others. Through this process, ASUU was disaffiliated from the NLC (through the provision of Decree 17 of 1986) because of what government considered as "radical influence" on the NLC. Furthermore, unwarranted arrests and detentions of members of these groups even without trial was a common development. Many examples abound of human rights, labour and pro-democracy activists who were detained without trial. Such activists include Olisa Agbakoba, Baba Omojola, Gani Fawehinmi of

blessed memory and Femi Falana (Barber, 2019). In the same vein, progressive news media have had their premises sealed up several times while printed copies of their papers and magazines were confiscated at the slightest excuse. Not only this, many journalists were arrested and detained even without any just cause. For instance, on May 5 1991, the Editor-in-Chief of the defunct new breed Magazine, Chief Chris Okolie was detained apparently because his magazine criticized the Babangida administration. Similarly, in 1993 alone, several copies of Tell magazine were confiscated at different times while the editor went underground in order to escape arrest (CHDR Annual Reports 1991–1993). In recent months, Koo, Twitter’s Indian rival, has begun advertising to Nigerians with the support of a powerful brand ambassador: President Muhammadu Buhari. The endorsement comes more than two months after Buhari banned Twitter from Nigeria, in response to the social media company deleting a controversial tweet from Buhari threatening violence against supporters of a secessionist movement in the South East. Endorsing a specific media organization is just the latest development in the government’s on-going attempt to suppress free expression (N. Wodu, 2021).

Recently, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), Nigeria’s media regulatory body, issued a letter to broadcast stations in Nigeria requiring them to downplay the worsening security situation in Nigeria, particularly, the threats of Boko Haram and banditry. NBC justified their position by arguing that reporting these issues has a tendency to ignite more violence. This explanation might have merit if the government had not been progressively rolling back rights to free speech. For example, last two years’ October, after the #EndSARS protests against police brutality, NBC fined media organizations for reporting on the protests (N. Wodu, 2021).

Consequently, this paper would therefore seek to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Does government wielded a big stick by outright proscription of some of these groups?
2. NBC fined media organizations for reporting on the EndSARS protests?
3. Were several copies of Tell magazine confiscated at different times

Objectives:

The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the relationship between government wielded a big stick and outright proscription of the groups.
2. To ascertain the nexus between NBC fine on Media and reporting of ENDSARS protests.
3. To find out if copies of Tell magazine were confiscated at different times.

Hypotheses:

In order to achieve these objectives, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant relationship between governments wielded a big stick and outright proscription of the groups.
2. There is no significant relationship between NBC fine on Media and reporting of ENDSARS protests.
3. There is no significant relationship between copies of Tell magazine confiscated and Government policies at different times

Theoretical Exposition

The particular theory that can sufficiently act as a guide for the analysis of issues in this paper is Marxist or classical theory. The classical or formal model of bureaucracy applies essentially to Western Europe countries, which are the prototypes for developed or modernized political systems.

Karl Marx was in many respects the most influential political theorist of the 19th century. He sought to combine factual analysis and political prescription in a thorough survey of the modern economic system. Arguing that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of the class struggles,” and that liberal governments and ideology were merely agents of the exploiting owners of property. Marx advocated the abolition of private property and predicted the demise of capitalization after a sense if receiving crises. The abolition of property and therefore of class exploitation would make possible a situation in which individual will contribute according to their abilities and take according to their needs. The state, following a transitional period in which the working class would rule, would eventually wither away. Marx’s view of human history is both profoundly pessimistic and profoundly optimistic. Its pessimism has in his belief that history reflects the oppression of the many by a small minority, who thereby secure economic power. First, Marx believed that technical innovations bring about new ways of meeting human needs and make it increasingly possible for people to satisfy their deepest wants and to develop and perfect their individual capacities. Second, Marx claimed to have proved that the long history of oppression would soon end when the masses rise up and usher in a revolution that will create a classless utopian society (N. Wodu, 2021).

Pluralist Theory

Classical pluralism has the belief that politics and policy decision making is located mostly in the governmental framework, but many on governmental groups are using their resources to exert influence. The central question for classical pluralism is how power is distributed in western democracies. Groups of individuals try to minimize their interests. Lines of conflict are multiple and shifting. There may be inequalities but they tend to be distributed and evened out. Any change under this view will be slow and incremental as groups have different interest and may act as “veto groups” to destroy legislation that they do not agree with. The existence of diverse and competing interests is the basis for a democratic equilibrium and is crucial for obtaining of goals by individuals. Pluralists stress civil rights, such as freedom of expression and organization and an electoral system with at least two parties. On the other hand, since the participants in this process constitute only a tiny fraction of the populace, the public acts mainly as by-standers. This is not necessarily undesirable: political issues require continuous and expert attention which the average citizens do not have. The important theorists of pluralism are Robert Dahl and Martins Lipset.

Literature Review

Relevance of Pressure Groups

Pressure groups are undoubtedly relevant in terms of the functions which they perform. These functions, according to Henry (2022: 488–490) include managing the flow of influence between government and the governed, by participating in the political competition of a given system. Through this process, government is able to ascertain reactions to her policies. Even though, pressure groups do not seek responsibility for direct management of government,

they reflect the concerns of the society in which they operate. They sometimes destroy an existing consensus as well as prepare for a new one. Their part in providing a balance between stability and change within a governmental system remains important. Pressure groups not only articulate the demands of their potential or actual membership, they also serve as outlet for the social energies of their members. Furthermore, through concrete and continuous group campaigns, socialization of the citizen by pressure groups often proves effective and lasting. In some cases, they supplement the functions of political parties while they also seek to meet conflicting claims and provoke favourable government decision ((N. Wodu, 2021)). Techniques often commonly employed by pressure groups to achieve their aims include campaigns, demonstrations or marches and strikes. Specifically in Nigeria, pressure groups like the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), as well as National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) and Association of Resident Doctors (ARD), have made themselves relevant not only in terms of what they have been able to achieve for their members but also for the larger society. The NLC for instance successfully negotiated a new minimum wage with the Shagari administration in 1981 after an effective general strike. Similarly NMA has consistently been in the forefront of negotiating exclusive and improved salary package for its members. In the same vein, the opposition to the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programme, spearheaded by NANS in 1989 led to the introduction of SAP relief packages for Nigerians particularly the working class and the Association of Resident Doctors (ARD) who few days ago in the year 2023 decided to suspend its one month industrial action for the sake of teaming Nigerians.

However, political developments in the country in the 1980's and early 1990's have not only toughened some pressure groups, it has also led to the emergence and growth of new ones. This development has led to the increased involvement of more assertive pressure groups in the efforts at attaining and sustaining a stable democratic order in the country.

Political Participation in National Development

The attitude of pressure groups to, as well as their participation in democratic process, depends to a very large extent on the development in a particular period Nordic Journal of African Studies and the prevailing situations. Even before the attainment of political independence, the organized labour, for instance, has had cause to participate in party politics particularly with its affiliation to the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon, (NCNC) in 1944. The outcome of this affiliation was the success of the general strike of 1945. A similar thing happened in 1964 when workers not only demanded for improved wages but also made a number of political demands. The climax of this development was the formation of the Nigerian Labour Party by Michael Imoudu and Eskor Toyo in 1964. Even though the party did not have much followers, owing to the regional nature of political parties formed during the period, it nonetheless participated in the controversial election of 1964 (Olukoju 2019: 337–350). Despite the decision of the Nigerian Labour Congress, that its leaders should be non-partisan in the emerging political process in 1979, individual members and officers who were interested in politics were allowed to participate freely in the political process even though without overt corporate backing from the congress. The decision to be non-partisan must have arisen out of the need to protect the new found freedom of the congress particularly in the face of towering military presence as seen in the Obasanjo administration. Consequently many labour leaders contested and won election into various offices on the platform of different political parties. This development notwithstanding, moves were made to pursue

anti-labour policies and to introduce anti-labour legislation even though without any success ((Olukoju, 2019: 337–350).

Methodology

This paper adopted a descriptive survey method. The survey was based on selected Geo-political Zones in Nigeria political system. The States are Abia (South East), Anambra (South East), Bauchi (North East), Borno (North East), Bayelsa (South South), Edo (South South), Kano (North West and Katsina (North West). The scope of the study is therefore restricted to years 2016 to 2022. The population of the study consist of 250 base on two categories (Senior and Junior) members of staff Public Service (See Table One Below). Out of this number, one hundred and seventy of them met our criteria and therefore form our sample size as can be seen in table one below:

TABLE 1: POPULATION OF STUDY

S/No	State/Geo-political Zone	Category of Respondents	No. of Returned Questionnaires	No. of Not Returned/Invalid Questionnaires	Total No. of Sampled Respondents
1.	Abia (South East) Ministry of Works	Senior Staff	16	6	31
		Junior Staff	5	4	
2.	Anambra (South East) Ministry of Health	Senior Staff	17	8	31
		Junior Staff	4	2	
3.	Bauchi (North East) Nigerian Television Authority	Senior Staff	18	7	32
		Junior Staff	4	3	
4.	Borno (North East) Ministry of Agriculture & Natural Development	Senior Staff	15	7	31
		Junior Staff	6	3	
5.	Bayelsa (South South) Bayelsa State Radio Corporation	Senior Staff	17	6	32
		Junior Staff	5	4	
6.	Edo (South South) University of Benin Teaching Hospital	Senior Staff	17	8	31
		Junior Staff	4	2	
7.	Kano (North West) Kano State Ministry of Justice	Senior Staff	18	7	31
		Junior Staff	4	3	
8.	Katsina (North West) State Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Agency	Senior Staff	16	6	31
		Junior Staff	5	4	
TOTAL			170	80	250

Source: Field Survey 2023.

Both Primary and Secondary sources of data were explored in trying to generate data for this study The specific information required for the study was An Appraisal of the Effectiveness

of Governance and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria with Press in the country as A Focal Point. The questionnaire formed the main instrument used in generating primary data, while documented information on prints that are relevant to this study, constituted the secondary source of generating data. To compliment the information received through the questionnaire, respondents were also interviewed. As the research is based on attitude and opinions, the statistical tools employed in analyzing responses include, tables and simple percentages. All the one hundred and seventy copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents studied were duly completed and returned in a useable form. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the data analysis.

Data Analysis

Of all the one hundred and seventy respondents, eighty (47%) of them are married; fifty (29%) are single while twenty one (13%) are divorced and the remaining nineteen (11%) are either widow or widowers. Thirty (18%) of them are within the age bracket of 18 – 25, Fifty (29%) are between the age bracket of 26-35; while eighty (47%) are within the age bracket of 36-45 and the remaining forty six years and above are ten (6%).

TABLE 2: Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between government wielded a big stick and outright proscription of the groups.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	110	65
No	60	35
Total	170	100

Source: Statistical Analysis

Table 2 shows that 110 (65%) of the total respondents agreed that government wielded a big stick for outright proscription of the groups and conversely could be responsible for the lack of poor performance of the press and fragrant disregard for rules and regulations.

Therefore, the hypothesis one which states that there is no significant relationship between government wielded a big stick for outright proscription is accepted.

TABLE 3: Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between NBC fine on Media and reporting of ENDSARS protests.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	105	62
No	65	38
Total	170	100

Source: Statistical Analysis

Table 3 shows that 105 (62%) of the respondents agreed that there is correlation between NBC fine on Media and reporting of ENDSARS protest while 65 (38%) were not satisfied or disagreed.

TABLE 4: Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between copies of Tell magazine confiscated and Government policies at different times.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	120	71
No	50	29
Total	170	100

Source: Statistical Analysis

Table 4 shows that 120 (71%) of the respondents agreed that copies of Tell Magazine were confiscated which are meant for the masses and which will contribute substantially to alleviate the misinformation of citizens and give the greatest information while 50 (29%) disagreed with the opinion.

Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between copies of Tell Magazine confiscated and Government policies at different times is accepted.

Findings Based On Hypotheses

Based on the analysis of the hypotheses, all the research hypotheses were positive which implies that (H_r) 1-3 were accepted.

More so, the study revealed that respondents agreed that there is correlation between copies of Tell Magazine confiscated and Government policies at different times while 65 (38%) were not satisfied or disagreed and conversely will impact positively on people enjoying the dividends of democracy in Nigeria.

1. Furthermore, this paper have highlighted an Appraisal of the Effectiveness of Good Governance and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria and solutions as per the findings in the hypothesis carried out in the research.

There is no doubt that, in one form or the other, progressive groups have contributed to democratic process in Nigeria, just as a few of them have constituted themselves to obstacles in the path of democratic process. The dismal performance of the organized labour between 1984 and 1988 notwithstanding, the Union still succeeded in recording some achievements. For instance the Adamu Chiroma led NLC identified with the Nigerian students on their struggle for a better educational environment. More importantly, trade unions participated effectively in the political debate of 1986. In the same vein, Abiodun has observe with reference to the organized labour that: Its articulated position for a political arrangement of “socialist organization” that could bring Nigeria to the path of social progress, remained the hallmark of the trade union movement’s involvement, with other constituencies of democratic struggles (Abiodun, 2019).

However, the poor leadership provided by Pascal Bafyau from 1988 to 1993, in sharp contrast to the exemplary leadership of Hassan Sunmonu, weakened the organized labour. Consequently the organized labour could not mobilize Pressure Groups and Democratic Process in Nigeria Nigerians against the glaring injustice of the period, as a social movement would do. The Campaign for Democracy (CD) eventually filled this gap. Human rights organizations have undoubtedly contributed meaningfully to the sustenance of democratic

zeal in the country. Apart from organizing conferences, seminars, symposia and lectures on the sustenance of democracy in the country with a view to sensitising and mobilizing Nigerians, it has also in extreme and serious cases taken up government attempting or making effort to abort democracy or stifle democratic process. This they did by organizing mass protests and campaigns of civil disobedience. For instance between July 5 and 7, 1993, the CD commenced direct political action by calling for mass protests against the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election. The violent manner in which the protests were put down led to the change of tactics to a campaign of civil disobedience. Sola Iji (2019:74–88) has observed that the pro-democracy agitation anchored by the CD and other human rights organizations led in part to the unceremonious exit of General Ibrahim Babangida from power in August 1993. Mobilization is thus a potential tool for the achievement of desired objective by the Human Rights Organizations. On its part, the National Association of Nigerian Students had at different times exercised the constitutionally granted freedom of expression by mobilizing against the 25 kobo increase in the price of petroleum in 1986. Similarly in 1989, the student body was in the forefront of the popular uprising against the dehumanizing effect of the Structural Adjustment Programme as pursued by the Babangida regime ((Olukoju 2019: 337–350). The SAP relief packages that came afterward were visible evidence of the success of the protests. Even in the second republic which lasted from 1979 to 1983, undemocratic acts and political intolerance of the political actors of the period did not go unchallenged. A good example of such undemocratic act was the illegal deportation of an opposition leader, Alhaji Shugaba Abdulrahman Darman in 1980. Adeyinka Banwo (2017: 44) posited that: Opposition to these undemocratic practices was spear-headed by the students, members of the intelligentsia and workers through their main bodies like the NANS, ASUU and the NLC in a few found alliance. This was complemented by support from progressive politicians, lawyers, journalist and other professionals.

2. Other functional professional groups like the NMA and NBA have consistently commented on national issues with a view to influencing the direction of policy. The NBA for instance has constantly criticized the inclusion of ouster clauses in decrees which effectively oust the jurisdiction of the court and constitute a breach of the rule of law. Besides, the setting up of tribunals to try cases that could be tried by normal courts has also been criticized by the NBA.

Conclusion

Conclusively, functional pressure groups have contributed immensely and are still contributing to the promotion and protection of democratic ideals in the Nigeria. However for the groups to be more effective in the democratic process, there is the need for them to have a wider spread. By so doing, their impact will be better felt. These groups as presently constituted are restricted to the Southwestern part of the country. The expansion of the base of the groups will give them a broad and national outlook. Moreover, it is very difficult to tell the sources of fund of some of these groups. There is therefore the need for them to disclose their sources of funding in order to clear all doubts related to their funding. Furthermore, these groups should not just criticize the government just for the purpose of criticizing. They should be principled and constructive in their criticism. There is also the need for pressure groups to be more democratic in their operation as well as in the running of their organization (Sola, 2019).

Finally, these groups should consider moving beyond the status of facilitators to actual participants in the democratic process in order to be more relevant. In doing this, however, they must be prepared to pursue political activities and the attendant developments with the courage and vigour with which they pursue pressure group activities without hiding anything from the people.

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